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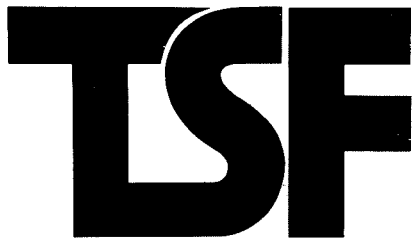
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# BULLETIN

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# On Pentecostals, Poets and Professors

## An Interview with Eugene Peterson

*Eugene Peterson is the pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) in Bel Air, Maryland, and the author of several books including Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Care, The Long Obedience, Traveling Light and Run with the Horses. Peterson was interviewed by Bill Mangrum, who is on staff with TSF in California.*

**TSF:** How long have you been out of seminary, Eugene?

**Peterson:** Twenty-six years.

**TSF:** Was seminary a positive or negative experience for you?

**Peterson:** Well, for me it was mixed. The seminary I went to was the old Biblical Seminary, a non-denominational school in New York which is now New York Theological Seminary. I hadn't really planned to go to seminary. I grew up in a pentecostal church and it was very anti-intellectual. I was afraid of higher education and I had stretched the limits by going to college. Pastors and people had filled my head with warnings: "You are going to lose your faith; you are going to leave the Lord." But I ended up at seminary, really kind of through the back door because other things fell apart. I didn't know anything about the place, except a college professor got me there. In some ways I was fortunate because I had plenty of intellectual curiosity and motivation. I didn't need anybody to stimulate me intellectually, I just needed a library. Biblical Seminary at that point was in its decline, and it really didn't have very much going for it in theological studies. But it was a spiritual community and so I found my theological education in a place where prayer was central and important.

**TSF:** How exactly did that spiritual community operate?

**Peterson:** There were daily prayers, and a service of prayer. Through the year there were retreat days and there was an encouragement to prayer. Many of the faculty really believed in prayer. It was important to them and they showed it in their own lives. Part of the spiritual community emphasis had to do with the student body. We had many missionaries on furlough. It wasn't a large student body, so these people had influence. The way they lived and prayed made a difference.

**TSF:** If you were going to seminary today, what type of theological education would you seek?

**Peterson:** I don't see any seminary that's doing what it seems to me is essential—providing encouragement and direction for the life of faith, training people in the traditions which have always been part of that life, and in the process providing theological structure by which to articulate it. But the whole *guts* of the material have been dropped out and we still have the intellectual, theological stuff, but it's out of context. I know there are seminaries that are trying to repair that. But some of the repairs seem to me to be only cosmetic surgery, and I don't know how it's going to turn out.

**TSF:** You found a balance of spirituality and scholarship among your teachers in seminary?

**Peterson:** No. I found the interest in the spiritual life, the commitment to the spiritual life. I didn't find the intellectual rigor, which I had to pursue on my own; but, no, I didn't find the balance.

**TSF:** You were pursuing an academic career?

**Peterson:** Yes.

**TSF:** Then you planned to complete a Ph.D. in what area?

**Peterson:** In Semitic languages. I went to Johns Hopkins and studied with William Albright in the field of Semitics.

**TSF:** How did you personally try to maintain that balance of scholarship and piety?

**Peterson:** Well, I don't know, Bill. A lot of this you do by dumb luck. My background, the church, the environment I grew up in, was very intense spiritually, and so I developed through my childhood and adolescence a life which was passionate in terms of spirituality. While much was extravagant and some of it was beside the point, the one thing that was communicated to me was that this Christian life had to do with intensity, with passion, with depth. And so I was spoiled. I never was able to put up with anything that was devotionally dilettante. What I had to fight for was some intellectual rigor. And I didn't find that for a long time. You see, I just had that hunger myself for learning, for knowing, and knew it was possible because I got in touch with some of the old masters who had been dead for a thousand years.

**TSF:** Who were some of those masters?

**Peterson:** Well, Augustine was one, Bernard was one, Gregory, Thomas Aquinas. Those were the people who attracted me early. Later I discovered others who were more protestant and puritan, but these earlier masters were the ones who inspired me. They were in a sense prereformation, they were pre-controversial, and so my pentecostal background had no labels for them. The kind of spirituality that I grew up with had to do with passion and intensity and inwardness—so these masters fit into that style. As I left the culture of the pentecostal church, I was able to leave the stuff that never fit, mainly entertainment—and there is a great deal of charlatanism in that whole business. But somehow because of the home I lived in I escaped that.

**TSF:** Do you teach now?

**Peterson:** Yes, I teach in both a secular university and a Roman Catholic seminary.

**TSF:** Tell me about the seminary teaching.

**Peterson:** Well, it's been very stimulating to me. I'm working with a community that I have never been close to before, the Roman Catholic community. I've found that in terms of ministry there's not

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that much difference. We're dealing with the same material. I've been very heartened by the fact that they've wanted me, that they've looked to me for something they are missing themselves—a theology of ministry and an interpretation of Scripture which has spirituality at its base. They have been caught up in this whole secularizing syndrome too—ministry as a career option and Scripture as kind of an academic exercise. They've been very receptive and warmly accepting of an approach to ministry which has spirituality at its core—along with intellectual integrity.

**TSF:** It seems to me that a lot of students today are viewing seminary as a place to study faith and to work out some types of belief system even though they do not have any kind of special calling or desire to enter ministry. Do you think that's a good trend among Christian students?

**Peterson:** The students I have for the most part aren't really there to learn. They're there to get a job or get equipped for a job, and it's very discouraging for a professor who gets excited about the material and wants to teach what's there to have the primary concern of most of the students be "how can I pass this course?"

I think the motivation you mention is okay. Any place is a good place to get started. But if I'm reading the signs rightly, I don't think the seminaries have adjusted to that desire, so that they are not developing the kind of community that meets that expectation or that need. I don't see anything wrong with going to seminary with that desire, but I think it would be better if the seminary said, "our primary task is to be a spiritual community which develops theological skills." Because thinking about learning theology is not a spiritual task. I had a student at St. Mary's who left his preparation for the ministry several years ago, but continued to maintain his interest in theology. He kept coming to St. Mary's Seminary just because he loved theology even though he didn't go to church and didn't believe in God. And during a course I taught last fall, he came to faith, and he ended the course by making a commitment to both the Christian faith and the ministry. It was the first time he had been in a course which had anything to do with his personal life and his vocation. Now that's hard for me to believe, that someone can go to a theological school for four years and never find oneself addressed at a personal level in order to integrate life with thinking.

**TSF:** Would you consider yourself an evangelical?

**Peterson:** Yes.

**TSF:** Given the state of that term today, could you briefly describe that for us.

**Peterson:** Evangelical for me, Bill, means two things. One, it has to do with a certain commitment to Scripture and the gospel as life-changing. It also has to do with culture, with a certain culture of the church which comes out of the pietistic, revivalist, sectarian tradition, and often has moved into other parts of the church. That's the church I grew up in, it's the movement I grew up in. Even though I'm part of an establishment denomination at this point, the evangelical church in both the theological and cultural sense is what I'm at home in. I'm not denominationally a part of it, but it is where I find my natural allies and friends and community.

**TSF:** What future do you see for evangelicalism in this country?

**Peterson:** Well, I think it's a very positive, strong future because evangelicalism has become, I think, much less sectarian, much less defensive, more confident. Evangelicals no longer understand themselves as a beleaguered band of believers holding the truth, but are really quite confident that they are in the main stream of things and are willing to become part of other denominations, cross denominational lines. I can be part of a Roman Catholic faculty without any sense of betrayal or leaving the faith or anything like that. So I think it's a very strong position. It's having a fermenting influence on the church.

**TSF:** Do you see any dangers in the movement?

**Peterson:** The dangers in evangelicalism seem to me to stem from an unreflective pietism. The pietistic element of the past is not understood in all its depth, so just little parts of it are taken. The dangers also stem from sectarianism which develops a minority mentality

of being-against and has a kind of paranoia. I still observe that feistiness, but it seems to me to be less and less. I'm encouraged.

The danger is that there is a strength that comes from paranoia. You can marshal a lot of energy if you are paranoid enough, and so as the evangelical movement becomes more ecumenical or open there is a natural danger that it lose its sharp edge. I am not a good enough cultural analyst to know if that's happening. I'm not aware that it is, but I should think theoretically that would be the danger.

**TSF:** As an evangelical in the Presbyterian Church (USA), what struggles have you had?

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***Doubt pushes me past the intellectualizing, past the superficial, and makes me deal with issues on a life basis where I can't understand and control everything.***

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**Peterson:** I haven't had any struggles, I don't think. But I've never felt at home. I've always been an outsider. That's part of my background. I didn't grow up in this, so I've never been part of the club, but that's not their fault. The Presbyterian Church has been very good to me. They've given me a place to work, a congregation to be pastor of, so I've never felt like my sense of being an outsider was their fault. I've never felt particularly at home with the national trends, but I feel very much at home with the historical developments, the whole rootage of the Presbyterian Church, so I'm willing to live through fashions which aren't congenial to me if I sense that the whole basic structure has a good foundation, and I think it does.

**TSF:** Have you learned any particular lessons working within a mainline denomination that you would like to pass on?

**Peterson:** The Presbyterian Church is pluralistic. For some people, of course, that's a negative. For me, because I'm a minority person, it's a positive. And if you're a black person in a mostly white world, you're glad when they're pluralistic. And as an evangelical and somebody from a sectarian background, I'm glad that my church is pluralistic.

**TSF:** Would you encourage more students from evangelical backgrounds to pursue mainline seminary education and ordination?

**Peterson:** You're asking two different questions. I don't have any opinion about where to go for your education. But it seems to me that it is always better to live out of your own tradition than it is to leave it. That wasn't possible for me. I tried and it didn't work. They didn't accept me; I didn't fit the pentecostal denomination, so I really had to leave. I think it would have been wrong for me to stay because I would have always been a malcontent. I would have always been disrupting things. That takes a lot of emotional energy. I envy people who are in the denomination in which they grew up and are able to build out of those roots and work out of that kind of tradition. I think it gives you a certain strength. So if it's possible, I think you should stay where you were born, but it's not always possible.

**TSF:** So for students who go off to college and deepen their commitment to the faith through various evangelical parachurch organizations, you would encourage those students to stay within the Presbyterian Church or the United Methodist Church or the United Church of Christ?

**Peterson:** By all means. Yes.

**TSF:** What dangers lie in mainline churches as opposed to the independent Bible church tradition?

**Peterson:** Well, I think there is more danger in the establishment churches assimilating to a bourgeois culture or a church culture. There's more danger in assimilating to a kind of professionalism, a clerical professionalism. In the mainline denominations, congregations generally let you get by with anything you want to do, as long as you are competent. However, evangelical congregations often

have well-defined theological expectations and sometimes spiritual expectations and perhaps there's a higher degree of accountability. That's just a hunch I have. On the other hand, the danger in the independent churches is for the pastor to become some kind of a superstar or a dictator, and see oneself as the leader of the church rather than the servant or the pastor of the church. I think it's a very strong danger.

**TSF:** You read widely. And not strictly within the religious or philosophical field?

**Peterson:** Right.

**TSF:** It seems to me that more students today lack a "classical" liberal arts education, and thus they seem to lack that imaginative-creative capacity. How would you suggest a seminarian correct this imbalance? You get your chance, Eugene, to correct all those students who are going to read the *TSF Bulletin*.

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***It is very discouraging for a professor to have the primary concern of the students be "how can I pass this course?"***

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**Peterson:** The theologian's best ally is the artist. I think we need to awaken an interest in literature, which is natural to most people but which gets suppressed. We must see the imagination as an aspect of ministry. What we're really talking about is creativity. We're participating in something that God is doing. He is creating new life. He created life and he's been creating life. Now how does the creative process work? The people who attend to that question most frequently are writers, artists, sculptors, musicians. People involved in church leadership should be passionately interested in how the creative process works—not in how to say things accurately. This great emphasis on how to communicate accurately is a dead-end street. Communicating clearly is not what we are after. What we are after is creating new life. The creative writer isn't interested in saying things as simply or as accurately as possible, but in touching the springs of creativity and letting the imagination work in analogical ways. I think if I were going to set up a seminary curriculum, I would spend one whole year on a couple of poets. I would insist that students learn how to read poetry, learn how words work. We don't pay enough attention to words—we use words all the time but we use them in a commercialized, consumer way. That consumer-oriented use of words has little place in the church, in the pulpit, in counseling. We're trying to find how words work, their own work.

I'm not insisting on any particular poet here. I've just finished reading a volume of poems of William Stafford. I've read Stafford for years, and a book of collected poetry which just came out would be helpful. He's a Christian. His Christianity is indirect and unobtrusive, and he uses words with great skill. I would want to pay attention with people to how that worked, how the creative imagination deals with common experience and learns to express itself rightly. I'd use some poets who've been involved in ministry. George Herbert was a pastor; Gerard Manley Hopkins was a priest. I'd take people who were involved at the core of the gospel and were trying to understand it, but paid attention to the way words worked.

And I would also want to learn from the literary critics. We're involved in the study of Scripture and we've been completely buffaloes by the whole movement of historical criticism which has insisted on looking at Scripture analytically, historically, objectively. You cannot read imaginative literature analytically. You have to be a participant. And the whole revolution in hermeneutics which has taken place in the last thirty years is unattended to by both. Our best allies are the literary critics—people like Northrop Frye, C. S. Lewis in the critical works he does, and George Steiner—people who teach us how to read with our whole selves. It's not enough just to read with our minds. We've got emotions, we've got bodies, we've got histories, we've got jobs, we've got relationships, and we

need to come to these texts with our whole beings—with our elbows and knees as well as our brain cells. And some of these men teach us how to do that or show us the way and insist that we follow. That's the way Scripture was read up until the Reformation and through the Reformation. But in the post-Reformation we got such an overweening desire to be respectable intellectually. We have such a fear of superstition and allegory that we squeezed all the imaginative stuff out of Scriptures so we could be sure that it was just precise and accurate. If it's the infallible Word, well then you've got to have the exact meaning and nothing else, so all ambiguity goes. Well, all good language is ambiguous. It's poetic. It has levels of meaning, so which one of those levels of meaning is infallible? We've got to squeeze all of that out and get one level so we have the exact truth. It's not just the evangelical or conservative church that did that, that was liberal scholarship, too. They had a different theological reason for it, but it worked out to the same thing.

**TSF:** And with that has come this over-burdening emphasis upon doctrinal and theological formulations at the expense of spiritual formation.

**Peterson:** I have nothing against the emphasis on doctrinal and theological formation; in fact, I insist on it. But that's part of a family and we've killed off the kids, eliminated all the imaginative stuff which people like William Faulkner or Walker Percy bring back. You cannot read a good artist just with your analytical mind. You've got to use your imagination. And Scripture is no different, but we insist on reading Scripture in a sub-literary way, and thereby lose much of its genius.

**TSF:** In speaking and writing, you talk about "wholeness." What do you mean by that term?

**Peterson:** I mean something Christian. I mean the whole Christian thing where we're in a conscious and growing relationship with God and an insistence that our life as described in Scripture and as experienced in grace be developed on those terms. I don't mean "wholeness" in terms of psychological subjectivism, what makes me feel good. And I don't mean "wholeness" in terms of meeting cultural expectations of what it means to be a well-rounded person, so there's tension in the way I use the word. I insist on the validity of the word for the Christian, being in touch with all reality. But I am also conscious that it is easy to be misunderstood, because a lot of people when they talk about "wholeness" mean just "I have it all together the way I want it to be."

**TSF:** How would you suggest a seminary student pursue "wholeness"? It's one thing to talk to seminary students about the fact that they need to read more, it's another thing when seminary students have jobs, a spouse and perhaps children, and seldom enough money. In the midst of all that, we want them to come out of seminary at least pursuing the direction of wholeness.

**Peterson:** I think the only thing that's realistic in terms of suggesting "wholeness" to the seminary student is to get a vision of it and an appetite for it. "Wholeness" is a quest and we have to know what we're questing. It's not reasonable to say, "Okay, now get a well-balanced life and get it all put together." It is possible to get a taste for it and to see what's possible. It's important to read the best writers. It's important to know the people who had some "wholeness." We need to know something about Gregory and Bernard, Thomas, Calvin, and Luther, to go to the best instead of fooling with the secondary literature. The mystics, I think, were often the whole people in our past. If we can develop a taste for them, so at least we know what it sounds like, what it looks like, then we might be dissatisfied with any substitute thrown our way as we go along.

**TSF:** You've somewhat touched on this, but maybe you could follow this through again: what qualities would you like to see in today's seminary graduates? If you were to hire someone freshly out of seminary to be an assistant pastor, what kind of person would you be looking for?

**Peterson:** I'd want somebody who had a basic conviction that the heart of pastoral work or leadership in the church has to do with developing a lifelong relationship with Christ which involves all of life. In other words, I would want somebody committed to the task

of spiritual formation. I would also want somebody who had some intellectual discipline and curiosity about how to understand and imagine the different ways in which life is experienced. Without that intellectual curiosity, the early experiences become clichés and are not reapplied in fresh ways in new situations. What starts out as a vital experience deteriorates into platitude. And so spiritual formation and intellectual curiosity are reciprocal because they keep each other growing and alive and fresh. That's what I'd look for. I said earlier that the twin pillars of ministry are learning and prayer, and I'd look for a desire for that.

**TSF:** You have talked about the temptation in ministry to lie about God. Do we lie about God out of a lust for power or out of a fear concerning an inability to answer questions?

**Peterson:** Both. I would think both of those things, but I think they're subtle. I think they would probably be unrecognizable if we were accused that way. We would say, "No, I don't want power, I'm not afraid." But I think part of that, Bill, comes because most people who go into ministry want to help people. We really are programmed to help people and that's good. When people ask us to do things, we want to do what they want to do. If they want answers, we give them answers because that's what they requested. So a lot of what I call lying about God, answers about God that obscure or distort certain ambiguities of life or a certain wholeness in the doctrine of God, is very well intentioned. I think we do it out of the best of motives which makes it very difficult to detect in yourself, because if your motives are right then you think what's coming out is going to be okay, too, especially if it's orthodox.

**TSF:** What part does doubt play in your own spiritual development?

**Peterson:** Doubt pushes me deeper. Doubt pushes me past the intellectualizing, past the superficial, and makes me deal with issues on a life basis where I can't understand and control everything. I

have to plunge in anyway. Doubt has never functioned in my life as a way to get out of things. It has always pulled me in further. I know it makes spectators out of some people but somehow it has never worked that way for me. It's caused me to be involved in dimensions of faith that I wasn't aware of before.

**TSF:** You spoke recently about the balance between striving for excellence and humility. How does that work? You say, "I really want to be an excellent people-helper," but you are always forced into the position of marketing yourself and your ability to help other people.

**Peterson:** That question, Bill, can't be dealt with very adequately in this setting, but it's one of the key questions for ministry because there's no area of the spiritual life that's more subject to pride, to ambition, to self-assertion, to non-humility than leadership positions in ministry. Yet there's no area in which the pursuit of excellence is more important either. Learning how to discriminate between excellence and ambition is a very difficult task. It requires lifelong scrutiny and a sense of discernment. I certainly think it's possible to learn how to do our best, discipline our lives in such a way that we get the best out of them (or the Lord gets the best out of them), and at the same time shut the door to self-assertion, to self-aggrandizement, to self-promotion. The problem is that most of the models for excellence that our culture provides feed ambition, so we don't have any models to work on. That's why we really need to saturate our imaginations with people like Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, Francis of Assisi, Gregory of Nyssa; these people who really did pursue lives of excellence in incredible humility and a complete indifference in terms of what people thought about them or whether they had any standing in life at all. It's too bad you have to go back five hundred years for your models, but that's better than nothing. Some helpful models are still around but we have to be very alert to spot them.

## Comparative Methods in Old Testament Studies Ecclesiasties Reconsidered

by Tremper Longman, III

Repeatedly in the Old Testament the Lord exhorts his people Israel to stay as far removed from the nations which dwelt around them as possible. The Canaanites were to be utterly destroyed, and the Israelites were to stay at home for fear that by coming into contact with other nations they would be led astray (Deut. 7:1ff). How surprising it is then to see so many similarities between the literature of the OT and that of the surrounding nations: details of the biblical flood story occur in the eleventh tablet of the Gilgamesh Epic; Yahweh is described in language reminiscent of Baal, the Canaanite god of the thunderstorm; and biblical covenants are similar to Hittite and Assyrian vassal treaties.

The task of comparative studies as it relates to the study of the OT is to describe and hopefully explain the relationship between the Bible and its environment. At its best, comparative studies provide a deeper understanding of the OT, helping the interpreter to bridge the vast temporal and cultural chasm which separates the modern reader from the OT. Methodological and theological issues are raised by the comparative approach to the study of the OT, and the best way to approach these problems is to begin with a survey of three different attitudes toward the use of Near Eastern literature to illuminate the OT. Afterwards, the benefits of the comparative method will be illustrated by placing Ecclesiastes in its proper Near Eastern genre.

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*Tremper Longman, III, is Associate Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary.*

### 1) *The Traditional Comparative Approach*

Mesopotamian tablets began to be deciphered in the middle of the nineteenth century. From the start the primary interest in these documents was the light they could shed on the Bible. Among the early discoveries of Assyriology were the Babylonian creation (Enuma Elish) and flood stories (Tablet XI of the Gilgamesh Epic), both of which were immediately compared with the biblical stories of creation and flood. Indeed, George Smith, one of the early pioneers of Assyriology and a comparativist, raised financial support for further explorations in the Near East by sharing with potential donors his hope of finding more of the flood story, a hope which he fulfilled!

The point of the traditional comparative approach is to find "parallels" with biblical materials. The focus is on similarities. Thus defined, this approach to comparative issues has a long history and continues to the present day. Indeed, new discoveries have frequently fueled the impetus for such studies. The discovery of the archives of Ugarit (1929 A.D. and following) led to a new barrage of comparative studies (especially in the work of M. J. Dahood). The discovery of Mari prophetic texts and the Nuzi archive in the 1930's resulted in comparisons with biblical prophecy and the patriarchal period respectively. Most recently the uncovering of Tell-Mardikh (Ebla) has led to new attempts to find parallels with the biblical text.

But extreme forms of the traditional comparative method characteristically lead to distorted views of the material. The classic case of an extreme approach to biblical near-Eastern comparative research is the so-called pan-Babylonian school represented by Friedrich

Delitzsch!<sup>1</sup> W. G. Lambert has concisely characterized pan-Babylonianism as the view which assumed that "all ideas originated in Mesopotamia and moved westward."<sup>2</sup> In other words, Israelite religion, language, literary forms and so on are thought to originate in Mesopotamia.

Pan-Babylonianism was not accepted by many; it appears to be a position of the past. Pan-Babylonianism, however, was replaced in the 1930's and following by pan-Ugaritism where virtually everything in the Hebrew Scriptures was explained by Ugaritic phenomena. M. J. Dahood and his followers (some of them evangelicals) literally "rewrote" many of the poetic sections of Scripture based on "parallels" with the Ugaritic mythological texts.

Pan-Ugaritism or the tendency toward it has been severely criticized, and today there are few proponents of a position which could justly be labeled pan-Ugaritism. Just recently, however, a new sensation has entered the field of comparative studies—Ebla. Ebla is an ancient site whose recent discovery has resulted in the recovery of thousands of cuneiform documents (1977 and following), a healthy percentage of which are written in a language which is close to biblical Hebrew. The new texts have not even been adequately studied, and already certain scholars have argued that great portions of the OT are illuminated by these texts. D. N. Freedman, G. Pettinato and others claim that the Ebla tablets include creation and flood stories, covenant/treaty documents and have references to the institutions of prophecy and judgeship similar to those found in the OT. It appears that the next few years will see the development of a type of pan-Eblaism where everything in the Bible is explained on the basis of these new texts.

## 2) Rejection of the Comparative Approach

In the first part of the present century a negative reaction against comparative studies developed which continues until today. This reaction comes from both Near Eastern and biblical scholars. On the one hand, there was a strong reaction on the part of certain scholars whose specialties were in the study of the Near East (particularly Assyriology). One of the most powerful statements of a non-comparativist in Assyriology is found in B. Landsberger's seminal article "The Conceptual Autonomy of the Babylonian World."<sup>3</sup> As T. Jacobsen summarized it in his preface to the translation of the article, Landsberger "insisted on the necessity of studying Mesopotamian culture for its own sake, in its own terms and within its own system of values."<sup>4</sup>

Landsberger noted and appreciated the fact that the generations of scholars who preceded him brought Assyriology into existence and prominence by connecting the new discoveries with issues which have contemporary relevance, or as he put it "made dead things alive by connecting them with ideas that are still of importance to us."<sup>5</sup> This, in part at least, must allude to the traditional comparative approach which sought relevance for Assyriological discoveries by showing their impact on biblical studies. Over against this tendency, however, Landsberger pleaded that we must recognize that cultures are conceptually autonomous, and that therefore our understanding of a particular culture is distorted if we seek to understand it in the terms and through the concepts of a second culture, no matter how close the two are.

It is of note that Landsberger's position on the validity and advantages of the comparative method was shared by many in other disciplines in the pre-World War II era. R. Benedict illustrates and typifies a common position when she asserts that human nature and human cultures are characterized by unlimited flexibility. The famous anthropologist Malinowski argued on this basis that every culture must be studied on its own terms (highly reminiscent of Landsberger's position) and that every institution within a culture must be studied as a product of the culture within which it developed.

Critics of the comparative method may also be found among biblical scholars. A move away from the traditional comparative approach may, for instance, be discovered in the Biblical Theology movement of the 1950's and 1960's. N. Gottwald succinctly described the program of the Biblical Theology movement as one which "... sought to express the internal unity-in-diversity and the comparative uniqueness-in-environmental-continuity of ancient Israelite faith."<sup>6</sup>

A theological issue has been raised within the evangelical camp

against the comparative method and may be seen most articulately in a critique of M. G. Kline's use of Hittite treaties to investigate biblical covenants. In attacking Kline's method of study, G. Bahnsen is actually throwing a challenge at the whole comparative enterprise.<sup>7</sup> As a theologian, he argues that the use of extra-biblical materials to elucidate the Bible is a threat to the doctrines of the sufficiency and perspicuity of the Scriptures. In other words, churches within the Protestant tradition have held that the Scriptures do not need outside help in being interpreted, that Scripture should only be interpreted in the light of the Scriptures themselves.

This objection is held by a surprising number of people and needs response. It is true to say that the Bible is both sufficient and clear, but only in regard to the central message of the gospel. No one needs Hittite covenants, Sumerian prayers, Akkadian autobiographies,

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## ***Ecclesiastes is constructed of two parts, the fictional autobiography of Qohelet which is filled with pessimism and scepticism and the orthodox assessment of the frame narrator.***

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Egyptian proverbs or Ugaritic epics to understand the central message of salvation which the Bible presents. The Bible is both sufficient and clear in regard to the gospel. And this is what the doctrines of the sufficiency and perspicuity of the Scriptures assert. On the other hand, as we will later observe, the twentieth century reader of the OT is culturally and temporally removed from the OT, and to recover many points of interpretation it is necessary to appeal to extra-biblical materials.

Nevertheless, we must listen to the non-comparativists, particularly Landsberger. There is not a one-to-one correspondence between any two cultures. A culture must be understood on its own terms and should not be smothered by the values of another. There are indeed similarities between cultures as well as contrasts. Both must be taken into account.

## 3) The Contextual Approach

The traditional approach's flaw is that it concentrates solely on the similarities which exist between the Bible and the ancient Near East. It is the contribution of the third approach to comparative studies to point out that by attending to similarities *and* differences there is less chance of distortion of the material and also increased insight into the relationship between cultures. Contrasts may be as illuminating as similarities.

W. W. Hallo of Yale University is presently leading the comparative method into a more mature phase of its history by recognizing that differences as well as similarities exist between the Bible and its environment. In his own words, "the intention is not to repudiate the comparative approach, but to define it, refine it and broaden it notably by wedding it to the 'contrastive' approach." Hallo prefers to call this method the "contextual" approach by which he means "... the entire Near Eastern literary milieu to the extent that it can be argued to have had any conceivable impact on the Biblical formulation."<sup>8</sup>

In summary, there are three types of approaches to the comparative method: 1) traditional comparative, 2) rejection and 3) the contextual approach. All three exist today. The remainder of this study will work within the contextual approach to comparative studies.

<sup>1</sup>*Babel und Bibel*; Friedrich was the son of the orthodox Lutheran commentator, Franz Delitzsch.  
<sup>2</sup>"A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis." *JTS* 16 [1965] 289.

<sup>3</sup>In *Sources and Monographs on the Ancient Near East* [Malibu: Undena, 1976], originally published in German in 1926.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>"Biblical Theology or Biblical Sociology? On Affirming and denying the uniqueness of Israel," *Radical Religion* 2 (1975):42.

<sup>7</sup>*Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley: Craig Press, 1979), 571-84.

<sup>8</sup>"Biblical History in its Near Eastern setting: the contextual approach." In *Scripture in Context: Essays on the comparative method*, edited by T. D. Evans, W. W. Hallo, and J. B. White (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1980), p. 2.

## The Procedure of the Comparative Method

One may compare cultures on a variety of levels. To name a few, one may compare words, images, literary themes, poetic devices, myths, religious systems, economic systems, institutions and genres. Each of these levels has its own methodological problems, but that should not hinder us from drawing some general principles.

Regardless of the type of comparison being made, six principles must be taken into account in order to determine whether a valid comparative connection is being established.

1) *Similarity/Contrast*. Along the lines outlined by the contextual approach, the contrasts as well as the similarities between the two poles of the comparison must be taken into account.

2) *The Context*. The phenomena being compared must be understood as thoroughly as possible in their original cultural context before being compared.

3) *Chronological distance*. The closer the two objects of comparison are to one another temporally, the more likely it is that the comparison is valid.

4) *Geographical distance*. The closer the two cultures are geographically, the more likely it is that they influenced one another's culture.

5) *Linguistic relationship*. If two cultures have closely related languages, then it is more likely that the languages and literatures interacted with one another.

6) *Generic similarity*. Uncertainty enters when texts from different cultures are compared when those texts also represent different genres.

These six guidelines do not bring scientific precision to the endeavors of comparative research. We are, of course, moving in the realm of probability not certainty. If a comparison is based on two texts which are close geographically, temporally, linguistically and generically and are based on a study of the texts in their original cultural context, then positive results of the comparison are highly probable, but not certain. And on the other hand, if the elements of a comparison are distant geographically, temporally, linguistically and generically, a positive comparison is possible, but less probable.

## The Benefits of the Comparative Method

Before referring to an actual example of a biblical-Near Eastern comparison, we may reflect on the benefits of the comparative method for our understanding of the Scriptures.

1) The comparative method helps us recover a healthy cultural distance from the Scriptures. Our translations and our preachers spend much of their time making the OT relevant to our times. This of course is good, but we must realize that the Scriptures were written thousands of years ago in an ancient Semitic culture. Reading other ancient texts from Babylonia and Ugarit help remind us that the Bible too is a product of antiquity and needs cultural translation to speak to our generations. The first step to letting the Scriptures speak legitimately to our generation is to recognize that they were originally intended to speak to an ancient Near Eastern people of God.

2) Reading the OT with a knowledge of the literature of Israel's neighbors leads to a recognition of the extent to which the OT is contextualized to its environment. God is described in the language used to characterize Baal or Marduk (Pss. 29, 74, 77, 104, etc.) with the obvious intention of showing that Yahweh is better than these gods in the areas of their specialty. For instance in I Kings 18 Yahweh defeats Baal at his specialty—throwing fire from heaven (lightening).

3) Comparative studies function to explain infrequent or unclear phenomena in one culture which are frequent or known in a second. The clearest illustration of this is comparative philology. Words which occur only once or twice in the Hebrew Bible are often difficult to translate. Fortunately, a cognate word may occur more frequently in some other Semitic language with a more or less certain meaning. Though there are numerous pitfalls, comparative philology has allowed great progress in the translation of the OT, particularly such books as Job, Psalms, and Hosea.

Comparative research has further helped to explain unclear literary forms. The comparison of biblical covenants (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy) with Near Eastern treaties, though often overdone, has resulted in a better understanding of the literary forms and theological significance of the biblical material. In the next section, we will observe that the book of Ecclesiastes has a Near Eastern back-

ground which will help us decide some important interpretive questions.

4) The contrastive pole of the comparative method highlights the difference or uniqueness of each culture and informs us about the particular values of each separate culture. For example, the most common literary form in Akkadian is the omen. The omen was a way in which the future could be discovered through manipulation of animal innards, oil in water and so on. In contrast with this, the future in the OT is dealt with through prophets, people through whom God chose to speak.

The uniqueness of a culture may be seen not only in the contrast of cultures, but in an analysis of how cultures adapt materials borrowed from another. For instance, the use to which Israel put the proverbs borrowed from Egypt and the setting in which they were placed lifted those proverbs from the realm of so-called secular wisdom to the realm of theological significance.

5) Comparative studies preserve students of the OT and Near Eastern cultures from the danger of over-isolating one culture from another. This is particularly the case where Israel's uniqueness is asserted. Mode of revelation, holy war, deity acting in history and so on have at one point or another been claimed as "unique" to Israel, a claim only to be disproved by further comparative studies. There are unique elements of every Near Eastern culture, but it is the task of comparative studies to dispute false antitheses and establish correct ones.

## Ecclesiastes as a Framed Autobiography

Many other values of the comparative method could be pointed out, but I would like to conclude by offering an example of a comparative study which aids our understanding of one of the most difficult portions of Scripture in the OT—the book of Ecclesiastes. The recognition that Ecclesiastes belongs to a well established genre of literature known also from Mesopotamia will help us decide on an overall approach to the book.

The main part of Ecclesiastes (everything except the prologue [1:1–11] and the epilogue [12:8–14]) contains the words of a figure given the name of Qohelet (often translated "the Preacher"). In 1:12 Qohelet introduces himself in the first person, in the next major section he recounts his experiences in the past (1:13–6:12) and the third and last section of the Qohelet's speech is composed mostly of advice which he gives to his readers and which flows from his experiences (7:1–12:7). What is of great interest is that there are a number of texts written in Akkadian which are autobiographical and also structured in this tripartite manner. The texts are didactic autobiographies, and the known examples of this genre include the Cuthaeen Legend of Naram-Sin, the Adad-guppi inscription and the "Sin of Sargon" text.

The most well preserved of the three texts is the Cuthaeen Legend

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### ***The royal fiction used in Ecclesiastes and the Akkadian didactic autobiographies was a literary convention to help strengthen the teaching of the book.***

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of Naram-Sin and so is the best representative of the genre of didactic autobiography in Akkadian literature. Four different versions of the Cuthaeen Legend are known to scholars, the two most important being 1) an Old Babylonian version (the oldest, from ca. 1800 B.C.) and 2) a neo-Assyrian version (7th century B.C.). Since the latter is the fullest version of the composition, it will form the basis for the following plot summary.<sup>9</sup>

The text opens with a self introduction which is formally similar to that of Qohelet's speech in the book of Ecclesiastes. Line three of the Legend reads "I, Naram-Sin, descendent of Sargon" which may be compared to Eccl. 1:12 "I, Qohelet, was king over Jerusalem." What is of special interest here is that in both cases the first person speaker was long dead by the time these compositions came into existence. In other words, both Ecclesiastes and the Cuthaeen Legend

<sup>9</sup>The only available English translation may be found in O. R. Gurney, "The Cuthaeen Legend of Naram-Sin," *Anatolian Studies* 5 [1955] 93–113.



are fictional autobiographies. Naram-Sin lived in the twenty-second century B.C., and "Qohelet" clearly represents Solomon who lived in the tenth century B.C. The Cuthaeen Legend was composed centuries after the death of Naram-Sin, and Ecclesiastes centuries after Solomon.

The Cuthaeen Legend continues at length with an autobiographical reminiscence of four years of Naram-Sin's life. These are years of hard experience for Naram-Sin, and they provide the basis for the advice which ends his autobiography. The opening lines of the text are extremely fragmentary, but already indicate that something is not right in Naram-Sin's kingdom. He calls the diviners in order to consult them. The trouble becomes clear in lines 31 and following in which a fantastic, demonic-appearing army is described: "Armies with the bodies of cave-birds; men whose faces were (those of) ravens." This army was under the leadership of King Anubanini, a king who is known to actually have been an opponent of the historical King Naram-Sin. The barbarian army conquered all the land surrounding Akkad (Naram-Sin's kingdom) to the north, the south and the east.

Naram-Sin wishes to go to battle with the hostile host, but he wants to first check their mortality and then consult with the gods. The king accordingly sends a soldier who determines that the enemy is mortal by sticking a captive with a pin and seeing that blood flows in his veins. Nevertheless, upon oracular consultation the gods signal that it is their will that Naram-Sin not enter the battle. Many legendary texts (e.g., The Curse of Agnade) portray Naram-Sin as a king who suffers from *hubris* by not following divine advice. Here too he violates their advice and engages the enemy at once. The results were devastating:

When the following year arrived, I sent 12,000 troops into their midst;  
not one returned alive.  
When the second year arrived, I sent 90,000 troops into their midst;  
not one returned alive.  
When the third year arrived, I sent 60,700 troops into their midst;  
not one returned alive.

At this point Naram-Sin rethinks his earlier decision to rebel against the gods. He repents, and the result is that the victory ultimately is his.

This self-reminiscence section in the Cuthaeen Legend is similar in form to the first part of the speech of Qohelet in the book of Ecclesiastes. Here Qohelet reminisces about his futile search for meaning in life. He presents a kind of spiritual diary concerning the many avenues which he explored in an attempt to lift himself out of the futility of the world. He speaks of his excursions into wisdom,

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***Mode of revelation, holy war, deity acting  
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wealth and pleasure. That the speech of Qohelet as a whole is a kind of autobiographical narration is supported by the fact that it concludes with a long statement about death (12:1-7).

The third and last section of the Cuthaeen Legend contains the advice of "Naram-Sin" based on his experience on the field of battle and is directed to the rulers who will follow him on the throne. The advice which the third section contains is of interest in and of itself in that it is a rather unique statement of pacifism from the ancient Near East. The advice in a nutshell is that future rulers should avoid imperialistic expansion and should rather seek to expand the domestic strength of their kingdoms.

The speech of Qohelet within the book of Ecclesiastes does not compartmentalize the reminiscence and advice sections as neatly as the Cuthaeen Legend, but it is of interest to note that from 7:1 to 12:7 there is a preponderance of advice delivered by Qohelet to his readers, advice which is based on his life experience. His life

experience was depressing and his advice reflects this (7:15ff.).

In brief, the Cuthaeen Legend (as representative of the Akkadian genre) and Qohelet's speech bear structural similarities to the point that both may aptly be called didactic autobiographies.

Recognition of the generic tradition in Akkadian helps us solve a number of the difficult interpretive problems which face the student of the book of Ecclesiastes. E. D. Hirsch has demonstrated<sup>10</sup> that the proper interpretation of a literary composition is inextricably bound with its correct genre identification. Thus, a new or modified genre identification will be followed by a new understanding of the book of Ecclesiastes. (Note the radical change in interpretation of the Song of Songs when the church finally read it as a collection of human love songs rather than as an allegory.)

The following are just a few implications of the discovery of the Near Eastern background to Qohelet's speech.

1) In the first place it lends support to the view that the third person sections which begin (1:1-11) and end (12:8-14) the book of Ecclesiastes were written by a person other than Qohelet. M. Fox<sup>11</sup> has argued on other grounds that the book of Ecclesiastes is the work of a second wise man who is instructing his son to avoid scepticism (12:12) using the words of Qohelet as a foil. The Akkadian texts demonstrate that the middle section (1:12-12:7) is a separate literary composition which was framed by a second writer.

This approach disputes the predominant evangelical position that the epilogue is written by Qohelet who for some unexplained reason chose to refer to himself in the third person at the end. Often scholars identify this Qohelet with the historical Solomon and hold that the epilogue contains the life assessment of a repentant Solomon.

On the contrary, Qohelet is an otherwise unknown wiseman who is sceptical of his nation's traditions. He has not rejected a belief in God (notice though that he never refers to God by his covenant name Yahweh), but doubts his personal concern for humanity (5:1ff). His religious scepticism leads him to a deep pessimism expressed most frequently by the well known refrain "Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless." The two most fearful aspects of his life are death (3:18-22; 9:1ff. and 12:1-7) and the realization that events and time are beyond one's understanding and control (3:1ff.; 7:13, 14; 8:7, 8; 9:12). These fears rendered every potentially meaningful area in his life as totally meaningless. For instance, since he is a wiseman (12:9), we would expect that wisdom would provide a source of meaning to him. Indeed we see that from an initial perspective he judges wisdom as superior to folly. However, upon further reflection he realizes that since the wiseman dies like the fool, both wisdom and folly are essentially worthless (2:12-16). The same evaluation is also given to pleasure (2:1ff.) and wealth (5:8ff.).

Qohelet never lifts himself out of his pessimism. The modern attempts to turn Qohelet the sceptic into Qohelet the preacher of joy<sup>12</sup> fail miserably because the "eat, drink and be merry" (2:24-26; 3:12-14; 3:22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7ff.; 11:7ff.) passages are statements of resignation, not optimism.

Qohelet ends on a note of death (12:1-7). If isolated from the book as a whole, his speech would plunge the reader into depression. A second wiseman, however, asserts himself at the close of the book (12:8-14, the so-called epilogue). He first summarizes Qohelet's conclusion in verse eight using Qohelet's own favorite refrain "Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless." Afterwards, he launches into a critique of Qohelet culminating in 12:12 where he instructs his son "Of these things be warned, of the making of many books there is not end and much meditation wearies the flesh." It is wrong to translate the first two words of this verse (*u<sup>c</sup>yoter mehemah*) as "in addition to these" as if Qohelet's writings were exempt.<sup>13</sup> In the last two verses the second wiseman gives the "OT gospel" in a nutshell. He reaffirms the three basic teachings of the OT: a) the fear of God, b) the law and c) the judgment. Each of these teachings had been questioned by Qohelet in his speech.

2) The comparison with the Akkadian texts reveal that the main body of Ecclesiastes (1:12-12:7) is an autobiography. This has not been perceived by scholars in the past, but explains why the main section moves from a very energetic beginning where the author is

<sup>10</sup>Validity in Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

<sup>11</sup>"Frame-Narrative and Composition in the Book of Qoheleth," *HUCA* 48 [1977] 83-106.

<sup>12</sup>E.g., R. N. Whybray, *JSOT* 1982, 97-98.

<sup>13</sup>See M. Fox for a full translation of the epilogue.

actively seeking meaning in so many different ventures to an ending which dwells so poignantly on the subject of death. The main section of the book gives the strong impression that it is written by a man who is approaching death and wishes to pass on his experiences to those who are younger than he is before he dies.

3) The Akkadian texts also indicate that Ecclesiastes was not written by Solomon, but that the experiences of Solomon were utilized to make the point that no matter how wise or rich or successful one may be one cannot find meaning in life apart from God. D. Kidner calls this royal fiction. If Solomon could not find meaning in wisdom and wealth, then who could (Eccl. 2:12)? It is interesting in this connection to observe that the Akkadian texts are all written after the death of the kings who have purportedly composed them. However, all the indications are that it was not the intention of the author to deceive their audience. In other words, the royal fiction used in Ecclesiastes and the Akkadian didactic autobiographies was a literary convention to help strengthen the teaching of the book.

4) The Akkadian parallels do not by any stretch of the imagination prove that the book of Ecclesiastes was an ancient composition (note Delitzsch's comment that "If the Book of Koheleth were of old Solomonic origin, then there is no history of the Hebrew language");<sup>14</sup> but it does correct those who argue for the lateness of the composition due to their belief that this type of self-reflective autobiographical writing does not appear until later. The oldest of the Akkadian autobiographies was the Cuthaeian Legend which was composed by 1800 B.C. at the latest.

5) All in all it leads us to understand the structure and canonical significance of the book of Ecclesiastes in a way analogous to the book of Job. The book of Job is for the most part a series of wisdom debates between Job and his three friends. These two groups set themselves up as wisdom schools to debate the reason why Job is suffering. The final "answer" to the question posed by the book of Job does not come until God speaks out of the whirlwind. Thus, one cannot pick a section of Zophar's speech and out of context endow it with canonical authority. In the same way, recognizing partly on the basis of the comparative evidence that Ecclesiastes is constructed of two parts, the one being the fictional autobiography of Qohelet which is filled with pessimism and scepticism and the other being the orthodox assessment of the frame narrator, one can only interpret the canonical significance of any single statement by Qohelet in the light of the whole, particularly the concluding verses.<sup>15</sup>

6) Understanding the dynamics of the book of Ecclesiastes in its OT context prepares us as Christians living in the post-resurrection period to interpret the book in the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In the first place, we must recognize that the original intention of the book is still valid today. The original intention of the book was to criticize speculative wisdom thought in ancient Israel. The second wiseman openly criticizes Qohelet and then states in simple and brief terms the essential teachings of the OT. The same lesson may apply today. That is, while there is a place for doubt in the Christian life such doubt should not lead to the open scepticism of Qohelet.

But there is another lesson to be drawn from Qohelet's desperate yearnings for meaning, and this may only be recognized once it is clearly seen that Qohelet is a sceptic precisely because he has not allowed belief in God to inform his thinking. In other words, and I am aware that I am here following in a long line of interpretation of Ecclesiastes, Qohelet's problem is a direct result of his limiting his thinking to "under the sun," a phrase which I agree means basically "apart from the revelation and knowledge of God." Where I disagree with traditional interpretations is when they assert that this was merely a heuristic device on the part of Qohelet or when they assert that Qohelet repents at the end and rediscovers the true meaning of life.

With this as a starting point we can very easily see that the meaninglessness which Qohelet is so graphically describing and which fills him with such despair is a picture of people living without God, a picture of people feeling the full effects of the covenant curse. Of course it is the foundational teaching of Genesis 1 and 2 that God created the world and he created it "good." There was meaning in creation as created. In Genesis 3, however, humans fell and were subjected to the curse of God. This brought into the world meaninglessness, vanity, frustration. The NT describes this frustration to which the world was subjected in Ro. 8:18ff., a passage which contains the only explicit allusion to the book of Ecclesiastes in the NT:

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of god to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

So in a sense Qohelet has hit the nail right on the head when he speaks of the world as meaningless, that is a world which does not take into account God. Of course what the NT tells us is that, contrary to what Qohelet teaches, the world is not just subject to an endless round of meaningless cycles, but on the contrary, there is something new and that something new is a person Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has rescued us from the meaninglessness of the curse which so plagues Qohelet.

The amazing fact is that Christ has rescued men and women from the vanity of this world by subjecting himself to the self-same vanity of the world. He who is God chose to subject himself to the conditions of a world under covenant curse in order to rescue the world from the effects of that curse. As Gal. 3:13 states it "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'" As a matter of fact, the life of Christ may be surveyed from this vantage point, and it may be seen that his life is a record of moving from one situation of worldly vanity to another. He came into the world, but the world recognized him not, according to the beginning of the gospel of John. Indeed, the Synoptics with a birth narrative highlight the fact that his expectant mother could not even find a place of human habitation in order to give him birth. His life becomes a chronicle of one vanity after another, one rejection after another and this culminates in the last week as the people withdraw their support of him, his disciples leave him, Judas betrays him and Peter denies him. But the ultimate experience of the world under covenant curse, the world of vanity, is when his Father departs from him on the cross, and he cries out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" At this point he dies, and he dies for a purpose and that purpose is to rescue men and women from the effects of the curse.

## Conclusion

The examples of the value of the comparative method could be multiplied many times. As we look forward to future study of Scriptures, the comparative method will prove to be one of the most fruitful avenues of research into the OT. We must continue to refine our methodology, so that we will not slip into an illegitimate use of the comparative materials which would result in the distortion rather than the illumination of the OT.

<sup>14</sup>Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. Reprint. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 190.  
<sup>15</sup>See also G. T. Sheppard, "The Epilogue to Qoheleth as Theological Commentary," *CBQ* 39 [1977] 182-89.

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# Contemporary Dispensational Thought

by Robert Saucy

Any discussion of contemporary dispensationalism must recognize at the outset that there exists within this broad theological school a considerable variety of interpretive opinion. From the specific interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount to the relation of the Church age to the Old Testament Messianic promises and many lesser issues, those who fall within "dispensationalism" arrive at differing exegetical conclusions. While the pre-tribulational rapture of the church has traditionally been universal among dispensationalists, even that is being called into question by Robert Gundry and those who follow his posttribulational rapture position which it is claimed "accords well with a scripturally measured dispensationalism."<sup>1</sup> All of this is simply to say that caution must be exercised in the use of theological labels. There is obviously a common denominator which lumps together adherents of a particular theological system, but there are sufficient distinctions to warrant questions before uniformly applying a detailed system to any particular individual.

Basic to all dispensationalism is a certain emphasis on the recognition of differing economies in the outworking of God's program of human history. It is from this that the name "dispensationalism" is derived since the central meaning of the word "dispensation" (Greek, *oikonomia*) involves the management or administering of the affairs of a household.<sup>2</sup> Many ancient and modern theologians also acknowledge the fact that God has administered His historical program by different economies, so that it is not simply the recognition of changes throughout history, but the significance and perhaps one might say the depth of the distinction that distinguishes dispensationalism from non-dispensational systems. In particular it is the distinction between Israel and the church which all recognize as the essential mark of dispensationalism.

Most students of history point to John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) and the Plymouth Brethren as the prime movers in systematization and promotion of what has become known as dispensationalism. Darby's thought in this area issued from his reaction to contemporary organized Christianity which at that time was allied to the state in England. He saw in the New Testament a church which was spiritually united with the heavenly Christ and quite different from the outward, more worldly Christendom of his day. His emphasis on the believer's exalted heavenly position in union with Christ, and the absolute grace of that status due to the finished work of Christ led him to develop a considerable contrast between the New Testament picture of the church and Israel. The Scriptures portrayed Israel as having earthly promises and living under an economy somehow involving law, while the Church although existing on earth was a heavenly body which lived under an economy of pure grace. From the evidence of these differences there developed within dispensationalism a tendency to structure history around the various different economies seen in the other portions of biblical history. The most popular form sees seven distinguishable administrations under which humanity lives throughout the whole of history. By distinguishable it is not meant that the economies are totally distinct, only that some distinct change has been brought about by the revelatory action of God which changes the conditions under which men and women live in obedience to God. An example of such a change is readily seen in the command to take human life which came only after the Flood and in relation to the fact that God had determined not to destroy humankind again by a flood (Gen. 8:20–9:7).

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The focus on distinctive expressions of the will of God for human life on earth has led to many accusations that dispensationalism teaches more than one way of salvation. In response, most dispensationalists will acknowledge a lack of clarity and even exaggeration in some statements made by early advocates of this system. But outside of the difficulty that many have had to elucidate clearly the distinction of life for the believer living under the Mosaic Law and the believer under the New Covenant,<sup>3</sup> a certain allowance must be granted in consideration of the reactive nature of some of early dispensationalism. Modern dispensationalism arose when much of the theology tended to level out any changes in the advance of God's program in history so that as James Orr states in his noted work, *The Progress of Dogma*, practically the whole of the New Testament was read back into the Old.<sup>4</sup> Against this background it is understandable that some overstatement might eventuate by the initiators of a new understanding which viewed the Scriptures more historically. History reveals that "prophets" of fresh insights frequently are carried beyond the proper balance of truth. Martin Luther, for example, was led by his discovery of justification by faith to derogate the Epistle of James as "a right strawy epistle" in comparison with other writings which in his view had gospel character.

The subsequent development of dispensational theology as well as non-dispensational covenant theology has led to a convergence on the issue of law and grace with regard to salvation so that today the charge of two ways of salvation is seldom heard. Both recognize God's gracious dealings with His people during the Old dispensation as well as a clearer and fuller manifestation of grace through the work of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Contemporary dispensationalism then may be said to be characterized primarily by its insistence upon a distinction between Israel and the Church which allows for the term Israel to stand for the covenant nation both in biblical history and predictive prophecy. To state it another way, the dispensationalist does not believe that the New Testament writers interpret the church as a "new" or "spiritual Israel" which fulfills the prophecies relating to Israel throughout Scripture. It should also be noted that this primary distinction of Israel and the Church tends to carry with it a viewpoint on biblical history which sees God dealing with humanity through a number of administrations designed to reveal human inability and the need of God's grace. This idea of various tests and failures on the part of humanity is, however, only secondary to the primary thrust of dispensationalism seen in the place of Israel and the Church.

Although all dispensationalists maintain a distinction between Israel and the Church, there are significant differences as to the extent of their separation in the purposes and programs of God. These differences focus on the relationship of the present Church age with the messianic promises of the Old Testament. Since these promises contain the restoration of the nation of Israel as a central feature, older traditional dispensationalism has tended to deny any fulfillment in the Church age of those promises related to the Messianic kingdom during the present church age, arguing that their fulfillment involves the salvation and restoration of Israel as a nation under the Messiah. Since Israel as a nation has not yet turned to God nor has the Messiah returned to reign on the Davidic throne, the present Church age must be viewed as a time when the Messianic kingdom program has been

<sup>1</sup>Robert Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>C. C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1941), pp. 296–97.

<sup>4</sup>James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1901), pp. 303–304.

<sup>5</sup>Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel & Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), p. 45.

interrupted and God is calling out of all nations a people for His name. Such an interruption is based on a variety of Scriptures including Romans 11:25 where Israel is seen under the temporary hardening of divine judgment. It is acknowledged that during this age Jew and Gentile alike share in the blessings of Messianic salvation which are related to the fulfillment of the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31. But according to traditional dispensationalism this does not involve the fulfillment of the Messianic *kingdom* promises founded on the covenant with David. Rather it is related to the overall spiritual kingdom of God which includes the elect of all ages. Thus there is a unified kingdom of spiritual salvation throughout all history while the actual manifestation of the rule of God on earth has taken various forms. The greatest and final form will be the Messianic kingdom of the future in which Israel will have a central role as God brings blessing to all nations (Rom. 11:11–15). According to this type of dispensationalism the different manifestations of God's rule on earth all coalesce in the revelation of God's glory. The unifying factor of history is thus said to be the revelation of the glory of God rather than any single historic kingdom program which necessitates the equation of Israel and the Church and the interpretation of Israel's prophecies as fulfilled by the Church.<sup>6</sup>

Some dispensationalists, however, have come to see a greater unity in the historical program of God centered in the Messianic kingdom. Without giving up the fulfillment of the promises for the nation of Israel when Christ returns to reign openly in glory, this form of dispensationalism agrees with non-dispensational premillennialism that it

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is preferable to interpret this age as the first phase of the fulfillment of the one promised Messianic kingdom. The present age involves the spiritual aspects of that Messianic kingdom, that is, the blessings of the New Covenant (i.e. regeneration, the indwelling spirit, etc.). The remainder of the promises including those concerning Israel and the nations will find their fulfillment following the second advent.

Thus this form of dispensationalism shares much in common with non-dispensational premillennialists in seeing the action of God through His word and Spirit in this age as the presence of the power of the Messianic kingdom in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Where it yet differs from non-dispensationalism is seen in the understanding of the relationship of the church and Israel. Based on the Old Testament prophecies that God would bring salvation to the nation of Israel and the other nations without confusing the two entities, the dispensationalist sees in the present salvation of God for all nations a beginning phase of this universal Messianic salvation. These prophecies are in turn seen as the outworking of the original promise to Abraham which includes God's blessing for a "great nation" as well as "all the families of the earth" (Gen. 12:2–3). In common with the more traditional dispensationalism this modified form maintains that the New Testament writers retain this Old Testament distinction. What is understood by the nondispensationalist as the merging of the concepts of Israel and the church so that in fact the church becomes new Israel, is interpreted by the dispensa-

tionalist as teaching the common sharing of Messianic salvation by Jew and Gentile without destroying their identities. Illustrative of this dispensational understanding is the teaching of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:11–3:7. Although the Gentiles are described as being outside of the privileges of Israel prior to Christ and subsequently brought near (vv. 12–13), the apostle does not say that they are incorporated into "Israel." Rather both are made into "one new man" (v. 15). Both the Gentiles who were afar off and the Jews who were near are brought into a new place in relation to God in the Spirit (vv. 17–18); they have both been brought into the Messianic salvation of Christ to share it equally. But this in no way necessitates denial of a future function of the nation of Israel according to the Old Testament prophecies. For as previously noted, these prophecies taught both a particular function of Israel among the nations as well as an equal sharing of all nations in the salvation of God.

This dispensational interpretation is borne out by the same apostle's teaching in the olive tree illustration of Romans 11. There Israel is identified as the "natural branches," some of which have been broken off from the root (v. 17; cf. v. 7). The Gentile believers are seen as cuts from "a wild olive tree" (v. 24). Both partake of the "rich root" (v. 17) that is probably best understood as a symbol of the promise to Abraham which includes both Israel and the nations. Thus both Gentiles and Jews participate equally in the richness of the root without losing their identity. When the apostle predicts the future ingrafting of the natural branches, the dispensationalist views this as evidence that God's future for Israel predicted in the Old Testament has not been abrogated by the present participation in salvation by Gentiles (vv. 24–26).

Dispensationalism as a system of biblical interpretation, although varied in some respects, nevertheless maintains that the prophetic Scriptures in both Old and New Testaments with regard to Israel and the nations in history should be understood basically at face value. To be sure there is the recognition that some aspects of the descriptions are couched in the terminology of the time of their origin and thus allowance must be made for other forms of fulfillment corresponding to the later time. But any new theological understanding must be prescribed by the New Testament. There are types and shadows of realities which the later Scriptures reveal as outmoded, but it is the position of dispensationalism that the New Testament does not reinterpret the meaning of the nation of Israel as much of church interpretation has done throughout its history. It is interesting to note that in the light of the preservation of the Jews and the reestablishment of the state of Israel several scholars, including some from traditionally non-dispensational backgrounds (e.g. Hendrikus Berkhof,<sup>7</sup> A. A. van Ruler<sup>8</sup>), are calling for a new understanding of the place of Israel in God's program for history.

History evidences the truth that no system of interpretation or theology can justly claim finality in all details. Under the continuing illumination of the Spirit the Church grows in its knowledge of God's revelation found in Scripture. That dispensationalism has been a contributing factor in the growth of understanding is generally acknowledged even by non-dispensationalists. Along with its cognizance of Israel, it has been credited with contributing to an awareness of the historical development in biblical history and significantly stimulated Bible study in general.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Ryrie, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup>Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ the Meaning of History* (Richmond, Virginia, 1966).

<sup>8</sup>A. A. Van Ruler, *The Christian Church and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971).

<sup>9</sup>Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), p. 177; Millard Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 122–23.

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# Responses to Ray Anderson's "Christopraxis"

by Michael Hayes and J. Deotis Roberts

*In the January/February issue of TSF Bulletin, we published Ray Anderson's "Christopraxis: Competence as a Criterion for Theological Education." These two responses, requested by our editors, will further the discussion. Michael T. Hayes is the pastor of Knollbrook Covenant Church in Fargo, ND, and has completed graduate degrees from Fuller Theological Seminary and North Park Theological Seminary. J. Deotis Roberts, until recently the president of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, is a theologian and author.*

## Response by Michael T. Hayes

Ray Anderson dangles a carrot before us when he raises the question of how we are to evaluate theological students. His essay, in fact, raises far more profound questions and does an excellent job of responding to them.

How theological students are to be evaluated depends on the purpose of theological education as a whole, which Anderson explains in terms of the ministry which follows the formal education. It is Anderson's thesis that a theological education is good only to the degree that it produces good ministers. The test of a good chef, he might say, is not in his training or his techniques: the proof is in the pudding.

What, then, is the pudding? What is this ministry for which theological education prepares us? And how do we distinguish good ministry from bad? How, indeed, do we practitioners of the art of ministry expend our efforts and sharpen our skills so that we can be good at it?

Before examining Anderson's handling of these matters, it will be worthwhile for us to pause at a common point of frustration for theological students and young ministers. It is striking that those who are preparing for ministry are called "theological students" rather than "students of ministry." The curriculum often seems aimed at producing professional theologians. And we would expect, of course, that the theological faculty would be most adept at producing men and women like themselves: theological faculty.

Yet woe to the young minister who is not prepared to submit the joy of the theological insight to the great god Relevance! Often there is pain, frustration, even failure as the naive young pastor tacks to the wall the diploma which proclaims he or she a Master of the Divine Things, only to find no one interested in the Divine Things! Anderson is being realistic here: the quality of ministry is not measured by how well one has "theologized" in school. Rather, the quality of one's theological training is measured by how well one ministers.

What then of the student who is planning on a career in teaching? Though Anderson does not address this question directly, it seems he would answer it simply, teaching *is* a ministry. He is very concerned that theology never become an abstraction, nor theological education an assembly line devoted to reproducing doctrines in the minds of the students.

True ministry, Anderson insists, is always an act of God in Christ—Christopraxis. It is that continuing act of God in Christ whereby revelation and reconciliation occur. And because the church is "the primary locus of Christopraxis," ministry is but the extension—God's extension—of God's acts. Real ministry, then, is a participation in the revealing and reconciling movement of God in our midst. No form of ministry, however much it may "appear to be comforting and reconciling," is of God if it does not reveal Christ. What a bold

claim! (Readers interested in exploring that concept of ministry in more depth than is possible here will find Anderson's *Theological Foundations for Ministry* most helpful.)

Ministry which is not Christ-revealing is but the making of a product or state of being rather than a participation in the ongoing process of God's self-revealing. This is perhaps not easy to grasp. Anderson would have served us well by spelling out more carefully his premise, that the impersonal making of a product is never the way of God. Once a product is made, whether it be a cake, a painting, or a universe, it takes on an existence of its own. The maker and the made are distinct and separate entities. It is God's way, however, to be perpetually, existentially involved in his creation. Likewise, those who minister in the name of Christ are giving of themselves, not merely of their skills and abilities, and as they do so they become profoundly enmeshed in God's giving of himself to us. It is as if our self-giving is the wavelength on which God communicates himself to us and draws us to himself. Ministry, then, is Christopraxis, the never ending work of God in Christ by which he is effecting revelation and reconciliation. And a theological education, therefore, is sound to the degree that it prepares one to be a participant in Christopraxis.

We must be careful here not to become derailed at the last moment. It is not at all Anderson's conviction that we think of the goal of theological education as being outside itself, out there somewhere in "the ministry." Quite the contrary: he is viewing education as being *within* ministry, though he needs to develop this more openly in the essay. The theological student is a participant in ministry already, both as one receives ministry from the faculty and as one is drawn into the fellowship of the student body.

Perhaps we need not dwell on this point further, other than to note an important biblical connection. Anderson's insistence that a theological education is to be evaluated by its fruitfulness in ministry reminds us of Paul's way of measuring his own ministry: "You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but of human hearts." (II Cor. 3:2f)

As important as is the assertion that the revealing and reconciling work of God in Christ is the criterion by which both theological education and all ministry are measured, I find the real excitement in Anderson's essay to be his exposition of the three qualities which are necessary for a "Christopractic" ministry: discernment, integration, and credibility.

By discernment is meant here "the recognition of the congruence between the Christ of Scripture and the Christ in ministry." If true ministry is but the on-going work of God in Christ, then of course the true minister must be sensitive to the continuity of that work. We have not recognized God in our day if we do not recognize him to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Such double-recognition requires of the minister a spiritual perception of the movement of Christ and a spiritual understanding of the content and nature of Scripture.

Here Anderson is touching upon the recent debates about inspiration, authority, and interpretation of the Bible. He affords us an excellent opportunity to build again on his earlier premise that God is not a mere maker of things. It is perhaps the common failing of the fundamentalist and modern-day evangelical "inerrantist"—narrowly conceived—that Scripture is treated as an impersonal object now removed from its source in God's revelation. Inspiration is said

to have occurred once for all and to now be a quality inherent in the Bible. Isn't that why we speak of "inspired" rather than "expired," as Paul would have it? Our attention has been on the product rather than on the Lord who continues to breathe his Word into us. And hermeneutics is so often the cold rationalism of logic used as a surgeon's knife to cut up that object called Scripture. So easily do we become the authority over Scripture that we dare tell God how he must have produced it! How little we have progressed from the Pharisees who condemned Jesus the Word because he failed to conform to their particular way of dissecting the Word.

There is a certain insecurity the evangelical may feel at this point. A dramatic part of our heritage is the great clash between fundamentalist and liberal earlier in this century. It has left many of us with an inclination to make objective Scripture the overarching authority that governs all else. What Anderson is calling us back to is the understanding that there is a higher authority than Scripture: God himself. To say this is not to compromise our doctrine of Scripture but to put it in proper context. Howard Snyder in his book *The Problem of Wineskins* (IVP, 1975, p. 63) points to this same insecurity when he speaks of Yahweh having had the Ark of the Covenant constructed with two poles in it for easy transport. He did not wish even that tangible expression of himself to be stuck in one place. After all, says Snyder, "Yahweh is free to be unpredictable." We must always grant Yahweh the freedom or we will not discern his movement among us. This is not to suggest that the Bible is merely a book of the past. It is no album of photographs of God as he appeared in Abraham's day and Moses' day and Isaiah's day and Paul's day. Nor is it to suggest, on the other hand, that the Bible is but an ink blot whose meaning changes from age to age as we view it from different perspectives. Rather it is to suggest that the Bible remains a spiritual expression of God's revelation and reconciliation.

By integration Anderson means the bringing together of the properly discerned reality of Christ and human need. Though he does not say so, it appears that this is really but another form of discernment of congruence. A failure at this point results in that peculiar kind of imposition that so often characterizes both Christian ethics and evangelism. In ethics we find in our history a frequent tendency toward legalism, the imposition of the impersonal on the personal. In Anderson's terms, legalism can be seen to be a failure to seek the appropriate point of integration of Christ and the human situation. Rather, the human is bent to match the doctrine. In evangelism we see a tendency to begin with a statement of our understanding of the Gospel and then expect non-believers to adopt it as their own. In each instance violence is done both to Christ—he becomes but a set of propositions—and to the person on whom this abstraction is imposed. A ministry of integration seeks to perceive the natural meeting point which the Spirit of Christ is creating and to speak to that point.

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By credibility is meant "the transparency of method and lucidity of thought"—what delicious phrases!—which makes the presence of Christ self-evident and worthy of belief in every event of ministry." I wish Anderson had stopped longer to dwell on this point, for there is a richness suggested here in which we can travel. We might, for instance, speak of harmony as the basis of credibility. There is a kind of credibility which draws attention—and praise—only to ourselves but which leaves others at a distance. That is not reconciliation. Nor is there reconciliation when we say we want others to see Jesus instead of us, for that could only mean we are not ourselves fully reconciled to him. Rather, the ministry of reconciliation is effected when we are so in harmony with, so in communion with Christ that to see us is to see him. When we are in pure harmony with Christ we become agents of reconciliation, not story-tellers speaking of the

reconciliation which lies elsewhere but those who stand squarely at the point of reconciliation between Christ and the individual.

It is, claims Anderson, when we demonstrate competence in these three areas of discernment, integration, and credibility that ours becomes a ministry of Christopraxis, the revealing and reconciling work of God in Christ. I know of no book on "practical theology" nor any course in seminary with such a fresh outline!

As I write these closing words, I sit in my church office. On the wall before me are attendance and income graphs, a calendar of activities, lists of committee members. On the shelves are copies of the Annual Report my secretary has just finished, several notebooks of minutes from various meetings, a note to call a fellow who wants to borrow a book. I have within reach a typewriter, paper cutter, copier and file cabinets. What has all this to do with ministry? Where in this room will fit such exciting words as "discernment," "integration," and "credibility"?

Where, indeed! In that very annual report in which I write not of numbers of hospital visits but of commitment, sensitivity, vision, and a sense of God's timing. In those graphs which I explain to people as tangible evidence that when we are enjoying God others are drawn into enjoying him with us. In that book on suffering that I will loan to—and discuss with—my friend. It is my task to avoid any dichotomy between my administrative tasks and the ministry of reconciliation. And it is a theological reflection like Anderson's that helps me maintain proper perspective: all ministry is God's ministry. If I cannot remember that in the midst of any given task, then I'm doing the wrong task.

But what of the frustration of finding so few laypeople interested in the pleasures of theological reflection? That is trivial compared to the greater fact that they are interested, deeply so, in the God about whom we theologize. And who, then, is the good theological student? Not the one who learns only to engage in theological interchanges but the one who learns to love Christ more than theology, who learns not to point to Christ but to be like Christ, who learns not to teach of love but to love.

**Response by J. Deotis Roberts**

Professor Anderson has given much attention as a theologian to the nature and purpose of theological education. He has made a significant contribution in both areas. Best of all he has brought the two aspects of his interest and witness together in an attractive and constructive manner in this provocative essay.

I accept the challenge here of a constructive critic. My career has moved along similar lines. Much of my ministry has involved activities and reflection both as a theologian and theological educator. Even though Anderson and I earned the doctorate in theology at the University of Edinburgh, our theologies are different and our experience as theological educators have been dissimilar. It is, therefore, to be expected that I will add an addendum to the discussion in addition to my critique of Anderson's statement.

First, this is my understanding of Anderson's reflections. He desires to see competence in theological education. His initial concern stems from an attempt to establish a criterion by which students and faculties engaged in education for ministry may evaluate future ministers. The covering term for this criterion is "competence;" competence is evaluated by the measuring stick of "Christopraxis." Christopraxis is "the act of God in Christ which occurred once and for all through the person of Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word," but continues through "acts of revelation and reconciliation" through the agency of the Holy Spirit in our "historical and personal existence."

The church is said to be the first locus of Christopraxis. This is closely followed by the seminary which serves the church in its preparation of ministers. He immediately states that the disciplines taught in the seminary may "become primarily methods of arriving at conclusions rather than embodying the reality of God." Anderson's critique of the failure of seminaries to focus on competence in ministry is thorough and intense. He desires to go beyond courses and purpose statements to the hidden discrepancies in the basic theological assumptions by which seminaries carry out their tasks. He is more concerned about the character of the event contained in the

process than he is about the "making" of a "product." Truth and knowledge are to be embodied in action. Anderson develops the meaning of Christopraxis under the categories of discernment, integration, and credibility, giving examples both from Jesus' ministry and contemporary pastoral ministry.

Turning to critique, the style of the essay is cumbersome. It is an important statement which could have been written with greater simplicity and clarity. One is required to ponderously ferret out the basic point of view he is attempting to set forth. There is a clear statement toward the end of the essay which could have come earlier in order to open up the subject.

Again, he raises too many issues for the amount of space available for discussion. There is some lack of clarity in setting forth definitions and the relationship of concepts. Perhaps this is due to his effort to combine "competence" with a theological perspective on ministry. The result is, however, an inadequate grasp of competence as usually understood. What does he mean by the term? Does he mean evidence of effectiveness, high performance or readiness in ministry? It would appear that one can only get the answer to this question as one delves into his theological program.

All this is to be understood in a consideration of the special purpose and character of theological education with competence in ministry

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in view. But his understanding of ministry is also vague. His Christocentrism is rather circumscribed so as to set very narrow limits to the actions of God. This raises in my mind several questions: Is the revelation of God in Christ manifest only in and through the Holy Scripture and within the Church? Is it possible that Christ as well as the Holy Spirit may be revealed in history and creation beyond the limits Anderson has proposed? Is he influenced by the very objective rationalism and idolatrous totalization (as regards to Christology and biblicism) which he denounces in others in his use of Christopraxis? Is not Christ present "outside the gate" where there is human suffering and need? If ministry is to both heal and reconcile, these types of questions need to be engaged.

I would question whether we can confine the work of God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit to the Bible and the Church. As we seek a ministry of liberation (this term does not surface in Anderson's discussion) we affirm a dignity in each person and people inherent in their humanity. Thus, it would be more appropriate to propose the world as the arena of God's revelatory and reconciling

work. In order to conceive of a ministry to all sorts and conditions of persons, the traditional concepts of God and Christ may be "too small."

This becomes disturbing to theologians *who need* to impose safe limits and structures on their thought. Some theologians now hold that a more proper understanding of God comes by developing a solidarity with the pain in the world than by merely reflecting upon Holy Scripture. This is not to gainsay the importance of the revelation of God in Christ or the authority of Scripture. There is, however, an important illumination which comes to exegesis itself from this perspective of solidarity with the oppressed.

This leads me to express some disease with Anderson's use of biblical texts. In some cases I would have been more impressed with his line of reasoning if he had made no reference to the Bible. He seems to feel that frequent references to biblical texts adds authenticity to some of his salient points. I am suspicious in some cases, for he has already presented his case well. The Scripture is brought in as a clincher. This method hovers close to "proof-texting" which is unworthy of Anderson's stature as a theologian. It is usually more accurate to put a passage of Scripture in its own setting first and then ask what it meant and also what it means. If one cannot do justice to the use of biblical texts, it is often best to leave them out. One does have the choice of limiting the number of such usages so as to be more careful in this regard.

What I am suggesting is that infrequent and a more thorough exegesis would have enhanced his presentation. While Anderson disclaims the rationalism and idolatry which often goes with biblicism, I do have some concern about the manner in which Scripture is used in his discussion to justify what may be a limited and personal point of view.

While it may be quite accurate to insist that theological education is basically too concerned about method and pedantic scholarship and should focus on developing competence in ministry, the question remains as to how we are to bring the two poles together. We are agreed that academic excellence is not to be sacrificed for ministry and that ministry is not to be hampered by scholarship, but how are they to be reconciled? It seems to me that a type of action-reflection approach is needed to accomplish the best results. After we have done all the profound theological reflection there must be an educational program to yield appropriate results. This educational project must relate in some way to both the degree program and to continuing education.

Finally, after such an erudite discussion by Anderson, we are not certain of the shape of that ministry which will bring liberation as well as reconciliation to the human family. There is a serious question as to whether his discussion has led us to a profound understanding of the earthly ministry of Jesus as it relates to social justice as well as healing. He has opened up for us a crucial and endless discussion in the theological reflection and education as related to competence in ministry. For this we owe Anderson a debt of gratitude.

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# Evangelization and Social Ethics —Some Reflections

by Mortimer Arias

I was at the beginning of my temporary exile in Brazil when I learned of the gracious invitation to participate in this symposium. I am very grateful to my friends here at Perkins for the golden opportunity to see them again. I wondered if they were trying to cheer me up a bit and help me to heal my wounds from the recent experiences in prison. I was inclined to accept immediately and gladly, though I was not able at the time to make a formal commitment. Only God knew where I would be by this time of the year! But I was strongly attracted to the attempt of bringing together social ethics and evangelism, long a concern of mine since my days as a bishop of the little and dynamic Methodist Church in Bolivia, and to share what I can from my particular perspective, a sort of Third World-Latin American perspective, infected with quite a bit of ecumenical experiences and a long year's association with North American Christianity.

These are just "some reflections" (as it has been suggested in the program) made along the way as an evangelist practitioner and an amateur theologian, as any Christian is supposed to be.

## I. My Evangelical Struggle and Our Common Problems

Let me begin, candidly, confessing my evangelical hang-ups and my struggle to get beyond them towards a holistic understanding of the gospel, more fully biblical and better rooted in the social realities of our world.

I have nothing to regret about my evangelical experience and I gladly remain an evangelical at heart, in terms of my personal experience of Christ, my fundamental trust in the witness of the Scripture, the basic roots of my piety, and the joyous thrust to share the good news with others. But I cannot share the favorite dichotomy of some American evangelicals separating themselves from liberal Christianity and the ecumenical movement. And I believe that not a few of us would like to call ourselves "ecumenical evangelicals" or "evangelical ecumenicals"!

### Evangelical Struggling

Anyway, I must recognize that it has not been easy for me to incorporate in a meaningful way the social dimension of the gospel and to relate coherently social ethics and evangelism. My Protestant-Pietistic-Evangelical heritage (to use K. S. Latourette's characterization) has been enough for my personal faith, my inner life and my individual ethics guidance, but it has not helped me very much to understand the structures and the dynamics of society and how to relate them to the gospel. We Latin American Evangelicals found some help at some stage of our pilgrimage in the Reformed tradition with its encompassing view of history and God's sovereignty in human affairs, and the unfailing inspiration of John Wesley's compassion and social concerns. But we were not enabled to see society except as a conglomerate of individual units: social evils were seen as the consequence of individual sins and vices, and the only response to social dilemmas and powers was personal conversion and personal virtues. David O. Moberg in his *The Great Reversal* says that this has been the effect of American individualism, a case of thorough accommodation of the gospel to the American culture!<sup>1</sup> If this is so, then it has been exported, David Watson was suggesting,

and it has effectively circulated around the world, almost as effectively as the American cowboys and the westerns watched in awe by Hong Kong, Japanese, German or Italian audiences!

Experience is showing, however, that this individualistic-spiritualistic-other-worldly reductionism of evangelization is too small. It doesn't do justice either to the realities of our world, as Francis Ringer was pointing out, or to the fullness of the biblical gospel, as Richard J. Mouw has effectively demonstrated (see *TSF Bulletin*, January/February, 1982).

Timothy L. Smith and David O. Moberg have demonstrated that the evangelical individualistic and spiritualistic reduction took place in the 1920s and 1930s, during the fundamentalist-liberal controversies and as an over-reaction to the social gospel, in a "Great Reversal" of the evangelical tradition of compassion and social concern present in the Wesleyan movement and in the first Awakening period in America.<sup>2</sup> David O. Moberg, for instance, tries to recover the biblical understanding of social sin and he bravely tries to point to some relevant ways through which Christians can express today their social concerns as part of the gospel proclamation and witness.<sup>3</sup>

It is my impression, however, that this attempt cannot go beyond the accepted concepts of social service and personal philanthropy; maybe it will lead to some community, but without the necessary analysis of the macro-structures and the dynamics of our contemporary society, like social classes, racist and sexist trends, military-industrial complexes, the omnipresent and omnipotent transnational corporations, the power and functions of cultural myths and ideologies, in one word the contemporary version of the "powers and principalities."

What we are doing—and here I include myself—is to act by aggregation, adding up, incorporating into our dominant understanding of the gospel and "evangelism" some social concerns. Sometimes reluctantly, as an appendix, or as "social implications," or "social duties," but not as an essential component of the gospel and of evangelization. The Lausanne Congress has gone a step forward in this process, recognizing, with Dr. John R. W. Stott, that social action and human liberation are part of Christian mission, but on a parallel line with "evangelism," considered as the primary mission of the Church.<sup>4</sup> But there was an eagerness (to which it might be healthy to apply the hermeneutical principle of suspiciousness) to keep and protect a special province for what is called "evangelism," defined mainly as verbal proclamation and restatement of the apostolic kerygma or a particular moment of the tradition of the Church. There were, however, at Lausanne, some interesting and challenging inputs from the Radical Discipleship group, who pointed to the need of prophetic evangelization, and the relevancy of the issues of liberation and oppression for a consistent proclamation of the gospel.<sup>5</sup> It is not by chance that the leading evangelicals in this group were from the Third World or those in the First World tuned to Third World and minority concerns in their own society.

### Catholic and Ecumenical Struggling

It may be a consolation for us to discover that the Catholic family is also facing similar problems, even coming from different historical experiences and formulations of evangelization. A whole Synod of Bishops was called in Rome in 1974 to deal with "The Evangelization of the Modern World."<sup>6</sup> The bishops were not able to come to

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<sup>1</sup>David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism and Social Concern*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, Holman Books, 1977).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 30f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 120ff, 172ff.

<sup>4</sup>John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1974), pp. 15ff.

<sup>5</sup>Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, eds., *Mission Trends No. 2: Evangelization* (New York: Paulist Press; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 249–252.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 259–267.



an agreement, particularly on the issue of the place of human liberation in the Christian concept of salvation and, consequently, of evangelization. One year later, Pope Paul VI was able to put together a remarkable document, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, an apostolic exhortation on Evangelization in the World Today.<sup>7</sup> Recognized then is the intimate relationship between liberation and evangelization, but the kind of link between the two is not spelled out, and after numerous and notable concessions to contemporary understandings of liberation, it ends up with an untouchable nucleus of good old Catholic doctrine on spiritual and eternal salvation, with some historical aggregations.

On the other hand, in the ecumenical movement the struggle comes from the other side. They have been strong in recovering the prophetic dimension of Christian faith and in committing themselves as Christians to the world and its problems. And though there is an evangelistic dimension in what the churches and other Christian

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***In the Kingdom of God you cannot separate history from eternity, or the individual from society, or the social from the spiritual.***

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groups are doing, there is a lack of intentionality, an ingrown allergy towards verbal proclamation and specific evangelistic activities and methodologies, which is only gradually receding. The Nairobi Assembly came a long way towards a holistic evangelization through its document II on "Confessing Christ Today."<sup>8</sup> The CWME is constantly struggling inside the structures and programs of the WCC to point to the missiological meaning of all the other programs: the social dimension of the gospel, yes, but also the evangelistic dimension of social involvement! And the latter is not so obvious to many who still have a syndrome reflex against the stereotype of "evangelism."<sup>9</sup>

True, as it has been said in this symposium by Dr. W. Richey Hogg, the Melbourne Conference has not come to specifics in evangelization; or, as Father Stransky put it: Melbourne should have had the Pattaya agenda and Pattaya should have had the Melbourne agenda. However, I have tried myself, in preparing our Monthly Letter on Evangelization in Spanish, to go through the Melbourne documents and bring up all the relevant guidelines for evangelization, and what I was able to put together was very impressive indeed, and could be very stimulating for our concern here and our ongoing evangelistic task and reflection.

After this confessional recital let me move to the next point, precisely related to the Melbourne theme: "Your Kingdom Come."

## **II. The Kingdom Perspective**

I have a hunch to share with you. Since I began to reflect on the Kingdom theme, long before the Melbourne Conference, I have had the hunch that the Kingdom perspective might be what we were needing and what I had been looking forward to for a long time. Might it be that the biblical vision and the theological foundation of the Kingdom of God is the rallying center where Evangelization and Christian (Social) Ethics come together where they belong?

### **Jesus' Evangelization: Announcing the Kingdom**

We are aware of the need for a definition of evangelization for the sake of clarity in our dialogue. How about trying Jesus' own definition of evangelization for a change? Nobody would deny that there was only one theme, one message, in Jesus' proclamation, and this was no other than the Kingdom of God, as it is witnessed overwhelmingly in the synoptic gospels. He came *preaching* the kingdom. "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the good news." He came *teaching* on the Kingdom of God; this is what his parables are all about. He came *healing* and pointed to his works of healing as the evidence that the Kingdom was in their midst to his contemporaries. He denounced the powers like the Pharisees' and Sadducees' systems of Law and Temple with all their economic implications—from the perspective of the Kingdom. His enemies

were well aware of this; they perceived the subversive nature of his preaching, teaching and acting, and decided that he had to die, and executed him as a subversive between two Palestinian guerillas of that time. The process was a fraud; they did not understand Jesus' message and the disciples didn't, but in another sense they understood what he was talking about when they put the title of the execution: "Jesus of Nazareth *King* of the Jews." This is not all. According to Luke's witness in the book of Acts, there was only one subject the resurrected Lord had to talk about with his disciples:

For forty days after his death he showed himself to them many times, and in ways that proved beyond doubt that he was alive; he was seen by them, and talked with them *about the Kingdom of God* (Acts 1:3).

In the synoptic gospels and in the book of Acts evangelization is *announcing the Kingdom*. No less and no more. Jesus came announcing the Kingdom. His disciples—the twelve and the Seventy and the women from Galilee—went around announcing the Kingdom, by word and deed. Jesus called his disciples to *enter* into the Kingdom, to *follow* him, and to *go out* announcing the Kingdom. We make a great fuss about the so-called Great Commission as the charter for evangelization, particularly in its Matthean version: "Go out . . . and make disciples." All right, but what is the content of the message to be delivered? Disciples in what? "Everything I have commanded you." And what is it but the Kingdom of God? John R. W. Stott perceptively has pointed out that we cannot separate the Great Commission from the Great Commandment; the first one does not stand alone.

How come, then, that we have lost track of the Kingdom of God in our evangelization message and approach?

### **Translations of the Kingdom**

It is a long story of *translation* and *reduction* of Jesus' message of the Kingdom. It began with the apostolic generation and its concentration on Jesus Christ—the Kingdom in person, *Auto Basileia* as Origen called him—and the salvific events of the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and Pentecost, all of which could be seen as the revelation and manifestation with power (as Jesus predicted) of the Kingdom of God, including the emerging of the church, as anticipation and privileged sign. Jesus the King became Jesus is Lord (*Kyrios*) and the consummation of the coming Kingdom became *Parousia*, the appearing of the Lord. In Paul the Kingdom is translated as salvation, its present dimension becomes the life in the Spirit (or "in Christ"), and the future consummation of the Kingdom is expressed in the faith in the resurrection, in the expectation of the Day of the Lord, and in the groaning with the whole creation in the birth pangs of the final liberation. In John the Kingdom is translated as eternal life. In the last book of the New Testament the message and the hope of the Kingdom is translated in the apocalyptic key, displaying the vision of the King of Kings, the Lamb of God, ruling over kings and powers and dominions, and the Dragon and the Anti-Christ, and calling the servants of the King to be faithful in the midst of captivity, persecution and oppression. This is a message coming from the one who is, who was and who is to come, through John, a brother sharing with them "in suffering, and in his Kingdom, and in enduring."

### **Reductions of the Kingdom**

This process of translation and contextualization went on during the centuries up to our days. But in the process of translation the gospel of the kingdom has been reduced to one of its dimensions. The Kingdom of God in the biblical witness is multidimensional and all-embracing (including the individual, the community of believers, society, the powers and kingdoms, the cosmos, history and eternity), and it is a dynamic reality that was, that is and that is to come. But in our effort to appropriate what is meaningful to us and our times we make it unidimensional, and absolutize the part we perceive or appropriate as if it were the whole: the *transcendent* kingdom of

<sup>7</sup>Published by the United States Catholic Conference (Washington, D.C., 1976).

<sup>8</sup>David M. Paton, ed., *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*. The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November–10 December, 1975 (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 41–57.

<sup>9</sup>*Christian Mission*, p. 29.

the Fathers, or the *ecclesial* kingdom of the Catholic Tradition, or the *inner* kingdom of the evangelical witness, or the *euphoric present* kingdom of the charismatic experience, or the *cataclysmic* kingdom of the apocalypticists, or the *new social order* of Christendom, the social gospel or the last revolutionary scheme.

In our evangelistic tradition of the last two hundred years we have reduced the Kingdom of God to a soteriological kingdom of individual salvation of souls for eternity, with a few reluctant concessions to present life and society. The Wesleyan tradition is richer and much more inclusive (Catholic, in the true sense of the term) than the common revivalistic mini-theology. But, in our effort to recover the totality of the gospel of the Kingdom and relating evangelization and social ethics, it will not be enough to go back to Wesley's tradition or to the Reformation tradition. Justification by Faith or Sanctification are very important reference points in our tradition, but they should not be a straitjacket for our own appropriation and proclamation of the gospel. What we are called to do is not mere re-statement and modernization of a frozen tradition defined once and for all, in the 16th or the 18th centuries, but a new encounter with the original tradition in the Scriptures, an ongoing dialogue with different strands of our traditions (and theology today cannot be but ecumenical), and a reformulation from our own historical context. Tradition and translation must go hand in hand.

### A New Perspective

It is here that I ask myself if it is not the time to look at evangelization from a new perspective: and it seems to me that social ethics is already moving in this direction. After one century of scholarly work and discussion about the historical Jesus, the Kingdom of God, eschatology and history, we are coming to some constructive efforts both in theology and ethics to translate the meaning of the original message of Jesus on the Kingdom. Wolfhart Pannenberg is definitely committed to found Christian ethics on the Kingdom as "the power of the future," followed in America by Carl Braaten with his *Eschatology and Ethics*.<sup>10</sup> Paul Ramsey himself, thirty years ago, in his classic work on *Basic Christian Ethics*, already was pointing to what he called "the two sources of Christian love," namely, God's righteousness and love and the reign of his righteousness in the Kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup> He continued: "Never imagine you have rightly grasped a biblical idea until you have succeeded in reducing it to a simple corollary of one or the other of these motives, or of the idea of the Covenant between God and man from which both stem."<sup>12</sup> I feel tempted to sign up on that and imitate him, in reference to evangelization, saying: "Never imagine you have grasped the biblical gospel and content of evangelistic message until you have succeeded in reducing it to a simple corollary of the motive of the Kingdom of God!"

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### ***The challenge to follow Jesus in the Kingdom is not a call to academic learning or orthodoxy, but a call to engaged faith, to what some are calling orthopraxis.***

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Now, this is what I would also like to happen in our evangelistic renewal and strategy. It is coming gradually and fragmentarily. The Melbourne theme has helped not only in its final documents but in the reflections that it has started and stimulated around the world.<sup>13</sup> There are a couple of books on evangelism in the United States (of which the most remarkable, as it has been said, is Alfred Krass's *Five Lanterns at Sundown*) which are pointing to a Kingdom evangelization.<sup>14</sup>

### III. A Few Hints and Some Suggestions

At first sight we can already see the tremendous potential of the Kingdom perspective for bringing together evangelization and social ethics. In the Kingdom of God you cannot separate history from eternity, or the individual from society, or the social from the spiritual. I don't mean that there is no hierarchy of values or historical priorities. Nor do I mean that evangelization and social ethics are the same

thing. There is difference in focus, but they belong together. There is no way to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom leaving out social ethics for some later stage of Christian growth. What are Jesus' requirements for discipleship in the Kingdom? If you take out what is thoroughly ethical in Jesus' message, what is left? A religious salvationism with only a partial soteriological content, a docetic reduction of the gospel.

### Hints from the Gospel

Jesus challenged his disciples to go and *announce* the Kingdom. And he invited his listeners to *seek* the Kingdom of God. How about summarizing evangelization as *announcing* the Kingdom and ethics as *seeking* the Kingdom of God and his righteousness?

Or take the Lord's Prayer. "Your kingdom come" might be the evangelist's prayer, while the ethicist's prayer might well be its equivalent translation in the same prayer: "your will be done on earth as in heaven."

Or take the inaugural message at the synagogue in Nazareth. Should it be the foundational charter for the churches' mission and evangelization task, or should it be the signpost for Christian ethics? Or both?

Or take conversion, the center of the evangelistic task. When you understand conversion in the perspective of the Kingdom, as it happens in the gospel story, turning to the Kingdom present in history in the person and movement of Jesus and his ministry, it is both conversion to God and to neighbor.

When Jesus demanded that the young ruler forsake his riches and use them for the sake of the poor, was he putting an evangelistic call or just an ethical demand of perfection? In any case, it was put right away in the first encounter with the would-be disciple, without waiting for a future course on Christian education. Or Zacchaeus' commitment to rectify his economic dealings with neighbor and society and make social reparations and start a new style of life; was it a conversion testimony or just a "social implication" or an advance pledge of Christian duty? Jesus called it "salvation" and he said that through this conversion he had been re-integrated into the covenant community of Abraham. (How do we compare this with our decisions for Christ and conversion stories in our evangelization?)

And, as there is no conversion to God without conversion to the neighbor, there is no vertical reconciliation without horizontal reconciliation according to Jesus. "If you come with your offering to the altar and there you remember that your neighbor has something against you . . ." <sup>15</sup> And there is no forgiveness from God if it is not shared with others. And no love of God without love of neighbor. And no service to the King in his Kingdom without serving him in the "least one of these," and that is what counts for final salvation in the inherited Kingdom. What about thinking on the soteriological meaning of the neighbor? John Wesley had something to say on this: "The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social, no holiness, but social holiness."<sup>16</sup> Or, take the clue Jesus gave to point to the presence and action of the Kingdom in his own ministry: "'To the poor' is announced the good news."<sup>17</sup> Was it the motto of Jesus' evangelization campaign or was it another instance of ethical teaching? If you pick poor you have ethics, if you pick good news you get evangelization. Is the poor an ethical category or has it also a missiological meaning in God's strategy? Is poverty a social ethics burning issue or is it also intimately related to human sin to be denounced and to the good news to be announced?

Why is it so difficult for us to put together what belongs together?

Certainly, we have to do our job in order not to put asunder what God has put together, and this is why I have been looking forward

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<sup>10</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Kingdom of God and the Foundation of Ethics," in *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), pp. 102-126. Carl E. Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics: Essays on the Theology and Ethics of the Kingdom of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974).

<sup>11</sup>Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Emilio Castro and Jacques Matthew, eds., *Your Kingdom Come*. The Official Report of the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, held in Melbourne, May 1980 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981). See also *International Review of Mission* 69:276-277 (October 1980-January 1981).

<sup>14</sup>Alfred C. Krass, *Five Lanterns at Sundown: Evangelism in a Chastened Mood* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1978).

<sup>15</sup>Matt. 5:23.

<sup>16</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book-Room, 1872; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), 14:321.

<sup>17</sup>Luke 4:18.

to this symposium with such expectation and hope.

There is no time here to develop this point further. I have been trying to do my homework and to imagine how evangelization would look from the Kingdom perspective. I am still struggling with it.

### **Announcing the Kingdom as Gift, as Hope and Task**

For instance, if we start from the fact that the Kingdom has already come in Jesus Christ and his ministry, and in the subsequent events of crucifixion, resurrection, Pentecost, and the emerging of the new community of the church, how do we announce the Kingdom? In this case we are announcing the Kingdom of God as a fact, as a given, as an accomplished reality, *as a gift*. As the early church in the New Testament, we point to Jesus Christ—the presence of the Kingdom—who came, who lived, who died, who was raised, who lives. And we point to the signs of the Kingdom in the words and deeds of Jesus' ministry, in the power of life that was manifested in him, in the good news announced to the poor, in the open table for sinners, in the forgiveness of sins that he brought and makes available today, in the workings of the Holy Spirit in the Church of yesterday and today. Jesus himself said that the Kingdom is a gift: "It is our Father's good pleasure to *give* you the Kingdom."<sup>18</sup> This is a Kingdom to be received, not to be built by the effort of humanity. And, as Jesus taught, it has to be received simply, unassumedly, without any pretension, as children, as "the least one of these."

How do we announce the Kingdom as a gift? Just like the apostolic church did: by *telling* the story in the preaching and teaching of the church; by *enacting* the story in sacrament, particularly in the

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### ***How about summarizing evangelization as announcing the Kingdom and ethics as seeking the Kingdom of God and his righteousness?***

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breaking of the bread; by *incarnating* the gospel of the Kingdom in the *fellowship* of the believing community and the *service* to the outside community.

This has been the strong point in the evangelical tradition: the kingdom has been announced as available salvation through Jesus Christ to be received by faith. We announce the Kingdom as "the rule of grace," to refer to the theme of Albert Outler's powerful address at our luncheon yesterday. This is what we might call evangelical evangelization! But it is good for us to remember that, even announcing the Kingdom as a gift, it takes more than verbal proclamation; it demands a holistic ministry, as David Watson reminded us, of *kerygma*, *didache*, *koinonia* and *leiturgia*, according to the apostolic precedent (see *TSF Bulletin*, January/February, 1983 and March/April 1983).

Now, if we take the eschatological or future dimension of the Kingdom, then we have to *announce it as hope*. No matter what our eschatological school may be, we will have to come to grips with the fact that Jesus pointed to the future consummation of the Kingdom of God through his parables of growth, his crisis of Parousia parables, and through apocalyptic dressed utterances. "Be like people who wait," he told his disciples, while he taught them to pray saying: "Your kingdom come."<sup>19</sup>

How do you announce the Kingdom as hope today? By hoping, by inspiring hope, by criticizing false hopes, by supporting hope. Here is where I believe our particular Latin American experience has been most meaningful and creative (as there was a creative period of the ministry of hope in this nation in the shaping up of the American Dream). We are recovering *prophetic evangelization*, the full ministry of hope in history. First by *annunciation*, the raising up of visions and dreams, developing the utopian function of Christian faith, awakening the hope for a new tomorrow, a new humanity, stirring the passion for things yet to be, inspired by the glowing visions of the messianic kingdom in the prophets and the New Testament. Second, by *denunciation*, the pointing out of the contradictions, the injustices, the oppressions of our day, unmasking and naming the idols, discerning the times, uncovering self-deception and illusions, confronting the powers. Third, we have discovered, in the midst of terrible repressive situations of persecution, prisons, concentration

camp, tortures, exiles, executions and disappearances, the ministry of *consolation*: healing of the broken-hearted, helping the needy, supporting the suffering, rescuing the victims, sustaining hope against hope: the ministry of *martyria*: living and dying by faith, putting life on the line as the final gesture of hope in the coming Kingdom. We have come back to the catacombs; the church of the martyrs has come to life again, and we are discovering the old and costly method of evangelization of the Roman circus. To be an evangelist in Latin America today—a true evangelist of the Kingdom—is to be the servant of hope, and to pay the price for it.

And then, we have the Kingdom *as task*, as present dynamic reality, inbreaking in our lives and societies. As in the times of Jesus, the presence of the Kingdom is a sign of contradiction: it is an attracting and repelling center. Today as yesterday, the Kingdom "suffers violence" and "forces its way" among men and women and powers. It is a "dividing sword" and as a "fire cast upon the earth." To enter into the Kingdom is to take sides, to cross the line, to make an option: for life or against life with the powers of death, for the oppressed or for the oppressor, for the poor and powerless or against them.

To announce the inbreaking present Kingdom in a sinful world means a call to repentance and conversion, to change persons and institutions and structures of sin. It means to turn to God, turning people to God's movement in history. A very risky step. Conversion to Christ in the neighbor, both the "near," personal neighbor, and the "distant," impersonal neighbor in the oppressed masses, classes and races. It means also a call to discipleship, which is much more than a gentle invitation to personal development, which means enrollment in the struggles of the Kingdom, and the embracing of some painful disciplines and priorities. The challenge to follow Jesus in the Kingdom is not a call to academic learning or *orthodoxy*, but a call to engaged faith, to what some are calling *orthopraxis*.

In this orthopraxis of faith not only a theological reflection and spirituality is coming up but also new forms of the Christian community, like the Base Christian Communities, small cells at the grass roots, not structurally dependent on the institutional churches, but free and creative responses to the situation, where Christians come together to study the Bible on their own, letting it speak and open up the message of hope and liberation; celebrating their faith in prayer, in song, and sacrament; and bringing with them the concerns and the problems of the community, trying to respond in very specific ways from their contextualized faith. These small "*comunidades de base*," spread all over by hundreds of thousands, are renewing the church, are becoming the reservoirs for the renewing of society, and they are already centers of true holistic evangelization in the perspective of the coming Kingdom: communities of the poor, evangelizing the poor and from the poor. In the midst of these small Christian communities there is no problem of keeping together evangelization and social ethics. They don't even know the difference!

Sure, I know what you are going to say: that this is nothing new. These were the Christian communities throughout the Roman Empire for three centuries at least. That this is what John Wesley's class meetings and bands were all about. All right, we have the precedent in our own tradition. The question is how do we respond to the present challenge and situation in the place where we are. Because there are no blueprints; and just an imitation of what is happening somewhere else or a reproduction of the past models will not do. We have tried it and it didn't work.

How are we doing to raise and become part of the contemporary expressions, partial incarnations and anticipations of the Kingdom in our midst? Because to announce the Kingdom incarnationally demands from us not only *to speak*, and *to do*, but also *to be*.

No wonder. After all, the church, like the woman in Revelation 12, carries in its womb the Messiah, the evangelist's Savior and the ethicist's Lord—but the same One, Lord and Savior, who was, who is and who is to come. History is also pregnant, in the beautiful concept of the Brazilian Ruben Alves, waiting for tomorrow's child, for full and final liberation. It is the task of the Church to inseminate the world with the seed of the Kingdom (and Jesus said that the children of the Kingdom are the seed of the world) and to groan with the whole creation for its final liberation and redemption. To the glory of the one King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Savior and Lord.

<sup>18</sup>Luke 12:32.

<sup>19</sup>Matt. 6:7ff.

## December Conferences

### Evangelical Theological Society

On December 15-17, 1983, the Evangelical Theological Society met at the Criswell Center in Dallas to deal with issues concerning "Preaching and Biblical Exegesis." Two issues controlled the conference: the tension between the church and the academy and the redaction criticism of Robert Gundry.

The first issue grew directly out of the topic of the meeting. The plenary sessions featured well-known pastors, while the seminars featured papers from the scholars. This was unfortunate, for the two sides never met head-on to discuss differences. In the first plenary session, W.A. Criswell spoke on "Forty Years of Expository Preaching;" in the second, James M. Boice and Ray S. Steadman spoke on "Preaching and Exegesis;" and in the final session, Charles Swindoll, Paul Robbins (editor of *Leadership*), Bruce Wilkenson (founder of Walk Through the Bible), and Haddon Robinson (program chairman for this meeting) dialogued on "What the Pulpit and the Pew Have to Say to the Scholars." The differences between pastors and scholars were especially evident in the latter session, as the speakers chastised the academy for its lack of practical application. This session highlighted the major disappointment of the conference: the scholars, with their concern for the integrity of the text, and pastors, with their concern for the needs in the pew, never truly dialogued on the means by which both could be accomplished. Most felt it would have been better if both pastors and scholars had been on the panels, then they could have debated the issues.

The second issue was even more serious. Robert Gundry's commentary on Matthew (see *TSF Bulletin*, March/April, 1983, pp. 14-16) has caused a furor in evangelical circles. The ETS executive committee, during the 1982 meeting, had unanimously affirmed Gundry's right to remain within the society. Prominent members, such as Norman Geisler, had publically affirmed their support of Gundry's continued membership in the ETS. But many were dissatisfied with that decision, believing that Gundry's conclusions constituted a de facto denial of inerrancy. They thought that he should be asked to leave the society. This faction carried out a carefully-organized action toward this end. Matters came to a head in the Saturday business session, which devoted an hour to the issue. In a reversal of his earlier position, Norman Geisler had distributed a four-page letter detailing the reasons why the society must "say no" to Gundry. A motion was passed rejecting the possibility that any biblical writer would "materially embellish or alter" the historical tradition. Then a motion was proposed officially requesting Gundry to resign. It was opposed by several who felt that Gundry's position was not a practical denial of inerrancy and that ETS was a debating society rather than a "church organization." In the opinion of this reporter, the unfortunate politics of the situation were demonstrated when a motion to end discussion was passed even though two members of the opposition were standing at microphones in order to speak to the issue. After the motion was passed (110-41), Gundry graciously offered his resignation. He suggested that there may be difficulties in applying the motion uniformly in the future, but asked his supporters to remain in the society in order to promote scholarly work within evangelicalism. For their part, his supporters are seeking to understand whether the society's action reflects its true character or is simply a reversible result of successful politicking.

The 1984 meeting, at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, will be in early December. The new president-elect, Richard Pierard of Indiana State University, is working on a program that will highlight historical issues. Evangelical theology, biblical studies, and organizational relationships have taken shape in the midst of a particular history. Plenaries and seminars will explore those influences.

—Grant R. Osborne

### Institute for Biblical Research

Formed as a counterpart to the English Tyndale House, the Institute for Biblical Research has been meeting since 1970. At this year's meeting two papers were delivered and a session on "Linguistics, Computers and the Study of the Bible" was organized.

At the latter, the first steps were taken to organize a [computer] user's group focused on biblical studies. The primary purpose of such a group would be initially to share information about resources, techniques, and research currently underway. If the liveliness of the discussion is an indication, a felt need has been identified.

The IBR accepts student memberships. Those interested may write to Bruce M. Corley, Secretary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Box 22000, Fort Worth TX 76122.

—Thomas H. McAlpine

#### Computers and the Seminarian

As microcomputers continue their downward price spiral (complete with a healthy number of Title X's) it will be increasingly feasible for the microcomputer to replace the typewriter as an essential part of a seminarian's (minister's) set of tools.

All to the good. We limit discussion to preparation of papers (sermons). Besides the freedom in editing which word processing programs allow, two research functions will see increasing use. First, data banks can be accessed for publications on specific subjects. It will be increasingly feasible—and less time-consuming—to find out if anyone has written on an assigned topic. As for textual study, well-organized versions of portions or all of Scripture will make it possible to do increasingly sophisticated concordance work.

The *TSF Bulletin* will therefore be responding to these changes in a number of ways. We will be providing information regarding theologically-oriented users groups, software, and data banks. If one of our advising editors gets his way, we'll eventually start a bank ourselves. ("Reach out and read the *TSF Bulletin*"?) If our managing editor gets his way, we'll offer the educational(?) software Michael Farrell proposed in the *National Catholic Reporter* (Example: You are God; use your joystick to pick the next pope.) If you have suggestions or contributions to make in this area, please let us know.

—Thomas H. McAlpine

### American Academy of Religion

The Evangelical Theology group, coordinated by Mark Lau Branson of TSF, again held two regular sessions at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, the professional association for college and seminary professors in the field of religious studies. The sessions were on Dec. 20 and 21 at convention hotels in Dallas, Texas.

The first session, entitled "Theological Turning Points," featured three professors of strongly evangelical backgrounds informally reporting on their pilgrimages. Donald Dayton of Northern Baptist Seminary was raised in a Wesleyan Methodist home. His father was president of the denomination's leading college. But Dayton said that the faith "didn't take" when he was growing up. Not until a couple years after college, with a lot of the credit to his reading of Barth and Kierkegaard, did he call himself a Christian. Despite his denominational heritage, his first serious encounter with Wesley was in a course at Yale Divinity School. He found himself at home theologically with Wesley. Because he combines social activism with various administrative, teaching, and writing responsibilities, Dayton has just completed his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago (with a thesis on the theological roots of Pentecostalism), twenty years after his bachelor's, and senses that he is now at a new turning point.

Dayton is succeeding Branson as the chairman of the group. He also presented a paper at the session that stressed the variety of

meanings over the centuries and in different contexts that has been given to the term "evangelical." At times he is inclined to question whether the term has any usefulness in view of the wide, even contradictory, meanings.

Gerald Sheppard of Union Theological Seminary (NY) then told of his pilgrimage. He was raised in an Assemblies of God home and graduated from one of that leading Pentecostal denomination's Bible colleges. He then went to Fuller, which he found to be a helpful transition to the even more mature biblical criticism that he encountered in his doctoral studies at Yale. He has moved his ecclesiastical affiliation into a predominantly black Pentecostal denomination, where his biblical views are not under the kind of scrutiny they would otherwise be. Sheppard stressed his sense of homelessness, being in some ways Pentecostal, in some Evangelical, in some liberal—yet not feeling fully part of any. He emphasized the importance of fellowship with God himself, not just the accumulation of information about him. He noted that "liberals" are often more compassionate and open to various views than their detractors depict them, yet at the same time he has found a tendency for "liberators" to look down upon those for whom they profess so much concern.

Royce Gruenler of Gordon-Conwell Seminary reported his not too common pilgrimage from a strong evangelical upbringing (he went to a seminary directly from high school, then to college and to graduate school at Aberdeen, Scotland) followed by a strong "liberal" phase, which in turn gave way to renewed commitment to an orthodox evangelical position. It was while he was teaching religion at a private liberal arts college in the sixties that he moved through

neo-orthodoxy to process theism. In the early seventies he realized both the intellectual and spiritual inadequacies of his "enlightened" religion and gradually made his way back. Gruenler stressed the importance of a theological position which can be shared with a cross-section of the Christian community rather than one which only appeals to or is understood by intellectuals.

A hearty interchange among the panelists and a few from the 70 or so in attendance at the session concluded the morning's activities.

The next day a smaller group, not numbering more than 35 for any one paper, heard four competent presentations under the theme "Methodologies in Interfacing Biblical and Systematic Theology." From various angles, the papers assessed the task of constructive theology. Donald McKim of Dubuque Seminary (Presbyterian) compared the resurgence of systematics as represented by the recently published works of Berkhof, Bloesch, Wainwright, Moody, and the Hansons. Paul Feinberg of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Evangelical Free) compared the approaches of Lonergan, Kelsey, Kaufman, and Tracy. Tom Finger of Northern Baptist Seminary proposed that systematians try using more the approach of biblical theology. Harold Hunter of the Church of God School of Theology (Pentecostal-Holiness) then suggested what using the biblical theology approach could produce when applied to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

An informal "round table" discussion was also scheduled. Royce Gruenler's paper expanded his critiques of Process thought and Stephen Franklin (Wheaton College) offered ways to positively use Process models within evangelical theology.

—Donald Tinder

## Unpacking the Vision: Inter Varsity's SF '83

After all the inspiration, San Francisco '83 asked the question, "Now what?" The conference did not end on a high note. It ended quietly and soberly, but in a way that appealed to the will of the students attending. This conference's success came about because it did not rely solely upon enthusiasm to get the point across. The plenary session speakers and seminar leaders realized that enthusiasm and high-pitched motivational talks will not help to heal the decay in America's cities. Reality therapy is far better medicine.

Barbara Williams Skinner, former executive director of the Congressional Black Caucus, closed the conference with a warning: "Someone is thinking and hoping that middle class, largely white youth, who are children of the 'me generation,' the comfortable ones, would somehow sacrifice this life of inevitable comfort to work in Appalachia and the Delta areas of Mississippi.

"I don't know how anyone expects white kids to do it, when black kids won't do it. Black, middle class kids do about the same thing that white, middle class kids do. They worry about the job they're going to get when they get out of school, and so they should.

"But I keep asking myself, 'What is the basis for that hope?'

"Well, maybe it's because there are some 50 million Americans who are supposed to be born again . . . or 12 million who attend Bible studies; there is a Christian culture in America.

"But then I ask myself against those facts, 'Why are we in the moral state as a nation and as a world that we are in . . . ?' And you and I know that the American church today is the most segregated institution in America . . . so why the hope?"

Not exactly the euphoric note to close a conference with, is it? Inter-Varsity got down to business at the end of the meetings. It didn't leave us walking off on a cloud of euphoria that would drop us when it evaporated a few days later.

San Francisco '83 made one thing very clear: A conference provides the propellant, the fuel, the push for ministry. It is not an end in itself. Conference director Pete Hammond put it to the delegates this way on the final evening: "You've been given a lot of information and a lot of options this week. It is my hope that you've been inspired. But inspiration is fleeting. The high you may feel right now

must be translated into something back on your campus. If you go back and settle into 'business as usual,' San Francisco '83 will have been nothing more than a five-day pep talk. It will have been a noble failure."

Hammond asked delegates to do five things once they got back to their schools. First, "Evaluate your major within the perspective of God's call to be salt and light in His world, and use your interests in building bridges of reconciliation between different cultural and ethnic groups."

Second, "Are you hiding out with people just like yourself? Or are you attempting, risking, and reaching out to some people you might not understand?"

Third, "Are you forming partnerships with other Christians and building bases of mutual support and prayer for one another?"

Fourth, "Do you have mentors, people of excellence in faith and in your area of career interest? Look actively for them. Seek them out. Find out what makes them tick."

Fifth, "Ask yourself whether Jesus is Lord of your entire life, or just Lord of all your explicitly Christian activities. Take what you have seen and heard at San Francisco and unpack it, use it to discover the richness God has for us when we give it all to Him."

"UNPACK." That was the word that drove San Francisco '83. Students saw and heard lives given completely over to God and to his service. The seminar and main session speakers were all "unpackers"—living epistles—men and women who had walked their faith despite great obstacles.

One of these living epistles was Robert LaVelle, a black businessman who is executive vice-president of Dwelling House Savings and Loan, and president of Lavelle Real Estate, both in Pittsburgh. Operating out of one of the poorest districts in the city, LaVelle has defied conventional business logic many times by granting low-interest housing loans to people whose incomes were at or below the poverty level. Bank examiners and other financial "experts" have called LaVelle crazy, but have eventually praised him because his business is working. As he noted, "Only the Christian can do what needs to be done. Jesus said we are to walk the second mile . . ."

At San Francisco '83, fifty professional men and women led seminars on how the values of the kingdom of God can affect career choices. Lawyers, scientists, advertising executives, media specialists, educators and politicians helped students understand what it

means to be salt and light in these vocations. The issues of economic and political justice, servanthood, mercy, and truth were discussed as workable tools, not as theory.

Students at San Francisco '83 learned that as Christians in the marketplace they should be concerned with truth, not only in visible ways, but in more subtle ways. Our culture is ever-aware of attempts to mislead others—false reports concerning a nuclear power plant, or exaggerations from Christian organizations concerning their actual financial needs as opposed to the needs they might present, or ministry results. Students heard that if trust is to exist in the marketplace, then communication must be accurate and not used as a tool to cover up or distort.

The messages at San Francisco were urgent. Futurist Tom Sine told delegates, "If you do a map, an overlay, of where the physical and spiritual needs are in this country, and where the Christians are, you wind up with two different maps. We tend to be holding one another's hands in the suburban areas. We minister to one another there and have essentially abandoned the cities . . . and the poor in the cities."

Sine goes on to explain why in his book *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy*: "A surprising number of Christians no longer believe they can make any real difference in the face of an uncertain future. When was the last time you heard a Christian talking about changing the world? "Many of God's people seem to have relinquished a major share of the responsibility and initiative for social change to secular institutions . . . .

Sine further encouraged students to become living epistles, but said it would be difficult. He noted that while the 70's could be described as the "me" decade, the 80's would come to be known as the "us and them" decade. These years will be marked by apathy for the poor. As the middle-class push increases, the poor and their needs will be seen as roadblocks to upward mobility.

Students also heard John Perkins, president emeritus of Voice of Calvary Ministries in Jackson, Mississippi, talk of students using their careers to help the poor in America.

Perkins has always seen the best results achieved in the area of meeting human need when those who are helping live in the com-

munity they are helping. Perkins brings this home in his latest book, *With Justice For All*: "Where are our Nehemiah's who will act as though the future is uncertain, who will test their plans against the reality in the community of need and will let God direct their work even as they proceed?"

"Throughout our nation and around our world, God is calling men and women to such a task—lawyers and doctors; experienced nurses and educators; affluent white suburban managers and financiers; students and time-tested retirees; people, whatever their skills, whatever their gifts, who are willing to be servants."

And so it went throughout the week; God's living epistles talking about their work on the flip side of the Kingdom of God, the side of the kingdom so few of us are willing to get near for fear of soiling our hands. We prefer instead to make our commuter jaunts into areas of need and then run back each evening to our warm and protected shelters.

San Francisco '83 was a step of faith for Inter-Varsity. It was a step of recognition that our field of ministry is changing. This awareness of change was best expressed by Bill Tiffan, Inter-Varsity's Director of Campus Ministries: "San Francisco '83 is evidence that Inter-Varsity is serious about preparing students and staff to have an impact in strategic places presently and in the future. It symbolizes our recognition that our mission field *is* changing from four-year, predominantly WASP residential campuses to large urban centers where students mix studies with commuting and jobs, where the work force is multi-cultural, and where the problems of our society converge with great intensity.

"San Francisco deals with Lordship in the overcrowded, often materialistic urban centers of our country where most of our students will spend the greater part of their working lives. The application of Lordship faces outward more than inward."

If San Francisco '83 is an indication, Inter-Varsity is serious about healing and binding wounds, the ministry to which God calls all believers. It's now time to unpack the vision and go to where the hurt is.

—Bill Chickering and Mark Lau Branson

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## Context and Hermeneutics in the Americas—Report #2

On November 24–29, 1983, thirty-five scholars from Latin America and North America convened in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The conference was co-sponsored by the Latin American Theological Fraternity, a society of evangelical scholars from Central and South America, and the Theological Students Fellowship. The major purpose of the meeting was to interact regarding the theological and political realities in the Americas in light of the issue of hermeneutics; i.e., the question of contextualizing the Bible for the modern age. Gerald Sheppard of Union Seminary in New York opened the conference by asking about the politics of exegesis; that is, those factors which allow certain hermeneutical positions to be acceptable and others not. The result, he said, was a "poverty of imagination" which forced a different Gospel upon the Church. Clark Pinnock addressed the group on the subject of the audience, arguing that the church's audience is "atheist" rather than "alienated." Therefore, the tendency of liberation theologians to speak in terms of the latter is wrong-headed, quite apart from the failure of Marxism in terms of both justice and allocation of resources. In a critique from the standpoint of Latin needs, it was stated that the issue is not primarily a North American stress on abstract theology but more practical questions. Several argued that a "justice theology" may be closer to the biblical norm than a truth theology. As John Stam summarized, the question is not "Does God exist?" as much as "Who is God and what does he require of us?" The problem is that many evangelicals are theological absolutists but ethical relativists.

Rene Padilla addressed the group on a "Contextual Christology from Latin America" and asserted that in the western world the "Christ of dogma" has replaced the biblical Jesus who identified with the poor. In popular religiosity, on the other hand, Christ was a dead figure unable to respond to needs. The historical Jesus needs to be reawakened, the prophet and servant who demands that a new social

ethics determine true disciplinship. While most affirmed the attempt to integrate Christology and ethics more closely, questions were raised on two fronts. First, some doubted the wisdom of tying other ethics or Christology to a reconstructed "historical Jesus." And Doug Webster of Ontario Theological Seminary argued that we dare not allow a purely relational or horizontal theology to replace the ontological Christology of the NT.

In a provocative paper, David Lowes Watson of Perkins School of Theology stated that the doctrine of election is one way to integrate the Western abstract theology and the Latin praxis orientation. If the church is to become "Salt to the World" (the title of his paper), it must recognize that it is "elect" for the world, not for its own inner circle. The locus of God's presence is found not so much in the community of the saved as in the world of the oppressed. Salvation is found there, not merely in a cathedral. This occasioned great discussion. Orlando Costas of Eastern Baptist Seminary stated that the identity of the Church is not in election but in the One who elects, and the dichotomy is too stark: it is both in the church and in God's presence in the world. J. Deotis Roberts, a major black theologian, thought it helpful to view election as to service and not just to privilege, and wanted a more biblical paradigm which like Moltmann saw the necessity of participation in the proclamation of the Kingdom's immanence. John Howard Yoder emphasized the need to clarify what "salvation" meant, citing as a negative example oft-heard liberal eschatology: 1) there is no heaven; and 2) everyone is going there. All, however, agreed that members of the Church must participate not only in salvation individually but also in the "birth-pangs of the mystery of the New Age" (Watson's phrase) by living the Gospel in identification with the needs of the oppressed.

In addition to the conference itself, there was great fellowship at the retreat center of the Iglesia Bautista "Horeb" Church in Mexico

City. The participants slept in dormitories and the men found a kindred spirit between "snorers" and "non-snorers"! In addition, there was tremendous fellowship between the participants and the church on Sunday. Each deacon in the church took a pair (a Latin and a North American) first to a local church (many of them poor) and then home. It was a marvelous time of learning and fellowship. The highlight was a two-hour evening service featuring congregational singing and the preaching of Argentinian theologian Ricardo Pietrantonio on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

During the conference five study groups were to do cross-cultural "readings" of various Bible passages. The "Exodus" group studied Exodus 1-15 both in religious and socio-political dimensions. Liberation comes via spirituality and worship as well as social justice. The "Isaiah" group considered the prophetic role of the community/church in the establishment of peace: she must expose national self-sufficiency and arrogance and thereby call the nation to the divine demand for justice and concern for the oppressed. The "Magnificat" (Luke 1:46-55) group followed recent stress on the social dimension over against a purely spiritualizing tendency. In light of the material in Luke-Acts pointing to Luke as "the theologian of social justice," the message that God has "scattered the proud," "brought down rulers," and "filled the hungry with good things" points to a social revolution. Latin American theologian Hugo Zorilla remarked, "if a Christian would sing this poem of Mary . . . perhaps (on) Sunday in the market of one of our towns, it wouldn't be strange if one of those who is always on duty would not let the song be finished (or more accurately, it would be finished in jail, if health permitted)." The group studying Galatians 3 debated whether the text should read "faithfulness of Jesus Christ" (Richard Hays; see *TSF Bulletin*, September-October 1983) or "faith in Jesus Christ" (Moises Silva) but agreed that a major stress in the epistle was the implication of justification by faith for community ethics, specifically the reconciliation of the oppressed (3:28; 4:19; 5:4-6). Finally, the "1 Corinthians" group studied 2:6-16 and concluded that the leaders of the church must exemplify a life-style identified with the crucified Lord rather than the "worldly wisdom" of those who seek power and self-glory. This is important, for it details how those engaged in the liberation of the poor are to conduct their spiritual and social ministries.

However, the highlights of the week occurred in the plenary sessions, which involved open discussions of key issues. Five issues dominated these dialogues. First, the group critiqued the relationship between theological institutions and the church, arguing that the "demonic of the academy" too often controlled the seminaries. Abstract intellectual issues rather than life-oriented ministry and "status" demands (i.e., degrees rather than proven ability) seem to dominate. The seminary instead should become a pluralistic center which nevertheless maintains confessional integrity and prepares

students to minister to people, maintaining a balance between theory and praxis. Second, the relationship between the North and Latin America was noted. Latin American theologians struggled to describe the dangers of middle-class American missionaries exporting a middle-class Gospel. Pedro Savage, co-ordinator of the Latin American Theological Fraternity, summarized the problem under five "power plays": 1) economic power, in which American missionaries who control the purse strings maintain control also over key decisions on the field; 2) prestige power, in which the minority voices from Latin America are often not heard because they do not have the same "training"; 3) power of confessional language, by which many Latin American books are not published because the evangelical "code-words" are not there; 4) administrative power, which at times refuses to allow Latins into executive positions on the grounds that they are "less efficient"; and 5) the power of economic level, stemming from the fact that American missionaries frequently have five times the salary of their Latin counterparts and therefore live with the wealthy at the same time that they minister to the poor.

The third issue was the problem of gender and equality. Great concern was expressed that those who utilize a literal reading of 1 Timothy 2 often do so in a polemical, political way which demeans women and forces them into a mold which causes many to depart from their evangelical heritage. Fourth, minority groups are also diminished by a western epistemology which refuses to acknowledge other cultural thought-patterns or hermeneutical perspectives. Black theologians H. Deotis Roberts and George Comings argued for the validity of a black theology which expressed the content of biblical truth in a form indigenous to the black community. Moreover, indigenous theologians are needed in America to dialogue with immigrants who cannot understand western ideologies. Fifth, the group discussed the tendency of liberators to despise the oppressed, in social ways as in Joshua or in religious ways as in Jonah. Popular religion and culture among the indigenous people are not appreciated or given the chance for expression, and there is a lack of love for the alienated. Empathy is needed, and not merely judgment.

Everyone present felt that the conference on Context and Hermeneutics was extremely beneficial. Ways of extending the dialogue were suggested: perhaps a biannual conference which would include students as well as theologians, perhaps an exchange program between Latin American and North American seminaries, perhaps a sabbatical program which would involve North Americans ministering in Latin American settings, perhaps a scholarship program for reciprocal studies between the Americas and an exchange program between professors. All in all, it was felt that North Americans need to enter a Latin American setting and do theological reflection in the context of poverty. Those from the North, before passing judgment, should be willing to enter a Nicaragua or an El Salvador and experience those realities from the inside.

—Grant R. Osborne

#### THE GOSPEL AND URBANIZATION

Theological Students Fellowship is among the co-sponsors of this conference to be hosted by the Overseas Ministries Study Center April 23-May 4. Conference leaders include Samuel Escobar, Raymond Fung, Raymond Bakke, Roger Greenway, and Michael Haynes. The first week will focus on urban evangelization; the second will concentrate on the role of the pastor. For further information, or to register for either or both weeks, write to Box 2057, Ventnor, NJ 08406.

#### SEMINARY CONSORTIUM FOR URBAN PASTORAL EDUCATION—CHICAGO

"Congregations, Cultures and Cities" is the theme for the 4th national/international congress on Urban Ministry to be held April 25-28 in Chicago. The conference includes plenary sessions plus nearly 100 working sessions on biblical perspectives, present needs, urban policy and cross-cultural challenges to the church in the city. SCUPE is also inviting churches, agencies or individuals to present workshops on the theme. For further information write to SCUPE, 30 W. Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60610; or phone (312)944-2153.

#### CONFERENCE ON JONATHAN EDWARDS

The Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals and the Institute for Early American History and Culture will host a major conference on the contribution of Jonathan Edwards. The conference will address the issues of Edwards' intellectual context, the major facets of this thought, and immediate and long range legacy of his writings. The conference will be held October 24-27, 1984 in Wheaton, Illinois. For further information contact Joel Carpenter, Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL 60187.

#### EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY CALL FOR PAPERS

The annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society will take place in Chicago on December 11-13, 1984, immediately following the AAR-SBL convention. The theme will be "Evangelicals: Heritage and Rediscovery," and papers dealing with change and development in exegesis, biblical interpretation, and formation of doctrines and theological concepts are especially welcome. Those wishing to propose papers should send a title and brief precis of 125-150 words to the program chairman by April 15: Richard Pierard, Dept. of History, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809.

Information about and applications for membership in the ETS may be obtained from the Secretary, Simon Kistemaker, Reformed Theological Seminary, 5422 Clinton Blvd., Jackson, MS 39209. Special student memberships are available.

# The Wholeness of Evangelism: A Bible Study (Part C)

by Alfred C. Krass

*This is the third in a series of four Bible studies based on the National Council of Churches' "Policy Statement on Evangelism." Four areas of evangelism receive attention: personal (Nov./Dec.), social (Jan./Feb.), communal (this issue), and public (forthcoming). Each article, as printed in TSF Bulletin, includes two studies on one of these areas. The time guidelines may help a group avoid getting stalled on introductory questions. The studies could be helpful in several settings—seminary classrooms, TSF chapters, church classes or committees. The author and the editors would appreciate hearing about results.*

## Commitment to Jesus Christ Is a Community Event C

"Commitment to Jesus Christ," the Policy Statement goes on, "is a community event; it engrafts one into the community of believers, the church." This means, the Statement elucidates, "to be called out from the isolation of individualism, from conformity to the ways of the world, into the fellowship of disciples which is the church, where by obedience we discover freedom, by humble service we are fulfilled, by sharing the suffering of others we are made whole."

### SESSION ONE

**Text: Acts 11:19-30**

Other references you may wish to consult in this session and the next: Matt. 18:15-17, Rom. 12:3-13, 2 Cor. 8-9, 1 Pet. 2:1-10

### Preliminary discussion questions (15-20 minutes)

Some critics of contemporary evangelism have accused it of pandering to the hyper-individualism of the modern world. What you are confronted with in much of what goes by the name of evangelism, they say, is "supermarket religion, the glorification of consumerism; everyone can pick and choose the "brand" of faith, the "style" of church they want. "Evangelism done in this way does not create community amongst divided humanity—it sanctifies its dividedness," they say.

1. Do you agree with the criticism these people make?
2. How could evangelism lead to the creation of a new community among divided humanity?
3. What does your group feel about evangelism carried out in isolation from existing churches? Can evangelism reach its goal if individuals who become Christians are not "engrafted into the community of believers, the church"?
4. Is it necessary to have a strong sense of togetherness in the church? Can this become a denial of the gospel if carried too far? What attitude should we have toward those who are not part of the church?

### Study of the Text: Acts 11:19-30 (40 minutes)

1. Which two groups of disciples converged at Antioch?
2. Why did the Jerusalem church send Barnabas and later some

prophets to Antioch? Was it any concern of theirs what the Antioch church did?

3. What were Paul's particular gifts which caused Barnabas to bring him to Antioch?
4. What significance do you attach to the fact that it was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians?
5. Why did the Antioch believers decide to send aid to the believers in Judaea? Did Agabus not predict a worldwide famine? Shouldn't they have helped their own?

### Summary questions (20 minutes)

- A. What is the relationship between Christian congregations in different places? What structures do the churches in your group have for bringing about solidarity with Christians in other places? Must all congregations have such channels?
- B. What mechanisms exist for bringing about order and unity in the Body of Christ? Is a congregation of believers such a mechanism at the local level? How does a congregation combat individualism? Conformity to the world? Do we "discover freedom by obedience"?
- C. Is "supermarket Christianity" a contradiction in terms?
- D. Does a person *first* become a Christian and *then* become a member of a fellowship of believers?

### Prayer

## SESSION TWO

**Text: 1 John 1:1-4**

### Preliminary discussion questions (20 minutes)

1. Is the church itself—its fellowship—part of the good news the evangelist proclaims?
2. What would it take for the quality of our Christian community life to become so compelling that individualism would lose its attraction for our members?
3. Is church growth a legitimate goal of evangelism? Is there more than one kind of growth?

### Study of the Text: 1 John 1:1-4 (40 minutes)

1. Why did John write this letter?
2. What can we infer about the people to whom he wrote it?
3. What is the bulk of his message in vv. 1-3? Can you express this in common, everyday language?
4. According to John, is evangelism necessarily a community event?
5. What does he mean in v. 4 when he writes that if the purpose of the letter is achieved "our joy will be complete"?

### Summary questions (30 minutes)

- A. How would you distinguish between the sentiment John expresses in v. 4 and what some people refer to as "a passion for souls"?
- B. Do the churches in your group have a sense that their joy cannot be complete while there are others who stand outside their fellowship? Or do they feel religion is pretty much an individual affair?
- C. Is there a danger that evangelism might become "religious imperialism"? How would you distinguish between biblical evangelism and a religiously imperialistic attitude?
- D. Review Preliminary Question 2, Session C1. Do the churches of your community work toward the creation of new unities among divided humanity, or do they sanctify existing divisions? How can they get beyond ethnic, linguistic, racial, and class divisions?

### Prayer

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*At the time of writing, Alfred Krass was a consultant to the Evangelism Working Group. He is currently involved in neighborhood ministry in Philadelphia, and contributes a regular column on urban mission to The Other Side. Studies ©National Council of Churches, reprinted by permission. The entire policy statement may be obtained from the NCC, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 10027.*



## Review Essay

***Religion on Capitol Hill: Myths and Realities* by Peter L. Benson and Dorothy L. Williams (Harper and Row, 1982, 224 pp., hb, \$11.95). Reviewed by Boyd Reese, Graduate Student in the Department of Religion, Temple University.**

Many myths are floating around today concerning the relation between religion and politics. Many of these have to do with the connection between conservative theology and conservative politics. The Moral Majority and other Christian New Right groups have built their case on this myth, and the media have often accepted their claims uncritically.

This book by Benson and Williams, colleagues at the Search Institute in Minneapolis, explodes these myths, as their subtitle indicates. While they did not set out to discredit the myths of the New Right (their survey work was done prior to the rise to prominence of the New Right in 1980), they discredit the picture of Congress being a hotbed of secular humanism with fundamentally different values and religious commitments than its constituency. They also demolish the notion that evangelicals are a united conservative political force. To their credit, Benson and Williams use myth in its everyday sense, "something accepted as truth without careful investigation" rather than "a story that expresses or explains a basic truth," the definition favored by professional religionists in academic circles.

The study is an exercise in empirical sociology of religion and voting behavior. Neither of these is unusual—empirical sociology has become increasingly sophisticated over the past twenty years, and studies of voting behavior are the staple diet of political science. What is surprising is that this is the first major study to marry the methods and focus on the relation of religion to politics in Congress. The study interviewed a random sample of Senators and Representatives (80 of 112 consented to interviews, a very respectable figure given the subjects), using a fifty-item questionnaire that identified 124 specific beliefs and behaviors. Since the questionnaire included both forced-choice and open-ended questions, the responses were not limited to the researcher's formulations. The questionnaire is included in an appendix. The thirteen scales constructed from these interviews are statistically valid. One of the strong features of the book is the avoidance of academic jargon and the use of language that is easily understood by the uninitiated.

The thirteen scales are the heart of the study because they are the foundations for the profiles of six different types of religious orientation found in Congress. Two scales relate to the importance the Member of Congress (M.C.) attached to religion: the Pro-Religion and Pro-Church scales. Three scales dealt with theological orientation: the Evangelical, Christian Orthodoxy, and Symbolic Concept of God scales. These three are a marked improvement over earlier work in this area. I would quibble over one point: as the authors define their terms, the Evangelical scale is logically a subset of the Christian Orthodoxy scale; Orthodoxy as implemented has more to do with belief, while Evangelical has more to do with practical piety. The Evangelical theme "emphasizes the nearness of God." God and Jesus are viewed in loving, close, parental images. Salvation comes through belief in God or faith in Christ. The reporting of a born-again experience and the experience of feeling God's presence are other items. One item declares that everything in Scripture is true and factual—an attempt at tapping inerrancy as a characteristic of Evangelicals. Given the way this scale is con-

structed, it seems to me that it would be quite possible to come out "moderately evangelical" on it, yet be fully within the boundaries of genuine evangelicalism. I think it is very unlikely that a person would score high on this scale and low on the Orthodoxy scale.

There is a further problem here. While the authors mention the difficulty of developing a succinct definition of orthodoxy, it seems to me that disagreement on any one item on their five-item orthodoxy scale would rule out a person's being orthodox: God as a personal being, Jesus as divine, the reality of life after death, belief in the existence of both heaven and hell, and belief that God played a role in the writing of Scripture. Given these five items, I don't see how one could be considered "moderately" orthodox.

The real breakthrough in the study is the development of an integrated approach to the way religion is perceived and lived. This is done through identifying eight religious themes that are combined into four pairs: Religious Identity, Focus, Message Received, and Consequence. Several of the themes have been used in earlier studies, but this is the first time they have been put together in a comprehensive fashion.

The Religious Identity pair uses the Agentic and Communal themes. These are developed from the work of David Bakan, *The Duality of Human Existence* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966). The issue addressed is how persons view themselves. The Agentic person focuses on the individual, and "in the religious context the Agentic theme reinforces and solidifies a person's tendencies to focus on his/her own needs." The Communal theme recognizes more of the social context of persons, and aspects of identity that are corporate. M.C.'s who score high on the Communal theme say their religion is strongly related to a sense of connectedness with and responsibility for others. The Agentic and the Communal are the most powerful themes—to some degree they are predictive of the others. The Religious Focus pair utilizes the Vertical and Horizontal themes, understood in conventional terms. The person who scores high on the Vertical theme places a high value on maintaining a firm relationship with God. The Horizontal theme is also called the Justice theme, since those with a high score said their religion impelled them to work for peace and justice. The Religious Message Received is Restricting or Releasing. In the Restricting theme, the focus is on limits, controls, boundaries. The Releasing theme sees religion as freeing people to live up to their full potential. The Religious Consequence pair related religion as Comforting and religion as Challenging.

It is significant to understand that none of these themes ever exist as pure types. Even the eight that make up the seemingly opposite pairs can and do co-exist together in the same person. Benson and Williams drive this home by quotations from the Bible that exhibit the characteristics of each of the eight themes discussed. They use the illustration of a person who adopts a Restricting style of religion by voluntarily taking on rigid disciplines, yet freed from the burdens that worry most of us, illustrates the Releasing theme by courage and risk-taking.

The explosion of myths begins when the thirteen scales are used to construct portraits of six types of religious orientation found in Congress. The six types were discovered by applying the statistical technique of cluster analysis to the thirteen scales. The results fell into six clusters, the six religious types. While some of the terms used for these six types are value-laden, they do flow legitimately

from the data revealed in the survey. Profiles of the six types are given in graphical form in an appendix.

Two of the types are of lesser concern for those of us who are particularly interested in evangelicals and politics: the Nontraditional religionists and the Nominal religionists, which together make up 31% of the sample. The other four types are of more interest to *TSF Bulletin* readers. Legalistic religionists make up 15% of the M.C.'s surveyed. They are characterized by high scores on the Agentic and Restricting scales, and high on Christian Orthodoxy but moderate on Evangelicalism (and Symbolic concept of God). They are moderate on both the Pro-Church and Pro-Religion scales. Self-Concerned religionists, 29% of the sample, score high on the Agentic, Vertical, and Comforting scales. They are high on both Christian Orthodoxy and Evangelical, and low on the Symbolic concept of God. Pro-Church and Pro-Religion are both high. Self-Concerned religionists score lowest of all the types on the Communal scale. The Legalistic and Self-Concerned are similar in several ways. They rank first and second on the Agentic and Restricting, and last and next to last on their opposites, the Communal and Releasing themes.

The chief characteristic of the Integrated religionists, 14% of the sample, is that they rank highest of all on the Releasing theme. They tend to be balanced between the pairs on several themes, seeking a "both/and" middle way approach. Their profile bears a superficial similarity to the Nominal type, with scores for both types tending to be in the middle. The way religion is understood and expressed is vastly different, however. On an examined/unexamined continuum, Nominalists had the lowest ranking, along with the Legalists, while the Integrated share the top spot with the People-Concerned. The 14% of the sample that make up the People-Concerned score considerably higher than any of the others on the Challenge and Horizontal themes. They are also highest on the Communal theme. The authors say of this type, "There is a curious combination of energy and calm that is communicated through the interviews with these people. The calm, to be fair, may have been the result of their relative comfort with the topics being explored. But there is also an energy, an enthusiasm for the possibility of change in the country and the world that gives their interviews a unique, hopeful flavor." The People-Concerned and the Integrated are "first cousins." Both the Pro-Church and Pro-Religion scales show that religion is important to them and that they are actively involved in church life. Both are on the high side of moderate on the Evangelical theme. While People-Concerned score low on the Symbolic concept of God, they refuse to settle for easy definitions of the nature of God, although their beliefs are sufficiently traditional to receive a moderate score on Christian Orthodoxy. These two orientations received the highest scores on the examined religion scale.

Benson and Williams provide a detailed chapter on the relation between religious orientation and voting behavior. They identify a set of parallels between politics and religion: Individualism-Preserving religion (Agentic, Vertical, Comforting, Restricting) and Community-Building religion (Communal, Horizontal, Releasing) are correlates of conservatism (Individualism-Preserving politics) and liberalism (Community-Building politics). These terms are carefully defined and discussed, so the labels are not as tendentious as they might appear. In terms of the six religious types, there is a strong tendency of Legalists and Self-Concerned to be

conservative, People-Concerned to be liberal, and Integrated to be moderate. The discussion is much richer than this sketch can begin to indicate. The authors conclude, "Members' religious beliefs and values are strongly connected to voting on specific issues in ways that can be explained by our religion-politics theory." This is a major achievement, and their claim is backed up by their statistical interpretation of their data.

The way the religion-politics connection works out can be seen especially in the chapter on the "New Christian Right." Using a Christian Voice index, the authors defined "Supporters" of the New Right agenda as those who scored 85 or above on a scale of 100 (21 M.C.'s) and "opposers" as those who scored 15 or less (22 M.C.'s). (Note that the two types together add up to just over half the sample of 80.) Supporters and Opposers were equally committed to Scripture as the Word of God and Jesus as Savior. They were equally likely to experience God in a close, personal way, read the Bible, and attend church. There are significant differences—but not the ones the New Right claims. Supporters placed a high emphasis on the four elements of Individualism-Preserving religion. Most of the support for the New Right agenda came from Legalists and Self-Concerned; none from People-Concerned or Integrated. "In sum, the New Christian Right appears to place minimal emphasis on reaching out to people, but instead is maximally devoted to promoting and governing the interests and welfare of the self." The Opposers are spread across the six types, most being Integrated, People-Concerned, or Nontraditional, for whom Community-Building serves as an active disposition.

This is a very significant study, both for its advances in the study of the theoretical relations between religion and politics, and for its demythologizing of the claims of the New Right. It will be disturbing to those who think that theology alone is a sufficient foundation for political action, but its conclusions won't be surprising for those who have any familiarity with the social sciences.

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### ***The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology***

by Bruce J. Malina (John Knox, 1981, 169 pp., \$9.95). Reviewed by Grant Osborne, Associate Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

The uniqueness of this book is its attempt to trace themes through all of New Testament literature from the standpoint of anthropology/sociology. In keeping with the new approaches from the social sciences, this one shows a wide range of knowledge stemming from current anthropological theory. In distinction from most, however, this book tries to present the material in ways which the non-scholar can understand. Malina argues that NT writings cannot be understood until the culture behind them is perceived. He uses three types of models, drawn from current anthropologists, to explain the first century cultural matrix: the structural-functionalist model, which looks at social systems in terms of an integrated whole based on a consensus of values which gives it cohesion; the conflict model, which views society as composed of diverse groups competing for prominence and continuously changing as the society strives for balance; and the symbolic model, which centers upon the symbolic meanings attached to human interaction and social values.

Malina applies these models to five major facets of the biblical world. First, honor and shame are seen as pivotal values of the first century, determining boundaries of power and position and acquired by family connections or exceptional repute. Second, individual and corporate dimensions are examined. Malina sees three zones of activity determining the function of the individual within

the group: eyes-heart as the "zone of emotion-fused thought"; mouth-ears as the "zone of self-expressive speech"; and hands-feet as the "zone of purposeful activity." Third, Malina discusses the peasant society which dominated the ancient Mediterranean world. Since the preindustrial society primarily consisted of rural people or artisans, the basic need was security. Fourth, kinship and marriage provide the network of constant obligations within society. Malina traces the various stages, from the conciliatory approach of the patriarchal period to the defensive approach of the first century. Fifth, rules of purity (clean and unclean) demonstrate the social boundaries between sacred and profane or between acceptance and rejection. Post-exilic Judaism saw this in terms of class structure or space, e.g., Temple worship. Christianity centered upon the congregation and immediate access to God in Christ.

Malina's work is a worthy model, especially in its broad scope. However, this strength is also his major weakness, for he is forced to move across the broad expanse of complex topics, e.g., purity rules (cp. Mary Douglas' work), with too little interaction. I found myself unconvinced time and again, for instance in the generalization of marriage patterns through the biblical periods. Nevertheless, the work is provocative and worth the time spent analyzing it. While one may not agree with everything, one has been introduced to key issues and been provided with a methodology which can help greatly in elucidating the cultural background of the biblical period.

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### ***Jesus and His Adversaries: The Form and Function of the Conflict Stories in the Synoptic Tradition***

by Arland J. Hultgren (Augsburg, 1979, 224 pp., \$8.50). Reviewed by Grant Osborne, Associate Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

This interesting work studies the peculiar gospel stories centering upon the ongoing tension between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. It is a form- and redaction-critical approach which studies and seeks to reconstruct the *Sitz im Leben* behind this particular genre. Therefore, tradition-critical criteria predominate, but they are not used so woodenly as in the past. Hultgren assumes neither historicity or non-historicity but tries to trace the nucleus in the historical Jesus and the various changes as they progressed in the apologetic needs of the church. Here he adds genre criticism to redaction, delineating the common features in the conflict form and the socioreligious factors which produced those characteristics. Therefore, the first section of the book studies analogies from Jewish and Hellenistic literature. He argues that those stories originating in a Palestinian setting are apologetic in purpose while those having their provenance in the Hellenistic church are catechetical, centering upon the needs of the community.

The rest of the book applies this work to the stories themselves. He divides them into unitary (narratives which circulated as a unit) and non-unitary (stories in which Jesus' closing saying may have been originally independent of its setting) types. Finally, Hultgren studies the process of collection and utilization, beginning with Mark 2:1-36. He believes that these conflict stories were combined in the Galilean church ca. A.D. 40-44, probably in opposition to the encroachment of Judean Pharisaism. Second, he traces the distinct function of the conflict narratives in Mark (where they form a prelude to the passion but also are indications of Jesus' authority), Matthew (where they stress Jesus as Teacher and form part of Matthew's polemic against the Pharisees) and Luke (where they have less significance and form part of his redemptive-historical and political-apologetic emphasis).

This is one of the better works stemming from classical redaction criticism. However, it falls prey to the two basic errors of the school: 1) It is too speculative, drawing conclusions from a reconstructed history of the early church and its dogma. The movement today is away from artificial *Sitz im Leben* reconstructions toward a stress on the work as a whole. Genre study is being removed from form-critical speculations. 2) It ignores the challenge of narrative hermeneutics, which has rejected the negative non-results of redaction criticism and studies the literary flow of the text as it is. This produces far more concrete results. For instance, the last section on the gospels (twelve pages long) should form the entire second half, and the stories should be seen in their contexts. The first half could follow the type of work seen in *Semeia* 20 on pronouncement stories or *Semeia* 14 on apocalyptic.

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### ***The Genius of Paul: A Study in History*** by Samuel Sandmel, 3rd edition (Fortress, 1979, 256 pp., \$5.95). Reviewed by Steven Woodward, Professor of New Testament, Win-nipeg Theological Seminary.

Heretofore, Sandmel's reputation rested chiefly on his ability to show that many of the accepted conclusions of New Testament scholarship relied upon insufficient evidence. Indeed 90% of the facts are not available. Despite this skepticism, however, Sandmel confidently deduces the missing pieces, and presents a novel reconstruction of Paul's contribution. Primarily, Paul's genius stemmed from his troubled personality and the influence of his Greek Diaspora thought world.

Before Paul, Christianity subtracted nothing from Judaism. It "merely" "added the belief that Jesus" was "God's agent and destined to return." Due to the influences mentioned above, Paul "recreated" Christianity in his own image. Negatively, he rejected Jewish law. Positively, he substituted the new idea that personal transformation (=escape from the body) takes place through "personal intuition, or the Holy Spirit, or Christ." However, Paul's genius was unrealistic. It tore down one authority (Law) without adequately replacing it (Christ). This threatened the early church with an uncontrollable individualism. Nearly the whole NT represents the story of the later church's two-fold reaction to Paul. (1) The church accepted "by faith" versus the Jewish law. (2) It neutralized Paul's individualism by adding the law of the Church, e.g., Acts 15 council and decrees, to assure maximum church order. This explains Acts' fictionalized account. Acts lowered the historic *sole* eminence of Paul to a *shared* eminence to neutralize his preeminent influence. The so-called Petrine tradition (*ethical code*, Jesus, parousia) is a fiction designed later to bring "Paul" down to reality.

Sandmel's reconstruction rests on troubled assumptions. (1) Psychology, not Christology, converted Paul. Paul argues the contrary (Gal 1-2). Sandmel's belief that for Paul Christ was no more than a divine good angel-spirit (based on Phil 2:6-11) tacitly illumines Sandmel's prejudice to strengthen the psychological factor. It also indicates his attempt to lessen the connection between Christ, Paul, and the early church. Philippians 3:4-6 indicates that pre-Christian Paul had no "debilitating uncertainties" about the ability to keep the law. Romans 7 does not refer to pre-Christian Paul.

(2) Greek thought conditioned Paul's transformational theology. Sandmel goes too far. First, Paul did not hold that conversion = escape from the body, as in Greek thought. Paul never contrasts "flesh" (evil) and "body" though he does contrast "flesh" (evil) and "spirit." The body belongs to Christ (1 Cor 6). Second, Sandmel does not explain how

Jews in the diaspora could worship with Jews in Palestine, i.e., what was the extent of difference?.

There are further problems. It is extremely doubtful that nearly the whole NT was a reaction *per se* to Paul's individualism. It is more likely that it is a reaction to the developing awareness of the enormity of the Christ whom Sandmel demeans. It is also unlikely that the addition of Christ to Judaism would leave Judaism unchanged, as Sandmel assumes. It is hard to believe that Christianity before Paul was transformationless and needed Paul to recreate it. This again requires that the theory be sustained by jettisoning nearly the whole NT evidence. Finally, it is strange that the "genius" of Paul stemmed from an "extremist" and escapist, whose contribution was "unrealistic" and whose force proceeded from a mind which was not "profound" or "unremittingly deep" or disciplined.

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***The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology***

by Robert Sokolowski (University of Notre Dame Press, 1982, 192 pp., \$6.95 pa.). Reviewed by Robert Kennedy, Ph.D. candidate, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario.

The issues of faith, reason, and knowledge of God have been familiar to Christian thinkers since Tertullian and Justin Martyr. Pascal's assertion that the God of the philosophers is not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is famous today. If, like me, you thought of this tradition when you saw the title of the book under review, you would be surprised upon reading the text. A more appropriate setting is provided by Rahner's article entitled "Transcendental Theology" (*Encyclopedia of Theology*). Rahner states that an important task facing transcendental theology is the need to explain the relationship between God and the world. "Only knowledge of God attained by a transcendental method prevents God being regarded as a part within the all." While Professor Sokolowski distinguishes between his position and both Thomism and transcendental Thomism, his purpose is clearly to answer Rahner's call. He informs us in the preface that the subject of investigation is "the Christian doctrine of Creation and the Christian distinction between God and the world."

The book begins with an analysis of the doctrine of God as found in the writings of Anselm. This notion of God is then contrasted to the pagan concepts of deity in Greek antiquity. Following this is a chapter entitled "The Metaphysics of Christian Belief" which draws heavily from Thomas. The notion of virtue is the subject of two chapters, one on natural virtue in Aristotle, the other on the theological virtues in Thomas. The fact that Kant's moral philosophy disagrees with Aristotle is considered sufficient reason for dismissing Kant on this point. On whether we can say that God exists, a positive answer is given which is supported by reference to Anselm. The final consideration involves the practical effects the proposed view of God and the world would have on Scripture reading, Christian experience, and the sacramental life.

In the preface, Sokolowski defines his task as that of "making the philosophical and theological clarifications necessary to show that Christian mysteries . . . can be stated as meaningful and true, that they can be asserted as real on their own terms, that they do not need to be deciphered into a merely symbolic or a simply human meaning." I seriously question whether the author has accomplished his stated intention. On the one hand, committed Thomists do not reduce talk of Christian mysteries to the merely symbolic; that is more characteristic of those following Bultmann or Tillich. If Sokolowski intends to speak to adherents of these men, how-

ever, arguments based on the authority of Aristotle, Anselm and Thomas are unlikely to be very persuasive. He would have to show more willingness to interact with traditions other than his own, and argue for his position.

For those who wrestle with the contrast between the God who acts in history and the God who is eternal and immutable, this book is of little help, if any. If you question the possibility of doing metaphysics, or of using analogical language about God, you will find Sokolowski merely assumes the validity of both without argument. If, on the other hand, you want a modified Thomist's version of God and the world, this book might be of interest.

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***The Authoritative Word, Essays on the Nature of Scripture*, ed. by Donald McKim (Eerdmans, 1983, 270 pp., \$10.95). Reviewed by William J. Abraham, Seattle Pacific University.**

The battle for the battle rages on. After marching forth like David to meet their respective Goliaths, the protagonists have now joined forces to meet each other in the form of learned articles. Donald McKim has assembled a splendid collection which deserves to be widely used in courses on the nature and authority of Scripture. There are thirteen pieces in all which are divided into three sections: sources and canon, doctrine and its development, and current views. The writers include Robert Grant, C. K. Barrett, F. F. Bruce, Dewey Beegle, and Avery Dulles. Some readers will feel cheated for most of the material appears elsewhere as chapters in books; but the value lies in the composite effect of the whole and the intention behind the project. Clearly McKim hopes to provide a sane, middle position in the current debate about biblical authority.

There are at least two major elements in that position. First, there is a wholehearted commitment to the critical enterprise. Thus the early articles trace the production of the biblical books, examine how the NT used the OT, and show the process of canonisation which operated. Moreover, there is a spirited appeal to the theological significance of historical criticism by James D. Smart in the last section. Secondly, there is a commitment to what we might call a centrist position on revelation, inspiration and authority. Positively, this would look like this: God has made himself known through special revelation (Beegle); the most important locus of that revelation is now the Bible, which we must read in faith if we are to hear God speak to us (Donald Miller); the Bible has primacy over every putative source in theology (Bloesch); it is attested as the Word of God by the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit (Berkouwer); its authority and inspiration must be worked out in relation to its salvific purpose (Ridderbos). This is the church doctrine of inspiration and authority (Rogers). Remarkably, there is now considerable consensus across the ecumenical divide for Catholics and Protestants who are coming to agree on the Bible as a primary embodiment of the Word of God and as an indispensable norm for theology (Dulles).

This summary cannot do justice to the wealth of material here. All the articles are worthy of careful study and supply fascinating leads of their own in the footnotes. Yet it is very important that we attempt to see the message of the whole. Without this there is no middle position and the project as a whole fails. The essays would still provide a valuable quarry for students but it would not provide a balanced overview where all sides would be fairly represented. As an attempt to lay out a centrist position the project fails. Beneath the veneer of any middle way we might construct from the materials provided there are fundamental flaws which cannot be ignored. Let me cite some specifics.

First there is ambivalence about inerrancy. Some

are resolutely against it; others are for it in a modified form. Secondly, there is ambivalence about the full consequences of historical criticism. Does it involve only the appropriation of new information about the origins of Scripture or does it also involve serious consequences about how we think about divine action in the world? Smart recognises the danger of the latter but his treatment of it is ludicrously inadequate. Thirdly, there is no agreement on the church's position on Scripture. Rogers, ignoring important criticisms of his recent proposals, keeps up the line that there is a church doctrine on the authority of the Bible. This is crucial to his defence of a centrist position because his case rests on fundamentally historical premises. Yet Dulles contrasts the modern consensus among Protestants and Catholics with that of the orthodoxy of recent centuries. Fourthly, there is severe tension on the role of reason in the warrants for Scripture and its use generally in theology. When the issue surfaces, the tendency throughout is to set reason sharply against the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. This move is central to the Rogers/McKim alternative to inerrancy. Yet there is no consistency. Bloesch and Berkouwer have no time for philosophy at all; but Rogers baptises Plato as a hero and damns Aristotle as an empiricist heretic. Even then, Berkouwer's clever and interesting analysis of the witness of the Spirit is totally inadequate both as an exposition of the NT and of the Reformers and Rogers gives no reason why Plato is to be favored over Aristotle or why these are the only alternatives.

Although there is much here with which I agree, I find the composite effect chaotic as an attempt to deal coherently with the authority of Scripture. Compared with the fundamentalist alternative, it all looks relatively attractive. In its own right it is scissors and paste theology. Pieces from here and there are patched together as a cosy, middle position which does not exist as a consistent entity. This is the truth of the matter; post-fundamentalist evangelicals must face it.

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***Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology***

by Colin E. Gunton (Eerdmans, 1983, 228 pp., \$7.95). Reviewed by Christian D. Kettler, Ph.D. student in Systematic Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary.

In contemporary Protestant theological circles, it is commonplace to do theological thinking in dialogue with past theology, but usually with the assumption that the modern view is vastly different from the ancient one, for various philosophical, cultural, and historical reasons. But this enterprise is not often embarked upon with a theological understanding of *how* we use the theology of the past in the world of the present. In this book, Colin E. Gunton has done so, and with admirable results. Gunton's thesis is that the traditional Christologies of the past must be given a stronger voice in modern theology. He argues that one cannot change the *form* of a theological statement without changing its *content*. If we are to maintain a real continuity with what Christians in the past believed about Christ, we must at least in some ways see some congruence between "their words and our words." Gunton is thoroughly conversant with both historical and contemporary Christologies, as evidenced by his discussion of the debate between "Christology from above" and "Christology from below." *Contra* Pannenberg, Gunton believes that these forms overlap greatly, in both the patristic and contemporary periods. He finds the main difference between ancient and modern Christologies in the tendency of the patristic writers to abstract Christ from history in order to eternalize him, while the modern tendency is to abstract him from eternity

by making his temporality absolute. But the similarities between patristic heresies and modern Christologies should not be ignored: Both were "dualistic" in outlook, "which does not refer to a metaphysic in which two different kinds of reality are supposed, but one which conceives two realities as either opposites or contradictions of each other" (p. 86). This is the basic similarity between Platonism and post-Kantian philosophy. The alternative, according to Gunton, is to search for "elements of intrinsic intelligibility in the biblical portrayal of Christ." This is done in dialogue with contemporary New Testament Christologies, which Gunton finds, for the most part, revealing their own dualistic frameworks. Within the admitted diversity of NT Christologies, the author understands the "presence" of Christ, along with the past Jesus, as the "inner intelligibility" which connects the NT together (Cf. Dietrich Ritschl, Hans Frei, and Walter Lowe).

It has been faulty ideas of the relationship between time and eternity which have caused so much trouble for Christology in both the patristic and modern eras. "The logic of divine love" is Jesus of Nazareth making known and restoring "authentic temporal existence" through the manifestation of its eternal reality. But in order to make Christological statements today, we must see scientific knowledge in the sense of "indwelling" the object, to use Polanyi's term. Gunton finds merit for this in both the "in Christ" motif of Paul and the theological significance of Christian worship and community. While this point is important, the author would have done well to answer the obvious objection, What objective control do we have in order to differentiate between our subjectivity and the objectivity which we are studying? How do we avoid a "theological myopia" which could result in some presentations of an "indwelling" epistemology?

A major chapter on the relationship between Christology and soteriology emphasizes the need to recognize the inevitable ontology which each statement about God and the world will assume. In a theological climate which often denies the importance of the incarnation for today, Gunton argues forcefully for the importance of God taking on human life as the strongest argument for the value of human life. The final chapter includes a discussion of Christology and the rise of Christendom with its "authoritarian" Christ figure, along with implications for the relationship between Christology and politics today.

Gunton raises some questions which need to be explored further. What is the criterion for a supposed continuity between past and present theology? The argument for the value of continuity needs to be made more explicit by orthodox theologians. What does he mean by "the presence of Christ?" We believe it, but what do we mean by it? Gunton's book is a very stimulating work, which can be of equal value to both the theologian, as a creative contribution, and to the seminary student, as a challenging introduction to the crucial issues in Christology, both yesterday and today.

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### **Towering Babble**

by **Vernard Eller** (The Brethren Press, 1983, 190 pp., \$7.95). Reviewed by **Kevin V. Dodd**, Th.M. Student, Fuller Theological Seminary.

Since its founding, the Church of the Brethren has not been unaccustomed to taking controversial and even unpopular positions. Vernard Eller, professor of religion at the University of La Verne, an ordained minister within the Church of the Brethren, bears this same distinction. Just one year after his much-criticized book, *The Language of Canaan and the Grammar of Feminism*, he has now placed his denomination under careful and unswerving

scrutiny in order to clarify its present position in relation to its history and call it to honest re-evaluation. His church, then, becomes a case study for what Eller sees as a typical situation of many churches today.

It should be emphasized that Eller stands solidly within his church. "Let it be said that nothing in this book means that I have given up on the Church of the Brethren," he writes. "The sickness is diagnosed as a step toward the patient's recovery, not as an excuse for deserting and rejecting him." The aim, then, is essentially positive.

How does Eller proceed with his diagnosis? He does so by centering his attention on the ailing heart of Brethrenism. As early as the church's founding in 1708 (Schwarzenau, Germany), there was a decisive commitment to the New Testament as the rule of faith and practice. This is still affirmed today, apparently unanimously. Yet according to Eller it becomes increasingly clear that the contemporary church has reneged on this, being seduced by unbiblical elements within the greater environment.

The 1981 Indianapolis Annual Conference is a case in point. The theme was "Go Now With God." Speakers approached this in terms of the individual's journey, the outcome of which is God (the numinous) or self-fulfillment. The Bible resists this at all points, counters Eller, as does biblical theology (e.g., Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer). These approach such issues as "from above" looking to God and his revelation. The speakers approached "from below" starting with religious experience and inevitably building a "towering babble" of reductionist theology.

This approach from below characterizes the Brethren's well-known stance on peace and non-resistance. According to Eller, the approach probably had its beginning during the Social Gospel movement. Before this, it was much more biblically based. Currently, however, Brethren peacemaking can be characterized as "peace zealotism." Instead of absolutizing God alone, this approach treats horizontal choices, which are relative, as if they were vertical, and hence absolute. Relative righteousness is confused with the absolute righteousness of God. One, therefore, begins to center on a selected sin in the interests of promoting one's own selective righteousness.

What ties this all together is a thrust toward what Eller describes as the "parity principle." There is an attempt here to equalize the relationship between God and humanity. Truth shifts from being objective and testable to subjective and relative. The end and goal of Christianity becomes religious experience. "Righteousness," "justice," and "peace" are defined in terms of abstract equality rather than by Scripture.

Eller counters these throughout the book by carefully interacting with biblical exegetes and dogmatic theologians. His purpose is not to establish a program for reform, but to provoke an honest reconsideration. This could take place either by the church aligning itself again with its biblical profession, or by aligning the profession with its current practice. To Eller, the former is definitely preferable.

The style is provocative and engaging. It takes little imagination to apply this book to many other denominations and to many peace organizations. One can get somewhat disturbed by what often appears to be a stereotyped presentation of the liberation theologies, but Eller's points are always incisive, even if not always directly applicable. As a member of a denomination with pietistic roots, Eller avoids the temptation of individualism with the same rare adroitness as Philip Spener did in the seventeenth century. In fact, there are many general similarities between both these men's "pious wishes."

What Eller has done is what Karl Barth has exhorted us all to do. In light of the real unity of the church and the scandal of denominationalism, each particular church must, from its own peculiar center, allow itself to hear and be guided by the

living Jesus Christ, and then attempt seriously to hear others in their same endeavor. In this book, Eller has located the center of his church and prepared it to listen.

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**Thomas More: History and Providence** by **Alistair Fox** (Yale, 1983, 288 pp., \$19.95). Reviewed by **Donald D. Smeeton**, International Correspondence Institute.

Psychobiographies can be a bane or a boon for historians. Alistair Fox, senior lecturer in English from Otago, offers neither. He does provide, however, an original inquiry into the intellectual and mental development of Thomas More.

Without repeating the accusations of the Sixteenth-century Foxe, Fox contends that More's youth and early adulthood are characterized not only by utopian optimism, but also by the tensions of holding together the sacred and the secular. He believed the Catholic concept of the intrinsic corruption of society, yet he sought to enjoy it. He held a traditional Catholic ascetic piety associated with the monastery, but longed for the new learning and the transformation of society. Trying to embrace both the court and the cloister, More's paradoxical synthesis of *Utopia* was, in reality, nowhere, certainly not in his own conscience.

More's second period, identified by his religious controversies, is the least stressed in his earlier biographies. With the hope of preserving the status quo, More engaged the heretics, but in so doing destroyed his earlier synthesis and failed to practice the urbane tolerance which he had preached in *Utopia*. In the winter's storm of controversy, More became unrelenting, irrational, uncharitable and dishonest. As his fears for England's religious security became fearful realities, More fought frantically to reverse the tide.

However tossed by the storm of controversy, More righted himself toward the end of his life. Freed from the daily demands of public office, More returned to his essential balance, if not his original synthesis. *A Treatise Upon Religion, A Dialogue of Comfort, and De Tristitia Christi* illustrate that sanity, if not complete saintliness, had returned. In the tower More re-established the comfort of personal piety and practice.

Fox's strength in literature shows in the mastery of More's extensive writings and his rich classical allusions, but he wisely does not attempt to function as a psychologist, historian, or theologian. Therefore, the theological concerns are sometimes slighted as Tyndale, Luther, Fish, and St. German are seen through More's eyes rather than in the context of their own writings. Additionally in this approach to periodization, there is always the danger of over drawing the differences for the sake of the contrast. To his credit, Fox admits this danger even as he presses for separation because the seeds of destruction are evident in More's earliest works and he helplessly slips into polemic in some of his last.

Perhaps Fox's greatest weakness is a tendency to speculate about possibilities and to overqualify his conclusions. To cite but one example: "The association of heresy suggests that More may have been Chapuys' informant, especially since he had just argued precisely the same connection in his *Supplication of Souls*, published in the same month. Even if More had not supplied Chapuys with his information the fact that Chapuys possessed it means that More could just as easily have foreseen the breach with Rome in late 1529" (p. 176, reviewer's emphasis).

After all the criticisms have been voiced, one must say that Fox has provided not a man for all seasons, but rather a man of all seasons. Fox has not given the final word on More's intellectual development,

but with 1985 coming as More's jubilee, this book arrives in time to be a catalyst for the ongoing research on this English humanist, polemist, and saint.

—Donald Dean Smeeton

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***A Passion for Jesus: A Passion for Justice***  
by Esther Byle Bruland and Stephen Charles Mott (Judson Press, 1983, 159 pp., \$9.95).  
Reviewed by David O. Moberg, Professor of Sociology, Marquette University.

Evangelicals generally have focused their social concern efforts around direct aid to needy persons and families rather than "social action" to reform society and its institutions. Emphasizing individual sin, they have been loathe to recognize institutionalized evils by which moral persons, even dedicated Christians, are trapped into engaging in activities which have serious immoral consequences.

This book is an excellent introduction to ways of promoting Christian justice. Written primarily for lay Christians as a tool to help them deal with any or all issues they confront, it is not a text on any specific social problems. It also is a good resource for seminarians and pastors who wish to sharpen their own sensitivities and help others to develop skills for combating social evil.

The first five chapters focus upon causes of human suffering and the biblical base for battling structural evil. God's grace, love, and justice and the nature of his kingdom motivate an active response. The next six chapters indicate various ways in which an evangelical Christian faith can be implemented by imitating Jesus Christ and continuing his life and work on earth. The concluding chapter centers around the goal of being "A Reconciling People" who experience the reconciliation of Christ and follow his example, whether the evaluation of progress and strategy reveals success or not.

Every chapter has a narrative section summarizing the theological basis for action and an "Engage" section with practical exercises designed to give further insights and help readers apply what was learned. Many of these are presented as if for a congregation's social action group. "Engage" gives practical action steps to use awareness, commitment, prayer, power, and cooperation responsibly and effectively. The anticipated outcome is not mere "understanding" of and knowledge about social justice but the germination and nurture of pragmatic actions to promote it.

A wholesome balance is maintained between evangelism and social concern, helping persons and confronting sinful structures, personal piety and public justice, proclamation and demonstration of God's love, objective and subjective aspects of morality, and other perspectives on faith and works that all too often are wrongly viewed as antithetical polarities. The authors indicate that the church too often is seen as only "a fellowship of the strong" launching out to change the world or else as "a hospital for the weak" which focuses upon their personal comfort and healing but loses sight of the spiritual warfare that must be waged in the world. They warn against programming for defeat by choosing action issues which are beyond the scope of the power of the group. They tell how to make organizational decisions with appropriate timing, accountability by the individuals among whom the labor is divided, and group discipline for carrying out the strategy aiming to bring about "creative reforms which directly address the roots of our social and systemic ills."

Obviously, I have great admiration for this book, but it is not without minor flaws. At least three times (pp. 25, 63, 101) readers are told to skip several pages in order first to read or complete an exercise that is in the "Engage" section. This awkwardness could

have been avoided by deviations from the rigid narrative—engage division of each chapter. The book's conclusion is abrupt, as if ending the process is final instead of comprising the beginning of a new or modified cycle of action planning. The lack of an index hampers usefulness as a reference book.

Contrary to the authors' perspective, experience indicates that a simple lifestyle may actually consume much extra time for repairing, recycling, making essential items, and preparing foods, not buying them ready-made, so instead of freeing up time for volunteer work, it may reduce the time available. The exercise on voluntary groups does not call attention to informal groups like friendship and kinship circles which often demand large amounts of time and resources for helping others. Local newspapers are called to task for not providing close coverage of the city council and school board, but the complex reality that most serve readers from dozens or even hundreds of cities and school districts is not mentioned. (Perhaps a Christian task-force and newsletter is needed within every one of them in order both to share such news and to present explicitly Christian dimensions of issues which general news sources tend to ignore.)

This book is an excellent primer on evangelical social action. I recommend it for your own reading, for adult education classes, and most of all for use by Christian social concerns committees in local communities and churches.

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***In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development***

by Carol Gilligan (Harvard University Press, 1982, vii + 184 pp., \$5.95 paperback).  
Reviewed by Nancy A. Hardesty, Ph.D., church historian, author of *Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Abingdon, 1984).

Some have said that universalism is women's history. Women have always had a difficult time consigning others, especially infants, to hell.

Carol Gilligan's work in women's moral development may give us a clue as to why. Although her research is in developmental psychology, her findings raise provocative questions for theologians.

Trained under Lawrence Kohlberg, Gilligan begins with the observation that Freud, Erickson, Piaget, Kohlberg, et al., have based their theories concerning developmental life-cycles exclusively on men's experience (a similar observation can certainly be made about theological systems). All of these major theoreticians have observed and admitted that women's experience differs. Rather than following that observation with research which could have been integrated into more comprehensive theories, they have simply proclaimed their male-biased theories as universal and labeled women's experience as deviant.

Gilligan suggests that women's experience, particularly as related to moral decision making, represents rather an alternative pattern. For women

the moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities, rather than from competing rights, and requires for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract. This conception of morality, as concerned with the activity of care, centers moral development around the understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules (p. 19).

In one study Gilligan analyzed the stories men and women told about pictured situations. Men pro-

jected the most violence into a picture of a man on a trapeze holding the hands of his female partner who is in midair. Women saw it as the safest, most related picture, often inventing a safety net to safeguard the relationship.

Gilligan notes that men view the world in terms of hierarchy with their goal to be alone at the top, while women view society as a web of interdependence and their goal is to be secure in the middle. Thus, she says,

The images of hierarchy and web inform different modes of assertion and response: the wish to be alone at the top and the consequent fear that others will get too close; the wish to be at the center of connection and the consequent fear of being too far out on the edge. These disparate fears of being stranded and being caught give rise to different portrayals of achievement and affiliation . . . (p. 62).

In other studies using Kohlberg's famous moral dilemma about Heinz who has a very sick wife and no money to buy needed and very expensive medicine from the druggist, Gilligan analyzes how men and women of various ages view the solution. Men usually see the situation as a clear-cut conflict between rights of life and property. The question is on what basis can one violate society's rules. Again women view it instead as a network of relationships and their conflicting demands. Gilligan notes that the series of questions outlined by Kohlberg to be used by the interviewer is totally irrelevant to the way that women generally construe the moral situation.

Two chapters in Gilligan's book are also devoted to a study she did exploring the moral reasoning of women seeking abortions, certainly enlightening reading for those Christians who view the issue as a simple moral choice between life and selfishness.

A cover story in *Ms.* magazine concerning Gilligan's work (January 1984) raises questions of what her research means in a world where men draw up the options and make the decisions regarding the world's political relationships, peace, food supply, environment, etc. Secular feminists are suggesting that perhaps women who are concerned with the interdependence and survival of all people might offer different perspectives.

The impact of her research on Jim Fowler's theory of faith development should be of interest since he too has uncritically adopted Kohlberg's basic work with male subjects only and has defined the stages of faith development accordingly.

Here, however, I would like to raise some questions about the relevance of Gilligan's research for Christian theology. Her work suggests that when theology is done by women and takes into account women's experience it will ask different questions and come to different conclusions. In her own "Visions of Maturity" she suggests that women will bring "a new perspective on relationships that changes the basic constructs of interpretation":

The moral domain is similarly enlarged by the inclusion of responsibility and care in relationships. And the underlying epistemology correspondingly shifts from the Greek ideal of knowledge as a correspondence between mind and form to the Biblical conception of knowing as a process of human relationship (p. 173).

I would suggest that feminist theology may well be closer to biblical conceptions of relationship and responsibility than previous theologies which have concentrated on philosophical questions of propositional truth.

Feminist theology already appears to have a new emphasis on the church as community of believers

in mutual fellowship rather than as the followers of a given belief system articulated by an authoritative leader. It is clear that women are rejecting men's hierarchy of relationships both on the male grounds of equal rights and also on women's own grounds that such hierarchies hurt everyone involved.

*In a Different Voice* is an important book. Both theologians and politicians need to grapple with the issues it raises if the church and the world are to survive.

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***Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism***

by John B. Cobb, Jr. (Fortress Press, 1982, 150 pp., \$10.95).

***Zen and Christian: The Journey Between***

by John D. Eusden (Crossroad, 1981, 224 pp., \$10.95).

Reviewed by Paul G. Hiebert, Professor of Anthropology and South Asian Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary.

In an age of rapid travel and communication one of the central questions facing people is that of cultural pluralism. For Christians the problem is particularly crucial for it raises the question of how they should respond to other religions. No longer is this an issue confronting only missionaries abroad. It now must be answered by Christians in all walks of life. These volumes present the views of two leading theologians on the relationship between Christianity and Buddhism.

John Eusden, Professor of Christian Theology at Williams College, has participated deeply in the practice of Zen and claims to have found profound insights in its teachings. After giving the reader a brief account of the history of Zen and its relationship to Taoism, the author discusses the main characteristics of the discipline in which Zen is experienced. These include *zazen* or body control and chanting, the use of *koans* or jarring statements aimed at breaking down the barriers of human reason that keep us from seeing reality as it is, controlled body activity, the development of an esthetic awareness, the use of humor and the place of *samadhi* or identification with the one reality that underlies all things. The author then gives a very personal account of his experiences while practicing Zen and while teaching it to students in his classes. This includes a deep self-encounter, a sense of buddhahood or intrinsic nature of everything, a feeling of caring and giving, a confrontation with death and dying, and a sense of the particularity and immediacy of all reality.

The insights provided here help us a great deal in understanding the nature of Zen. Many will question, however, whether a Christian needs to or should enter into the actual practices of another religion in order to understand it. If Christianity is simply a matter of understanding and insights, this might be justified. But if it is a matter of a relationship to Christ as Lord, is not the participation in any other religion idolatry?

Eusden seeks to answer such questions in his comparison of Christianity and Zen. He recognizes that the two cannot be merged in some useful synthesis. There are similarities, but at root they are antithetical. To be sure, there are some parallels between Zen and Christian mysticism, and between Zen and the Ramist logic used by Puritans to transcend the limits of Aristotelian logic. But these lie at the surface. At the deepest levels there are profound differences between the two religions.

Eusden illustrates the differences by contrasting Hakuin Ekaku and Jonathan Edwards, two eighteenth century leaders in their respective religious traditions. For Ekaku, the human dilemma is rooted in ignorance fostered by reason, for

Edwards it is sin. Hakuin depends upon the self and its resources for enlightenment, Edwards upon repentance and God dependence. Hakuin folds the past and the future into the all embracing present and Edwards looks for the culmination of time that will take place in a future day of judgment.

Eusden sides here with Zen and sees the goal is withdrawing from illusion. In so doing he rejects the Christian claim of the unique revelation of truth by God through the Scriptures and the person of Jesus. Contemporary theories of complementarity do permit the holding of different ways of looking at reality, but only when there is a common set of fundamental assumptions underlying them both. This is not the case in Zen and Christianity. Eusden is able to draw from the two, but only, it would appear, by ultimately accepting the fundamental premise of Zen that there is no absolute truth, a premise that attacks Christianity at its very root.

John Cobb, Professor of Theology in the School of Theology at Claremont, seeks to go beyond dialogue towards a mutual transformation of those of different faiths seeking to understand one another. He begins with a review of the discussions in Christian circles regarding dialogue. He concludes that theologians have not been willing to go far enough in their encounter with other faiths. Along with Paul Knitter, John Hick and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, he rejects what he calls the deep-seated tendency of Christians to absolutize their tradition in some way. Christians must be willing to enter dialogue with no reserved areas at all, and with complete openness to learning whatever others may have to teach out of their different experience of the one reality.

To test the consequences of his thesis Cobb undertakes a dialogue with Mahayana Buddhism of the Pure Land school and analyses what the consequences of such a dialogue might be both for the Christian and the Buddhist. The key Buddhist concept he uses to elucidate transformational dialogue is Nirvana or Emptiness because it challenges Christian beliefs at their deepest levels. Briefly tracing the history of Western perceptions of that concept by both Indologists and philosophers, the author proposes his own method for understanding the concept and its contribution to Christian beliefs. This involves what Whitehead calls passing over into the framework of another system of beliefs and then returning to one's own.

According to Cobb, Emptiness within Buddhist faith has four levels of meaning. On the surface it is cessation of clinging to things of this world. On the second level it is the dissolution of the Self and the realization of the True Self not by absorption into deity but by immersion in subjective immediacy. The third level is the affirmation that ultimate reality is emptiness and the deepest level is the abolition of time and history. Cobb seeks to show that despite their seemingly irresolvable contradiction of fundamental Christian beliefs, each of these insights can significantly add to Christian thought. The Christian, he notes, is called to faith without attachment and to think of the self not as autonomous, but in relation to others. He recognizes that it is harder to think of God as Emptiness and history as pure immanence. But, he argues, to do so can help us to understand these concepts in new ways.

The book raises the significant questions inherent in dialogue and carries dialogue to its logical conclusion. It also provides us with valuable insights into Buddhist thought, particularly as it relates to the concept of Nirvana, insights that can help bridge communication between Christians and Buddhists. But it raises the ultimate question, can one enter into transformational dialogue and remain a Christian? Do not changes such as Cobb suggests so alter the fundamental Christian beliefs that the result is a new religious paradigm rather than a more refined understanding of Christianity?

Eusden and Cobb provide us with two models for

dealing with the encounter between Christianity and Buddhism. Eusden seeks to understand Zen by direct exposure. Cobb analyses theological frameworks of the two in order to build a bridge between them. Both provide us with a great deal of insight into Buddhism. But readers will disagree greatly on whether the authors have succeeded in building a bridge between the two religions, or whether, for the sake of mutual understanding, they are not in danger of sacrificing the essence of Christianity and its claims to being the only way unto salvation. This writer believes the latter.

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**BOOK COMMENTS**

***A History of Israel in the Old Testament Period***  
by H. Jagersma (Fortress, 1983, xv + 304 pp., \$13.95).

This text, the cover proclaims, is "a leading textbook" in the Netherlands, and it is not difficult to see why. It is compact (about one-half the size of Bright's *A History of Israel*), well-written, and contains a generous helping of notes, as well as indices, chronological charts, and maps.

Nevertheless, its usefulness in this country is limited by three characteristics. First, coming from the Netherlands, the bulk of the references are to works in Dutch, French, and German (contrast Bright, where the bulk are to works available in English). This is important, because a major desideratum of a text is to be a door into the secondary literature. Second, at a number of points Jagersma advances positions without indicating their difficulties (Dietrich's three redactions of the Deuteronomistic history, von Rad's early dating of the credo in Deut. 26:5f). Third, the social scientific questions becoming increasingly prominent in this country receive little attention, and this despite the strong tradition of German research. Thus, for instance, for Israel under Jahu's dynasty, Jagersma notes "As so often in history, however, the advantages which this [progress] produced were of principal benefit to a small group" without attention here—or elsewhere—to the question of the precise way in which this happened. But this leads to a final consideration.

What is involved in writing a history of Israel? Jagersma has given us a history of political events, and a cursory one at that (but what can one do in 300 pages?). Occasionally Jagersma is able to move from the "what" to the "why," e.g., in the discussion of the pluralistic character of the northern Kingdom. That this move is not made more often is more a symptom of the methodological difficulties and the lack of evidence which challenge all who work in this field. Nevertheless, the range of questions needs to be broadened. Minimally, ideas, groupings, and religious practices need equal time alongside events—together with their interrelationships. Then we will begin to have a partner in dialogue which will expand our own horizons.

—Thomas H. McAlpine

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***Studies in the Patriarchal Narratives***  
by William McKane (Columbia University Press, 1979, 320 pp., \$17.50).

McKane provides a thorough investigation, painstaking analysis and sober reflection on major critical works (mostly Continental scholars) on the patriarchal narratives in this century. The works of Gunkel, Alt, Noth, Eissfeldt, von Rad, Mowinckel and others have been summarized many times, but, in the light of McKane's analysis, have nearly as often been oversimplified. If for no other reason than as a model of critical analysis, this book could be recommended to most of us.

There are other reasons for reading this book as well. For those of us weaned on Bright's *History of Israel*, this will be immensely challenging, perhaps even unsettling, reading. McKane challenges those like Bright, but also the less conservative works of T. L. Thompson and J. van Seters, who work from archaeological evidence to deduce the historicity of the patriarchal narratives. He says, "The premise which is contradicted by this book is that the application of external, archaeological evidence to the patriarchal narratives has a special objective status; that the operation can be carried out and the results ascertained, while a judgement about the genre of the narratives, which depends on an internal criticism, is held in suspense." Thus, until the question of literary genre is dealt with, the use of archaeological evidence is immaterial. Indeed, when one uses archaeological or external evidence, either positively or negatively, one is already making a tacit assumption about the genre. Those of us who believe in the inspiration and authority of the biblical text should perhaps take this challenge more seriously than has heretofore been done. This is not to say, of course, that we will arrive at the same conclusions as McKane or those he examines.

In sum, this is a challenging book, both in subject matter and as a model of scholarship. It is, however, of more value to the advanced, rather than the beginning student, for it requires a depth of knowledge of the issues and literature concerning the patriarchal narratives that most students do not yet possess.

—A. J. Petrotta

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***Faith and Piety in Early Judaism. Texts and Documents***

by George W. E. Nickelsburg and Michael E. Stone (Fortress, 1983, 272 pp., \$19.95).

The Bible student who is curious about the beliefs of Judaism between the Old and New Testaments now has a ready resource in this modest volume. It offers excerpts from Jewish writings (including some from the NT) from 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E. arranged in topical fashion and with brief but informative comments by its expert authors. The topics covered in successive chapters include sects and parties; temple and cult; the ideals of piety; deliverance, judgment, and vindication; the agents of divine deliverance; and lady wisdom and Israel. It provides a useful index of quotations and also points to other works to be consulted by the more serious student.

The book aims at the general reader and avoids heavy scholarly discussions. I see a specific use for this volume by a pastor: its contents allow him/her to trace a biblical theme either from the OT forward or from the NT backward in time. Particularly helpful is the citation of both biblical and extra-biblical sources under the same topic. There are plenty of sermon quotations to be had in this book.

—Robert L. Hubbard

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***Beginning Old Testament Study***

edited by John Rogerson (Westminster Press, 1982, 152 pp., \$8.95).

The purpose of this volume is not to provide a guide to the content of the Old Testament but a "guide to how to approach the academic study of the OT." This purpose is achieved admirably by presenting chapters on the history of OT study, methodology, historiography and various aspects of OT theology by British scholars well qualified in these respective areas. Rogerson's opening chapter briefly sketches the history of the OT studies and explains to the beginner that a "critical approach" to the Bible is not necessarily antithetical to ortho-

dox faith. David J. A. Clines' chapter on methodology is informative, though a discussion of American archaeological scholarship would be helpful under "Second-order methods." Rogerson then presents chapters on historiography and the world view of the OT. The remaining chapters address selected topics of OT theology (including ethics), the individual and the community, and the OT's relationship to the New.

This new work will be useful for those with little or no previous acquaintance with OT studies. Although many elements commend themselves to the reader, the evangelical may be dissatisfied at certain points. For example, Rogerson's discussion of historiography displays a healthy scepticism of the form-critical and traditio-historical methods of reconstructing early Israelite history. Yet he also reflects a hesitancy to accept the biblical witness as a source for historical analysis of the early periods. He says about the earliest history of the Hebrews: "we simply do not know in any detail what is the relation between the biblical traditions and the events which they reflect." This tendency is not consistently apparent throughout the volume and should in no way detract from the work's many positive points.

In short, the volume is replete with valuable insights concerning OT history, theology and methodology. Rogerson and his colleagues are to be commended. The reader should, however, be aware that different presuppositions regarding biblical authority are at work.

—B. T. Arnold

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***Gospel-Telling: The Art and Theology of Children's Sermons***

by Richard Coleman (Eerdmans, 1982, 134 pp., \$7.95, pb.).

Children's sermons pose controversial questions. Their theology, ethics, and liturgical functions frequently run counter to the stated goals of an adult worship service. Most are cute, moralistic, and shallow. Often employed by beleaguered pastors, child's talk is utilized to speak indirectly to moral problems that the pastor may fear to mention openly to adults in the congregation.

Most children's sermons are used as a quick fix: the minister grabs a moralistic, somewhat entertaining story and runs with it. Richard Coleman won't let the preacher pilfer his work that way. He starts with an excellent discussion of the theological issues in children's sermons (Part 1: "Laying a Firm Foundation"). Especially insightful are the chapters "The Purpose Behind Our Preaching" and "The Story Form as Proclamation."

In the how-to-do-it section he defines and illustrates seven different forms of gospel-telling appropriate for children. Each of his 31 sermons has a scriptural reference, a comment on the liturgical season or appropriate day, a note of summary, and a word, where needed, on props.

This book is clearly intended for the serious pastor who wants to be responsible to and for children's spiritual, moral, and psychological development. Those looking for the shallow, quick, gimmicky fix should keep their money for sermonic placebos.

—Paul A. Mickey

---

***The Power of the Powerless***

by Jürgen Moltmann (Harper & Row, 1983, 166 pp., \$12.95).

This collection of sermons and addresses expresses Moltmann's conviction that the church must respond to the poor and oppressed if it is to be Christ's church. Moltmann does not offer a pro-

grammatic proposal but seeks a response of personal change and social awareness.

Because Moltmann assumes that sermons should communicate an experience, these sermons are based on experience, contemporary and biblical. As sermons, they are not detailed exegesis or careful argumentation, and themes are repeated at times. The major problem is the failure to explain the relation between divine agency and human agency. But rather than explaining, sermons, particularly those that communicate an experience, challenge the readers to discover how God's action for liberation relates to their own lives.

Moltmann does not clearly express a position of classical orthodoxy but does affirm the necessity of God's action. Divine agency restores human agency rather than human agency alone being sufficient. But God acts for the sake of human agency. At the same time, Moltmann avoids a dichotomy between personal and social action by holding that human agency has social effects but begins with the individual's openness to God's action in Christ.

These sermons offer valuable help to theological students in their spiritual struggles and when they question the relevancy of their academic work. For the broader audience, this book will appeal to those concerned for the poor and challenge those interested in only social action or personal salvation.

—John Culp

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***Jesus As Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages***

by Caroline Walker Bynum (University of California Press, 1982, 280 pp., \$28.50).

This collection of five essays by a Professor of History at the University of Washington focuses on 12th, 13th, and 14th century spiritual treatises for the insights they offer concerning individualism, the clericalization of the church, lay and monastic piety, and the upsurge of female mysticism in the 13th century. For the student of theology, perhaps the most enlightening essay is "Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother: Some Themes in Twelfth-Century Cistercian Writing." This essay demonstrates that men, not women, were particularly attracted to female images of God.

When the monks of the Middle Ages "needed to supplement their image of authority" with "nurturing, affectivity, and accessibility," they utilized the Bible's maternal metaphors concerning God. These monks felt that maternal images of God were necessary in order to "supplement authority with love"—to achieve a balance between rules and discipline on the one hand and tenderness on the other. Bynum's carefully documented facts help us to understand why the biblical images of God as female should be lifted up in contemporary churches.

Especially when supplemented by a doctoral dissertation, "God is Our Mother": *Julian of Norwich and the Medieval Image of Christian Feminine Divinity*, by Jennifer P. Heimmel, Bynum's study provides fascinating glimpses of medieval usage which suggest possibilities for modern usage. The Heimmel dissertation (St. John's University, 1980) is available from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

—Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

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***Faith and Works: Cranmer and Hooker on Justification***

Edited by P. E. Hughes (Morehouse-Barlow, 1982, 118 pp., \$5.95).

Dr. Philip Hughes has rendered a good service by drawing our attention back to the foundations of the faith as expressed by two of the giants of the

sixteenth century—Thomas Cranmer and Richard Hooker.

In the sixteenth century few priests were licensed to preach; instead they had to read from the Book of Homilies, which is almost forgotten today. Cranmer's three great Homilies in the book of 1547, through constant repetition, sank into the minds of the hearers, and became an accepted part of Anglican theology. Further, as Albert Outler has shown, they exercised a profound influence on the mind of John Wesley as he worked out his doctrine of justification by faith.

Richard Hooker was the most learned of the Anglican reformers. Concerning him, C. S. Lewis uses the unusual word "sequacious"; each sentence is carefully formed, and the argument moves majestically forward to its conclusion. I do not think that the Sermon on Justification, reproduced here, is the best of Hooker's works; it is overlong, repetitive, and at times tedious. I could wish that we had been given some of the great passages in the *Ecclesiastical Polity*. But in the Sermon, Hooker sticks to the essential point—that for our redemption we depend on the divine initiative and on what God has done for us in Christ, and on nothing else.

This is a little book which all theological students could read and ponder to their advantage.

—Stephen Neill

**Metaphysics: Constructing a World View**  
by William Hasker (InterVarsity Press, 1983, 132 pp., \$4.95).

William Hasker is a professor of philosophy at Huntington College in Huntington, Indiana. He has written a brief, lucid, and perceptive introduction to the philosophical discipline of metaphysics. The book is part of a projected series of works by Christian philosophers entitled "Contours of Christian Philosophy." Under the general editorship of C. Stephen Evans, the series appears to be off to a promising beginning.

Hasker accomplishes two tasks in his book. One is to provide a readable introduction, especially for undergraduates, to some of the important metaphysical problems discussed by contemporary philosophers. These include such issues as: free will and determinism, the mind/body problem, the nature of the world, and the relationship of God to the world. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly for seminarians and other readers of *TSF Bulletin*, Hasker provides a model of Christian philosophical thinking on these topics. Each chapter includes illuminating thoughts about the relationship of the topic discussed to the Christian faith.

Like any brief introductory volume, this one is selective in the topics it treats (my vote would have been for an additional chapter on the problem of personal identity) and occasionally sketchy in its discussion of the various arguments and positions that are selected for consideration. Nevertheless, this reviewer is enthusiastic about the book and hopes it receives a wide hearing. Read this book and you'll begin to understand (if you don't already) why Christian philosophers have been growing in respect and influence among their peers in recent years.

— Stephen T. Davis

**Genetic Engineering**  
by J. Kerby Anderson (Zondervan, 1982, 132 pp., \$4.95).

In this popular book Dr. Anderson states the need for upholding God's natural order, the absolute sanctity of human life beginning at conception regardless of one's genetic make-up, the ideal linkage of sex and reproduction, and the distinction between humans and animals. He supports the cautious use

of genetic research on plants and animals, and the artificial insemination of humans only in the case of infertility. He is strongly against "test-tube fertilization," cloning, and genetic manipulation of humans except for curing genetic diseases.

One criticism of his position is that appeals to natural order are often a mask for supporting traditional habits, structures, and chance occurrences. Anderson rightly condemns secularists who envision creating, and controlling, a "perfect" society by material means such as genetic engineering. But imagine if humans could genetically alter themselves so all could photo-synthesize. Christians know that this wouldn't cure sin or create wisdom, happiness, and perfect justice. But it could eliminate world hunger and even the possibility of any hunger.

Genetic engineering represents an enormous leap in power that can be used for justice or injustice. We must carefully control this power but we need

not insist upon natural, i.e. traditional, structures of society or our physical bodies.

—Philip Averell

**Homosexuals in the Christian Fellowship**  
by David Atkinson (Eerdmans, 1981, 127 pp., \$4.95).

Atkinson divides his material into two parts: (1) a review of some recent thinking done by Christians and others on the subject of homosexuality and (2) a lengthy argument against any compatibility of Christian faith and homosexual behavior. The method of presentation is similar to that of James Nelson's *Embodiment* (Augsburg) published the year before, but his conclusions are the opposite.

According to Atkinson, "anatomy is destiny" and it is thus their heterosexual destiny that homosexuals are denying in favor of what Atkinson says

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is a repetition of "Man's first error [which] was to deny a destiny." Here he casts homosexuality as simply voluntary genital nerve-ending stimulation, rather than as a complex, life-long involuntary, ability to achieve sexual closeness only with somebody of the same sex.

Demanding that homosexuals be genitally inactive—even going so far as to promise the gift of celibacy to all homosexuals—Atkinson nonetheless admits that even with "spiritual maturity, with or without counselling help," the "homosexual orientation" will not "necessarily reverse." His honest ecclesiastical commitments and assumptions combine with his lack of experience of any successful integration of Christian faith and homosexual behavior to preclude in the minds of some, including this reviewer, a practical grasp of his subject. Thus, I do not think that he has much real help to offer homosexuals within the Christian fellowship. Many will remain hidden there or will withdraw, as many

already have from his sector of that fellowship.  
—Ralph Blair

---

**Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy**  
edited by Stanley Hauerwas and Alasdair MacIntyre (University of Notre Dame Press, 1983, 320 pp., \$19.95 cloth/\$9.95 paper).

The title of this collection of essays is particularly appropriate: "vision" is an important category in the moral thought of Stanley Hauerwas, and the collective impression one gains from the work as a whole is that we are being offered a return to some basic considerations of moral philosophy. That revisionist call is issued with particular clarity in one of the volume's finest essays: Edmund Pincoffs' trenchant criticism of contemporary moral philosophy's narrow preoccupation with solutions to moral prob-

lems as the essence of ethics.

This noteworthy book makes accessible to theological students and others reprinted essays which in one way or another support the idea of ethics as character. Other than Simone Weil, the names of many of the contributors to *Revisions* will be unknown to many students. Their introduction to the work of these moral philosophers will be another value of the volume.

Those who return to *Revisions* seeking a collection of essays in theological ethics will be disappointed. On the other hand, the student who turns to the volume as a philosophical resource for further theological reflection on the question of morality will find important, readable considerations for his or her own moral vision.

—Merle D. Strege

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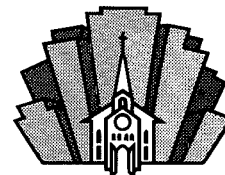
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In addition to regular *TSF Bulletin* editors and contributors (listed on the front and back covers), the following reviewers have contributed book comments in this issue: **Bill T. Arnold** (Ph.D. candidate, Hebrew Union College), **William Averell** (Visiting scholar at Andover-Newton Theological School), **Ralph Blair** (Psychotherapist and President of Evangelicals Concerned), **John Culp** (Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Olivet Nazarene College), **Virginia Ramey Mollenkott** (Professor of English, William Paterson College of New Jersey), **Stephen Neill** (Anglican missionary, bishop, professor, author), **Anthony J. Petrotta** (Ph.D. candidate, University of Aberdeen), **Merle D. Strege** (Assistant Professor of Historical Theology, Anderson School of Theology).

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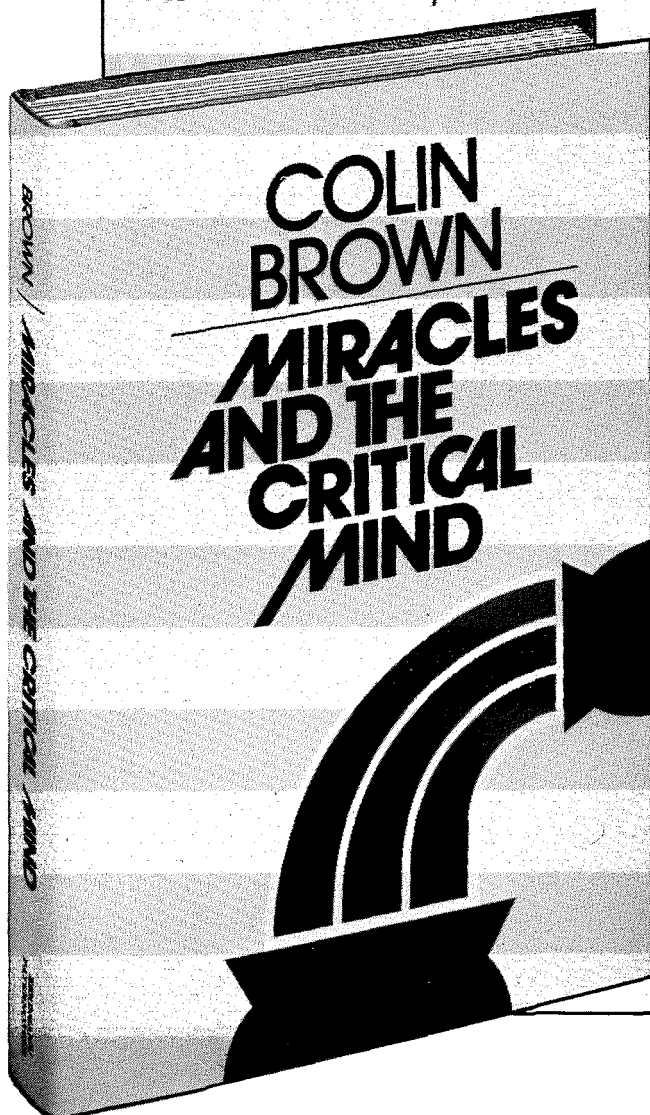
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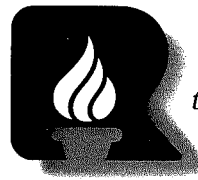
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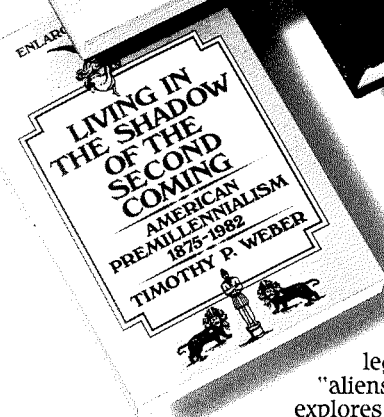


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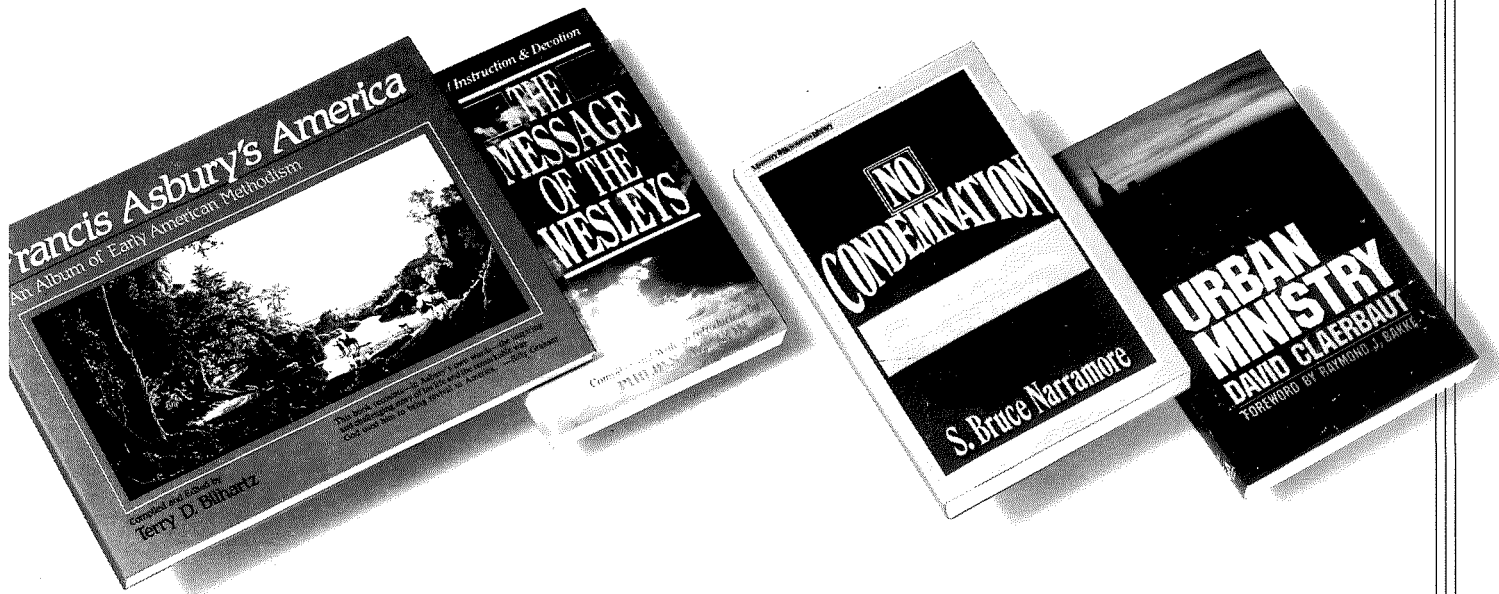


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