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# BULLETIN

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# Eunuchs Because of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 19:12)

by Dale Allison

"For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs because of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it" (Matt. 19:12). This verse is not one of the more celebrated utterances of Jesus, and sermons on the text must be comparatively few and far between. There are at least two reasons for the lack of attention generally paid to the saying. First, the word "eunuch" which conjures up the image of a male being castrated, does not have pleasant connotations. It is not the sort of word one can freely utter in formal or polite company. Second, the suspicion or fear that Jesus' saying about eunuchs was intended to be taken literally has never been fully out of mind. Eusebius, in his history of the early church, reports that the great Origen, while yet a youth and full of religious zeal, performed the act of self-castration, thinking himself thereby to have fulfilled the command of the Lord (*H.E.* VI, 8); and, although Origen later interpreted the saying otherwise (as we know from his commentary on Matthew: 15,1 [PG 13, 1253]), a literal understanding of Matt. 19:12 has in fact cropped up from time to time: the deed of the youthful Alexandrian has had its imitators. Indeed, the situation in the early church was such that the First Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) found it necessary to address the problem of what to do with Christian ministers who had emasculated themselves; see the first canon.<sup>1</sup> So Christendom has had its reasons for not treasuring Matt. 19:12 as much as, let us say, John 3:16.

Despite this, it is unfortunate that our selected text has suffered the fate of obscurity. The verse is not all that difficult to comprehend; and it well illustrates a principle fundamental for all who would apprehend the true meaning of Christian service.

Eunuchs are rarely encountered in our society today. It was otherwise in the old world. The old world had its harems, and eunuchs were typically given charge over them. Thus it is that we read in the Bible, in 2 Kings 9:30-33, of the retinue that attended queen Jezebel. Eunuchs also frequently held official posts in the royal courts and helped conduct affairs of state. Acts 8:26-40 recounts the familiar story of the treasurer of the queen of the Ethiopians, a eunuch whom Stephen converted. And the Jewish historian Josephus informs us that three of the chamberlains of Herod the Great—his cupbearer, his steward, and his gentleman of the bedchamber—were eunuchs. Josephus writes: "There were certain eunuchs which the king had, and on account of their beauty was very fond of them; and the care of bringing him his drink was entrusted to one of them; of bringing him his supper, to another; and of putting him to bed, to the third, who [-and this is rather intriguing—] also managed the principal affairs of the government . . ." (*Ant.* XVI, 8. 1).

Although the self-gelding of devotees sometimes played a role in the cults of a few hellenistic religions, the thought of castration for any good purpose was foreign to the religious Jews of Jesus' time. Two facts in particular explain this—along with, one presumes, a natural repugnance felt for the mutilation of a healthy human body. To begin with, the Old Testament contains several prohibitions having to do with eunuchs. These are scarcely complimentary. Deut. 23:1, associating eunuchs with bastards, Ammorites, and Moabites, commands, "He whose testicles are crushed or whose male member is cut off shall not enter the assembly of the Lord." And Lev. 21:20 lays down the stricture that no descendant of Aaron with "a defect in his sight or an itching disease or scabs or crushed testicles" could serve before the Lord at the holy altar. Even the castrated animal was deemed unfit for the Lord. Lev. 22:24, which the rabbis later took as a general prohibition of castration (see *b. Sabb.* 110b and *Sipre Lev.* on 22:24), declares, "Any animal which

has its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut, you shall not offer to the Lord or sacrifice within your land." The impact of such legislation on later generations was given expression by Josephus, who offered the following interpretative paraphrase of the commands in Lev. 21 and 22:

Let those that have made themselves eunuchs be had in detestation; and do you avoid any conversation with them who have deprived themselves of their manhood, and of that fruit of generation which God has given to men for the increase of their kind; let such be driven away, as if they had killed their children, since they beforehand have lost what should procure them; for it is evident that while their soul is effeminate, they have withal transfused that effeminacy to their body also. In like manner do you treat all that is of a monstrous nature when it is looked on; nor is it lawful to geld men or any other animals (*Ant.* IV, 8. 40; cf. *Ps.-Phoc.* 187).

A second factor which contributed to the abhorrence of castration was that: celibacy was almost universally frowned upon in Judaism. (This, by the way, is in interesting contrast to the two great religions of the East, Hinduism and Buddhism.) The Essenes who, according to Josephus, Philo, and Pliny the Elder, abstained from marriage, seem to have been pretty much alone in their abstinence. In fact, only a single rabbi, a certain Ben Azzai (of the second century A.D.), is known to have been celibate—and he was rebuked in the strongest terms by his fellows. Moreover, to Ben Azzai himself is attributed this saying: "He who does not see to the continuation and propagation of the race, may he be accounted by Scripture as if he diminished the divine image" (*y. Yeb.* 8, 4). Rabbinic Judaism taught that procreation was a duty and that the unmarried state was blameworthy. Had not God commanded Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28)? It is not difficult to collect rabbinic utterances extolling wives, the married state, and propagation. R. Tanhum is purported to have said in the name of R. Hanilai, "Any man who has not wife lives without joy, without blessing, and without gladness" (*b. Yeb.* 62b). According to a saying assigned to R. Eleazar, "A man who has not wife is no proper man; for it is said, Male and female he created them and called their name Adam" (*b. Yeb.* 63a). The same rabbi also reportedly said, "He who does not engage in the propagation of the race is as though he sheds blood; for it is said, Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed" (*b. Yeb.* 63b). R. Hama b. Hanina is recorded as saying, "As soon as a man takes a wife his sins are buried; for it is said, Whoso findeth a wife findeth a great good and obtaineth favor of the Lord" (*b. Yeb.* 63b). R. Helbo advised, "Be careful about the honour of your wife, for blessings rest on a man's house only because of his wife" (*b. B. Mes.* 59a). Finally, listen to this from an old rabbinic commentary on Genesis: "R. Jacob said, 'He who has no wife lives without good, or help, or joy, or blessing, or atonement.' R. Joshua of Sikhnin added in the name of R. Levi that he is also without life. R. Hiyya b. Gammada said that he is not really a complete man, and some say that he diminishes the divine likeness" (*Gen. R.* 17, 2).

Given what has been said up to now, and despite the tradition that Daniel was a eunuch (*Jos. Ant.* X, 10. 1; *b. Sanh.* 93b; Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, on 15:5)<sup>2</sup> and the prophecy of Isa. 56:3-5, which foretells the acceptance of eunuchs into the congregation of Israel at the final redemption (cf. *Wisd.* 3:14), it was clearly no good thing for a Jew to be a eunuch. Indeed, eunuchs were sometimes the butt of derisive taunts or disparaging jokes. One of the most droll tales in the Talmud occurs in *b. Sanh.* 152a. It tells of a Sadducee, a eunuch, who runs into a bald rabbi. The eunuch, poking fun at the rabbi, asks how far it is to "Baldtown." The rabbi responds in kind: about as far as the distance to "Eunuchtown."

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Then the two trade barbs as to the relative worth of a castrated animal and a bald animal. Next the Sadducee, noting that the bald man is barefoot, composes a little saying. "He who rides on a horse is a king and upon an ass a free man, and he who has shoes on his feet is a human being; but he who has none of these, one who is dead and buried is better off." The bald man retorts, "O eunuch, o eunuch, you have enumerated three things to me; now you will hear three things: the glory of a face is its beard; the rejoicing of one's heart is a wife; and the heritage of the Lord is children; blessed be the Omnipresent, who has denied you all these!" Finally, the two call each other names—"quarrelsome baldhead" and "castrated buck"—and angrily depart company. This tale well illustrates how a eunuch, just like a bald man or any other human being who stands out as unusual or abnormal, could call forth ridicule.

It is something new. Presumably, then, the point of Matt. 19:12 rests with this third sort of eunuch. This presumption is wholly confirmed by an analysis of the structure of the saying.

#### IV

According to Prov. 17:3,  
The crucible is for silver,  
and the furnace is for gold;  
and the Lord tries hearts.

The first two lines of this proverb relate concrete facts about the everyday world and serve to introduce or illustrate the third line, which proclaims a truth—much less concrete—from the religious sphere. Now this sequence of two lines about common concrete facts followed by a third line pertaining to the religious or moral

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### *So-called natural "rights" are not infallible guides for the Christian disciple following Jesus.*

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In this connection, one more fact is to be noted. As might have been guessed, the word "eunuch," with its connotations of contempt and ridicule, was sometimes disparagingly applied to an unmarried or impotent male (see below, section III). In fact, if the words of R. Simeon b. Eleazar be any index, a single man with a high, feminine voice ran the risk of being labeled a congenital eunuch (*b. Yeb.* 80b). Furthermore—and this reminds one of how our own society stereotypes the homosexual—the Talmud (*ibid.*) states that, according to the rabbis, a eunuch could be recognized by a lack of beard, smooth skin, and lanky hair. The decidedly crude and pejorative force of the word "eunuch" is here in full evidence.

#### III

Having said a few words about eunuchs in ancient Jewish society, we may now turn our attention toward Matt. 19:12. The first thing to be said about the verse is that it is tripartite. Three different clauses tell us about three different types of eunuchs—those who have been eunuchs from the beginning of life, those who have been made eunuchs by men, and those who have made themselves eunuchs because of the kingdom of heaven. It is essential to realize that the first two kinds of eunuchs—those by birth and those by men—represent a standard categorization. According to the rabbis, there were two sorts of eunuchs, those of man's making and those of nature's making (see, for example, *m. Zab.* 2:1; *m. Yeb.* 8:4; *b. Yeb.* 75a, 79b). The first type was spoken of as being *srîs 'ādām*, literally, "eunuch of man." And the second type was spoken of as being *srîs hammâ*, literally, "eunuch of the sun," that is, a eunuch from the first seeing of the sun, a eunuch by birth (*b. Yeb.* 79b, 80a). The "eunuch of man" was a male who had either been literally castrated or who had, sometime after birth, lost the power to reproduce, whether through a disease, an injury, or some other debilitating factor. The "eunuch of the sun" was one who had been born with defective male organs or one who had otherwise been rendered impotent by the circumstances of his birth.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of the rabbinic terminology for Matt. 19:12 should be evident. The phrase, "eunuchs made eunuchs by men," is the equivalent of the stock expression, *srîs 'ādām*, "eunuch of man"; and the phrase, "eunuchs who have been so from birth," matches the rabbis' *srîs hammâ*, "eunuch of the sun."<sup>4</sup> It follows that the first two lines of Jesus' saying simply set forth a once familiar classification and intend to call to mind recognized characters. Things are otherwise, however, with the third line. The eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of heaven has no parallel in Jewish literature.

arena, occurs often in the book of Proverbs; we evidently have here to do with a pattern typical of the wisdom tradition. Prov. 20:15 reads:

There is gold,  
and there is an abundance of costly stones;  
but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

Prov. 27:3 reads:

A stone is heavy,  
and sand is weighty;  
but a fool's provocation is heavier than both.

Prov. 30:33 reads:

For pressing milk produces curds,  
pressing the nose produces blood;  
and pressing anger produces strife.

Jesus himself took up for his own purposes the pattern of speech we have just observed in Proverbs. In Matt. 8:20 he declares,

Foxes have holes,  
and birds of the air have nests;  
but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

Here, as with the earlier passages, two tangible facts about the known world serve as the background for the declaration of a moral or religious verity. Recall also Matt. 5:14–16, where Jesus speaks first about a city set on a hill, then secondly of a light under a bushel, and then, finally, exhorts his hearers to let their light shine before men. Matt. 12:25–26 is likewise relevant. Jesus observes in the first place that a kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and that, in the second place, no city or house divided against itself will stand; and that, in the third place, if Satan casts out Satan, his kingdom is divided against itself, so how will it then stand?

The text we are looking at in this paper, Matt. 19:12, offers yet one more example of the standard proverbial pattern:

There are eunuchs who have been so from birth,  
and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men;  
and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs  
because of the kingdom of heaven.

This proverb or maxim mentions three types of eunuchs. The first two, as seen previously, are taken for granted: they are known entities. They thus serve to illustrate the third type of eunuch, which is novel. In other words, reference to eunuchs of birth and to eunuchs of men functions to introduce a new type of eunuch, that for the kingdom of heaven.

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Before proceeding any further with our interpretation of Matt. 19:12, it is necessary, for reasons soon to become evident, to consider the polemical context in which Jesus carried out his ministry.

Jesus was accused of being unlawfully impious, of breaking the Sabbath, of not fasting, and of being ritually unclean (Mark 2:18, 24; 3:2; 7:5). He was further called all sorts of names by his opponents, by those who found his words and actions offensive. He was labeled a blasphemer, a drunkard, and a glutton (Mark 2:7; 3:28; 14:64; John 10:33, 36; Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). People contemptuously declared that he was the friend of tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:16; Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). It was even said—and surely this is the unsurpassed insult—that he had a demon and was in league with Beelzebul (Mark 3:22; Matt. 10:25). Clearly the adversaries of Jesus of Nazareth held no verbal punches in their attempt to stigmatize him and his work.

But Jesus seems to have been up for the fight. For in a way that reminds one of Paul,<sup>5</sup> Jesus took up his opponents' accusations and adroitly employed them in his own defense. Having been called a glutton and a drunkard, Jesus responded thiswise: Yes, the Son of Man, whom you reject, did indeed come eating and drinking; but then John the Baptist, whom you also reject, came neither nor drinking, and you say that he had a demon. So then what difference does it make? "We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn" (Matt. 11:17; Luke 7:32).

There are additional texts which show us that Jesus did not ignore the biting remarks directed against him, that he rather tried to blunt their force by doing something positive with them. For example, Jesus acknowledged that he was, in truth, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. But to this admission he added that he had come to call not the righteous but sinners (Mark 2:17), and also that tax collectors and sinners were going to go into the kingdom of God before the chief priests and scribes (Matt. 21:31). Again, when it was said that his power to cast out evil spirits and to heal the sick derived not from the Spirit of God, that he expelled demons only by the prince of demons, Jesus did not simply let the accusation pass by without comment. Instead he pointedly asked, "If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out?" (Matt. 12:27; Luke 11:19).

With all this in mind, we may now return to Matt. 19:12. There must have been a very good reason why Jesus, in a seemingly unprecedented, even bizarre manner, used the offensive word "eunuch," in a positive fashion, in association with the kingdom of heaven. Can we guess that reason? I think we can. Given that Jesus was unmarried,<sup>6</sup> given that the unmarried state was widely held by Jews to be dishonorable, given that the word "eunuch" was sometimes abusively directed towards unmarried men, given that Jesus was often viciously maligned by his opponents, and given that Jesus frequently picked up on the names he was called to turn them around for some good end, it seems probable enough that Matt. 19:12 was originally a response to the jeer that Jesus was a "eunuch."<sup>7</sup>

Jesus was a controversial public figure with his fair share of foes, foes who, according to the testimony of our sources, eagerly sought opportunity to hurl abuse. They found, it seems, such opportunity in the fact that Jesus had remained, against the usual Jewish custom, unmarried. And accordingly they smeared him with the derogatory word "eunuch." But just as he made the best of the other slanders his adversaries tossed at him—glutton, drunkard, blasphemer, friend of tax collectors and sinners—so Jesus, when tagged a "eunuch," composed around that crude word a little proverbial saying vindicating his celibacy: "For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs because of the kingdom of heaven."

If we have rightly discerned the genesis of Matt. 19:12, the gist of the verse should now be plain. In the world at large there are two types of eunuchs, those made by men and those made by nature. But, so Jesus proclaims, there is also a third type, a type accounted for only by religion, the eunuch because of the kingdom of heaven. Men of this type are neither literal castrates nor impotent by nature, neither eunuchs by birth nor eunuchs made eunuchs by

men. They are, indeed, unmarried, not because they cannot take a wife but rather because they will not—because the duty placed upon them by the kingdom of heaven is such that it is best discharged outside the confines of marriage. For these men, the good and valuable thing that marriage undoubtedly is must necessarily be turned down, surrendered in view of the demand made upon them by something even greater.

It is here worth comparing St. Paul's attitude, as it was voiced in 1 Cor. 7 and 9. The apostle knew that he—like the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas—had the right to be accompanied by a wife (9:5). And yet he had not, he boasted, made use of that right, for in his case it would only have been an obstacle in the way of the gospel (9:12). Paul evidently believed that, at least in his own case, it was expedient not to marry. While he might have enjoyed a wife, and while he certainly had the right to have one, his own particular calling would only have suffered if he had had to bear the anxieties and responsibilities of married life. His goals were such that they compelled full focused attention on the affairs of the Lord (cf. 7:32–35). In a similar fashion, that is, with reference to his particular mission, Jesus also justified his own celibacy. Because of the kingdom and what it so urgently demanded of him, he could not but give himself to it utterly, and that excluded the course of taking a wife. In other words, Jesus was a eunuch because of the kingdom of heaven.

## VI

In Mark 10:2–9 we read that Jesus said, "From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder." From this statement we learn that our Lord held a very high view of marriage, that he taught it to be an institution divinely ordained. It would seem to follow that Matt. 19:12 should not be taken as a denigration of the married state; otherwise, the saying on eunuchs would stand in conflict with the high endorsement of marriage enunciated in Mark 10:2–9. But if Matt. 19:12 does not entail that marriage is some kind of inferior state, what does it entail? Perhaps this question is best answered if we reflect for a bit on the idea of sacrifice. True sacrifice does not mean the giving up of luxuries. It means instead the giving up of good and needful things, things from God himself, things we think of as ours by "right." Sacrifice cancels out the notion that what we have should be dictated in the first place by that to which we think ourselves, as human beings, entitled. So-called natural "rights" are not infallible guides for the Christian disciple following Jesus. Even if traceable to the hand of God himself, such "rights" and reasonable human expectations must sometimes be canceled for those whose lives are given over to the cause of Jesus. For example, marriage is ordained by God as the natural, normal state for the members of our species; and those who marry in the Lord do so with the Lord's blessing. So one could justly claim—as did Paul in 1 Cor. 9:5—that a man has a so-called "right" to take a spouse. Nevertheless, it is also true that there are those—and Jesus and Paul were among them—who should not make use of that right, for what they are compelled to do because of the kingdom of heaven would not be well served by marriage (cf. 1 Cor. 9:12). In other words, the commitments imposed by certain Christian vocations may sometimes disallow the enjoyment of gifts intended by God for human beings in general.

Now most of us, as a matter of fact, have not been called to give up marriage. This fact, however, scarcely sets us free to ignore the principle behind Matt. 19:12. For marriage is not the only good thing that the Christian may be called to sacrifice. There are, in fact, some good things that all of us, at least from time to time, are called to give up. For instance, food is from God and all of us must eat—and yet it is sometimes, as at Lent, expedient to fast. Similarly, we all have the need to acquire various material goods and services, and therefore we all have the need for money; yet sometimes the call of Jesus will mean the sacrifice to wealth, in part or in whole (Mark 10:17–31). Again, sleep is needful, yet sometimes it is better to pray than to shut the eyes and dream. Our religion is a religion of sacrifice. And every one of us—not just those dubbed "eunuchs

because of the kingdom of heaven"—is called, because of the demand of God's kingdom, to suffer the loss of certain goods. What particular goods any particular individual will be called to sacrifice is something that cannot be decided in the abstract; it is something that appears to the individual only as the Christian life is lived out rightly. But it remains true, it is a Christian rule, that all of us will be called to sacrifice things we treasure.

One final point: Jesus was a "eunuch for the kingdom of heaven"; that is, he sacrificed the good of marriage because the kingdom required it of him. But marriage is not the only thing that Jesus sacrificed. At the heart of all Christian faith is this: Jesus sacrificed his very life. Now surely if anything is ours by "right," it is life itself. But this was precisely what Jesus was called to hand over. Life, the gift of God we value most, the gift that makes everything else possible—that is what Jesus gave away. So Jesus must be seen as the one who made the ultimate sacrifice, the sacrifice which symbolizes and sums up all other sacrifices. And he thereby becomes our model. Like him we too are to offer sacrifice: *imitatio Christi*, the imitation of Christ. Not, of course, that any of us are likely to be called to martyrdom—or even to abstain from marriage for that matter. But we are all called to enter into the sacrificial spirit of Jesus, the spirit which could give up not only marriage but even life itself. We must learn to see that our so-called "rights" are not the ultimate reference point. Jesus justified his celibacy with these words: "because of the kingdom of heaven." The thought behind these words also led him to his death. And the same thought must direct the course that our lives take. As we progress along the pilgrim's path, these words, "because of the kingdom of heaven," which demand nothing less than painful but whole-hearted sacrifice, are to be our signpost.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "If any one has been obliged to undergo a surgical operation from disease, or has been castrated by barbarians, let him continue in the clergy. But if any one in good health has so mutilated himself, it is right that, if he be enrolled amongst the clergy, he should cease from his ministrations; and that from henceforth no such person should be promoted. As, however, it is

plain that this is said with reference to those who dare to mutilate themselves, therefore, if any persons have been so mutilated by barbarians, or by their own masters, and in other respects are found worthy, the canon allows them to be admitted to the clerical office." Compare with this the *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII, 47, 21–24.

<sup>2</sup> A comparison of Isa. 39:7 and 2 Kgs. 20:18 with Dan. 1:1–3 shows why Daniel and his associates were thought to have been eunuchs. Incidentally, this conclusion did not set well with everybody. How could the great Daniel have been a eunuch? Would Scripture have recounted the shame of the righteous (cf. b. *Sanh.* 93b)? Some rabbis affirmed that the fiery furnace had been an instrument of healing and restoration (y. *Sabb.* 6, 9) or (by a far-fetched exegesis) that the eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon (Isa. 39:7; 2 Kgs. 20:18) were not Daniel and Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego but Babylonian idols; for idol worship became "sterilized" in the days of Daniel (b. *Sanh.* 93b). Note also the first century A.D. *Liv. Pro. Dan.* 2 ("in his manhood he was chaste, so that the Jews thought him a eunuch").

<sup>3</sup> The rabbis were concerned to make the distinction between the eunuch of the sun and the eunuch of man because they believed that certain prohibitions applied to one type but not the other; see, for example, m. *Yeb.* 8:4 and b. *Yeb.* 80b.

<sup>4</sup> So also H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, vol. I (München, 1926), 805–807. Against C. Daniel, "Esseniens et eunuques (Mt 19,10–12)," *Revue de Qumran* 6 (1967–69), 353–90, "eunuchs made eunuchs by men" are hardly to be identified with the Qumran Essenes, who otherwise play no role in the gospel tradition.

<sup>5</sup> See esp. 2 Cor. 10:1, 10; 11:6 and 29 and the context of these verses.

<sup>6</sup> A few, of course, have argued that Jesus was married; e.g. W. A. Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* (New York, 1970). But against this, Paul, in 1 Cor. 9, 5, refers to the fact that the rest of the apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas have wives; Jesus he does not mention. But he certainly would have done so in this context if he had known that Jesus had been married.

<sup>7</sup> Credit for this insight apparently goes to J. Blinzler, "Eisin eunouchoi. Zur Auslegung von Mt. 19,12," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 48 (1957), 254–70. He has been followed by many, including T. Matura, "Le célibat dans le Nouveau Testament d'après l'exégèse récente," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 107 (1975), 481–500; J. Kodell, "The Celibacy Logion in Matthew 19,12," *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 8 (1978), 19–23; and F. J. Moloney, "Matthew 19,3–12 and Celibacy. A Redactional and Form Critical Study," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 2 (1979), 42–60. Blinzler's interpretation (and ours) presupposes, obviously, that Matt. 19.12 goes back to Jesus. For the claim that it does not, that Matt. 19.12 is instead a redactional formulation of the first evangelist, see R. H. Gundry, *Matthew, A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), 381–83. Gundry's argument, based solely upon word statistics, is unconvincing. Among other things, Justin Martyr (*Apol.* I, 15.4) seems to preserve a version independent of Matthew; see J. Blinzler, "Justinus Apol. I,15,4 und Matthäus 19,11–12," in *Mélanges bibliques en hommage au R. P. Bédaride Rigaux*, ed. A. Descamps and A. de Halleux (Gembloux, 1970), 44–55.

<sup>8</sup> We have herein been concerned only with Matt. 19.12 as a word of Jesus; its interpretation by Matthew has not been within our purview. Nonetheless, we should perhaps mention that there are two very different ways of approaching Matt. 19.12 within its present context. According to the traditional interpretation, the verse has to do with those who have never been married. That is, it is a general call to consecrated celibacy (cf. 1 Cor. 7:25–39). For this position see the articles of Matura and Kodell cited in note 7. But 19.12 has also been understood as an integral part of 19.1–12: the eunuchs because of the kingdom of heaven are those who have become divorced (cf. 19.1–9) and they are to remain single. So Jacques Dupont, *Marriage et divorce dans l'évangile. Matthieu 19,3–12 et parallèles* (Bruges, 1959), 161–222; Q. Quesnell, "Made Themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1966), 335–58; and Gundry, *Matthew*, 382–83.

## Theological Soul-Searching In The United Church Of Christ

by Gabriel Fackre

Some call the mood one of "ferment" (President of the UCC), others "turbulence" (*Seventh Angel*), still others a challenge to the "theological disarray" in the United Church of Christ (*Christianity Today*).

The theological dynamisms current in the UCC make it a laboratory for learning how a Church can both be open to the mandates of mission and unity and at the same time preserve its theological identity and some doctrinal coherence. The denomination—a conjunction of four somewhat diverse streams of Protestantism—Congregational, Christian, German, Swiss and Hungarian Reformed, and the part-Lutheran and part-Reformed Evangelical Synod of North America—has grown up in the twenty-seven years of its life in the midst of major theological and social upheavals. Reflecting its origins and formative years, the UCC has been deeply involved in social issues, open to cultural questions, an advocate of justice for marginalized groups and active in peace movements. These diversities and directions have brought the charge that the Church in its national expression is essentially a social action group, subject to the influence of one or another current ideology, and that its local congregations are the home of "a pallid but personable faith" (*Time*).

How to hold together the "world-formative" (N. Wolterstorff) character of its Reformed tradition, and the world-drenched nature of its recent history, with its historic rootage in scriptural authority and creedal and covenantal bonding—that is the question. Right now the UCC is in the middle of this kind of serious soul-searching.

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What follows is a chronicle of that quest from the perspective of one participant-observer.

### Post-60s Searchings

The present self-inquiry has long roots. From the beginning, these heirs of Jonathan Edwards, the Mercersburg theology and the Niebuhr brothers have never been devoid of theological concern, as evidenced by the widely used Statement of Faith of 1959, thoughtful Christian education programs, liturgically rich worship books, and strong ecumenical involvement, all concurrent with a passionate social witness.

However, signs of burnout after the activist 60s, concern about the reduction of mission to only its deed dimension, and worry about the acculturation of its message brought the beginnings of a new theological agenda. The meaning of mission became a natural early focal point. The Board for World Ministries began to explore its understanding of mission with a task force inquiry on evangelism, and the development of a statement of its dual nature as deed and word. In a similar vein, the Board for Homeland Ministries, having declined to participate in the nationwide Key 73 evangelism campaign, held a summer conference at Deering, New Hampshire in 1972 to examine its responsibilities in sharing the faith. Participants seized the initiative and produced the Deering Statement of Commitment that fused the social imperatives of the 60s with the faith sharing mandates of the 70s. Influenced by current action-reflection modes of theology, the Statement spoke of word in deed, the word of faith linked inextricably with deeds of mercy and justice. This grassroots movement, supported by BHM resources, developed extensive materials and training programs using "story" as its the-

ological metaphor—"getting the story out."

Parallel with these outreach settings for theological recovery were inreach developments in the Office of Church Life and Leadership. Seeing a growing interest in congregations in exploring ultimate questions, OCLL instituted a "faith exploration" program in which small gatherings were encouraged to share their doubts, hopes, and convictions, and move ahead on their spiritual journey. OCLL also gathered a group of pastoral and professional theologians in the mid-70s who issued a call for "Sound Teaching in the United Church of Christ," one that sought to integrate social witness and faith commitments.

Significant impetus was given to theological consciousness-raising in the UCC by two grassroot movements that emerged in the late 70s: BTL and UCPBW. BTL—the Biblical-Theological-Liturgical group, the "BTL Club"—was born at an anniversary celebration of the Evangelical Synod of North America, one of the streams of UCC history, in September, 1977. Organized by a local church pastor, Frederick Trost, the gathering (some in it) concluded that the time had come to work more aggressively on the biblical, theological and liturgical tasks represented by these and other forebears. Developing a membership throughout the Midwest and East, BTL has met yearly to hear papers on Authority in the Church, Baptism, Eucharist, the Augsburg Confession, and the proposed new UCC worship services. An East Petersburg Statement was issued in 1981 criticizing the captivity of churches to bourgeois values and calling the UCC to its biblical and christological standards. Trost, now leader of the Wisconsin Conference of the UCC and convener of BTL, also founded an occasional journal, *No Other Foundation*, bringing theological and homiletical resources together for UCC clergy. The most significant contribution of BTL to date may be its sponsorship of the Craigville Colloquy, an event to be described in connection with the vigorous activities of 1984.

The United Church People for Biblical Witness (UCPBW) was formed in April, 1978 at a convocation of UCC clergy and laity who questioned the influence of contemporary values and ideology on a human sexuality report prepared for the UCC General Synod of 1977. Behind that lay a perceived erosion of biblical authority in the denomination. Similar concerns had been expressed earlier by a small group of conservative evangelicals, organized as the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen. Led by Barbara Weller in its early years, with pastors Gerald Sanders and Martin Duffy as key associates and Donald Bloesch and Royce Gruenler as important theological resources, the UCPBW sought to make its influence actively felt on UCC policy through committee representation and Synod resolutions on the one hand, and an educational venture within the denomination on the other. The latter has included the production of an alternative resource on sexuality, *Issues in Sexual Ethics*, and a journal, *Living Faith*, with its commentary on denominational issues and theological essays, and a study guide on controverted UCC issues, *Affirming our Faith*. I shall treat its Dubuque Declaration and reorganization in 1984 subsequently.

Responding to the vocal presence of the UCPBW and noting its numerical growth in the UCC (with estimates as high as 50,000), another group of UCC members established a counter organization, Christians for Justice Action, which seeks to press the social issues it believes UCPBW neglects.

#### 1983-84: Years of Ferment

1983 was marked by an acceleration of theological activity that prompted talk of a "movement" or "theological renewal" (Executive Council statement) in the UCC. Aforementioned groups showing continuing signs of vitality and new manifestations were to be seen:

1. BTL scheduled its yearly meeting at New Brunswick Seminary in New Jersey in conjunction with clergy and seminary people from both the UCC and the Reformed Church in the United States to discuss the Mercersburg theology, a sacramental and ecumenical tradition shaped by 19th century theologians Schaff and Nevin. On that occasion a new organization alongside BTL was founded, an ecumenical Mercersburg Society. In the days that followed, many of the New Brunswick attendees journeyed to Washington, D.C. to join the UCC delegation in the mass demonstration marking the twentieth anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Wash-

ington for justice and peace, showing the linkages between social and biblical commitments envisaged by this kind of theological renewal.

2. After a determined effort up to and including the 1983 General Synod to air its views on sexuality and inclusive language, with little apparent result in the councils of the Church, the UCPBW constituency reviewed several scenarios for reorganization, looking toward possible broader alliances and more impact on denominational decision-making. At a November board of directors meeting, the Dubuque Declaration was drawn up, asserting biblical authority (in the infallibilist rather than the inerrantist tradition), loyalty to the Nicene Creed and faithfulness to the theological commitments in the Basis of Union and Preamble of the UCC Constitution. The new organization proposed was named the Biblical Witness Fellowship.

3. With some overlap with the BWF in its constituency, a Fellowship of Charismatic Christians founded in the 1970s continued to make its presence known and concern felt in the denomination through its publications and national meetings on renewal.

4. Theologians involved in the development of the "Sound Teaching" document (Fred Herzog, Walter Brueggemann, Douglas Meeks), together with others on the faculties of the seven UCC-related seminaries (Barbara Zikmund, Max Stackhouse, Susan Thistlewaite, etc.), believing the time had come to raise serious questions about the lack of theological clarity in the UCC, circulated a statement among that group, signed in the end by thirty-nine UCC teachers. The statement, "A Most Difficult and Urgent Time," declared that judgment on "worship resources, language practices, life-style and modes of accountability in the Church appeared to be 'made. . . on grounds of 'pragmatism,' 'liberalism,' 'conservatism,' 'pluralism' which are inappropriate to the church of Jesus Christ. . . postures (arrived at) happenstance without the discipline and guidance offered to us in our theological tradition." The appeal was sent to the Executive Committee of the UCC with the urging that some serious theological grounding be sought for the policy and direction of the Church.

5. Decisions made by the Church at large or action taken by its agencies with clear theological import evoked wide discussion and controversy within the Church. Among them: a) A new set of services for the worship, sacraments and rites of the Church, long in the making by a task force of OCLL, were published in 1983 and began to be tested throughout the Church. Attention was given in these services to the classical traditions in liturgy, on the one hand, and on the other hand an effort was made to render virtually all the language of liturgy in inclusive terms. b) The Executive Council that acts for the Church between Synods entered the lists by voting approval of an inclusive language version of the UCC Statement of Faith. Debates about inclusive language and its theological import were fueled by the concurrent release of the National Council of Churches lectionary readings that went further than UCC inclusivist proposals. c) Responding to the 1979 General Synod call for direction on Disciples-UCC union talks, the joint steering committee put forward the plan "Shared Life: A New Approach to Church Union" with proposals for common life and work as a matrix for decision-making on merger. The prospect of this union and the way toward it contributed to the growing theological discussion with special reference to the nature and mission of the church. Increasingly vocal opposition was heard from those with more organic views of the Church (especially in former Evangelical and Reformed areas) who felt these would be put in further jeopardy by Disciples polity and practice, and by others who argued that preoccupation with the mechanisms of merger would spend energies that should be devoted to mission.

6. An UCC-EKU (Evangelical Church of the Union in Germany) Working Group, sponsored by the United Church Board for World Ministries, became increasingly active in the publication of materials on the theology of the UCC. In 1983 and 1984, in its UCC-EKU Newsletter, it published essays from representatives of the seven UCC-related seminaries on various theological topics (authority in the Church, the teaching office, the confessional nature of the UCC, the Trinity and inclusive language, etc.) Those papers were in turn critiqued by faculties in other seminaries and then shared with EKU

counterparts.

7. Sensing the ripeness of the moment for more official action on the theological front, the Office of Church Life and Leadership in 1983 launched a church-wide program to facilitate theological dialogue among the membership. The OCLL staff invited thirteen UCC people representing a spectrum of interest and constituencies to spend a year thinking through what such a denomination-wide effort would entail, identifying issues, possible areas of agreement and tasks to be undertaken.

8. The deans of the seven UCC-related seminaries put in motion a proposal to create a theological journal of and for the denomination.

9. Ethnic and minority groups in the UCC organized around advocacy issues joined together to form COREM (Council on Racial and Ethnic Ministries) to give voice to their perspective on both action questions and the widening theological discussion. Similarly, women's caucus groups throughout the UCC focused on rights issues have had to deal with theological questions (ordination, inclusive language, etc.) propelling them increasingly into the explicitly doctrinal arena. The organizing of a Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society in the UCC and annual national women's meetings have provided a forum for these growing concerns.

Winter meetings of one or another segment of UCC leadership hosted by Florida constituents, are becoming a sounding board for denominational policy. In February of 1984 a joint gathering of Conference executives, agency heads and denominational officers aired the question of "a theological centerline" in the UCC with Roger Shinn, drafter of the original UCC Statement of Faith, reflecting on this issue and responses from feminist, Black, and evangelical perspectives. In a separate meeting of the executives of the 39 UCC Conferences, Disciples-UCC proposals for steps toward union—the "shared life" approach—were critically reviewed and a larger shadow cast over the future of these negotiations. An even more negative response to the prospects of this union was given at another winter meeting of UCC pastors from larger congregations with a signed protest from them and others appearing in the denominational information journal, *KYP*, as a "Committee for a New Alternative."

The faltering Disciples-UCC conversations are not a measure of UCC ecumenical commitments, to judge from other theological signs in 1984. The ten denomination project in unity, COCU, continues to enjoy wide tacit support in the UCC, although there is no vigorous campaign right now for it. The BEM document (*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*) produced by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches is currently being discussed throughout the Church with agreements regularly expressed on the Baptism and Eucharist sections, but questions posed about its failure to honor adequately the ministry of the laity, and the too-priestly cast given to the pastoral office. 1984 also saw the discussion of the Lutheran-Reformed document of agreements and challenge, *Called to Action*, in which dialogue UCC was represented, and *Called to Witness to the Gospel Today*, an invitation from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to respond to its theological concerns. A revitalized Council on Ecumenism actively discussed these proposals and made a public plea in *KYP* for support for the ecumenical agenda.

1984 was a year of transition for the United Church People for Biblical Witness-Biblical Witness Fellowship. The reorganizational proposals of its Board were confirmed, and the Dubuque Declaration was endorsed at a meeting in Byfield, Massachusetts attended by 400 members and observers from around the country. Responding to criticism that it represents a potentially schismatic movement in the UCC, the leadership declared that it was in for the long haul, saw positive signs of theological renewal throughout the church, and was more determined than ever to press vigorously for its issues.

Questions of piety and spirituality, regularly intertwined with theological matters, emerged in their own right in the spring of 1984. A "spirituality network" was officially formed with a call for reinvigorated personal piety and public worship with appropriate theological undergirding. And a "Third Order of St. Francis—United Church of Christ" (chartered in 1983) began to gain momentum.

## Craigville, 1984

The Craigville Colloquy represents, in the writer's view, the clearest expression of the direction, mode and possibilities of current theological soul-searching in the UCC. With neither budget nor staff, in fall, 1983 BTL and the Mercersburg Society issued a call for a grassroots assembly on UCC theological basics, with the 50th anniversary of the Barmen Declaration as background, prevailing upon the Craigville Conference Center in Massachusetts to house the event. The invitation generated twenty pre-Colloquy discussion groups around the country seeking to identify elements in a statement the Colloquy might make about the UCC theological framework. On May 12, 1984, 160 people from California to Maine to North Carolina arrived, with the largest numbers from New England, Pennsylvania and the Midwest. With its focus on the teaching premises of the UCC, and therefore the responsibilities of the teaching office, participants included pastors, local and regional (the latter being State Conference Ministers), with some seminary faculty and students, laity in leadership, and national executives, including the President of the Church, Avery Post, who was on a "theological sabbatical." Forty women were present in leadership roles and as participants. Many of the partisans in recent theological disputes were on hand, representing a variety of points of view concerned to make their voices heard, running from evangelicals in BWF and sacramentally-oriented Mercersburgers through UCC leadership figures and theological centrists to feminists and political activists.

With a sixty-page notebook of pre-Colloquy reports in hand, the participants met in twelve working groups to further clarify the themes that might appear in a Craigville statement, one determined in a plenary session to be "epistolary" rather than a formal declaration, since a "Letter to our Brothers and Sisters" reflected better the alongsided spirit and form that was sought. Feeding into the process of theological reflection were a series of presentations on the four traditions that formed the UCC—Congregational (Joseph Bassett), Christian (Willis Elliott), Evangelical (Fred Trost), Reformed (John Shetler)—the ecumenical challenge (Diane Kessler), the Third World Context (Orlando Costas), the UCC theological trajectory (the writer), and a report from the President on responses expected of the UCC from various ecumenical entailments. An intense theological discussion about these issues was carried on in the setting of six worship services.

After plenary reports and discussion of the working groups, the material was turned over to a drafting committee formed in the self-select, "theology-from-below" mode at work in UCC theological renewal, with five members chosen by lots from a volunteer pool of thirty, with two "poets" added, Fred Trost the Colloquy convener, and the writer. The committee worked eight hours through the night presenting its results in a plenary session that debated and modified the text, voting it in the end, 141 to 1, with a standing ovation and doxology.

Developed according to the rhythms of worship, the letter moves from praise through confession and assurance to affirmation and thanksgiving. Its goal is the clarification of first principles—the assumptions behind what the UCC is and does. In the section on authority, it lifts up the UCC constitutional commitment to a christological center of the normative prophetic-apostolic testimony of Scripture (showing parallels with the Barmen Declaration), with the creedal and covenantal heritage of UCC faith honored in its relative role, and it declares the task of reinterpreting that faith in ever-fresh historical and cultural settings. In doctrinal content it speaks of the UCC's trinitarian framework of faith, citing the narrative sequence from creation to consummation, with its center point in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (a framework familiar to UCC members through its Statement of Faith). It speaks of a sacramental life in Baptism and Eucharist, and holds to the importance of both the pastoral office and the ministry of the laity. The letter acknowledges some of the unresolved issues in the denomination from polity to morality, but forcefully affirms the UCC commitment to justice and peace and the covenantal ties that bind the members of the Body. Following Barmen, it ventures some specific rejections, ranging from the issues of "self-liberation" and relativism to racism and sexism, and, again following Barmen, disavows the ideologies of both left and right, and concludes with a doxology.



As important as the agreements reached in the Letter was the Craigville process. From invitation through pre-Colloquy discussion to the exchanges at the Colloquy, accent was placed on self-activated, theologically energetic participation. No official "line" was laid down, and no pattern of representation was demanded (either confined to or dominated by one theological perspective, or determined by proportional representation of advocacy groups). Does the Spirit work best in such an open-ended venture? Can there be a *sensus fidelium* as the matrix of sound theology? The vitality of the exchange among diverse groups and the remarkable consensus that developed are strong arguments for trust in this kind of forum. Those with heavy axes to grind will, of course, be suspicious if the result does not include their conclusions. The Colloquy assumed that the UCC is a Church of Jesus Christ in which the Spirit lives, a Spirit who will let light and truth break out when the ways of the Spirit among the people of God are honored.

The reception and sequel events are a measure of the UCC quest and hope for theological identity and integrity. Recognizing the significance of a theological framing for which the UCC had not often been known, the media gave Craigville wide coverage, with long articles in the *Boston Globe*, a Religious News Service report, *Christianity Today* and *Christian Century* coverage and front-page stories in UCC-related organs *KYP* and *Seventh Angel*. Many UCC members committed to the Church's justice and peace agenda but troubled by its theological unclarity and developing polarization in its ranks, responded enthusiastically to a statement of first principles and an apparent consensus on the biblical and christological basics by the otherwise diverse constituencies present at Craigville. A number of letters and testimonies from leaders in other denominations and in the larger Christian community expressed appreciation for UCC commitment to biblical authority and classical faith, assuring continuing linkage with the ecumenical movement. Evangelicals in the UCC, including BWF leadership were on the whole pleased with the sections in the Letter that declared UCC commitment to biblical authority and the hope it represented for coming together of partisans around matters of basic framework.

Critics soon appeared. A Boston Feminist Dialogue group was formed to assess the Craigville letter and raised questions about the weight given to biblical authority, traditional theological formulations and matters of inclusive language (the Letter was scrupulous

in its use of inclusive language but employed the baptismal formula "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" to affirm ecumenical Christian usage in this binding rite.) On the other hand, one editorialist criticized Craigville for taking up issues in a denominational context that belonged more appropriately to an ecumenical setting. Some evangelicals were unhappy about a view of biblical authority that appeared to be limited to faith and morals and made a place for "ever new light and truth," a position which they judged contrary to the necessary conception of inerrancy. On the other hand, some advocacy groups and activists were concerned that more explicit positions on current ethical issues from a nuclear freeze to the abortion debates were not included.

A long critique by Al Krass in *Seventh Angel* faulted the Letter for its "blandness," failing therein to condemn specifically such evils as "the social and economic policies of Reaganism," and judged that the Colloquy was the product of aging middle class male clergy and seminary professors seeking to reassert their authority in the UCC after a season of contextual theology, much like the restrictiveness of the John Paul II era in Roman Catholicism vis-à-vis Küng and Gutierrez. Some from denominations with more dogmatic definition thought Craigville's theological assertions too minimalist. Others felt that the openness of the UCC was imperiled by any attempt to bring up theological premises, including the elemental one found in the UCC Preamble to the Constitution.

The Craigville event is having its own immediate institutional effects—widespread study of the Letter in congregations and pastors' groups, and the planning of two subsequent events: a May, 1985 BTL-Mercersburg meeting in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, responding to the WCC proposal "Toward Confessing the Apostolic Faith Today," the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the Lutheran-Reformed dialogue agendas, and a September, 1985 church-wide Craigville II on the critical questions of Scripture/Word in the United Church of Christ (organized by a diversity of theologically active groups, official and unofficial). Even more, it has accelerated the theological soul-searching we have traced here, accenting a special dimension to that process, the work of "theology from below:" pastors and people of the UCC making their views and concerns known, especially as they are concerned with grounding the witness of this Church to justice and peace in the soil of biblical authority and classical faith.

## The Craigville Letter

Grace and Peace:

On the 50th anniversary of the Barmen Declaration we have come together at Craigville to listen for God's Word to us, and to speak of the things that make us who we are in Christ.

We praise God for the theological ferment in our Church! When such life comes, and light is sought, we discern the Spirit's work. The struggle to know and do the truth is a gift of God to us. So too are the traditions that have formed us — Congregational, Christian, Evangelical, Reformed, and the diverse communities that have since shaped our life together. We give thanks for the freedom in this family of faith to look for ever-new light and truth from God's eternal Word.

Thankful for the vital signs in our midst, we know too that our weaknesses have been the occasion for God's workings among us. To make confession at Craigville is also to acknowledge our own part in the confusions and captivities of the times. The trumpet has too often given an uncertain sound. As the people of God, clergy and laity, our words have often not been God's Word, and our deeds have often been timid and trivial. Where theological disarray and lackluster witness are our lot, it is "our own fault, our own most grievous fault."

Yet we trust God's promises. Mercy is offered those who confess their sin. Grace does new things in our midst. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God!

In our deliberations we have sought to honor the ties that bind us, and to learn from the diversities that enrich us. We gladly speak here of the

affirmations we can make together, and the judgments we share.

### Authority

Loyal to our founders' faith, we acknowledge Jesus Christ as our "sole Head, Son of God and Saviour." (Preamble, Para. 2, *The Constitution of the United Church of Christ*). With Barmen we confess fidelity to "the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and death." (Barmen, 8:11). Christ is the Center to whom we turn in the midst of the clamors, uncertainties and temptations of the hour.

We confess Jesus Christ "as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture." (Barmen, 8:11). As our forebears did, we too look "to the Word of God in the Scriptures." (Preamble, Para. 2). Christ speaks to us unfailingly in the prophetic-apostolic testimony. Under his authority, we hold the Bible as the trustworthy rule of faith and practice. We believe that the ecumenical creeds, the evangelical confessions, and the covenants we have made in our churches at various times and places, aid us in understanding the Word addressed to us. We accept the call to relate that Word to the world of peril and hope in which God has placed us, making the ancient faith our own in this generation "in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God." (Preamble, Para.2).

### Affirmation

According to these norms and guides, we call for sound teaching in our Church, and so confess the

trinitarian content of our faith. Affirming our Baptism "in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:19) we believe that the triune God is manifest in the drama of creation, reconciliation and sanctification. Following the recital of these mighty acts in our Statement of Faith, we celebrate the creative and redemptive work of God in our beginnings, the covenant with the people of Israel, the incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ and the saving deed done in his life, death and resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit in church and world, and the promise of God to consummate all things according to the purposes of God. In the United Church of Christ we believe that the divine initiatives cannot be separated from God's call to respond with our own liberating and reconciling deeds in this world, and thus to accept the invitation to the cost and joy of discipleship.

### Church

Our faith finds its form in the Christian community. We rejoice and give thanks to God for the gift of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, gathered by the Holy Spirit from the whole human race in all times and places. That Church is called to share the life-giving waters of Baptism and feed us with the life-sustaining bread and wine of Eucharist; to proclaim the Gospel to all the world; to reach out in mission by word and deed, healing and hope, justice and peace. Through Baptism the Church is united to Christ and shares Christ's prophetic, priestly and royal ministry in its servant

form. We rejoice that God calls some members for the ministry of Word and Sacrament to build up the Body and equip the saints for ministry in the world. We rejoice that God calls the laity to their threefold ministry, manifesting the Body of Christ in the places of work and play, living and dying.

We confess that although we are part of the Body in this Church, we are not the whole Body. We need always seek Christ's Word and presence in other communities of faith, and be united with all who confess Christ and share in his mission.

### Polity

We confess our joy in the rich heritage of the Congregational, Christian, Evangelical, and Reformed traditions and the many diverse peoples who compose the fabric of the United Church of Christ. We are a "coat of many colors" and we give thanks for this diversity. We affirm the value of each voice and tradition that God has brought together and that our unity in Christ informs our faith and practice. In these days together, we have been reminded of the search for unity amidst the marvelous diversity in the United Church of Christ. We acknowledge that our diversity is not only a precious gift of God but that it is sometimes the source of hurt, frustration and anger.

God is gracious. Through God's grace we are able to embrace in forgiveness and to reconcile divisions. In covenant we are continually being called to be present to and for one another. In covenant we are being called to acknowledge that without one another we are incomplete, but together in Christ we are his Body in which each part is honored.

We have not yet reached agreement in our discussions regarding the governance of the Church. We acknowledge a need to develop further our polity; to hold together in mutual accountability all the various parts of our Church. We affirm that the Christian community must conform its life and practice to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and dare not heed the voice of a stranger. We affirm that in the United Church of Christ the Holy Spirit acts in powerful ways as the communities of faith gather for worship and for work, in local churches, in the Associations, in the Conferences, in the General Synod, and in the Instrumentalities and Boards. As a servant people, the prayer on the lips of the Church at such times is always: "Come, Holy Spirit!"

### Justice

We have not reached agreement on the meaning of peace with justice. We confess however our own involvement with the injustices present in our society. We acknowledge our need to embody God's eternal concern for the least and most vulnerable of our neighbors. This shall require a renewed commitment to the study of the biblical teachings on justice and a fresh determination to do the things that make for peace.

We invite you to join us in reconsidering the meaning of Jesus' call and the summons to the Church to preach good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, enable recovery of sight to the blind, set at liberty those who are oppressed, and proclaim the acceptable year of our Lord.

Where justice is compromised and the rights of the weak sacrificed to the demands of the strong, the Church is called to resist. Christ stands alongside those deprived of their just claims. We pray for ears to hear God's voice resounding in the cries of those who are victimized by the cruel misuse of power. God's tears are shed also amidst the indifferent. We share with each of you the ministry of reconciliation. We ask you to consider thoughtfully the meaning and implications of this high calling in the world God loves and to which Jesus Christ comes as the embodiment of hope, the messenger of love, and the guarantor of the divine intention

that the bound be set free from the unjust yoke.

In response to the witness of the Holy Scriptures and the example of Jesus Christ, we beseech our government at every level, to be steadfast and persistent in the pursuit of political, economic and social justice with mercy and compassion. We are of a common mind, inviting you to join us in the urgent pursuit of those longings which compel a just peace in the nuclear age. Where justice is withheld among us, God is denied. Where peace is forsaken among us, we forsake Christ, the life of the Church is compromised, and the message of reconciliation is gravely wounded. Let us bear witness to the truth in this.

### Ambiguities

We acknowledge with joy that new light is yet to break forth from God's Word. This bright light is a gift for the nurturing of our lives as Christians. At the same time, it is our experience that this vision of the Church is often blurred and incomplete. "For now we see through a glass, dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Where our vision is unclear and the voice of the Church uncertain, we are urged not to indifference or compromise, but to our knees; to repentance, to prayer, and an earnest quest, seeking together the way of Christ for us.

We acknowledge with gratitude that in Christ every dividing wall of enmity or hostility is broken down. How do we celebrate this when we are tempted to ignore, avoid or resist some members of the community? Is not such resistance a contradiction of love of neighbor? As brothers and sisters in Christ we are summoned to address one another with humility knowing that our words and actions are subject to the judgment of God. Are we not to trust God to reconcile divisions among us, and when there has been separation or hurt to lead us back to one another as a shepherd searches for the flock? Can we afford to be any longer apart from the promise of the Gospel? Are we not to live this promise in the brilliant light of God's redeeming ways with us? God is faithful and just. Trusting in that faithfulness and the enormity of divine grace, surely we may bear the tension of the paradoxes of salvation not yet fully realized.

### Rejections

Ours is an age of a multitude of gods and we are tempted on every side to cling to a false message and a false hope. This is a dangerous path and it is no stranger to any of our congregations. Idolatry can tempt us and lull us to sleep; it offers us false comfort and false security. We ask you to consider with us the idolatries of our time and to reject all that denies the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

We reject "the illusions of self-liberation." (WARC, II, 2, p. 12). With the framers of the Barmen Declaration, we reject the false teaching that there may be "areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but other lords; areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him." (Barmen, 8:15).

We reject the racism and sexism that demean our lives as those created precious in the sight of God.

We reject materialism and consumerism that put things in place of God and value possessions more than people.

We reject secularism that reduces life to its parts and pieces, and relativism that abandons the search for truth.

We reject militarism that promises "security" by means of a nuclear balance of terror, threatening God's creation with destructive "gods of metal."

We reject identification with any ideology of the right or the left "as though the Church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions." (Bar-

men, 8:18).

We reject cultural captivity and accommodationism as well as the notion that we can turn aside from the world in indifference, for we remember that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof . . ." (Psalm 24:1)

We urge the Church in each of its parts to prayerfully consider the meaning for our times of Paul's admonition in Romans 12:2 " . . . Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Pray that God will help the United Church of Christ discern the things we must reject as well as the things we must affirm, that to which we say "no" and that to which we give our glad assent.

### Life Together

For the health of the Church and the integrity of our witness and service, we urge clergy and laity to gather in timely fashion for prayer, study, and mutual care. We encourage the mutual support of clergy for one another in their ministry, and ask the theological faculties to maintain communion with students beyond the years of their formal study. We ask Church and Ministry Committees to nurture Christian love and concern for seminarians during the course of their preparation for ordained tasks in the Church. We hope that retreats and periods of rest, reflection and spiritual renewal will become part of our life together in each Conference, and that the teaching ministry might be affirmed by laity and clergy to the end that our congregational life and our mission be anchored deeply in Scripture and informed generously by the urgent realities of our time.

### Doxology

To the truth of the Gospel that has sustained and emboldened the Church in each generation, we too say "yes." With grateful hearts, we affirm the gift of faith present in the United Church of Christ — evangelical, catholic, and reformed — which we are being called to live out in these fragile and bewildering times.

While the way ahead is not always clear to us, we dare to hope and rejoice, believing that we belong to our faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ, our "only comfort in life and death." (Heidelberg Catechism, Ques. 1). We seek to hold together worship, discipleship, proclamation and service, Word and world.

As our forebearers have done, we too declare that we shall tread this path with all who are "kindred in Christ" and "share in this confession." (Preamble, Para. 2). We invite you to walk with us in this way.

### In Christ

#### The Participants in the Craigville Colloquy, Craigville, Massachusetts, May 16, 1984

(This document, in substance, was voted as "an epistle to the churches" by colloquy participants present at the final session, May 16 (approximately 140 in attendance), with one dissenting vote. Those taking part in the Colloquy, convened at Craigville Conference Center, May 14-16, 1984.

The letter took form from materials developed in 12 Colloquy Working Groups meeting three times on May 14, and 15, and reporting their conclusions in plenary session. A Drafting Committee of seven-five chosen from the Colloquy by the drawing of lots from a pool of 30 volunteers, and two appointed by the Colloquy's Organizing Committee—spent eight hours sifting the Working Group's proposals, writing sections of the letter, and editing the overall document. Drafters names appear with asterisks. The draft letter was reviewed, amended, and editorially refined in a two hour plenary session, and approved in substance, with the Drafting Committee charged to incorporate editorial clarifications.)

# The Dubuque Declaration

We declare our continuing commitment to the truths set forth in the Basis of Union and the Constitution of the United Church of Christ.

We perceive an erosion and denial of these truths in our church. Because of our concern for the people of our churches and the well-being of our denomination as a member of the body of Christ, we are called by God to make this confession:

1. We confess our faith in the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. We confess that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. Because of our sin and estrangement from God, at the Father's bidding the Son of God took on flesh. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, He became like us in all things apart from sin. He died on the cross to atone for our sin and reconcile us to God and on the third day rose bodily from the dead. He is the sole head of the church, the Lord and Savior of us all, and will one day return to glory, power, and judgment to usher in the kingdom of God in its fullness.

3. We hold that the Bible is the written Word of God, the infallible rule of faith and practice for the church of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures have binding authority on all people. All other sources of knowing stand under the judgment of the Word of God.

4. We affirm that the central content of the Scriptures is the gospel of reconciliation and redemption through the atoning sacrifice of Christ and His glorious resurrection from the grave. The good news is that we are saved by the grace of God alone, the grace revealed and fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus Christ, which is received only by faith. Yet this faith does not remain alone but gives rise to works of piety, mercy, and justice. The Holy Spirit, who spoke through the prophets and apostles, calls us today, as in the past, to seek justice and peace for all races, tongues and nations.

5. We confess as our own the faith embodied in the great ecumenical and Reformation creeds and confessions, finding them in basic conformity with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

6. We confess that the mission of the church is to bear witness to God's law and gospel in our words and deeds. We are sent into the world as disciples of Christ to glorify God in every area of life and to bring all peoples into submission to the Lordship of Christ, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We seek to obey this commission in the full assurance that our Lord and Savior is with us always, even to the end of the age.

—Adopted by the Board of Directors of United Church People for Biblical Witness, Dubuque, Iowa, November 17, 1983

THEOLOGY

## Evangelical Theology: Where Do We Begin?

by Thomas Finger

### I) The Present Situation

In recent decades systematic theology has fallen on hard times. This is due, in part, to our general cultural situation. Not only has knowledge in fields relevant to the discipline exploded beyond the capabilities of almost any individual, but the felt religious needs of most people are for something quite different from a complex, tightly interwoven, cognitive "system". In a world increasingly shaped by massive, impersonal and intellectually sophisticated technology, most people turn to religion for something intimate, personal and emotionally satisfying. Even those whose focus is "outward", toward challenging modern structures, want guidelines for concrete action, not carefully refined dogmas.

Systematically inclined thinkers can legitimately challenge this craving for experience or action at the expense of truth. But despite the extreme forms in which they are often phrased, might such concerns contain a kernel of truth? Is not systematic theology's ultimate purpose, after all, to guide the life and mission of the Church? And, might not one plausibly urge that its concepts and structure make closer contact with the outlook of the age and of ordinary Christians than often is the case?

Traditional theological systems usually begin with complex issues of epistemology: of revelation, reason and their interrelation. Then follow God's attributes and the Trinity—surely among the most intricate intellectual issues ever discussed. Systematic Theologies then descend to Creation, where sophisticated scientific issues come to the fore. To be sure, Systematic Theology must at some point deal with these important matters. But *beginning* one's system with them carries two liabilities.

First, discussion commences at an intellectual level so lofty that all but the highly educated or intelligent are left groping at the start. Second, the concepts employed are often deeply indebted to philosophy and science. The terms and style of argumentation are often

set before the data relevant to worship, fellowship, experience, ethics and mission are thoroughly explored. Such data, accordingly, may be neglected, distorted, or presented in a form undesirably disconnected from actual Christian living.<sup>1</sup>

Beginning, then, from the purpose of evangelical Systematic Theology itself—to guide the Church's life and mission—and not primarily from the experience and action-oriented mood of the present, we may ask whether the discipline might helpfully adopt a different style and structure. We will do so by pondering, first, the meaning of "evangelical", and second, the meaning of "systematic".

### II) What is "Evangelical"?

The voluminous literature on this topic suggests three main routes to definition: theological, historical and Biblical.<sup>2</sup>

#### A) Theological Definitions of "Evangelical"

According to Kenneth Kantzer, evangelicals affirm the authority of scripture and justification by faith.<sup>3</sup> Evangelical theology, that is, is primarily reformation theology. Others, such as Bernard Ramm, identify it more with the specific Reformed tradition.<sup>4</sup>

Donald Bloesch's list of evangelical "hallmarks" contains a number of Reformed emphases such as: the sovereignty of God, total depravity, the substitutionary atonement, and the primacy of proclamation.<sup>5</sup> Bloesch, however, recognizes that some groups stressing these "hallmarks" have neglected other important themes and practices. Some of these have been emphasized in Catholicism.<sup>6</sup> Others, such as personal piety, sanctified living and social involvement, have been stressed by other Protestant groups, sometimes at times when Reformed Christians seemed to have lost them.<sup>7</sup>

We thoroughly agree with Bloesch and others that the authority of Scripture and God's initiating activity must characterize all theologies called "evangelical". However, by looking beyond the Reformed tradition, Bloesch points the way towards an historical definition of "evangelical", and one closer to common usage of the term.

#### B) Historical Definitions of "Evangelical"

Evangelicals, on this view, not only believe something, but are

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eager to communicate it and to live it out. Evangelicalism, for this approach, is marked, first, by an urgent sense of mission. Second, this mission aims at personal response to Christ. Third, this response issues in wholly transformed living. Finally, this transformed living carries a social impact.

When we contrast this historical definition with the theological, we see that the referents of each do not always coincide. Some groups holding a theology designated as "evangelical" (whether Reformed or otherwise) have exhibited few or none of the four above characteristics. Yet other groups clearly exhibiting these characteristics have had conflicting theologies, or little explicit theology at all. This is precisely the weakness of defining "evangelical" by strictly theological criteria: it risks overlooking, marginalizing or neglecting groups that have done much of the evangelizing. Yet this weakness parallels one we recently discerned in systematic theology in general: its tendency to develop its concepts and structure apart from the Church's life and mission.

To be sure, evangelical theologizing can never simply derive its doctrines from Church activity, as if doctrines were mere descriptions of what Christians feel and do. Evangelical theologizing, which views all things in light of God's initiative, must provide criteria for measuring experience and action. Yet if those criteria are conceptually disconnected from these actualities, theology will not fulfill its major task.

Serious thought about the structure of evangelical theologizing, then, must consider movements which theologians have often neglected. One is the so-called "Believers' Church" tradition, bypassed because it contains little explicit theologizing.<sup>8</sup> Yet historians generally agree that in Reformation times it was a "Believers' Church",

gelical reality. One can also ask— as one must of any philosophically-influenced system— to what extent its concepts facilitate or distort expression of theology's Biblical substance.<sup>17</sup>

2) Many strongly evangelistic groups had little interest in theology. What theologizing they did was highly "apologetic" in character: it was motivated less by a desire to articulate their own distinctive ethos than to interact with more established theologies, and with scientific and cultural challenges. In other words, the style and structure of their systems did not derive entirely from their own agendas. One can at least ask whether the impulses foundational to Methodist, Baptist and other movements might appropriately have taken on— and even today might take on— different conceptual forms.

3) One may ponder the suitability of the conceptuality derived from the Reformation, especially as accentuated in Reformed Orthodoxy, to articulate two primary features of evangelical reality. First, it generally defined justification (something imputed, external, etc.) in sharp contrast to sanctification (imparted, internal, etc.). Yet in evangelical reality, conversion flowed directly into discipleship. Second, these theologies discussed justification and sanctification largely in individualistic terms. Yet evangelical experience normally carries a social impact. Reformation theology and its orthodox heirs, no doubt, rightly intended to emphasize the divine initiative and the necessary personal response. But might evangelical reality suggest other angles from which to approach these issues?

To summarize: our historical approach has shown that "evangelical" movements stress both content and action. Evangelicals have something definite to believe, yet also to communicate and to live out. A contemporary theology for articulating, critiquing and

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### *"The gospel" is a group of affirmations . . . and also their transforming actuality.*

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the Anabaptists, who possessed the strongest sense of evangelistic mission, the strongest emphasis on discipleship, who insisted on personal conversion, and who unleashed far-reaching currents of social transformation.<sup>9</sup> Not much later, as Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy slipped towards social and theological rigidity, Pietism rediscovered faith's experiential side, disciplined believers in small fellowships, and sent missionaries around the globe while attacking social problems at home.<sup>10</sup>

While Pietists seldom broke with their State Churches, and thus were not technically "Believers' Churches", they formatively influenced movements like the Moravians and Methodists who were. Methodism became a mass movement distinguished by the four characteristics above. Yet in their polemics, Methodists were often at odds with Reformed doctrines which, they felt, sometimes inhibited the evangelistic enterprise itself.<sup>11</sup>

To be sure, in America, Methodist Evangelicalism intermingled with older streams from Reformed sources.<sup>12</sup> Yet the origins of America's Puritans and their longings for a pure Church can hardly be dissociated from the Believers' Church movement. Moreover, their early years reveal frequent tension between "Believers' Church" emphases, which moved in evangelical directions, and those conforming to the religious and social *status quo*.<sup>13</sup> Their history and that of later Presbyterianism<sup>14</sup> shows that Reformed doctrines can be understood by some to support evangelical emphases, and by others to oppose them. Meanwhile, during the 18th and 19th centuries, much of the evangelizing was carried out by Methodists, Baptists and newly emerging "Believers' Churches."<sup>15</sup>

But what of the relation of systematic theology to Evangelicalism before about 1900? Three points stand out:

1) Some systematic reflection, such as that of Jonathan Edwards, was both distinctly Reformed and integrally related to evangelical activities. Later, however, evangelical groups borrowed heavily from Reformed theologies formulated in other intellectual and social worlds. Especially influential was the "Princeton Theology", rooted more in an ecclesiastically and socially conservative European orthodoxy than in American Evangelicalism.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Princeton's most noted system, that of Charles Hodge, was shaped in part by reigning philosophical and scientific notions. Hence one can ask how well his system and its many successors can articulate evan-

guiding evangelical impulses, then, could usefully work on the connecting links between belief and action, and among the different dimensions of that action. More specifically, a theology appropriate to historical evangelical reality could articulate:

1) that ultimate horizon within which not only beliefs, but the communication and living out of beliefs is urgent.

2) the intrinsic connection between justification and sanctification.

3) the intrinsic connection between personal sanctification and social involvement

#### *C) A Biblical Definition of "Evangelical"*

Since "evangelical" theology, whatever its style or structure, emphasizes the normativity of Scripture, we may most appropriately ask whether the Bible contains a term(s) or a theme(s) by which to define "evangelical".

Investigation reveals that the word *euaggelion* meets this need in several ways.<sup>18</sup> First, it often denotes the core of the early Christian message. This core does not include every topic important for systematic theology. But it contains the unique, foundational claims of Christian faith. It thereby provides a point of orientation from which to view later developments and to articulate their significance.

Second, though *euaggelion* involves a definite theological content, it is also a dynamic, life-changing power. "The gospel" is a group of affirmations . . . and also their transforming actuality. And this two-sidedness corresponds to that of historical Evangelicalism. We may distinguish three phases in the use of *euaggelion*: in Synoptic gospels, by the earliest Christians, and by Paul.<sup>19</sup>

1) In the Synoptics, the inbreaking of God's Kingdom forms the primary content of *euaggelion*. The Kingdom, of course, is not just a verbal message, but the advent of new Life. The "gospel" of the Kingdom is regularly accompanied by healing, exorcism, and new possibilities for "the poor".<sup>20</sup> As the advent of new Life and power, *euaggelion* calls for repentance (Mk 1:15).

In the Synoptics, "the gospel" is also the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. The coming of God's Kingdom is therefore an eschatological occurrence. Moreover, the Kingdom's advent is intrinsically connected with that of Jesus. Thus the Synoptics occasionally indicate that Jesus— and even his death— are intrinsic to

to *euaggelion*.<sup>21</sup> However, the dawn of a whole new reality, the Kingdom of God, forms the center of the Synoptic "gospel."

2) Jesus is at the center of *to euaggelion* in the early Christian proclamation. Yet this does not mean that a transcendent object wholly replaces the eschatological irruption of new Life into history. Fulfillment of God's historical promises is as pronounced as ever. Some of "the gospel's" earliest expressions outline Jesus' ministry, crucifixion and resurrection.<sup>22</sup>

Among these events, his resurrection has most profoundly shaped history.<sup>23</sup> On one hand, it has unleashed powerful "subjective" forces. For Jesus' resurrection corresponds with the outpouring of the Spirit, who draws believers into communities of worship, fellowship, mission and economic sharing. (Note that while personal decision is foundational for it, the "subjective" dimension of early Christianity is communal, not individualistic, in character).

Yet these "subjective" effects of Jesus' resurrection are grounded in its "objective" significance. Jesus' resurrection is his appointment to Lordship over the cosmos. This includes his dominion over all principalities and powers.<sup>24</sup> It also involves his appointment as the coming Judge (Ro 2:16). Yet Jesus' resurrection, along with his death, has also already passed eschatological judgment on the world. This judgment, however, is a strange one. For though the death and resurrection of God's Messiah have condemned the world, to those who repent and believe they bring forgiveness of sins.

As often noticed, the *euaggelion* of the earliest Church announces and actualizes an intertwining of the "already" and the "not yet". The resurrection has already occurred, the Spirit has already been poured out, new Life and new community are already present. Yet the risen Lord is also the imminently returning Judge, and believers have been born anew to a living hope— yet a hope which places life in the "already" in an entirely different perspective.<sup>25</sup>

3) Finally, Paul the apostle brings out further implications of *to euaggelion*. The emphasis on promise and fulfillment finds expression as a comprehensive historical *mysterion*. For Paul, what is revealed and fulfilled is God's plan, hidden for ages, to actualize obedience among all nations (Ro 16:25–26); or, more profoundly, to unite all dimensions of creation.<sup>26</sup> In this way Paul further explicates the historical and social reality of "the gospel", and also the imperative of preaching it to all Creation, even the heavenly Powers.<sup>27</sup>

Second, "the cross" takes on new dimensions. Jesus' death becomes the critique of the worldly striving for wisdom and power.<sup>28</sup> As "the word of the cross", the gospel will bring persecution to those who communicate it and those who receive it.<sup>29</sup> The "already" of the *eschaton* co-exists paradoxically with struggle against "the world." The mission it implies will be marked by suffering.

Finally, Paul enlarges on "justification by faith". When Peter's party separated itself from Gentile Christians at Antioch, "the truth of the gospel" was threatened (Gl 2:14). As the following verses show, "justification" language was already familiar to Jewish Christians. It was therefore consistent with, the earliest Church's "gospel". However, Paul's elaborations of the conflict between "the works of the Law" and "the Promise" are better understood as his own explications— accurate explications, of course— of this aspect of "the gospel."<sup>30</sup>

If Paul's justification teachings are viewed from the vantage-point of *to euaggelion*, two important implications for evangelical theologizing emerge. First, justification's "legal" terminology refers primarily to God's victorious eschatological judgment and liberation of the whole creation. Its primary reference is not the individual sinner. Second, as the starting-point of his discussion in Galatians shows, living *kata erga nomou* separates not only humans from God, but humans from each other. Justification, like all aspects of "the gospel", has important social dimensions.

### III) What is "Systematic"?

The content and dynamic of *to euaggelion* correspond remarkably with evangelical reality, historically ascertained. Both are grounded in a definite content which can and must be verbally articulated. Yet this content presses towards communication with an urgency and a dynamism which brings conversion, transforms lives, and impacts the whole created order.

If we now wish to articulate this "gospel" and its implications

in some "systematic" order, which might be most appropriate? What conceptual structure might best inform, critique and guide the Church as it seeks (among other things) to grasp the "horizon" within which the "gospel" works, and to intertwine conversion with discipleship, and the personal with the social?

Since all systematic *loci* are interrelated with all others, nothing forbids beginning as traditional systems have: with epistemology and/or the doctrine of God. Nevertheless, commencing with issues so conceptually intricate may obscure, if not distort, the specific, concrete shape of evangelical realities. As an alternative, evangelical theologians might usefully reconsider the "Biblical Theology" movement of the 1940s and 50s. Its practitioners often insisted that Biblical writers communicated in unique categories, and that theology's business was largely to recover and restate them.<sup>31</sup>

But among the widely diverse Biblical writings, can any suggestions of "systematic" order be found?<sup>32</sup> Over 30 years ago, G. E. Wright underlined the notion of "recital". Recitals recount God's past saving acts in a way that gives meaning for the present and future. As newer acts are experienced, these are added to the recital, reshaping its significance. As time passes, more and more of the Biblical community's experience finds meaning within an overarching history of promise and fulfillment.<sup>33</sup>

We have seen how the Biblical *euaggelion* interprets Christ's saving acts within just such a framework. Perhaps evangelical theologizing could articulate the unique character and urgency of that "gospel", yet express its contents and their implications in an orderly way, if it were structured somewhat as a "recital". Several starting-points suggest themselves. Systematic theology might begin with Christ, and from there stretch backwards through the history that promised him and forwards to the consummation he will bring. Or theology might systematize all aspects of God's work from the central theme of the Kingdom.<sup>34</sup>

My own suggestion is that Systematic Theology begin with eschatology.<sup>35</sup> By eschatology I mean not only those events still to occur (*parousia*, final judgment, etc), but that joyous reality proclaimed in "the gospel": that the *eschaton* has "already" broken in, although it has "not yet" been consummated. In eschatology of this sort, "objective" and "subjective" dimensions are most closely intertwined. For the *eschaton* is grounded in Jesus' historical life, death, resurrection, reign and return. Yet it unleashes intense repentance, rejuvenated living and glorious hope. Phrased otherwise, with an eschatological starting-point, systematic theology can stress both the initiative of the transcendent God and experiential character of Christian existence: and both the cosmic and personal dimensions of Christian reality.

Eschatology, in other words, provides the horizon within which the urgency and dynamism of *to euaggelion* can be understood. "The gospel" is urgent because the New Age is "already" here . . . because a new way of living is now possible . . . because all creation is being renewed. However, its "not yet" character also clarifies the necessity of struggle and suffering, as expressed in Paul's "theology of the cross".

An eschatological starting-point might also help overcome dichotomies between conversion and discipleship. From this perspective, conversion must lead to discipleship because conversion is conversion to the dawning reality of a New Age. Similarly, the polarity of personal and social can be bridged. For personal decision joins one to a new community and a new creation.

If evangelical theologizing were to begin from this point, or from any point inherent to the Biblical recital, the doctrine of God might come later in the system. Of course, God would remain ontologically prior, as in all Evangelical theology. However, if God is known primarily through divine acts, theology might wish to postpone lofty intellectual discussions about divine attributes and the Trinity until the maximum data concerning these acts had been examined.

Some, of course, might shy away from Biblical Theology due to reports that it has long been "in crisis". Examination of this "crisis", however, shows that it arose largely from Biblical scholars' failure to do adequate Biblical theology, and from theologians' failure to interact with and appropriate their findings.<sup>36</sup> Today evangelicals are blessed with increasingly competent Biblical scholars and with theologians who know Scripture better than most others. The time is ripe for them together to pick up and reconsider the still chal-

lenging issues left unsettled by this movement.

One such issue, however, calls for specific comment. Biblical Theology frequently puzzled over how the distinctive categories it emphasized could make contact with today's personal and social issues. To speak to contemporary problems, isn't it better to appeal to apparently universal notions: say, "to conscience, human dignity, and the natural rights of self-expression . . .?"<sup>37</sup>

Today a movement with significant affinities to Biblical Theology, known as Narrative Theology, suggests some points of connection. Narrative theologians insist that for Christianity, reality is intrinsically structured by the narrative histories it tells. There is no way of knowing, expressing or accepting Christian claims without understanding how reality has been shaped by these stories.

Numerous features of Christian existence, then, can be understood as interactions among narratives. Each individual, for instance, has a history. We move toward personal identity through

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## *Evangelical theologizing . . . must provide criteria for measuring experience and action.*

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understanding and creatively appropriating our own pasts. Conversion, then, can be said to occur when one's personal narrative "collides" with the Christian narrative: when one allows one's personal story to be illuminated and judged by the Biblical one, and find its meaning-context in the latter.<sup>38</sup>

Consequently, as in evangelical reality, conversion leads intrinsically to discipleship. For conversion is insertion into a new universe of meaning; and discipleship involves continuing re-interpretation of one's own story in light of it. Moreover, that new context, by definition, cannot be individualistic in character. For it is the story of God's dealings with the world. Personal conversion and discipleship, then, have social dimensions.<sup>39</sup>

Narrative theologians, of course, sometimes have problems. For some, the Biblical "story" is ambiguously related to history.<sup>40</sup> But if "story" is merely a structure of subjective human development, then "the gospel" loses its rooting in the Divine initiative, contrary to all Evangelical Theology.

Yet many Narrative theologians do root the Biblical story in history. Narrative Theology, therefore, can suggest links, first, between Scripture and pastoral psychology. For growth towards personal wholeness involves re-shaping by the Biblical story. Second, Narrative Theology suggests links between the Bible and contemporary ethics. For, as Stanley Hauerwas insists, ethics has to do not merely with general rules, but with the formation of character. And character-formation is guided by the narratives of a normative tradition.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, Narrative Theology suggests ways of relating Scripture to modern social problems. For conflicts among social groups often arise from the dissimilarities among their collective stories. And oppressed peoples often have no real story, or only a brutalizing one. In a pluralistic world, conflicts among cultures often may not be best approached by appeals to notions and values which supposedly are held in common. Rather, it might be best to let each group discover and tell its own story. Then the Biblical story might be told; for it can illuminate, critique and create points of contact among those stories.

### IV) CONCLUSION

Narrative Theology suggests one way in which the Biblical message, the norm of theology in evangelical perspective, can concretely inform, critique and guide the Church today. Like the notion of "recital" in Biblical theology, it envisions the Scriptures and modern life as caught up in God's overarching history with humanity. Evangelical theologians can usefully consider these movements, for Evangelicalism is essentially dynamic and historical in character. Its "gospel" is largely a proclamation of past events whose power surges towards actualization. It creates mission, converts individuals, transforms them in Christian community and impacts the whole of theological society. If theological doctrines are to facilitate this process, they must be stated and systematized in a way that can be clearly interconnected with it.

<sup>1</sup> This concern is not merely a modern one, but was classically expressed in the Reformation's first attempt at Systematic Theology:

We do better to adore the mysteries of the Deity than to investigate them. . . . The Lord God Almighty clothes his Son with flesh that he might draw us from contemplating his own majesty to a consideration of the flesh, and especially our own weaknesses. . . . Therefore, there is no reason why we should labor so much on those exalted topics such as 'God', 'the Unity and Trinity of God', 'The Mystery of Creation', and 'The Manner of the Incarnation.' What, I ask you, did the Scholastics accomplish during the many ages they were examining only these points? . . . But as for one who is ignorant of the other fundamentals, namely, 'The Power of Sin', 'The Law', and 'Grace', I do not see how I can call him a Christian. For from these things Christ is known, since to know Christ means to know his benefits, and not as they teach, to reflect upon his natures and the modes of his incarnation (Philip Melancthon, *Loci Communes* in Wilhelm Pauck, ed., *Melancthon and Bucer* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], pp. 21-22.)

<sup>2</sup> Our purpose is not to present "Evangelical theology" as a normative ideal type. Our aim is to determine (very roughly) to what historical movements the name "evangelical" might most usefully apply, and what sort of Biblical starting-points might best suit theologizing in these traditions. "Evangelical theology/ies", then, would be a descriptive term for theologies done in these traditions. Since, as we shall see, such theologies point beyond their own traditions to Scripture as their critical norm, they should resist elevating themselves to the status of

ideal types. The ideal towards which such theology should aim would not be an "Evangelical theology", but "theology in evangelical perspective" (that is, theologizing from the vantage-point of a tradition, but always clarifying and critiquing that tradition by Scripture). On the dangers of using "Evangelical" as an ideal type, see Vernard Eller's criticism of Donald Bloesch ("Evangelical: Integral to Christian Identity?" *TSF Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 2 [Nov-Dec, 1983], pp. 5-10).

<sup>3</sup> "Unity and Diversity in Evangelical Faith" in Wells and Woodbridge eds., *The Evangelicals* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), pp. 38-67.

<sup>4</sup> This is particularly prominent in *The Evangelical Heritage*, (Waco, Tx: Word), 1973. Probably the most extreme example of this is John Gerstner, who can call evangelist Charles Finney "the greatest of nineteenth century foes of evangelicalism" (in Wells and Woodbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 27).

<sup>5</sup> Donald Bloesch, *The Evangelical Renaissance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) pp. 48-79. Bloesch also lists the Divine authority of Scripture, salvation by grace, faith alone, Scriptural holiness, the Church's spiritual mission, and the personal return of Christ. For a similar list, see *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. II [New York: Harper, 1978], pp. 235-259.

<sup>6</sup> *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol II, pp. 278-290.

<sup>7</sup> For Bloesch's greater appreciation of Pietism and related movements, which Ramm seldom mentions, and for his frequent critiques of Protestant Orthodoxy, which Ramm evaluates highly, see *The Evangelical Renaissance*, pp. 101-157, and *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 14-22. For Ramm, see *The Evangelical Heritage*, pp. 49-70.

<sup>8</sup> We are not identifying "evangelical" with "Believers' Church", but proposing that they are similar and frequently overlapping historical types. See James Garrett, ed., *The Concept of the Believers' Church* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald, 1969). Against criticisms that Believers' Churches are based on human choice rather than on divine initiative, this volume insists in numerous ways that "the Word of God creates, judges and restores the church" (p. 319; cf. pp. 27-28, 60, 201, 218, 225, 258, 316). On this issue, see also Donald Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 6, 31-33.

<sup>9</sup> See Robert Friedmann, *Theology of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald, 1973) and Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline* (Kitchener, Ont: 1981). More than some other Believers' Churches, Anabaptists place more emphasis on Jesus' normativity for ethics and on the Church community (e.g., John H. Yoder in Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 258: "The work of God is the calling of a people. . . . The church then is not simply the bearer of the message of reconciliation. . . . Nor is the church simply the result of a message. . . . That men are called together to a new social wholeness is itself the work of God. . . .").

Regarding "Evangelicalism" largely as a twentieth century North American phenomenon, Norman Kraus insists that it is often at odds with Anabaptism (see Norman Kraus, ed., *Evangelicalism and Anabaptism* [Scottsdale, Pa: Herald, 1979], pp. 1-22, 169-182). Ronald Sider, on the other hand, finds authentic Evangelicalism similar to Anabaptism (pp. 149-168).

<sup>10</sup> Dale Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Wesley's criticism of predestination (see Thomas Langford, *Practical Divinity* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1983], pp. 34-35.) Much of Wesley's theology, like many of his successors, focused on maintaining the Reformation emphasis on justification while supplementing and intertwining it with a greater emphasis on sanctification (pp. 20-48).

<sup>12</sup> For a view which traces Evangelicalism largely from Puritanism and regards "the rise of Wesleyan Arminianism. . . as an almost immanent development," see Sydney Ahlstrom in Wells and Woodbridge *op. cit.*, pp. 269-289.

<sup>13</sup> Between missionary impulses and concentration on those already within the covenant; between intensive and relatively minimal personal preparation for saving grace; between efforts towards regenerate Church membership and the "half-way covenant"; and between efforts to make the Church independent of the State and efforts to subordinate her to it. (see Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Vol. I [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975], pp. 200-236)

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 329-345, 551-570.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 388-402, 504-550

<sup>16</sup> Ahlstrom shows briefly how this school was allied with forces cautious towards (though not entirely opposed to) revivalism. See also Mark Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), esp. pp. 13-40, 114-116.

<sup>17</sup> Hodge insisted that his theology followed an inductive method, which he regarded as standard in the sciences. (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. I [London: James Clarke, 1871] pp. 1-17). At the same time, such a method relied heavily on *a priori* rational principles, as taught by Scottish common-sense philosophy (cf. Noll, pp. 61-70). In fact, Hodge often argues deductively from these principles. Some important doctrines can be deduced largely from them with little help from the accompanying Scriptural passages. (e.g., consider the logical structure of the arguments on pp. 195-199, 233-240, 367-368, 413-424, 535-543).

<sup>18</sup> Attempts to define "Evangelicalism" almost always mention *euaggelion*, but very seldom investigate it in any depth (e.g. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol I, p. 7: *The Future of Evangelical Christianity*, pp. 15-16).

<sup>19</sup> Our investigations below take both *euaggelion* and the related verb *euaggelizomai* into account. A thorough study (which would substantially confirm our results) would fully investigate other forms of *aggello/aggelia*, and also *kerussein/kerugma*, *akoe*, *hrema*, *maturoe/marturia*, and *logos* (cf Peter Stuhlmacher, in the volume *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien* [Tuebingen: Mohr, 1983], pp. 24-25).

- <sup>20</sup> Mk 1:15; Mt 4:23, 9:35. Luke uses the verb rather than the noun to indicate the same message (4:18, 43, 7:22; 8:1, 9:6; 16:16; 20:1). Robert Guelich concludes that the literary genre "gospel", materially speaking, "consists of the message that God was at work in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, effecting his promises found in Scripture." This work of God is "the establishment of *shalom*, wholeness, the reestablishment of broken relationships between himself and his own, the defeat of evil, the forgiveness of sins and the vindication of the poor" (in Stuhlmacher, *op. cit.*, p. 217).
- <sup>21</sup> Mk 8:33 and 10:29 parallel to *euaggelion* and Jesus. Mk 14:9 (par Mt 26:13) connects the gospel with his death.
- <sup>22</sup> Acts 10:36-43 with 15:7, 13:26-31. According to C.H. Dodd, the earliest "kerygma" began, much like Jesus' proclamation, by asserting that God's promises were now fulfilled. It ended, again like Jesus' message, with a call to repentance and faith. In between, the "kerygma" briefly recited Jesus' life, death, resurrection, present lordship and return—all which occurred according to God's plan, foretold in the Old Testament. In Dodd's view, these events correspond to the central element in Jesus' proclamation: the coming of God's Kingdom. Although our present, brief reconstruction of the early Church's "gospel" focuses on passages where *euaggelion* or *euaggelizomai* occur, Dodd's "kerygma" corresponds closely to it. In a thorough study (cf note <sup>19</sup> above), the findings of each would interpenetrate and confirm each other. Passages central both to Dodd and to our present study are Ac 10:36-43, 13:17-41; I Co 15:1-7; Ro 1:1-3, 2:16. Other passages central for Dodd are Acts 2:14-39, 3:13-26, 4:10-12, 5:30-32; I Th 1:10; Gl 1:3-4, 3:1; Ro 8:34, 10:8-9. (*The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* [New York: Harper, 1964], pp. 7-35 and appended chart).
- <sup>23</sup> Esp. Ro 1:4, I Pt 1:3, Ac 13:34-37, II Ti 1:8; though Jesus' death and resurrection are given equal weight in I Co 15:3-4, the rest of the chapter focuses on the resurrection. Because *euaggelion* involves not only content but power, we also stress its "subjective" effects as indicated from accounts of the early Christian communities' activities (Ac 2:43-47, 4:32-37, I Th 1:2-10, etc.).
- <sup>24</sup> Though Dodd acknowledges this (p. 15), Oscar Cullmann emphasizes it much more fully in *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (London: Lutterworth, 1949). These confessions provide another means of penetrating to the emphases of the earliest Christian "gospel".
- <sup>25</sup> I Th 2:14; Cl 1:5, 23; Ep 1:13-14; I Pt 1:3-8, 12.
- <sup>26</sup> Ep 1:9-10, 3:3-11, 6:19; Cl 1:25-27.
- <sup>27</sup> Ep 3:7-10. Thus when Paul speaks of the "gospel", he is frequently discussing his missionary commission (I Co 9:12-18; II Co 10:13-16, 11:7-9; Gl 1:6-2:10; Ro 15:15-21; Ph 1:5-7, etc.).
- <sup>28</sup> I Co 1:17-2:6; Gl 3:1, 4:13.
- <sup>29</sup> I Th 1:5-7; 2:2, 14-15; Ep 6:15; and throughout II Corinthians. This was already evident in the earliest evangelizing (Ac 5:42) and in Jesus' synoptic sayings (Mk 13:10, Lk 16:16).
- <sup>30</sup> My view may differ slightly from Stuhlmacher's, who asserts that "Paul's gospel of Christ is essentially the gospel of justification" (*op. cit.*, p. 24). However, Stuhlmacher finds the origin of Paul's gospel in his encounter with the risen Jesus. Since this Jesus was the same

one who died accursed by the Law, the encounter convinced Paul that it was not Jesus who was really discredited, but the Law as a way of salvation. Thus from the beginning Paul's gospel involved a critique of justification by works of the Law (pp. 164-167). Even for Stuhlmacher, however, the foundation Paul's gospel is not a general message about justification, but the risen, enthroned Jesus. Justification is an *implication* of his resurrection. Even here the resurrection as God's cosmic act of condemnation and liberation is the foundation of justification.

- <sup>31</sup> Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), esp pp. 44-50. By "unique" we do not mean that Biblical themes have nothing in common with those of other religions and philosophies; but that even a consideration of common elements often serves to highlight the distinctiveness of the former.
- <sup>32</sup> By "systematic" we mean simply an orderly, comprehensive, coherent account, employing a consistent methodology and terminology throughout.
- <sup>33</sup> G.E. Wright *God Who Acts*, (London: SCM, 1952), pp. 33-58.
- <sup>34</sup> Evangelicals have shied away from the Kingdom because of its centrality in Liberal Theology. But the Liberal kingdom was an immanent one. The Biblical notion intertwines immanent and transcendent dimensions.
- <sup>35</sup> See Thomas Finger, *Systematic Theology: an Eschatological Approach*, 2 vols. (to be published by Thomas H. Nelson, 1985). Moltmann points in this direction when he says "The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day." (*Theology of Hope* [New York: Harper, 1967], p. 16.) Vernard Eller makes similar suggestions in *Towering Babble* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press), pp. 65-76 and in the dialogue with Donald Bloesch *op. cit.* (note <sup>2</sup> above).
- <sup>36</sup> See Childs, pp. 51-87. A major issue, for example, was that of revelation. What was revealed: historical events? Biblical interpretations of these events? Some combination of the two? (p. 52). This and other issues are still being refined and discussed by evangelical scholars. For another claim that Biblical Theology is not dead, see James Smart, *The Past, Present and Future of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979).
- <sup>37</sup> Childs, p. 85.
- <sup>38</sup> George Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), pp. 170-175.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 228-233. Appropriation of the Biblical narratives as the context for one's own narrative cannot be a passive or merely intellectual act (though receptivity and intellectual appropriation are necessary elements). It means to live—to continue one's narrative history—in a certain way. Conversion (or confession) is real only when it is the first step of a new way of living (pp. 186-212).
- <sup>40</sup> For a discussion of the issues, see Stroup, pp. 89-95; and Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), esp pp. 194-240.
- <sup>41</sup> See esp. *Character and the Christian Life* (San Antonio: Trinity, 1975) and *Truthfulness and Tragedy* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame, 1977).

## Is Sojourners Marxist? An Analysis of Recent Charges

by Boyd Reese

In the past couple of years, figures from both the Evangelical Establishment and the secular New Right have charged that Marxism characterizes the *Sojourners* outlook. This article will analyze and rebut those charges; more broadly, it will propose other contexts for understanding *Sojourners*. I start with introductory comments, examine evangelical criticisms, discuss the intellectual background and political perspective of *Sojourners*, and finally deal with criticisms from the secular New Right.

Some preliminary comments about the perspective from which this article is written are in order. This analysis will form part of a doctoral dissertation focusing on *Sojourners* written for the Department of Religion at Temple University. I was one of the students at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School who was involved in events leading up to the founding of *Sojourners'* predecessors, *The Post-American*, and served as associate editor of the magazine from 1971 through 1974. I thus claim an insider's knowledge of the development of the political and theological perspective of the magazine in its early days. Almost all of this analysis, however, will rely on material that is available for public scrutiny in the pages of the magazine and in the secondary literature. While I continue in basic sympathy with *Sojourners'* stance, I do not presume to speak for the magazine; the editors may disagree with elements of my analysis.

### Charges from the Evangelical Establishment<sup>1</sup>

Both Harold Lindsell and Ronald Nash have charged in recent books on evangelicals, economics, and ethics that *Sojourners* is characterized by a Marxist analysis and prescription for society. In his *Social Justice and the Christian Church* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1983), Nash cites a statement of Jim Wallis as evidence that he is "one evangelical who can hardly restrain his enthusiasm for Marxism" (p. 158). There is a great deal of irony when one recognizes that the major thrust of the article Nash refers to is a warning to Christians against marrying themselves to any ideological system,

and particularly a plea to Latin American liberation theologians to learn from the alliance of North American evangelicalism with capitalism and not tie themselves to Marxism. When Wallis says that it is predictable that some Young Evangelicals will "come to view the world through Marxist eyes," Nash understands this to be desirable from Wallis' point of view, when in fact Wallis attributes this to lack of sophistication on the part of those evangelicals who turn to Marxism! (cf. "Liberation and Conformity," *Sojourners* September 1976, p. 4).

*Sojourners* has made use of elements of analysis from some Marxist thinkers in its socio-political analysis, but it is not accurate to say its analysis is Marxist, or even heavily influenced by Marxism. Ironically, *Sojourners'* use of Marxism exactly parallels Nash's. In his discussion of Herbert Marcuse, Nash says, "No evangelical has to reject every aspect of Marcuse's diagnosis. Portions of it are easily serviceable in a Christian diagnosis of the spiritual ills of a materialistic society whose every conscious moment is spent in the pursuit and the consumption of things" (p. 99). Nash also discusses Marx's four forms of alienation and says, "The evidence does suggest that all the forms of alienation noted by Marx exist under capitalism"—and immediately adds that they are found in socialist societies as well. He goes on to say that Marx ignored a fifth form of alienation, that from God caused by sin (pp. 135-137). Where *Sojourners* has appropriated elements of analysis from Marxist thinkers (and from other social scientists as well), they have proceeded as Nash does, selectively and with modifications from their reading of the Scriptures.

In *Free Enterprise: A Judeo-Christian Defense* (Tyndale House, 1982), Harold Lindsell charges that *Sojourners* has a thin veneer of Christian rhetoric overlying a basic commitment to Marxism (pp. 30-31). Lindsell quotes from a June 1980 editorial of Jim Wallis that speaks of the present as a period of major social disintegration. Lindsell's quote ends with Wallis' statement, "... a system has power only to the extent that people believe in it. When people no longer believe the system is ultimate and permanent, the hope of change

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emerges. Undermining the belief in the system is therefore the first step toward defeating it" (p. 31). Lindsell comments, "Undermining America's belief in the free enterprise system is precisely what *Sojourners* is all about" (p. 31). Lindsell takes "the system" to mean capitalism, pure and simple. I would argue, however, that "the system" in *Sojourners'* analysis is a broader concept, analogous to the New Testament motifs of "the world" in Johannine thought and "this age" in Pauline thought—that present order of things that is criticized and relativized in light of the coming kingdom of God. All systems, capitalist and noncapitalist alike, fall under the gospel's fundamental critique.

Whether Richard Quebedeaux qualifies as a member of the Evangelical Establishment is questionable, but he is a third influential evangelical who makes a connection between *Sojourners* and Marxism. In *The Worldly Evangelicals* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), he stated that of the periodicals of the evangelical left, *Sojourners* was the most open to using New Left and Marxist categories (p. 150). He did not elaborate on this statement, other than to say that this influence included arguments raised by liberation theology.<sup>2</sup> This comment of Quebedeaux's can serve as a lead-in to the next section.

### The Intellectual Background of *Sojourners*

Quebedeaux's assertion about *Sojourners* and the New Left is basically accurate, but needs explication. *Sojourners* is to the New Left as the Jesus Freaks were to the hippies. Hippies were generally characterized by their use of drugs and permissive attitude toward sex. While the Jesus Freaks often came from the ranks of the hippies and looked like them, their commitments and morality were decisively different. Likewise, while a number of the leaders of the early *Sojourners* community came from the ranks of the anti-war movement and exposure to New Left thought, conversion to Christian faith led to a perspective that was significantly different from that of the New Left, a perspective that has become increasingly divergent as time has passed.

It is important to understand that the New Left was not a monolithic entity, and that its history can be divided into two distinct phases. This latter insight is of crucial importance, because it was only after 1968 that the New Left came to be dominated by Marxist analyses. The early New Left was an indigenous American radicalism that took its ideals (it was not an ideological movement in its early days) from the American vision ("We hold these truths to be self evident," etc.), and its criticism from the failure of America to live up to that vision, especially in its treatment of racial minorities at home and abroad (e.g., in Vietnam). One of the characteristic commitments of the early New Left was to participatory democracy and making the American democratic vision work for all citizens.<sup>3</sup> As a native American radicalism, the early New Left was more like the populist movement of the late nineteenth century than the varieties of American socialism in the early twentieth century that drew their inspiration from Marx and European experience.<sup>4</sup>

It may be objected that this is a particular reading of the New Left, but the important thing to realize is that it is the understanding of the New Left that fed the founders of *Sojourners*. In particular, it is the vision that Jack Newfield presents in his *A Prophetic Minority* (New York: Signet, 1970 edition with a new introduction by the author), a book that discusses the early days of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee and Students for a Democratic Society.<sup>5</sup> This is the book Jim Wallis gave me to read when I was skeptical about a radical analysis of American society when we first met in 1970; Newfield's picture of the New Left provided the understanding of the movement for the founders of *Sojourners*.

These comments about intellectual history lead to another characteristic of the New Left. While most of the media attention was focused on the activities of the campus radicals, there was at the same time a significant intellectual effort going on (mostly in graduate departments of a number of state universities) in the production of radical analyses of American society. Some of these New Left analysts were Marxists, others were not.

Those Marxists who produced significant works were what C. Wright Mills called "plain Marxists," those who appropriated ele-

ments of Marx's social analysis without capitulating to dogma.<sup>6</sup> These plain Marxists are to be contrasted to dogmatic Marxists, who adhere to a particular party line, e.g. Stalinist, Maoist or Trotskyite.

The diplomatic historian William Appleman Williams is the most influential self-avowed Marxist in the development of *Sojourners'* political analysis. Mills, with his work on the power structure, would be the other figure who would identify himself as a plain Marxist, though Mills' hypotheses in *The Power Elite*, with their denial of a ruling class, and his comments elsewhere about hopes of working class revolution as "labor metaphysic," put his work in direct contradiction to Marxist and other ruling class hypotheses concerning the structure of power in American society. Mills and Williams are the only two figures whose work has had significant influence on *Sojourners'* political analysis who could be considered Marxists, even given this broad understanding of Marxism. Others, like Joyce and Gabriel Kolko with their work on wealth and power and the shaping of the post-war diplomatic world, G. William Domhoff with his work on the structure of power in America, and Richard J. Barnet with his work on a variety of topics dealing with the projection of power of the United States and the Soviet Union in the post-war world, would not be considered Marxists—at least by those who have any real understanding of Marxist thought.

### *Sojourners'* Political Analysis

"Radical" is the proper designation of *Sojourners'* political analysis.<sup>7</sup> This term also can be misleading, because it tends to bring to mind pictures of anarchism and totalitarianism. The content of "radical" as it applies to *Sojourners* can be specified in terms of political analysis and political practice. Components of *Sojourners'* radicalism include perspectives on the domestic structure of power (drawing on the work of C. Wright Mills, G. William Domhoff, and Gabriel Kolko); the military (the central position in the political economy of the military-industrial complex, with the work of Richard J. Barnet and Sidney Lens especially influential); foreign relations (interventionist government policy plus dominant position of the multinationals in the world economy results in a neo-imperialism, with Barnet, Gabriel and Joyce Kolko, and William Appleman Williams influential); racism (as a cancer that eats away at the heart of American society, with Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., as seminal figures); and approach to social change (grass-roots change from the bottom up, using strategies that can include but usually move beyond electoral-legislative politics into such strategies as community organizing, nonviolent direct action, and civil disobedience). It is perhaps indicative of the commitment of the magazine that the real hope for social change in America is seen as coming from renewal in the churches; this renewal is the locus of building opposition to present government policies and articulating constructive alternatives in issues like the arms race and interventionism in Central America.

A good example of the way theology affects political analysis can be seen in the use of the principalities and powers motif in the understanding of political power.<sup>8</sup> Using the work of figures like C. Wright Mills and G. William Domhoff (without committing themselves to either hypothesis), *Sojourners* stands firmly on the side of those who see power in American society concentrated in the hands of a wealthy elite in contrast to the prevailing pluralist viewpoint that sees power diffused throughout competing interest groups, none of which are able to maintain hegemony. *Sojourners'* understanding of the structure of power in American society comes from a dialectical interplay of these elite theories from political science and a biblical picture of the principalities and powers. In *Sojourners'* understanding, structures and institutions of society are subject to the principalities and powers. These supernatural beings were created for human good (in fact, we can't function without them), but revolted and fell, with the consequence that they have an ever-present tendency to usurp God's intended purpose for them and hold humans in bondage to their pretensions to universal sovereignty. The way wealth and power concentrated in the hands of a few work to oppress the many is a particularly vivid example of the oppressive functioning of the powers, especially in the Central American societies that have been the focus of *Sojourners'* attention over the last several years.



The theological dimensions of this analysis give a theoretical depth to the understanding of the problems of justice in relation to power not available in secular analyses. Because the problems are of supra-human dimensions, the situation confronting those who wish to work for peace and justice is on one level even more hopeless than even the most pessimistic secular analysts would have us believe. In understanding the principalities and powers as defeated on the cross of Christ, there is an element of hope for the future "coming out right" not possible in the most optimistic of secular messianisms. It also leads to the understanding that political solutions can never be anything but approximations of justice that are ever in need of improvement because of the tendency of the powers to rebellion. It sees spiritual as well as a political dimensions to the struggle for justice, with praying together one of the most radical political actions people can take.

### Secular New Right Charges of Marxism in *Sojourners*

The criticism found in secular conservative sources varies considerably in character. Lloyd Billingsley's "First Church of Christ Socialist" (*National Review* [October 18, 1983: 1339]) portrays *Sojourners* and *The Other Side* as applying double standards in their assertion that "God is on the side of the poor" and in their pacifism, overlooking militarism and abuses of the poor by Marxist regimes. While the tenor of his article can be seen in his use of a parting shot from Malcolm Muggeridge, "People believe lies not because they are plausible, but because they want to believe in them," the article's polemics are based on clear ideological differences and not blatant distortion of the positions of the two magazines.

This cannot be said about a full scale attack on *Sojourners* by Accuracy in Media (AIM), a right-wing media watchdog, and a piece in *Conservative Digest* that twists AIM's already twisted report of the position of *Sojourners*.<sup>9</sup> *Reformed Journal* characterized the AIM study as "too crude to warrant serious consideration" (August, 1983, p. 11). I concur in this evaluation, but the report is circulating within the New Right and readers of *TSF Bulletin* should be aware of the distortions of the AIM report. Joan M. Harris' *The Sojourners File* (Washington: New Century Foundation Press, 1983) was originally published by AIM as *Sojourners on the Road to . . .* (Washington, AIM, 1983).<sup>10</sup> Harris' study is a work of pseudo-scholarship. At first glance, it appears to be thoroughly researched and documented. Upon cursory examination, this veneer of scholarship dissolves into a mishmash of innuendo and distortion.

This examination of AIM's charges will first deal with the methodology of the study, and then look at AIM's substantive complaints. Harris' report is characterized by use of ideologically biased sources. Most of her criticisms come from books published by conservative and right-wing publishers, right-wing newsletters, and reprints of articles (Harris doesn't even bother to cite the originals). Of eleven newsletters cited, the only one not identifiable with a right-wing group is castigated as a communist front. Harris' use of Ethics and Public Policy Center reprints and right-wing newsletters represents an attempt to bolster her ideological position by using *bona fide* conservative sources and shows a lack of balanced research.

The main charge in *The Sojourners File* is that the magazine follows the "Soviet party line" on fifty-three topics ranging from revolution, liberation theology, and the PLO to Senator Hatfield, the Super Bowl, and the disabled. In the vast majority of instances, there are no sources for what is claimed to constitute the Soviet party line.<sup>11</sup>

Her use of material from *Sojourners* is equally flawed. The study purports to examine *Sojourners* in depth over six years, but relies on half a dozen issues from 1977 and a baker's dozen from 1981 and 1982. She is prone to quoting out of context and quoting with significant omissions, with the result that reviews and articles with criticisms of Marxism are portrayed as supporting Marxist positions.<sup>12</sup>

These methodological flaws are enough to render *The Sojourners File* unworthy of serious consideration. There are a number of substantive issues raised, however, and these should receive some comment. There seem to be three chief complaints: *Sojourners* has consistently favored the PLO against Israel; it has refused to criticize Marxist regimes; and it is part of an evil network emanating from

the Institute of Policy Studies. On the first point, *Sojourners* has consistently championed the rights of the Palestinian people to their own homeland. This is not the same thing as a blanket endorsement of the activities of the PLO (though I would agree that *Sojourners* has not condemned the terrorism of the PLO with the vigor that it has criticized Israeli policies). On the second point, perhaps it is sufficient to say that the *Family Protection Report*, a conservative newsletter, reported that Thomas R. Getman, Senator Hatfield's chief legislative assistant, provided them with a list of seventeen articles published in *Sojourners* since 1977 (the period that Harris examines) that were critical of human rights violations in communist nations.

It is clear from *The Sojourners File* that AIM is particularly upset about *Sojourners'* connection with the Institute for Policy Studies—an appendix is devoted to discussion of IPS.<sup>13</sup> Richard J. Barnet, co-founder and director of IPS, has been a *Sojourners* contributing editor since 1978. Perhaps the easiest way to show that the charge that he and *Sojourners* follow the Soviet party line without deviation is absurd is to look at an editorial he wrote for the February 1980 issue of the magazine, "Two Bumbling Giants" (pp. 3-6), that begins, "The 1980s have begun with the brutal Soviet invasion of Afganistan, . . ." Both superpowers are portrayed as out of touch with the yearnings of billions of people for liberation and dignity—yearnings that both capitalism and socialism have failed to answer. Neither realizes that the projection of military power has become counterproductive in achieving its goals. In short, both are portrayed as having fatally flawed, outdated pictures of the world (his *The Giants* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977] is a book-length study of this theme). AIM has made no honest attempt to air legitimate differences of opinion and perspective. These tactics of misrepresentation, unsubstantiated allegations and innuendo cut off possibility of fruitful debate.

*Conservative Digest* (October, 1983, p. 6), reporting on *The Sojourners File*, claimed that *Sojourners* staff had visited North Vietnam, called for the "right" of North Korea to control South Korea, and supported abortion on demand—none of which are true (apparently support for the Equal Rights Amendment is equated with support for abortion on demand). The report climaxes with an attack on Senator Hatfield.

Why should *Sojourners* be the target of attempted smears by groups like AIM and *Conservative Digest*? Beyond speculation, there are two pieces of evidence. One is to use attacks on the magazine to attack Senator Hatfield. The press release from the National Christian Action Coalition that accompanied the release of *The Sojourners File* in paperback form was intended to discredit the Senator at the beginning of his re-election campaign. A second piece of evidence is the timing of the release and distribution of the earlier spiral-bound version of the book. This coincided with the conference in Pasadena in May 1983, "The Church and Peacemaking in the Nuclear Age," where an attempt was made to distribute the book from the Institute for Religion and Democracy table (IRD refused to allow distribution of the book). Both *Sojourners* and Senator Hatfield are significantly involved in efforts to reverse the arms race. If the right wing can successfully paint them with the red paint brush, then evangelicals will be unlikely to take their biblical arguments seriously.

### Conclusion

*Sojourners* is increasingly recognized as articulating a significant minority position within American evangelicalism. The magazine integrates a sophisticated theological position with a carefully articulated non-Marxist political radicalism. Future critics may be successful in attacking elements of *Sojourners'* vision, but if they are, their work will have to be more careful and more penetrating than the studies explored in this article. These studies, secular and evangelical alike, suffer from a common assumption: criticism of capitalism and opposition to certain U. S. policies are seen as supportive of Marxism and the Soviets. Criticism of the one does not logically entail support for the other.

<sup>1</sup> Part of this section was presented in my paper, "The Evangelical Left and Justice," presented at the annual meeting of the Religious Research Association in November 1983, and in a review of Lindsell's and Nash's book in the May 1984 *Sojourners*.

<sup>2</sup> While liberation theology is an accurate designation of *Sojourners'* position (see Jim Wallis' comments on page 3 of the September 1981 issue of *Sojourners*), it is an indigenous North American theology of liberation whose basic stance was worked out before the appearance in English of Gustavo Guterrez's seminal work, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973). Liberation theology did not make much of an impact on the American scene until Guterrez's book appeared; the Latin American theology did not influence the editors of *Sojourners* in the first few years of the magazine. As noted above, Wallis has written urging the Latin Americans not to make the mistake of tying themselves to Marxism.

<sup>3</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale's *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973) is the best study of the SDS; see also Alan Adelson, *SDS: A Profile* (New York: Scribner's, 1972). For more succinct studies of the period that put the New Left in a broader context of twentieth century American radicalism, see James Weinstein, *Ambiguous Legacy: The Left in American Politics*, (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975) and Milton Cantor, *The Divided Left: American Radicalism 1900-1975* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Lasch's comments in *The Agony of the American Left* (New York: Knopf, 1969) pp. 5-6 are relevant here:

Populist and Marxist rhetoric sometimes coincided. The Populist platform of 1892 contained the ringing declaration: "The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of these, in turn, despise the public and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires." Some historians have concluded from this rhetorical coincidence that the Populist critique of capitalism, though arrived at independently, was essentially the same as the Socialist critique. (Norman Pollack: *The Populist Response to Industrial America* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.]) This conclusion, as I have argued in the *Pacific Historical Review* (February 1964, pp. 69-73), rests almost entirely on verbal correspondences; it is arrived at by piecing together a series of quotations abstracted from their contexts and treated with equal weight, without regard for speaker or occasion, so as to form a wholly synthetic system which is then attributed to the Populists themselves.

This comment of Lasch's about Pollack's work is a good description of the methods Joan Harris uses in her indictment of *Sojourners* discussed below. There are also parallels between the position of figures like Nash and Lindsell and late nineteenth century movements. Leslie K. Tarr suggested in his *Christianity Today* article "Are Some Electronic Preachers Social Darwinists?" (Oct. 21, 1983 p. 50) that some electronic preachers have mistaken Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism for biblical perspectives. If one takes the capsule summary of the tenets of social Darwinism on page 6 of Richard Hofstadter's *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon, 1955), and substitutes "the market" for "nature," then one has an accurate description of Nash's position.

<sup>5</sup> Newfield's perspective is similar to that of Art Gish in *The New Left and Christian Radicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970). Gish compares the New Left to the Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century and finds useful elements in both experiences for Christian radicals to appropriate. This book circulated among those who would become the editorial staff of *The Post-American* fairly soon after they met; I used it as a textbook for a course on Christian social involvement at Trinity College during the second semester of the school year in which we met.

<sup>6</sup> See Mill's comments in his chapter, "Rules for Critics," *The Marxists* (New York: Dell, 1962):

"Plain Marxists (whether in agreement or in disagreement) work in Marx's own tradition. They understand Marx, and many later marxists as well, to be firmly a part of the classic tradition of sociological thinking. . . . They are generally agreed . . . that his general model and his ways of thinking are central to their own intellectual history and remain relevant to their attempts to grasp present-day social worlds. . . . It is, of course, the point of view taken in the present essay" (p. 98). Mills contrasted his plain Marxists to rigid or institutionalized marxism, which characterizes Marxists "who have won power, or come close to it" (p. 99).

<sup>7</sup> While numerous analysts have characterized *Sojourners* as radical, Augustus Cerillo, Jr., is the only commentator who specified the analytical content of "radical" and authors upon whom *Sojourners* draws (see his "A Survey of Recent Evangelical Social Thought," *Christian Scholars' Review* 5 [1976] 272-280, a condensed version of his American Academy of Religion regional paper of 1974, "On Being Salt and Light in the World: An Appraisal of Evangelical Social Concern").

The most extensive discussion of analysts upon which *Sojourners* draws appears in two review essays by the present author, "The Structure of Power," *Post-American*, January, 1974, pp. 8-9 and "America's Empire," *Post-American*, November/December, 1973, pp. 10-11, 14. See also my "Political Analysis in the Evangelical Left," AAR Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> See my comments on misunderstandings of the use of this motif in "The New Class and the Young Evangelicals: Second Thoughts" (*Review of Religious Research* 24/4 [March, 1983] 262 and 265n5).

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of differences between "responsible conservatism" and the Radical Right, see chapter 2 of Richard V. Pierard, *The Unequal Yoke* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970). The tactics of AIM and *Conservative Digest* put them in the Radical Right camp.

<sup>10</sup> Two investigative journalistic pieces deal with AIM's work, methods, and finances: John Friedman and Eric Nadler, "Who's Taking AIM?" (*The Soho News*, NY, July 15, 1981, p. 10) and Louis Wolf, "Inaccuracy in Media: Accuracy in Media Rewrites the News and History," *CovertAction* 21 (Spring, 1984) 24-38. I realize some would consider the latter article a "tainted source," but I would invite interested readers to compare the AIM study of *Sojourners* with the *CovertAction* piece side by side and decide for themselves which comes closer to being accurate journalistic reporting.

<sup>11</sup> There is one Soviet piece on the church from 1982; the next most recent source is a quotation from *World Marxist Review* from 1977. There is one Soviet source from 1965, two from 1935, and two from Lenin. Needless to say, this is not a valid picture of the current "Soviet party line."

<sup>12</sup> For examples of this distortion, see her comments on pages 4 and 42-43 of *File*; for the originals she distorts through selective quotation and omissions, see Wes Granberg-Michaelson, "At the Dawn of the New Creation," *Sojourners*, November, 1981, p. 14 and Merold Westphal's review of Fernando Belo's *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark*, February, 1982, pp. 37-38.

<sup>13</sup> IPS is a think tank located in Washington. In the twenty-five years since its founding, it has provided analyses of domestic and international problems from a perspective to the left of mainstream liberalism in America. It is perhaps an indication of the quality of IPS' work that it has been the target of a number of attempts from the New Right to discredit its work as Marxist. These attempts have been ably discussed by Aryeh Neier in "The I.P.S. and Its Enemies" (*The Nation* [December 6, 1980] 605-608); another discussion of the IPS appeared in the *New York Times* Sunday magazine: Joshua Muravchik, "Think Tank of the Left" (May 3, 1981).

## The Church and Domestic Violence

by Marie M. Fortune

"My heart is in anguish within me, the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me. And I say, 'O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; yea, I would wander afar, I would lodge in the wilderness, I would haste to find me a shelter from the raging wind and tempest.' "It is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him. But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to hold sweet converse together; within God's house we walked in fellowship. "My companion stretched out his hand against his friends, he violated his covenant. His speech was smoother than butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords." Psalm 55 (RSV)

The Saturday before Easter I received a call from a colleague who serves a parish in this city. "I have a woman here who has just walked in off the street," he said. "Her husband beat her up. Please talk to her." Clearly, the woman was in crisis and did not know what to do next. I provided her with reassurance and information and suggested that she contact the local shelter for abused women where she could find protection, comfort and time to sort out her options. She took the information and then left with the police to retrieve her son whom she had left behind in her house with the husband she had fled.

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This recent experience gives evidence of aspects of family violence that the church must understand: the church is a sanctuary and an appropriate refuge for members and non-members who need assistance with family violence. For the most part, however, the church is unprepared to help.

### Where is the Church?

Until recently, the church has been the priest and Levite in passing by victims of family violence who have fallen by the wayside. The secular community, in many instances, has been the Good Samaritan, and since 1970, has helped respond to the crisis of family violence with shelters and telephone "crisis lines." Often, the church's "passing by" has been unintentional, especially on the part of the clergy. They simply do not "see" the victim standing before them. Most commonly, when asked about family violence, they comment, "No one ever comes to see me with this problem . . ." The seemingly logical conclusion of their limited perception is ". . . so you see, I don't need information about family violence."

Many victims or abusers hesitate to go to their clergy for fear of the response; they fear talking to yet another person who either does not know how to help or whose help may in fact be detrimental.<sup>2</sup> Often hidden from public view, family violence has nevertheless reached epidemic proportions in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> Even good, church-going Christians are not exempt from the statistics of victims and abusers. The United Methodist Church, surveying a portion of its membership, found that 68 percent of those questioned had personally experienced family violence.<sup>4</sup>

Ironically, the church has failed to hear the suffering of violent families because, in general, it has failed to speak out.

During the final session of a several-week seminar for clergy, one local pastor commented with some distress that in the past few weeks he had encountered two incest cases and a rape in his small congregation. In exploring this further, it was discovered that he had announced from the pulpit that he was taking a seminar on sexual and domestic violence and that he thought it was a valuable course. This brief announcement apparently gave the congregation "permission" to approach him with these problems and the confidence that he would be able to help them. As a result, people in the church who had been struggling for some time with incestuous abuse and the rape experience came to him for help.

The stigma surrounding family violence remains great, especially in the church. Victims and abusers are the "new lepers" among us. In our silence, we pretend to not see the suffering. We are disbelieving when a friend or parishioner pours forth a story of abuse, especially if the abuser is a respected and well known member of the congregation. We make clear that we do not want to know about the pain and its source. Of if we do recognize the violence, we recommend more prayers and Bible study and send the person back into a frightening and confusing situation. It is no wonder that people hesitate to come to the church for help. Yet, at all times the church can and must represent the Good Samaritan for people who are afraid, confused and in pain.

### The Gospel Message

Two gospel stories can help us shape the church's response to family violence. The Good Samaritan story in Luke 10:29-37 provides a model of compassionate response to a bruised and battered victim of violence. In it, we are called to see the victim before us and respond with our material resources to provide immediate protection and support. Pressing us to another dimension of response, the story in Luke 18:1-8 describes a widow who persists in seeking vindication from the judge who did not fear God nor care about the people. Finally the judge tires of her persistence and grants her request for vindication against her adversary. Then, Jesus says, even so God hears and will vindicate those who cry out. In many cases the church, as the widow, is called to persist in advocating for the powerless and vulnerable—the victims of family violence. This persistence may involve advocating for individuals who need legal, medical or social aid, or it may involve advocating on a larger scale to change unjust laws and practices which exacerbate the suffering of victims of family violence and deny help for the abusers, leaving them to repeat their past sins. The gospel mandate is clear: We as the church are called to bind up the wounds of the victims and to confront the destructive actions of the abusers. In short, we are called to seek justice.

### Shaping a Response

Social ethicist Beverly Wildung Harrison says that the role of ministry is to make public issues out of private pains, i.e., to take the individual suffering of people, attend to it, and then address it in a larger social context. This is certainly an appropriate way of viewing family violence. Violence is a personal tragedy for the individuals in a violent family, but it is not an isolated personal event. Family violence is largely a social problem created and sustained by social forces which underlie the individual battering incidents. It must be addressed as a crisis for the individual family *and* as an ongoing social problem of disturbing magnitude. Our response as the church must be to address family violence on both personal and public levels. Whether our role is parish pastor, pastoral counselor, Sunday School teacher or friend, we are part of the church's response to family violence and we each can be a significant part of the *pastoral, prophetic and preventive response*.

### A Pastoral Response

Family violence raises particular religious issues which need attention; it may even precipitate a crisis of faith. Questions about separation and divorce, family authority and responsibility, the meaning of suffering, and the possibility of forgiveness are all critical concerns to those touched by family violence. Too often secular resources fail to address religious questions, and pastors—out of ignorance and discomfort—tend to respond with platitudes and empty prayers. Religious questions need an informed and appro-

priate pastoral response.

To respond with sensitivity, clergy and lay person need special education and training to understand what family violence is all about. Often general counseling techniques which many clergy learned in seminary—especially marriage counseling—are inadequate and inappropriate to deal with family violence. Clergy and lay persons need to know more about the dynamics of family violence and the kinds of help which are effective when responding to a parishioner or friend.

The first goal in counseling is to stop the violent act, which, potentially, can be terribly destructive or even lethal. The objective of an initial intervention, therefore, cannot be simply to preserve the family unit at all costs. To attempt to avoid separation or divorce — when there is violence — forces people to remain in a life-threatening situation. The once-viable marriage covenant has become empty and meaningless, and to remain physically together while the violence continues is a charade which is more damaging than a temporary separation or the consideration of divorce. If the abuser is willing to seek treatment to stop the violence, however, rebuilding the relationship may be possible in the future.

To stop the violence, pastors or lay counselors may need to be confrontative. Although the church tends to shy away from confrontation, in this case it may be the most loving and helpful thing to do. Sometimes the victims of family violence need to be confronted with the reality of the danger they and their children face in order to motivate them to seek protection. Likewise, abusers need to be confronted with the reality of what they are doing to themselves and their families. Too often no one cares enough to say: "This has got to stop." Confrontation is not the same as harsh and punitive judgment which drives abusers further into isolation. Confrontation can and should be supportive and encourage abusers to seek treatment.

To fully provide for the needs of victims and abusers, pastors and lay counselors need to be aware and make use of secular resources for shelter, legal advocacy and treatment. Most large communities and many smaller ones now have some type of crisis services for abused women. In smaller communities, these services have often been established by church people working with others in the community. These services are a valuable resource and can provide assistance which individual ministers cannot, especially in the area of shelter for victims and long term treatment for abusers. Pastors need to work cooperatively with community services in order to increase their effectiveness and be able to share their particular expertise as a pastoral resource.

The church as a community of faith also has a pastoral role to play. The congregation which responds with genuine concern and compassion when a family loses a loved one often has difficulty when that same family faces family violence. Yet, friends in the congregation can provide the ongoing community support which each of the family members needs to stop the violence and be healed from its pain. In one study, over half of the abused women who had left abusive relationships did so with the aid of family and friends rather than traditional counseling resources.<sup>5</sup> Many women who are unwilling to talk with a pastor or therapist about their abusive treatment may seek help from lay people whom they know through their church.

### The Prophetic Response

One of the reasons that family violence has reached epidemic proportions is that there has been no public institution which has forthrightly said that family violence is unacceptable and must be stopped. We have the resurgence of the women's movement to thank for bringing the issue to public attention in the past ten years. But even so, the legal, religious, social service, mental health and medical institutions have moved slowly to take a strong public position opposing violence in the family.

The church is called to be *prophetic* and with a strong voice challenge the notion that family violence is a private matter — an area into which no one outside the family should venture. Further, the church must challenge the widely-accepted idea that the husband/father has the absolute right to do whatever violence he wishes with other family members. The absence of the church's outspoken

concern on this issue perpetuates the silence for both victims and abusers and minimizes the potential impact that the church should have in shaping public opinion and moral standards about domestic violence.

A prophetic response must be based on solid theological and ethical consideration and study. Unfortunately some of the history of the Christian tradition has reinforced the notion that family violence is acceptable. An example of this is apparent in a quotation from the 15th century publication called *Rules of Marriage*:

"Scold your wife sharply, bully and terrify her. If this does not work, take up a stick and beat her soundly, for it is better to punish the body and correct the soul than to damage the soul and spare the body . . . Then readily beat her, not in rage but out of charity and concern for her soul so that the beating will redound to your merit and her good."

An embarrassment to Christians in the twentieth century, this passage nevertheless makes apparent the need for theological and scriptural homework in order to ground the prophetic voice in the liberating truth of the Gospels. Then, we can speak with the power and authority of the Word not only to the church but also the wider community. It is vital that the Christian community conveys the clear message that "people are not for hitting and abuse,"<sup>6</sup> a conviction based on the belief in the sacredness of human persons.

### A Preventive Response

The church's preventive role is, in the long run, the most important one. The church remains a significant locus of education, new awareness and moral standards for many in the community. The church has the opportunity to shape people's understanding of themselves, their relationship with God, and their relationships with other persons, particularly in the family. Family life education in the church presents an ideal context for helping families learn how to shape their relationships in non-violent, respectful and creative ways. In this respect, prevention moves to a broader category of justice-making, and the work of the church is to enable families to address such issues as sex role stereotyping, multicultural experience and appreciation, stewardship of the family's material resources conflict and problem solving, shared decision making, use of television, etc. Such family modeling can also take place in the context of the Gospel's values (see Resources). Providing the awareness and skills to families to maintain caring, nurturing, challenging, just relationships is a primary prevention of strategy which can help break the cycle of violence.

Also, in the context of examining methods to prevent family violence, pre-marriage counseling must approach the topics of anger, conflict and violence, as well as the more common subjects of money, sexuality, in-laws, occupations, etc. For those couples who are still in the first blush of romance, this topic is often jarring and sobering. It pushes couples to consider what they will do if violence occurs, and it helps them clarify basic ground rules with each other in advance of marriage. The counseling session helps them realize that while anger and conflict are inevitable in their relationship, violence is not. They can make a covenant together based on a just and non-violent relationship. They can consider their potential for violence based on their personal and family histories and their expectation for the marriage relationship. This can help prevent them from being caught up in the cycle of family violence in the future.

Similarly, working with teenagers is an excellent educational opportunity to help prevent family violence. Adolescence is a formative period in the areas of self-image, sexuality and expectations of relationships, and abusive patterns formed in teenage relationships are hard to break in later marriages. Teenagers need a strong

and consistent message which runs counter to the often abusive and exploitative media message which bombards their consciousness. Young people need information about their own sexuality, and about sexual abuse as well, so if someone in their family attempts to take advantage of them, they will know where and whom to ask for help.

The problem of abuse of the elderly by their adult children is becoming increasingly apparent. The church can help prevent this form of family violence by trying to minimize the stress created in families which have the responsibility of caring for an elderly person. In addition, regular visits by clergy and lay persons to shut-ins provides older persons with a dependable contact outside the family. A trained and sensitive person can detect difficulty and then assist the older person in dealing with an abusive situation before it becomes chronic.

### The Church: Roadblock or Resource?

Violent families who are in any way affiliated with the church encounter it as either a roadblock or a resource. The church's silence and inability and, in some cases, unwillingness to realize the suffering caused by family violence create enormous roadblocks which prevent victims and abusers from seeking help. When the church does acknowledge the problem, its theological and pastoral approach can often be damaging, thereby creating still more confusion and guilt which immobilizes victims or abusers in their efforts to stop the violence. Sometimes the church even takes a defensive role and tries to isolate its members from assistance provided by state law. Thus it creates a roadblock for the family which might otherwise receive assistance from secular as well as religious resources. Sometimes these roadblocks force church members into a difficult choice between the church with its counter-productive advice, and the person's own survival.

The corporate church and personal faith can and should be invaluable resources for individuals facing family violence. Through prayer and personal support victims can gain the strength and courage to leave the abuse behind, and abusers can make the changes necessary in order to stop the violence. The church — the community of faith — working with and through other resources in our communities, can insure that there is adequate shelter, support and advocacy for those who need it. The church must speak out to remind people that there is nothing in the Christian message which justifies the abuse of another person.

As the Body of Christ, both the church and individual members of the congregation are called to remove the roadblocks to loving and effective care. Then our *pastoral, prophetic, and preventive response* can more adequately become the resources which make justice a possibility for both victims and abusers who suffer from family violence.

1 In a recent survey conducted by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, however, we found that parish clergy surveyed nationally averaged 13.7 persons per year coming to them with situations which constituted family violence.

2 In one survey sample of 81 abused women, only 18 percent indicated that they had called upon clergy for help; of those, half were satisfied with the clergy response and half were unsatisfied. This information comes from Ellsworth and Wagner, "Formerly Battered Women: A Follow-up Study," an unpublished manuscript, University of Washington School of Social Work, 1980.

3 It is estimated that 50 to 60 percent of couples will experience physical violence at some point in their relationship. One out of five female children and one out of 11 male children will experience sexual abuse before reaching the age of 18. At least half of this sexual abuse occurs in the family as incest. See *Family Violence: A Workshop Manual for Clergy and Other Service Providers*, Fortune and Hormann, 1980.

4 This survey was conducted by Peggy Halsey and results were published in the *Texas Methodist*, Oct. 9, 1981, Sharon Mielke, editor. The categories included in this total figure included physical and verbal abuse of a spouse, abuse of a child by the respondent, and physical and sexual abuse experienced by the respondent as a child.

5 *Ibid.*, Ellsworth and Wagner.

6 An expansion of John Valusek's principle discussed in "People Are Not For Hitting," available at 3629 Mossman, Wichita, KS 67208.

### Resources

The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence is an interreligious, educational ministry. As a resource primarily to the religious community, it provides workshops for clergy and lay counselors as well as secular professionals on the problem of family violence. It also makes available workshop and curriculum materials for working with adults and teenagers. To receive the

Center's bi-monthly newsletter, "Working Together," write to CPSDV, 4250 S. Mead St., Seattle, WA 98118 or call (206) 725-1903.

"Parenting for Peace and Justice," by Kathleen and James McGinnis with tapes, program guide and filmstrip is available from Discipleship Resources, 1908 Grand Ave., P.O. Box 189, Nashville, TN 37202. This is a fine resource for families in churches exploring positive models of parenting and family life.

*Love and Negotiate: Creative Conflict In Marriage*, by John Scanzoni. Using a strong biblical base, Scanzoni presents a sound alternative to the hierarchical view of marriage: an excellent resource.

### Twelve Opportunities to Help

1. Volunteer to serve on the board of your local shelter for abused women and gain the experience and knowledge that will enable you to make a significant contribution to the healing of violent families.
2. Volunteer to train as an advocate/counselor for the shelter or crisis line in your community.
3. Sign up for a training seminar to learn ways to effectively counsel victims and abusers.
4. Contribute to the local shelter money or material goods (clothing, furniture, supplies, etc.) through the women's fellowship in your church.
5. Speak up when someone tells a wifebeating joke. Wifebeating

is not funny and you need to stand up and be counted.

6. Arrange an adult education series in your church on family violence.
7. Provide brochures in the church's narthex about community services dealing with family violence.
8. Speak up in the community in support of local services for victims and abusers.
9. Keep informed about all legislative issues at the state and national levels. Let your representatives know of your concerns about family violence issues. Be especially aware of how budget cuts are affecting services in your area.  
*And for clergy . . .*
10. Do the theological and scriptural homework necessary to better understand and respond to family violence.
11. Preach a sermon about family violence.
12. After you have taken a training seminar, volunteer to be on call at your local shelter when it needs a clergy person.

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## Evangelical Feminism: Reflections on the State of the "Union"

Harvie M. Conn

What is a feminist? I agree with Alan Alda. It is "someone who believes that women are people."

My purpose in this essay is to review the opinions on feminism now current within the evangelical community. What do I mean by "evangelical"? To quote Robert K. Johnston, I speak of a group of over forty-five million North Americans and millions more worldwide. Two of their commitments are important for us in providing a functional definition for this paper. They affirm (1) the need for personal relationship with God through faith in the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and (2) the sole and binding authority of the Bible as God's revelation.<sup>1</sup>

More specifically, I focus on what some have called "conservative-evangelicals." This label, like so many other theological ones current, is purely functional. And even then it is clumsy. "Conservative" hardly seems appropriate as a designation for those in this circle who question past evangelical stances on the issue of women in the Bible. And I suspect there are many in this broad continuum who are even reluctant to use the term "evangelical" about some on the far opposite end of the spectrum from them.

However, my own purpose is not labelling so much as sampling. With a highly selective hand that has eliminated journal and magazine literature, I seek to introduce key selected writers in a growing discussion. I hope to point to some of the issues that are presently surfacing in the infra-fraternity discussion and to point to those that still need to be resolved for progress. As with most issues, the evangelical has entered the discussion as a latecomer. And ordinarily the choice of options perceived by the writers are limited to the two around which the contemporary discussion revolves - egalitarianism versus some form of hierarchism. Unfortunately the former is also designated as feminism, an equation I am not yet prepared to make. And equally unfortunately, the latter is often indistinguishable from some form of subordinationism, an equation more culturally formed than biblically, often as covert as overt.

### Evangelical Options: Egalitarianism

The book that initiated evangelical participation came from within that camp in 1974 - *All We're Meant to Be* (Waco: Word Books) by Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty. Unlike so much evangelical

writing, the work was not simply a negative, knee-jerk reaction against earlier feminist literature the evangelical frequently characterizes as "liberal" or "secular." Scanzoni and Hardesty, working within the evangelical orbit, startled it by commending an egalitarian position. Their call for equality in the male-female relationship, coming from within a community that assumed a hierarchical position as theoretically biblical, initiated the discussion. *Eternity Magazine* selected it as "book of the year" and it has remained very much at the center of evangelical discussions since then. Its serious attention to Scripture placed it in the evangelical camp and thus demanded evangelical attention for its new conclusions. The wide range of issues it dealt with were also striking. The width of its treatment, in fact, may be part of the reason why it continues to be a center of discussion. And why it also appears rather thin and superficial in its exegetical treatment of biblical texts. It minimizes a wide range of hermeneutical possibilities. And its resolutions of difficulties in interpretation are not always fully satisfactory. There is little admission of unanswered problems. Still, more than most evangelical literature in this field, it has come closest to understanding and interacting with the full agenda of topics raised by women's lib.

In 1975, the second major evangelical treatment of the issue appeared, this time from the pen of Paul K. Jewett. His book, *Man as Male and Female*, was much more narrowly limited in its scope and style. He paid little overt attention to the contemporary social and cultural questions. And one might even say it was more theological than exegetical. It remained more technically aimed at the theological issues involved.

Undoubtedly these were factors in making it a storm center of controversy. Many reasons could be added to the list. Like Scanzoni and Hardesty, the book rejected the traditional conservative defense of a hierarchical view of the man/woman relationship. Jewett saw such a view requiring not simply a priority of the male but even the superiority of the male. He rejected this classical statement of the evangelical as entailing a subordination of the female to the male. In its place, he argued for what he called "a model of partnership."<sup>2</sup>

In addition there were other reasons to anger the community in Jewett's argument. He used a modification of Karl Barth's idea of human sexuality as the key to understanding man, male and female, as image of God. In doing that, despite his strictures on Barth's argument, he angered the community in several directions. He had to challenge long-held exegetical traditions regarding the under-

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standing of the image of God in man. And he had to do it by using as a foil the views of a theologian long suspect in those circles.

Another issue, however, became even more controversial for the evangelical family in their dialogue with the book. It was not so much Jewett's defense of a modified egalitarianism but his perceived questioning of the full integrity of the Bible over the issue of women. Specifically, it was the testimony of Paul, and Jewett's exposition of it, that became the firestorm.

To Jewett, there was Paul, the ardent disciple of Jesus Christ affirming that "there is neither . . . male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). But there was also Paul, the rabbi of impeccable erudition and chauvinism, forbidding women to teach, exhorting women to keep silence in the churches. Evangelical commitment to the Scriptures had always sought harmonization as the solution for such apparent collision points. For Jewett, "there is no satisfying way to harmonize the Pauline argument for female subordination with the large Christian vision of which the great apostle to the Gentiles was himself the primary architect."<sup>3</sup> Jewett's commitment to the egalitarianism of Paul the Christian clashed with his understanding of the subordinationism of Paul the rabbi. He could not accept the traditional resolutions and harmonizations. He could only see two Pauls in the New Testament.

Harold Lindsell, in his 1976 book, *The Battle for the Bible*, saw these admissions as a rejection by Jewett of inerrancy.<sup>4</sup> That concern was a legitimate one. I am quick to add as well that Lindsell's domino theory seems to come close to saying that egalitarians hold a low view of Scripture since they reject what to him is such a clear view of Scripture (hierarchicalism).

Jewett responded by defending these Pauline self-struggles as "an indication of the historical character of biblical revelation."<sup>5</sup> But Jewett's reply was too mild to defuse the agenda now enlarging around the question of feminism. Egalitarianism, in the eyes of the evangelical traditionalists, was being seen increasingly as tied both to "feminism" and to what was described as a "lower" view of Scripture.<sup>6</sup> Lindsell's domino theory they saw as being proved again. The growing exodus of congregations in this same decade from mainline Presbyterian churches reinforced these concerns. The issue of the ordination of women to the teaching office of the church was being seen by conservative dissidents as really the issue of biblical authority.

Since these earlier works, the egalitarian position in the evangelical movement has continued to add supporters. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, who wrote the foreword to Jewett's title, has provided her own full work, *Women, Men, and the Bible* (1977). It is perhaps the most strident in tone of all these works. Ranging more widely than Jewett's early title, she followed him in his attitude toward Paul, but went beyond him in using the term "contradictions" to describe the Pauline material. Sensitive to the controversies stirred by Jewett's work, Mollenkott writes, "I believe that Paul's arguments for female subordination, which contradict much of his own behaviour and certain other passages he himself wrote, were also written for our instruction: to show us a basically godly human being in process, struggling with his own socialization; and to force us to use our heads in working our way through conflicting evidence."<sup>7</sup>

I myself do not agree with Mollenkott (or Jewett) either in the interpretation of the Pauline data or in the proposed alternatives to traditional harmonizations. And I struggle with how far one can move to the left of the evangelical continuum on biblical authority before moving off it altogether. But I continue to hear evangelical sensitivities resonating in Mollenkott's argument. In seeking an answer to what she perceives as Pauline rationalization, her resort is not to a questioning of Pauline authorship. She uses no deus-ex-machina appeal to the scissors-and-paste unity of the letters I sense in other scholarship. Her struggle is not against biblical inspiration but the face of it. The problems, she says, are not with the text but "learning to interpret accurately."<sup>8</sup>

Mollenkott, in all this, is not just a Jewett *redivivus*. The book, for example, interacts directly with traditionalist writers in a way that Jewett does not. And it raises issues Jewett or even Scanzoni and Hardesty did not. A full chapter for example, and perhaps a chronological first in contemporary evangelical literature, is her study of the question, "Is God masculine?"

In the years since the mid 1970s, the egalitarian movement has grown among the evangelicals. An Evangelical Women's Caucus, organized in the mid 1970s, continues to expand its membership. By 1980 it had reached approximately 600. A small bi-monthly journal, *Daughters of Sarah*, now provides a writing platform for expanding evangelical study and influence. Within this side of the continuum, studies are enlarging beyond the original, more general agenda.

Ecclesiastical concerns still retain a major interest. Jewett's 1980 work, *The Ordination of Women*, expands his argument into what, for many conservatives in the evangelical camp, will be regarded as "inevitable consequence" to his earlier title. And Jewett's method of argument will only reinforce that suspicion. He assumes the exegetical basis of his previous book and spends the bulk of his time here in demolishing what appear to him to be the major traditionalist objections to women's ordination—their appeal to the nature of women (ch. 2), the nature of the ministerial office (ch. 3), and the (masculine) nature of God (ch. 4). His positive arguments remain limited largely to the fifth chapter, women's "right to the order of ministry."

A possible tactical mistake of Jewett's may have surfaced in his "all-purpose" case for the ordination of women. He attempts a discussion of ordination that is general enough to interact with both Protestant and Catholic alike. Ramsey Michaels conjectures, "it is doubtful that his 'end run' around the ecumenical issue can succeed."<sup>9</sup> Given conservative sensitivities on this question, assuredly it will raise as many objections as eyebrows in that corner of the evangelical house. I personally suspect that the understanding of ordination may be more central than Jewett has made it.

In the meantime, there has appeared the beginnings of study on the biological, social and cultural influences affecting role relationships. Peter DeJong and Donald Wilson's 1979 work, *Husband and Wife: The Sexes in Scripture and Society* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), focuses on traditional sex roles. Its strength is particularly in the valuable sociological input on these questions. Its weakest link is in its exegetical treatment of the topic.

Also growing at this end of the continuum spectrum is the discussion of the problem of sexist language in the Bible and worship. It is, to this writer, the best chapter in Jewett's 1980 volume. And it has been expanded further by a more recent title, Vernard Eller's *The Language of Canaan and the Grammar of Feminism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Comp., 1982). Eller's work is a brief, but intriguing, use of language analysis as a starting point for the examination of sexist language. The more traditional evangelical circles, by contrast, are virtually silent about this topic. Little seems to have appeared also from this latter camp regarding the influence of culture and society on role models.

### Evangelical Options: Hierarchy Views

In all this, the "traditional" evangelical end of the spectrum has not been totally silent. But, with few exceptions, it has appeared as more negative in tone than the egalitarian view and decidedly more limited in its agenda. Its major writers have reacted not so much to the socio-cultural questions of western society as to the rise of egalitarianism within its own ranks. And even here there is further reductionism. Its temper is not always dictated so much by egalitarianism as it is by its concern over those positions it associates with the egalitarian position—in particular, a perceived "lower" view of Scripture. One senses much more fearfulness over compromise of biblical integrity in its defenders. That concern is a legitimate one. But too often it becomes more dominant in the literature than it should.

The end result of this narrowing of perceptions gives the "traditionalist" more the appearance of a knee-jerk reaction agent. And for those outside any Christian camp at all it reduces further any desire to listen. This is tragic at a time when evangelicals are awakening more and more to the social obligations of the gospel. And when western society frequently and incorrectly dismisses evangelical perceptions as "right wing" or "Moral Majority-ism."

A sample of how these problems arise is illustrated in the 1977 book by George Knight III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women*. Knight's work is the briefest of all the books we have mentioned thus far. And that in itself works

against his own purposes. The style is extremely compact and difficult to follow. Again, his concerns are not with the social problems of male chauvinism and male/female equality. They are with "the question of admitting women to the teaching and ruling function of the church."<sup>10</sup> He deals briefly with the marriage relationship. But he does so only as part of his argument that this relationship, with its concept of male headship, is the basis for understanding the question of women in ecclesiastical office.

Adding to this complexity of style and narrowed agenda is Knight's strong apologetic against the works of Scanzoni and Hardesty, and of Jewett. Whether this is entirely fair is a question. None of these earlier works have the strongly narrowed area of interest Knight has limited himself to in his book. Further, each of Knight's chapters open with a section offering "biblical evidence" and then "objections answered." The sections responding to the egalitarian advocates are much lengthier than the more positive materials. Out of two central chapters (pp. 19-53), 27 pages out of a total of 34 are devoted to critical interaction. The effect is to minimize even more the positive elements of Knight's argument.

Knight recognizes that outside these family and church spheres are those areas where men and women "are mutually dependent

the expected treatments of headship, submission and women's ordination to ministry.

There is beyond all this a refreshing sensitivity to the exploitation of women in culture. And this is rather unique in traditionalist literature. Repeatedly her illustrations warn against the way in which evangelical male traditionalists can too easily capitulate to this chauvinist danger. She warns of a glib proof-texting of male boorishness or a subtle shifting of the responsibility of the husband to love his wife from him to her.<sup>14</sup> She does not hesitate to criticize fellow traditionalists like Wayne Mack,<sup>15</sup> and to support egalitarians like Scanzoni and Hardesty in several areas.<sup>16</sup> She is much quicker to distinguish between biblical demands for role-playing and cultural stereotypes than Knight seems to do.

At the same time, Foh's work is not ultimately directed by her concerns over cultural chauvinism. Her obvious awareness of the realities is there. But her argument and her solid exegetical work are not directed to that topic. She has written an "in-house" reaction to other evangelical writers. The subtitle of her book tells it: "A Response to Biblical Feminism" (her term for evangelical egalitarians). It is here she cannot match the scope of Scanzoni and Hardesty's work. She has not really seen the cultural woods for the

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***The end result of this narrowing of perceptions gives the "traditionalist" more the appearance of a knee-jerk reaction agent.***

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upon one another and relate to one another outside of a particular sphere of authority."<sup>11</sup> At the same time, his strong advocacy of headship as a characteristic of maleness and of submission as the role of femaleness minimizes even this admission for the chauvinist-concerned reader. He cautions that "every relationship does have the overtone of one's maleness or femaleness."<sup>12</sup> And given his strong defense of hierarchy in the roles, this caution does not comfort the reader by way of balance.

Another feature of the discussion also hurts Knight's case. With many evangelicals, he shares a failure to verbally appreciate the cultural and social factors that also play a part in our understanding of even biblically-dimensioned role relationships. He gives no substantive acknowledgement to these dimensions anywhere I could find in the book. This absence is reinforced by his argument concerning the three key passages relating to these questions (I Timothy 2:11-15, I Corinthians 14:33b-38 and I Corinthians 11:1-16). He says the commands prohibiting women from ruling and teaching men in the church "are grounded not in time-bound, historically and culturally relative arguments that apply only to Paul's day and age, but in the way God created men and women to relate to each other as male and female."<sup>13</sup>

At this point, we are not saying Knight is right or wrong about this interpretation. But we are saying that the effect of this argument, combined with his strong defense of hierarchy, transforms for the hearer the argument for hierarchy into an argument for subordinationism. And this whether Knight intends it or not. His assault on any form of cultural relativism will be understood as a simplism that leads to subordinationism.

A much fuller and more helpful presentation of the traditional viewpoint of hierarchy is found in Susan Foh's *Women and the Word of God* (1980). She too dialogues constantly with evangelical egalitarians. But it is much more subdued and gracious, stylistically more controlled than that of Knight. Her writing style is rather wooden but far less antagonistic than Knight's. She too is concerned with egalitarian attitudes towards the Scripture. In fact, the opening chapter of her work is entitled, "Can We Believe the Bible?" Unfortunately, her work shows no awareness of the centrist postures of the Boldreys and of Gundry.

Her work benefits also from a more comprehensive search than Knight. There are useful discussions on singlehood, on God as male and female, on the metaphysics of sex. And, in addition, there are

egalitarian trees.

Why? Is it related to her argument over "cultural relativism" early on in the book? She argues that a recognition of cultural conditionedness to parts of the Bible makes the Bible therefore non-authoritative.<sup>17</sup> "The commandments to women rest on unchanging principles."<sup>18</sup> Her legitimate concern is undoubtedly over those, who in the name of cultural conditionedness, discredit the integrity of the Bible. And these views she obviously associates with the likes of Jewett, Mollenkott and others. But, at the same time, her rather simplistic response can overcompensate.

By far, the fairest and best of the hierarchical statements is that made by James B. Hurley in *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (1981). Hurley makes no sustained effort to paint the twentieth century discussions on women as the introductory context for his work. And this may be the book's largest problem to me. But it is clearly the setting which he seeks to address in the book. The major intent of the book is "to present a careful examination of the relevant biblical texts within the context of their day and to discuss their relevance to the present."<sup>19</sup>

His focus is heavily on exegesis, and not just limited to New Testament data. He proceeds chronologically through the Bible, with chapters on women in Israelite culture, women in the ministry and teaching of Jesus, women in the life of the apostolic church and basic attitudes reflected in the apostolic teaching.

A distinctive of his work, and one seldom used by the traditionalists, is his attention to the cultural settings of the Bible. How were women viewed in the ancient near east, the background to the Old Testament? How were women treated by Judaism and the Graeco-Roman world of the first century? This background goes a long way to unfolding the sharp break that biblical attitudes displayed in its host cultures.

In all this Hurley is less strident and apologetic in his tone. Though he is well aware of critical opinion on key texts, he deliberately refrains from naming names and devouring opponents' houses. Alternative choices are fairly laid out and answered. But his discussions do not get in the way of positive exposition of the text as they do in Knight's work. Hurley's volume will likely be *the* book for understanding the hierarchical position.

Finally, in the concluding ninth chapter, he seeks to draw guidelines for the application of his biblical study to the present day. He raises a large number of case studies and deals with each, using

the materials he has provided in previous chapters. In terms of his stated purpose, this is a rather skimpy offering in the name of application and relevance. And, to be sure, it is all very carefully defined by his understanding of submission to male authority. But it is worthwhile. And it is significant that he tries it.

Again, however, in common with so many of the traditionalist writers, Hurley's orientation is to ecclesiastical questions. Can a woman address a local congregation with the approval of the elders? Can she teach a Sunday school morning adult Bible class? There are other questions equally or more important to our culture that demand answers. What of culturally determined "maternal" roles in the home? What of sexual harassment on the job, salary inequities in society? How far does one use the Bible in determining marriage roles, and how far may one accede to cultural patterns? How does

a Christian vote on the ERA? On the drafting of women? On legal action against discrimination because of "sexual preference" (a euphemism for homosexuality)? This agenda is not treated in the Hurley book.

I would have some difficulty describing Knight's book as "feminist". Most feminists would also, I suspect. But Hurley comes closer to hearing the pain. He is open enough to the agonies to be open to a larger agenda. Though still a traditionalist, he is a traditionalist who is sensitive to and truly listens to feminist concerns and arguments. That, to me, places him very close to the feminist camp, if not in it.

*Part II, "Where Do We Go From Here?", will appear in the next TSF Bulletin.*

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

## Personal Renewal: Reflections on "Brokenness"

by Roberta Hestenes

The biblical promise and possibility of personal spiritual renewal is broader than any simple definition. In the Old Testament, "renewal" seems to carry a meaning of restoration and repair—putting right that which has been broken or disrupted (1 Samuel 11:14; 1 Chronicles 15:8; Psalm 51:10, 104:30; Lam. 5:21). Renewal of strength is seen as drawn from waiting upon the Lord (Isaiah 40:31; 41:1), watching and listening in expectant anticipation for the powerful action of the creative and energizing Lord of the nations.

In the New Testament, renewal is used to speak both of the initial Christian experience of the working of God—"regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5)—and of the subsequent work where daily the Christian experiences the transforming power of God (2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:23; Romans 12:1–2). Renewal is both that which is given to us and accomplished in us by God and a reality we seek and a process to which we give ourselves.

In this paper I will focus on one of the ingredients of personal renewal—a "broken and contrite heart". In addition, I will explore a few of the dangers along the way for even the experienced traveler. Three key texts form the center of my exploration:

*Psalm 51:* especially verses 10-12 and 17: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

*Matthew 5:6:* "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

*James 4:6* (quoting Psalm 138 and Proverbs 3): "'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Submit yourselves therefore to God."

I want to center on the theme of "brokenness" as an ingredient in renewal, drawing on David's statement, "A broken and contrite spirit you will not despise." It may seem strange to speak of brokenness to contemporary seminarians and academicians who live in an age constantly stressing self-actualization and self-fulfillment. Here are a group of people, many of whom are eager, committed, bright and energetic—successful according to many definitions of the word. Yet David also knew something of striving and success. It was in the middle of that success that the occasion for this psalm arises. It comes out of a devastating experience in David's life. It had begun with adultery and deception, had moved to trickery and murder, had resulted in confrontation and exposure, and the death of a child. The hidden sin was known and David was devastated.

In this response of David's there are some lessons for us:

1) The reality of temptation for even the most spiritual of persons

in the most spiritual of places. David lives in the holy city, the resting place of the ark. Spiritual history and spiritual status provide no safe security. They are not impermeable barriers to temptation and sin. David loved God, but he sinned.

2) The necessity of the community of God's people willing to "speak the truth in love" to help us face ourselves and to know the holiness and the love of God. The dangers of isolation and personal lack of accountability in the midst of large numbers of people can only be overcome through the maintenance of a few significant relationships where the truth, even if unwelcomed, can be said and heard.

3) The reminder that the work we do for God and our study about God is no substitute for the holy life lived in vital relationship with God. It is important not to coast on our spiritual history, but to maintain a fresh, ongoing personal fellowship with God.

4) The forgiving and renewing mercy of God available at the deepest points of our need. This renewal comes in prayer, waiting for and seeking God.

In the face of exposed sin, David confessed and repented. He knew the value of a heart humbled before God. In our day which emphasizes self-confidence, self-assertion and self-fulfillment, we need to learn again the lessons of brokenness—of humility and gentleness before God and each other. This "brokenness" speaks not of self-worthlessness nor a malformed personality, nor deep clinical depression. It points toward a deeper reality, the response to a prompting of the Spirit in certain circumstances of need, demand, or spiritual yearning and hunger. Brokenness is a yielded heart open before God, a heart emptied of pride and self claims, of all arrogance, knowing our sin, our self-deception, our frailty, weakness and inadequacy. We discover ourselves again to be hungry and thirsty, poor and needy when we had thought ourselves full and needing nothing. Along with this awareness comes a re-discovery of God's love, mercy and forgiveness—His affirmation of us, care for us, and claim upon us.

Spiritual brokenness can come in different ways:

1) A vision of God. Isaiah sees the Lord "high and lifted up" and sees his own uncleanness and the uncleanness of the people of God. "Woe is me," he exclaims. Receiving the cleansing of God, he is able to hear and respond to the call of God upon his life—"Here I am; send me." But his ministry follows his heightened awareness of the holiness of God and his own sin.

2) A desire to be blessed. Jacob wrestled with God—"I will not let you go unless you bless me"—and emerges wounded and blessed to become Israel, the prince of God. In his encounter with God, he must acknowledge his identity as Jacob the deceiver before receiving the new name and promise.

3) An awareness of weakness, failure or sin, as we see in David in Psalm 51.

4) An encounter with Christ. Saul on the Damascus Road: "Saul, Saul why do you persecute me? It hurts you to kick against the

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goads." The proud Pharisee is led blind and defenseless into the city he had planned to enter as an avenging power. Later in seeking to have his "thorn in the flesh" removed, he is taught again by Jesus, "My strength is made perfect in weakness. My grace is sufficient for you."

5) The providential circumstances beyond my control—where we sense no alternatives, feel boxed in, cornered, no way to go, no where to go—as Job did when he lost all only to recover after a vision of God.

God wants to teach us the lessons of brokenness, not that He wants us to be weak, but so that we may know our weakness before we lean too hard on ourselves, depend on ourselves, or take an exalted view of self instead of the sober assessment required. God wants us to discover continually the true source of our strength—His Spirit and His power. Brokenness is not the opposite of wholeness; it is the continuing precondition for it. It is related to being "tender-hearted" (Eph. 4:32) and "gentleness," one of the fruits of the Spirit. It is part of the movement from pride to humility.

Sometimes we become aware of our own complicity in our brokenness. Sometimes we feel God is, even unjustly, doing this to us (as Job complained in chapter 17). Yet whether through brokenness or by other paths, we seek an openness to all that God offers. Renewal is a gateway to new possibilities, new beginnings.

The realities and dangers that can harden or soften us as we seek an awareness of the reality of God are diverse. We are hardened instead of softened when we:

1) Make excuses for our sin or for our shallowness. "I couldn't help it. I had no choice." We are softened when we confess and receive the faithful forgiveness of God (I John 1:9).

2) Blame someone else; refusing to take our share of responsibility. "They" are the problem.

3) Defend our actions as right or the only thing we could have done under the circumstances when in our hidden selves, a tremor warns us that all is or was not as we put it forth.

4) Ignore the tender shoots, the hidden promptings of the Spirit, to confess, make right, risk honesty or try love. This ignoring of the prompting of the Spirit can lead to hardness, brittleness, callousness, or insensitivity. It may cause us to miss the *Kairos*, the special time of God's acting. It is like those who are deaf in the higher ranges of sound. We simply lose the discernment to hear the Spirit unless He yells to us in the middle range. Can we hear the whisperings of the Spirit?

5) Fill our lives with activity, but are left empty of God.

Brokenness is only one part of the wholeness of Christian experience with its joy, peace, and power in the Holy Spirit. Awareness of it may be fleeting, but it is a gracious gift from God. For a moment our pride is shattered. We know ourselves and amazingly discover that the real selves we are, these very selves are *loved*, empowered, renewed. From that discovery and rediscovery flows healing, wholeness, and transforming newness.

In the midst of our comings and goings and our planning and programs, there are times, sometimes in solitude and sometimes in community, when we come to know our emptiness that we might be made full.

Remember that we are not loved for our success or our spirituality. All is of grace. We follow a Savior who one night in the Upper Room told us and the next day showed us that He was broken for us. Broken for us: an undeserved death in our place that we might be made whole in Him. This is our journey of renewal. It begins and continues in such great love. Broken before Him, we are continually made new and whole in Him.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Toward Old Testament Ethics*

By Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. (Zondervan, 1983, 345 pp., \$12.95) Reviewed by Frank Ames, Acting Dean, Western Bible College Denver, CO.

In 1970, Bernard S. Childs concluded that "there is no outstanding modern work written in English that even attempts to deal adequately with the biblical material as it relates to ethics. . . ." Now there is. Kaiser's *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, published under the new Academic Books imprint of Zondervan, is a noteworthy attempt to sift the primary data and to suggest a comprehensive approach to the ethics of the Old Testament.

Kaiser proposes an eclectic approach to the task. He argues that the Old Testament must be taken on its own terms and in its final form. The theologian must inductively identify and exegete the summarizing ethical texts, then blend the results using synchronic, diachronic, and central theme techniques. To be complete, questions about the moral difficulties and continuing application of the Old Testament must be answered. A less comprehensive approach, argues Kaiser, would neither embrace the whole of the Old Testament nor meet the needs of those turning to a volume on Old Testament ethics.

The five divisions of the book reflect the major elements of his approach: I. "Definition and Method" (a hermeneutical excursus), II. "Summarizing Moral Texts in Old Testament Ethics" (an exegetical study of central texts), III. "Content of Old Testament Ethics" (asynchronic theology developed around a central theme), IV. "Moral Difficulties in the Old Testament" (an apologetic treatment of problem texts), and V. "Old Testament Ethics and New Testament Applications" (an argument for the continuing application of Old Testament morality).

Kaiser points out that Old Testament morality, or "the manner of life that the older covenant prescribes and approves," is rooted in the character, authority, and creation ordinances of God. This ob-

servation strengthens his argument for unity and consistency in Old Testament ethics. It also argues for a continuing applicability. Kaiser writes, "Laws based on the character and nature of God we call moral laws. Their permanence is set by the immutability or unchangeableness of the character of God. Similar insights are scattered throughout the first section of the book to support Kaiser's approach and to stimulate the reader's thinking."

In the second section, Kaiser examines the programmatic moral texts of the Old Testament: the Decalogue (Exodus 20:22-23:33), the Law of Holiness (Leviticus 18-20), and the laws of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 12-25). Priority is given to the Decalogue. In this section Kaiser is at his best. One finds insightful exegesis, irenic argument, and informed commentary. His analysis of the Laws of Deuteronomy, for example, is especially helpful. He shows, following the thesis of Stephen Kaufman, that the outline of Deuteronomy 12-25 follows the structure of the Decalogue.

Kaiser, in the third section of his book, presents the content of Old Testament ethics. He argues that holiness is the central theme, then he incorporates it in a synchronic theology outlined like the Decalogue. He discusses holiness in connection with worship, family and society, the sanctity of life, marriage and sexuality, wealth and possessions, the discovery and use of truth, and intentions and motives.

In section four, Kaiser responds to the charge that the ethics of the Old Testament are morally offensive. He presents reasonable answers for those hard questions about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, the use of deception, the "ban," slavery, sexism, and imprecation.

A very brief, and somewhat disappointing, defense of the continuing authority and applicability of the moral law of the Old Testament concludes the book. Here his exegesis and argument will be challenged especially by dispensational theologians. A longer and more detailed presentation would have been helpful.

Regardless of weaknesses in Kaiser's final chapter, this reviewer recommends the book for those studying the Bible and ethics.

### *The New Testament and Homosexuality*

by Robin Scroggs (Fortress Press, 1983, 160 pp., \$14.95). Reviewed by Robert Wall, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies and Biblical Ethics, Seattle Pacific University.

The concerns Robin Scroggs raises about the current debate in the church over homosexuality are important ones. While scriptural texts are invoked as a primary authorization for whatever opinion is being argued, the church - including its scholars - have paid precious little attention to the *hermeneutical* issues which are at stake in this discussion and others like it. What is the proper use of the Bible in moral discourse? More specifically, what are the biblical authors really up against when they oppose homosexuality? And what relevancy does this historical reconstruction have for the contemporary debate?

The task Professor Scroggs has set for himself is to convince the reader that the prevailing attitudes about homosexuality in the Greco-Roman world shape the NT prohibitions against homosexuality, and this conclusion in turn should control how the church uses these texts in its moral judgments about homosexuality. Thus, he casts his argument with three interrelated discussions: 1) He first describes the secular and sacred attitudes about male homosexuality in the Greco-Roman world; 2) assuming these attitudes shaped the NT writers, he exegetes the Pauline texts which prohibit homosexuality (1 Cor 6:9-10; Rom 1:26-27; he does not consider the 1 Tim 1:9-10 vice-list Pauline); and 3) he finally assesses the value of his exegetical conclusions for today's debate. Included in his work are three appendant discussions of questions which the interlocutor might raise against his thesis.

The thesis of his entire work is to show that the *only* model of male homosexuality known to the Greco-Roman culture and so to Paul and his churches was *pederasty*. While some platonic pederastic relationships were known in the academy or military, most were between young slaves or call-boys and adults who abused and dehumanized them. The outrage over such practices within the secular world was reflected in the religious traditions passed on to Paul and by Paul to his audiences. Indeed, references which prohibited adult homosexuality in The Torah were reinterpreted by the rabbis to condemn the "gentile vice" of pederasty; the vice-lists and arguments which included a condemnation of homosexuality were used rather uncritically by Paul to make theological rather than moral points.

Thus, Scroggs concludes that the NT does not address the sort of homosexuality we find today in our churches (i.e. adult and mutually caring). "*Biblical judgments against homosexuality are not relevant to today's debate . . . not because the Bible is not authoritative, but simply because it does not address the issues involved*" (p. 127, his italics). In any case, the infrequency and disinterest in the issue reflected by the biblical citations corrects the "homophobia" which Scroggs finds in certain segments of today's church.

I am not convinced that Scroggs has made his case. While the book is a commendable piece of historical research, and no doubt clarifies the *Sitz im Leben* behind the NT prohibitions, Scroggs exhibits, in my view, a disconcerting tendency of drawing firm conclusions from, at best, selected evidence. Further, he treats contested, yet crucial issues far too casually. For example, while he acknowledges the difficult nature of those discussions about Paul's formative religious tradition (whether Hellenistic or Palestinian Judaism), he finally situated Paul in line with the Hellenistic midrashim (which understood the prohibitions in Torah as against pederasty) and then exegetes the Pauline texts accordingly. Had he decided, as most scholars now would, to situate Paul in line with Palestinian Judaism (which understood Torah more literally and so condemned *adult* homosexuality), he could not have concluded so easily that Paul had pederasty in mind when prohibiting homosexuality.

I am most troubled, however, by Scroggs' hermeneutical moves. Two criticisms must suffice. First, he severely limits the role the Bible can play in contemporary moral discourse. For instance, he discounts the Hebrew Scriptures as unimportant for Christian debate; he locates ultimate meaning of the biblical text in the past rather than for the present; and he gives too much value to those secular forces which determined the biblical view of things moral and immoral.

Second, with Scroggs, I too want to admit that deciding about homosexuality is a complex issue involving norms drawn from many sources; however, the focus of his book is on the usefulness of the Bible as one authorized source for making the church's moral judgments. In my view, Scroggs erodes the Bible's role as the church's inspired canon—its *ongoing* rule of faith and practice. In fact, against Scroggs, the church continues to use these words of Paul because they assume that they are used by God's Spirit in conveying to it a fresh understanding of his Word and will. No part of the Bible should be discounted; that some scholars, conservative and liberal, do so shows the bankruptcy of their view of the sacred text. Now, to a possibility. . .

Scroggs persuasively argues that male homosexuality within the Greco-Roman culture was a natural manifestation of that culture's dominant male reality. Might it be suggested, based upon Scroggs' analysis, that to the extent a society is determined by a male mythology, homosexuality will result as its concrete manifestation? Is not such

a social reality against the biblical view of creation which envisages the *equality* between females and males? Does not Paul utilize a Jewish argument in Romans 1:18–32 to suggest that idolatry, homosexuality and social vices are all manifestations of a gentile world which stands against God's *creation*? Indeed, it is a theological point, but one which condemns certain practices as integral to it.

It may be true that homosexual relationships found within the church today are not at all analogous to those in the Greco-Roman world; however, like that world, homosexuality today continues to reflect a social reality (male dominance in the West) that is against creation's ideal of sexual equality. It occurs to me that even lesbianism might be understood as a radical form of feminist protest against a male world. Thus, the Pauline texts, especially Romans 1, can be used by the church to judge in a fallen world an appetite which is homosexual rather than an equality between male and female characteristic of the new creation.

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***The Power of the Poor in History***  
by Gustavo Gutierrez (Orbis, 1983, 240 pp., \$10.95).  
Reviewed by Todd Speidell, Ph.D. student in systematic theology, Fuller Theological Seminary.

Ten years after the 1973 English publication of Gutierrez' pioneer work, *A Theology of Liberation*, we have a collection of essays which span the author's theological development from 1969 to 1983. The title indicates the common theme of the book and the distinctive method of liberation theology: *The Power of the Poor in History*. This is no academic theology written as an appendage to two millennia of Christian theology—composed "from above"—but it is a rereading of history enacted "from below."

Gutierrez first surveys the biblical sources of liberation theology by rereading Scripture from "the underside of history." God's revelation in history as the liberation of the poor, recorded in Scripture as the mighty events from Exodus to Christ, demonstrates the historical nature of revelation and God's preferential (though nonexclusive) option for the poor. A *re-reading* of Scripture indicates a *re-making* of history.

Gutierrez next discusses the liberating power of the gospel for the poor, who themselves can achieve liberation, proclaim the gospel, and theologize from the situation of oppression. God's "preferential option for the poor," however, makes the poor the bearers of salvation for all humanity. The church, then, should express a clear option in concrete solidarity with the poor and their liberating praxis, for salvation includes (without being reduced to) the economic, social, and political well-being of humanity and society.

Gutierrez finally provides a critique of the salient individualism of modern theology (with some exceptions; for example, Bonhoeffer and Barth). Liberation theology differs from the dominant ideologies, whether conservative or progressive, by emphasizing the lived faith of the poor in history. The poor do not offer academic criticisms of modern theology, but question first of all the socio-economic order.

The hermeneutical implications of liberation theology are clear: biblical and theological interpretation are contextual and not timeless. Gutierrez does not permit the "neutrality" of "scientific" exegesis, but points out the inevitable sociological influence on one's reading of Scripture and doing theology. One can agree that hermeneutics is not context-independent—so that third world peoples will interpret God's Word from the situation of oppression, just as first world interpreters have a marked bourgeois bias—but it is a mistake to raise

context-dependency to a methodological axiom. The point is neither to be totally context-independent, nor simply context-reflexive, but to reflect critically on contemporary context in the light of the Word of God. God's Word is a critical norm of solidarity, judgment, and hope in every human situation and cannot be reduced to a "preference," method, or program, but is the free and concrete commitment of God to humans in history. The Word of God acts among and speaks to the poor and oppressed, for example, without being exhausted or defined by the situation of poverty and oppression.

The practical implications of liberation theology are equally clear: salvation history is salvation *in* history, and the liberation of the poor will be effected by the power of the poor. Gutierrez avoids the reductionistic options on both sides: salvation as either structural *or* spiritual, political *or* personal, for one should not "baptize the revolution" nor "disincarnate the gospel." Gutierrez calls the church to concrete commitment and active involvement with the popular, historical movements of the poor in history. Banners for the "new humanity" and visions of a "classless society," however, often replace concrete descriptions of the situation of oppression in Latin America and realistic projects of liberation—not aseptic descriptions, but with the active commitment and critical reflection of the church; not impartial proposals, but with the passionate, pastoral, and prophetic praxis of the gospel.

The "power of the poor in history" challenges our way of interpreting the Word of God and calls us to solidarity with the historical praxis of the poor. Gutierrez' work is important as a recent and overview statement of the theology being done "from the underside of history" in Latin America.

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***Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions***  
by Arthur F. Holmes, (InterVarsity Press, 1984, 132 pp., \$4.95.) Reviewed by Charles Van Patten, Ph.D. student in philosophy, University of Notre Dame.

*Ethics* is divided into three sections. The first part discusses nontheological options for ethics. Holmes's exposition of the basic tenets of relativism, emotivism, egoism and utilitarianism is fair and accurate with piercing criticisms—philosophical and Christian—which show these theories to be inadequate. For example, since utilitarianism can ignore justice when unjust means result in a good end greater than the unjust means employed, Holmes argues that this teleological theory is inadequate and must be augmented by a deontological theory.

That theory is developed in the second part of *Ethics*. Deontological alternatives are briefly critiqued and dismissed in favor of the Christian and biblical natural law theory, viz. the Divine Command Theory. Holmes argues that only the moral being and will of God offers a true and sufficient metaphysical foundation for moral rules and principles (which determines the actual "ought" in particular moral cases and situations). Because the nature of God is loaded with moral significance, love, justice, goodness and law, all follow from this moral foundation.

The third part of *Ethics* attempts to apply the above developed moral foundation to the contemporary issues of human rights, criminal punishment, the legislation of morality (this chapter is the most relevant for social ethics), and sex and marriage. There are two methodological and analytic deficiencies that have generally characterized modern moral philosophy, and it is important to point them out to contextualize the discussion of the third part of this book.

First, modern moral philosophy has paid al-

most no attention to a theme in ethics that runs throughout classical philosophy, medieval philosophy and the Bible, namely that ethics are not reducible to outward actions. The prohibitions against coveting (Ex. 20:17), anger (Matt. 5:28) and lust (Matt. 5:22), are unanalyzable to the modern moral philosophers whose theories are capable of categorizing the rightness and wrongness of outward acts only. Second, modern moral philosophy offers alternative theories for the foundation of *personal* ethics. Personal ethics are obviously very important, but this methodological approach is incapable of developing an equally important social ethic. A social ethic must inform individuals and society of their moral obligations and responsibilities in respect to social nuances and complexities of power, economic injustice, war, etc. To this end a social ethic must also describe and define the social structures which often results in the individual being directly irresponsible - but indirectly responsible -for the structures' social injustice. Yet how is the mere foundation for personal ethics to do the work of morally informing on these levels?

It is within this vacuum that modern moral philosophers must write, Christian or not, and Holmes has clearly avoided the first deficiency by pointing out that "motives as well as actions are morally significant" (p. 115). In this vein, Holmes discusses the importance of a person's inner will, character and dispositional state, along with the outward complement of acting rightly. The fact that Holmes makes this connection not only corrects a trend in modern moral philosophy, but also reveals sensitivity to the moral realities of the intending and acting moral agent.

If this book has a weakness, it would be that the second deficiency of moral philosophy is not entirely corrected by Holmes's application of his theory to moral and social issues. For example, Holmes's Christian moral foundation understands the complementary roles that love and justice must play when the moral agent must decide how he or she ought to act. But if love and justice are to do their work effectively on the societal level in the context of the world's present structural injustice, the *partial* favoring of entire disenfranchised and marginal groups may be called for. The individual and personal approach to morality can not even begin to affect a just restructuring alone. Furthermore, since groups can exploit other groups regardless of how loving and just individual moral agents within the exploiting group might act, a foundation for morality that wishes to change society toward morality and justice—and not only inform what "the right thing to do" is—must include sufficient social categories and methodology for the establishment of a Christian social ethic along with a personal one.

I recommend this book highly. *Ethics* is helpful as an introduction to some of the important ethical theories and categories of contemporary and traditional moral philosophy. The book will be especially helpful to anyone who wants a concisely stated yet complete theoethical foundation for a Christian moral philosophy and to anyone who wishes to apply such a foundation as a methodology for determining what one ought to do regarding current moral issues and situations. The book's clear and concise writing style sacrifices neither the penetrating analysis of Holmes's exhaustive knowledge of moral philosophy nor the development of the appropriate Christian alternative to the discipline. This makes the book for beginner and expert alike.

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*God's Truth: A Scientist Shows Why It Makes Sense to Believe the Bible*  
by Alan Hayward (Thomas Nelson, 1983, 331 pp. \$ 6.95) Reviewed by Richard H. Bube, Depart-

#### ment of Materials Science and Engineering, Stanford University.

This is a revised edition of a book originally published in England in 1973. The author, Dr. Alan Hayward, is research and development adviser with Redwood International Ltd., in England, up to 1977 principal scientific officer in a government research laboratory, and the author of *God Is*. In the opening chapter the author tells us that it is his purpose to "open up the Bible," and that he does this not "from the point of view of a scientist, but as a student of the Bible." He intends the book for "ordinary men and women" and promises to stick to "simple English." In this he is very successful and the book should be readily understandable to general readers.

The book is divided into three parts. In Part I, Hayward presents positive arguments for believing that the Bible is the Word of God in eleven chapters. Part II counters objections raised against the bible, and consists of fourteen chapters. Part III consists of a brief two chapters providing encouragement and guidelines for Bible study. The book concludes with Notes and References, and an Index.

Hayward's case for the Bible as God's Word rests upon discussions of fulfilled prophecy, the uniqueness of Jesus, the evidence of the Resurrection, the relevance of the Old Testament law for continuing concerns in health, conservation and family life, and evidences of internal harmony and consistency. Chapter 6 entitled, "Who Could Have Invented Jesus?" is particularly effective in supporting the argument that "the Jesus of whom we read in the Gospels was, at the time the Gospels were written, uninventable." In general, Part I presents a strong case for the unique power and character of the Bible. The reader may wonder at a few statements. The fulfillment of Daniel 2:44 is ascribed to the future rather than to the establishment of the kingdom with the coming of Jesus 2000 years ago. Since the Jews are said to have accepted many Old Testament passages as being Messianic in character, Hayward argues that "we are bound to take the Jews' word for it." Hayward advances two somewhat curious arguments in support of biblical harmony: "the failure of the firstborns," or the Old Testament record that "Not one acknowledged first-born is ever a success in God's sight" until God's own First-Born appears; "the story of sweat," in which it is pointed out that the three mentions of sweat in the Bible (Gen. 3:19, Luke 22:44, Ezek. 44:18) summarize the whole Christian Gospel. He also argues that Jesus "had an uncanny knowledge of the twentieth century" (see also Chapter 5).

The thrust of the argument in Part II often tends to become more problematical. Underlying any specific statements are two approaches that are underlined repeatedly. The first of these is "Don't let the experts pull the wool over your eyes," which, although a timely warning, tends easily to become a choice for obscurantism rather than for thorough understanding. On a somewhat populist note, Hayward tells the reader, "like a civil servant, you are well able to consider the evidence and decide for yourself." This might or might not be true, but it certainly would require a careful assessment of all of the evidence. Because it is by nature "scholarly," however, much of the evidence with which a Christian apologist needs to deal is not given to us by Hayward. Instead one often feels the impact of a second approach: argument by ridicule. Those who object to the Bible as the Word of God tend to be countered as much by poking fun at them as by substantive comments. At the root of Hayward's approach is the position,

Being a scientist might help you to spot the mistakes of other scientists when they condemn the Bible, but scientific knowledge

cannot help us to decide whether the Bible is a message from God. Studying the Bible for ourselves is the only way we can do that. And we can study the Bible without knowing any science, or even any of the more useful subjects like Hebrew and Greek and ancient history. The only essential equipment is a thoughtful, inquiring mind. (p. 15)

Hayward's position becomes most clearly defined in Chapter 14, appropriately titled, "All or Nothing." Here he argues that if Adam was not a literal historical man, then how can we be sure that Jesus was a literal historical man? There can be "only one right answer for the Christian." "The whole Bible stands or falls together." This leads Hayward to a simplistic dichotomy:

It stands to reason that there are only two possibilities. Either the Bible's astonishing claim is true - or the book is the biggest confidence trick in history! . . . Many leaders of religion refuse to accept that these are the only alternatives. They adopt a third point of view. They say that the Bible is sort-of-true and sort-of-false. Of course, they don't put it like that. They express their views in language that is almost impossible for the man in the street to understand. (p. 141, 142)

For Hayward this means that "If the Bible is what it claims to be, its sixty-six books must have been written by the men named as their authors." Or again, "If the Book of Isaiah did not even contain the words of Isaiah, you could hardly expect it to contain the words of God." What is the matter with people who would hold a contrary view? "Brilliant men are often lacking in plain common sense." In a section entitled "Why They Do It," Hayward attributes such foolish thoughts to a desire to conform, the fear of seeming ridiculous to their peers, too much respect for the "experts," and too professional a view of the Scriptures. Now all of these motives may or may not apply in particular cases, but are there no authentic reasons why devout Christian scholars would deviate from Hayward's rather fundamentalistic stance? Is there something unexpectedly revealing in Hayward's words,

There are a few scholars who use the methods of higher criticism in a sensible way and remain staunch Bible-believers. But for simplicity's sake I shall disregard their existence. (p. 154)

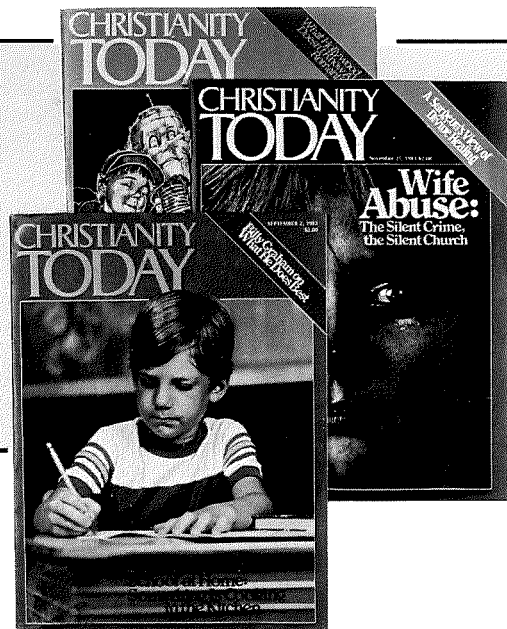
Although it is certainly true that the Bible's message of salvation by grace through faith is simple enough for the most naive minds to grasp for their eternal redemption, it is not true that the Bible's message comes to us without interpretation on our part. Yet this is what Hayward seems to argue in several places.

A large part of the Bible is perfectly straightforward, needing no more interpretation than any other non-fiction book. . . Interpreting it is no great problem, if only - and this is a big "if" - we manage to read it with a humble, seeking mind. Much of it interprets itself for us. (p. 195, 196)

One thing is certainly true: just as in science no fact interprets itself for us but must be given an interpretation by us, so no written material of any kind interprets itself for us. Interpretation of the Bible is the work of the Holy Spirit using all the means at His disposal, and working in and through the Body of Christ.

Hayward does deal successfully with many of the objections raised against the Bible, and these

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chapters in Part II provide a helpful summary for the Christian in dealing with others who raise such objections. In dealing with the traditional question, "Is the Bible Scientific?" in Chapter 21, he points out the well-founded distinction between "how" answers provided by science and "why" answers provided by the Bible, and indicates how each approach provides us with inputs not available from the other. He argues strongly for the acceptance of the scientific evidence for the age of the earth and against Flood Geology, and states that "Genesis was never intended to teach science." In spite of this, however, Hayward sees Genesis 1 as "a broad picture of the entire geological history of the earth - and a remarkably accurate one at that." In attempting to harmonize the scientific record with the days of Genesis 1, Hayward is enthusiastic about accepting the theory that the days of Genesis 1 were actually the days on which God revealed the story of creation "to the angels or to one of His inspired historians."

With this orientation, it is not surprising that Hayward enters into some length to reject the theory of biological evolution. He so seriously prejudices the discussion at the very beginning by choosing to use the word "evolution" to mean "evolution by natural processes alone . . . to describe the belief that God played no active part in the development of life on earth," that any objective discussion for the Christian becomes impossible. He opposes the growing Christian awareness that what we call "scientific chance" may indeed be our description of "God's Providence." What *must* be a most unfortunate misprint occurs in the midst of this discussion, reading, "It is not necessary to accept the facts of science." (p. 257) Hayward makes another serious mistake when he interprets "the principle of uniformitarianism" to mean "an assumption that God does not exist, or at least that He has left the world alone." At any rate, Hayward is certain that "by a special creative act God made the first man and woman."

In the chapter on "The Problem of Suffering," Hayward poses the dilemma in a most acute way, but does not seem to recognize its existence. Having told us that suffering came into the world because of Adam's sin, "so we too must suffer, and we too must die," he then tells us three pages later (having in the meanwhile interpreted "eternal death" to mean cessation of existence, not eternal punishment) that "the world would be worse off, not better off, if there were no suffering in it." Or again, "Strong characters can only be developed in a world where suffering is always present." The reader cannot help but wonder what would have been the consequences if Adam had not sinned!

I've been critical of many of Hayward's simplifications. I must for completeness also cite an aphorism that struck me as being appealing: "Jellyfish always go along with the tide; it takes a fish with a backbone to swim against it."

There is much in this book that will prove helpful to the discriminating Christian reader. One must be aware, however, that Hayward is providing a one-sided perspective, and that his dogmatic assurance of having the one simple answer may not stand up under inspection in the real world. It is unfortunate that some of his treatment of the interaction of science with the Bible may be totally misleading for the layperson.

(This review was initially prepared for the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*)

### **Faith, Feminism & the Christ**

by Patricia Wilson-Kastner (Fortress Press, 1983, 147 pp., \$8.95). Reviewed by Frances F. Hiebert, Director for Women's Concerns, Fuller Theological Seminary.

Finding feminist literature with a theological

basis acceptable to evangelicals often seems like looking for a needle in a haystack. This book will be very helpful to those who feel that ideology must submit to theology rather than take precedence over it. Not only is theology given precedence, there is much here that would support an evangelical feminist theology. The author presents a Christological discussion that is both orthodox and supportive of feminist concerns. What is gratifying to an evangelical feminist is that she does not find it necessary to shred Scripture or discard great chunks of orthodox Christian tradition in the process.

In the first chapters of the book, the author provides a very helpful description of the radical feminist critique in which Christianity and Judaism are seen as hopelessly patriarchal. At the heart of the problem stands Jesus Christ, a male savior. She then sets out to respond to this critique by raising issues in the areas of the new epistemology, the nature of God, and the meaning of the Incarnation.

The author consistently and convincingly argues that orthodox Christian understandings can be used to support feminism while never denying the history of misunderstandings that has oppressed women at various times and places in the actual practice of the Christian community. For instance, she insists that a perception of male and female being united in common humanity rather than one that makes a radical distinction on the basis of sex provides the best support for true equality. She notes that for radical feminists like Mary Daly, however, the question of equality is increasingly irrelevant. It is the woman's fundamental goodness and her own female experience of the world that is definitive for the humanity of womankind. For Daly, men and their patriarchal God represent an oppressive "other" to whom relationship is unnecessary for authentic women's experience.

Ironically, states Wilson-Kastner, the most vigorous proponents of a binary theory of humanity are the feminist separatists and male opponents of women's equality in church or society. She argues for an inclusive anthropology in which persons are perceived as primarily human and secondarily divided into male/female. Scripture focuses on the human responsibility toward God and creation and any feminism that does not begin with an assumption of one human race, diverse in some aspects but unified in equal humanity, is not compatible with Christian faith.

The conclusion drawn from epistemology is that there is no difference in the male or female way of knowing; there is only the human way to know. Feminists, however, are justified and in step with contemporary epistemological insights when they argue against a radical Cartesian disjunction between knower and known. "The knowing subject is a psychophysical reality which perceives the greater reality of which it is a part and is integrated into the greater reality it perceives."

While the digression into epistemology at first may seem peripheral to the theological issues, it becomes clear that this supports the author's contention that both male and female humanity come to know God through the revelation of Jesus and are equal beneficiaries of his soteriological activity. By strongly affirming the classical doctrine of the Trinity, the author shows how reconciled humanity is taken up into the relationship that already exists in the God who transcends sexuality.

Jesus' "maleness" is incidental to his humanity. Therefore, it is also appropriate to think of Jesus as having "feminine" characteristics and to use the metaphor of Jesus, our mother, as did Julian of Norwich. This is not to substitute a female image of Christ for the historical male Jesus but to provide an exercise in visualizing the nurturing aspect of his work for humanity.

Wilson-Kastner, while acknowledging its at-

tractiveness, challenges the feminist approach that is ahistorical or creates an imaginary past. "The illusory attempt to pretend that feminist positions can be created from nothing, or can spring fully formed from the air, remains compelling for contemporary Americans." She urges Christian feminists to do the hard work in history, scriptural studies, theology and ethics that will take into account feminist insights into and criticisms of Christianity without violating its central message. She believes that such an inquiry will uncover a richness in the self-revelation of God in Christ that discloses more inclusiveness than Christianity often has dared to preach.

### **A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction**

by William C. Placher (Westminster, 1983, 324 pp., \$16.95 pb.). Reviewed by John L. Thompson, Ph.D. candidate in History of Christianity, Duke University.

Any book which would purport to treat the twenty centuries of Christian theology within the confines of about 260 pages of actual text inevitably calls to mind the claims of one of those whirlwind packaged tours: "See eleven countries in six days!" Nonetheless, it is only one virtue of Placher's work that he does not allow the scenery to dissolve into a blur, a virtue which is cultivated in part by the author's clear awareness of what his book is *not*: it is not a general history of Christianity, nor is it a history of doctrine *per se*; it is rather a history of theology, and accordingly it "focuses more on the ideas of individual theologians and less on the statements of the institutional church."

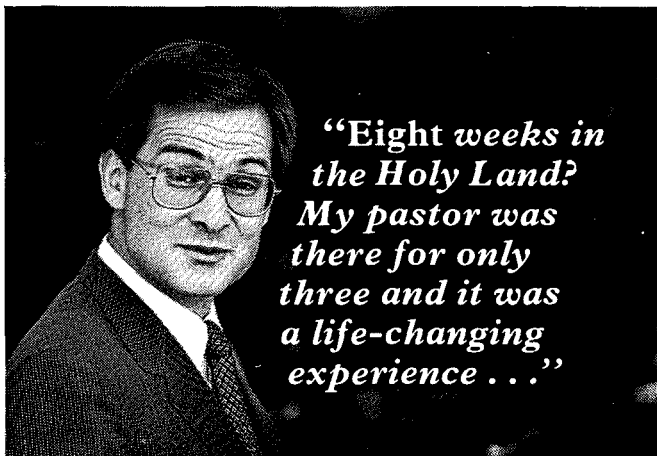
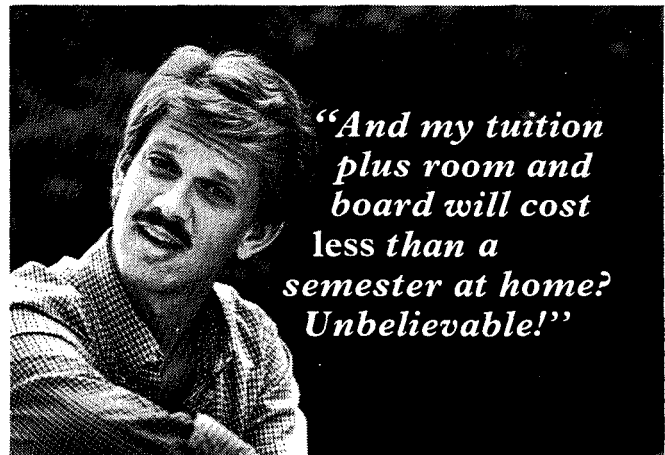
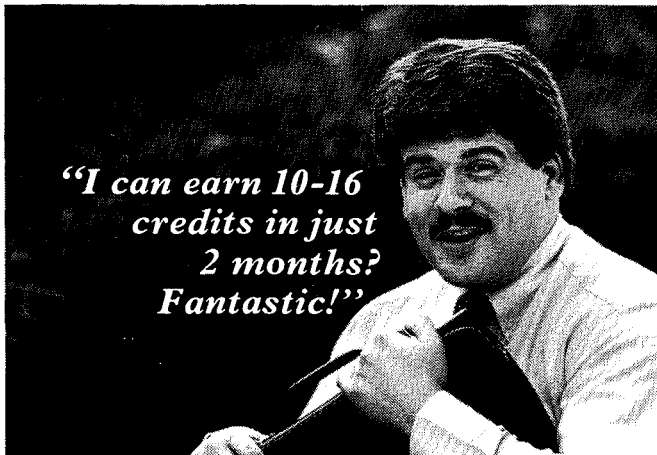
The book is divided into seventeen chapters, each of which is thematically structured, and each of which takes up about fifteen pages. Two chapters deal with the theological impetus of the Old and New Testaments; four chapters survey theological developments through Augustine in the west and Chalcedon in the east; four treat the theology (east and west) of the middle ages; and three chapters each are devoted to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and to the Enlightenment and modern developments. Each chapter is followed by a brief annotated bibliography of primary sources as well as basic and advanced secondary literature.

Placher's is, above all, a book for beginners. His style is conversational, occasionally even witty. He endeavors at all times to invoke the reader's sympathy for whatever position is under discussion, especially when it is a position which the twentieth-century mind would tend to dismiss as trivial, obscure, or repugnant. Often Placher does this by calling the reader's attention to the historical circumstances which made what might seem trivial a matter of great moment; at other points, Placher unobtrusively suggests what lessons may be learned from a particular controversy in a way that should be acceptable to both Christian and non-Christian readers. The author successfully navigates around the bewilderment often induced in the beginner by constant recourse to technical or foreign terminology by avoiding some technical terms and by translating, explaining, or paraphrasing others.

Placher has a knack for introducing analogies from everyday experience which simplify complex issues. Thus, to elucidate the nuance of disagreement in the post-Nicean dispute over the creedal phrase, "of one substance with the Father," Placher illustrates: "Suppose I told you that the paperweight on my desk is made from the marble from which the Parthenon is constructed—the same substance. You might think I meant 'the same substance' in the sense of 'the same type of marble,' or you might think I had crept up to the Parthenon

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late one night and chipped off a piece of that very substance. Most of the bishops at Nicaea interpreted *homoousios* in the first sense. . . . [But in Athanasius' view,] that led away from monotheism, since it implied the existence of two separate beings, both made of divine substance" (pp. 75-76).

Placher encourages both the reader's interest and the reader's comprehension by limiting details rather than multiplying them, following the maxim that it is better to whet the appetite than to sate it prematurely. Placher recites the history of theology as a story; a diverse story, but with still a unified plot. Yet the question must be raised: When does a sketch become a caricature? By and large, this reviewer would give Placher high marks for preserving a maximum of accuracy in a minimum of space. Nearly all the faith's major figures receive enough mention to put them in a fair context, and none seems to have been particularly favored. This is not to say that no distortions can be found. Placher's compactness sometimes leads him to present as a completed portrait what is, to the historian, only a status report of research in progress. Along these lines, I found his treatment of late medieval "nominalism" somewhat too redolent of the usual stereotype that Ockham's God is unpredictable and capricious and that his theology merely reflects the social chaos of the fourteenth century. Surely Placher's presentation of the Ockhamist concept of God's absolute power needs to be rounded out by at least some mention of the significance of his teaching on God's *ordained* power, whereby the present orders are affirmed as resting firmly and reliably on God's own covenant.

There are other problems which will be more apparent than the preceding to the non-specialist. It is a great strength of this book that it begins the story of Christian theology with its earliest roots, in the accounts of God's activity in the two testaments. However, most evangelicals will not be comfortable with Placher's ready acceptance of the current critical views concerning the historicity of the patriarchal narratives and the origins of Israel's twelve tribes. Many will also object to his accent more on the diversity than on the unity of the New Testament witness to Jesus; and Placher's account of Jesus' resurrection is confined to a single ambiguous statement. Such points are termed problematic because they will surely disappoint conservative readers, but the book should not therefore be dismissed. An introduction such as this is properly a summary of current "historical" research, and it must be admitted that the dominant views in biblical studies today which Placher reports are not views which please most conservatives. In defense of Placher's occasional ambiguity, it may be said that such deliberate ambiguity does make the work useful to a wider audience where a more confessional treatment would not. Placher employs such ambiguity, for example, to acknowledge that Pauline theology and ethics have come under fire from various twentieth-century critics (e.g. those who object to the Pauline injunctions against homosexuality). Placher thus registers the criticism, yet avoids passing judgment.

Again, Placher's is a book for beginners, whether those beginners are to be found among undergraduates or interested laity. In its scope and purpose, it stands virtually alone among books currently in print, falling nicely between the atomism and brevity of a dictionary of church history and the more technical and detailed treatment of Cunniffe-Jones' *History of Christian Doctrine*. Placher's text is less demanding than one would normally assign for divinity students, but even here it may be recommended for remedial purposes or for a quick overview of unfamiliar territory.

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### **Your Wealth in God's World**

by John Jefferson Davis (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1984), pp. 134, \$4.95. Reviewed by Douglas J. Miller, Professor of Christian Social Ethics, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA

Davis' book is another in the deluge of recent books by conservative Christians which attempt to legitimate the principles undergirding capitalism by an appeal to Scripture. The author uniquely contributes to the discussion by his broader inclusion of Biblical themes such as creation, providence, image of God, sin, work, stewardship, etc., in defending the free market.

However, the result is a less than adequate exegetical analysis of the Biblical texts. Moreover, the absence of any consistent or sophisticated hermeneutical stance leaves the reader with a literal-mythical proof-text approach that ends up bolstering the dubious position that modern day capitalism is discoverable in the Bible.

An even greater weakness of the book is its one-sided (with a slight deference to the other side here and there) and nearly uncritical approach to capitalism. Most issues are settled by unsupported claims (e.g., that progressive tax policies are the reason for no new jobs nor increased productivity) or by quotes from well-worn ideologies (Gilder, Friedman, et. al.). The book oozes with rehashed conservative themes: that poverty in America and world hunger are not as bad as people think; that a crucial factor in poverty is a character flaw in the poor themselves, that Colonialism was really a benefit; that the problem of riches is our attitude toward it; that big government has caused most of our problems (including the Depression); that obedience, diligence, and hard work are priority virtues; that Social Security weakens the family; that the "robber barons" really improved life for people; that DDT is a benefit to humanity; and on and on.

While the author does push for compassion, it is within the context of Adam Smith's moral feelings so that volunteerism and philanthropy become the answer to social injustice. The author's ethical justification often borders upon utilitarianism and pragmatism - positions that are only tangentially Biblical.

The free enterprise system is too significant to be defended in these hackneyed ways. Nor does one do it justice by anachronistically reading it back into Biblical texts. Moreover, its moral vision is dissipated by the book's decided sexist language (mankind, businessmen and housewives), its somewhat national chauvinism (reference to communist countries as "Iron Curtain") and its implicit racism (quoting Arthur Ashe and Thomas Sowell as spokespersons for Blacks).

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### **The Old Testament Writings: History, Literature, Interpretation**

by James M. Efrid (John Knox, 1982, 295 pp., \$11.95). Reviewed by James L. Jaquette, Pastor, Union Church of South Foxboro, Foxboro, Massachusetts.

The serious Bible student consults the "introduction" or "survey" to find historical, geographical, and literary information about each biblical book as well as comments about its authorship, dating, audience, and message. Professor Efrid's book seeks to introduce the beginning student to the complex world of the Old Testament literature and is a companion volume to his *The New Testament Writings* (John Knox, 1980).

The author begins with a discussion of general themes (i.e., Holy War, the sanctity of covenant

relationships, sympathetic magic, the importance of corporate identity among Semitic people, etc.) and then examines other introductory matters (i.e., the geography of the area, the types of literary material found in the Old Testament, the process of canon formation, etc.).

The rest of the work is divided into three major parts corresponding to the three divisions of the Hebrew canon. In each division, Efrid follows the threefold pattern of his book's subtitle: a brief history (where reconstruction is possible), an analysis of the literary questions *apropos* to the books within that division, and a discussion of each book's critical problems and interpretation. Each section closes with a helpful list of major works on each division and suggested commentaries for further study on individual books. The book ends with a bibliographic guide to the major areas of Old Testament study and a short glossary.

The author avoids the danger of oversimplification by constantly calling the reader's attention to scholarly flux in many matters. He is particularly interested in what lies behind the editing of books and the formation of the entire canon. He espouses the documentary hypothesis of the Tetrateuch (and Joshua) and Noth's theory of the composition of Deuteronomistic history through Kings.

He appeals to scholarly uncertainty, however, and fails to remove a major flaw. There is virtually no interaction with conservative scholarship. Since Efrid unequivocally seeks an eclectic position, the beginning student may arrive at the mistaken conclusion that all major views have been presented. Further, with respect to historicity, he assumes uncritically that "historical accuracy was not as important to (the people who heard the stories) as religious understanding and teaching" (p. 17). He minimizes the literary integrity of each book through discussion of contradictory theological emphases within the literature and, for example, by separating the "original" oracles of the prophet whose name appears with a book from later development of his thinking (i.e., finding post-exilic messages in a pre-exilic work). In other words, he assumes that the Old Testament is the result of humanity's developing religious ideas and not a revelation of God.

A pastor would probably not recommend this book to an interested parishioner without a large number of qualifications. A work such as the Bush, Hubbard, LaSor *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of the Old Testament* (Erdmans, 1981) would be a better recommendation. Likewise, the introductory seminary course would demand the more complete introduction of Eissfeldt and Harrison. From an evangelical viewpoint, Efrid serves best as an excellent overview of a particularly prominent approach to Old Testament studies.

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## **BOOK COMMENTS**

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### **Whose Promised Land?**

by Colin Chapman. (Lion Publishing Ltd. 1983. 253 pages. Paperback. £1.95.)

Israelis call it "Israel". Palestinians call it "Palestine". Both call it their "Promised Land". But to whom was it promised; to whom does it rightfully belong?

Colin Chapman has been working with university students in a variety of nations in the Middle East since 1968. He has had to face first-hand the explosive issues which bedevil this Promised Land.

In this book he presents the claims, counter-claims, and arguments which Israelis and Palestinians put forward. He analyzes the surficial and the underlying causes behind the uprooting of families, the refugee problem, the violence.

He treats thoroughly the claims of each party—then traces the story behind them, going back to the time of the Bible. What do Bible prophecies concerning this land mean? How were the promises and prophecies (made to ancient Israel concerning the land) understood by Jesus and first-century Christians? How should they be understood today?

The author traces the development of Zionism, of the UN partitioning plan, of the founding of the modern state of Israel. He shows how anti-semitism in the West has been a stimulant to the birth of today's Israel.

The book evidences thorough historical research, quoting generously from historical documents. The author has some devastating things to say about the hidden role of westerners—and of Christians—who, behind the scene, helped set the stage for much of the violence in the Promised Land and who, under the spotlight of Old Testament prophecies, stand guilty. The book is not comfortable reading for Western Christians in general; evangelicals in particular. But it is highly illuminating and gives an excellent analysis (with thought-provoking questions) of both sides of the problem.

—John W. Alexander

***Luther's Ecumenical Significance: An Inter-confessional Consultation***

edited by Peter Manns and Harding Meyer in collaboration with Carter Lindberg and Harry McSorley (Fortress Press and Paulist Press, 1983, 336 pp., \$24.95).

***Luther: A Reformer for the Churches. An Ecumenical Study Guide***

by Mark Edwards and George Tavard (Paulist Press and Fortress Press, 1984, 96 pp., \$4.95).

One of the fruitful outcomes of the 1983 celebration of the quincentennial of Luther's birth was the amount of inter-confessional dialogue that resulted over Luther's theology and his place in the development of Christian doctrine. Often ecumenical dialogues try to minimize the past in order to bring harmony in the present. The type of dialogue in evidence in the two books under review here—a dialogue which explores the resources of the church's history in depth—seems to offer a much richer source for Christian unity.

*Luther's Ecumenical Significance* is a collection of papers and responses originally delivered at a consultation sponsored by the Center for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg and the Institute for European History in Mainz. Topics included are Catholic Luther research, Luther's influence on Protestant confessions, Luther's concept of the church, *simul iustus et peccator*, and Luther's understanding of Scripture.

All of the papers are written from the perspective of the most recent research on the topics at hand and represent a variety of confessional positions, the majority Lutheran and Catholic, but also including Reformed and Anabaptist. The theological student could benefit immensely from studying any and all of the essays in this volume. Only one problem mars this effort—some of the translations from German are almost unreadable.

*Luther: A Reformer for the Churches* is the joint effort of a Lutheran historian who teaches in a state university and a Catholic theologian who teaches in a Methodist seminary. This combination makes for a book with many strengths and a few odd weaknesses. Edwards is well known as a careful historian of the Reformation, specializing in Luther's polemics—a fertile field indeed. Several sections show his hand in analysis of the center of several of Luther's important battles. Tavard's hand also shows in several idiosyncratic interpretations

of Luther. All in all, the book will provide a good introduction to Luther and source book for lay study groups.

—Robert A. Kelly

***Creeds of the Church***

edited by John H. Leith (John Knox Press, 736pp., \$9.95).

It has been said by some that the best texts for the study of theology are the creeds. If this be so, Leith's volume, now in its third edition, has proved invaluable. It commences with the historical credos and declaratory affirmations of the Old Testament and includes as recent a document as the Lima Text

on baptism, eucharist, and ministry (World Council of Churches, 1982). Short introductions provide helpful information concerning the historical background and the significance of each document, while sources with more complete information are noted in brief bibliographies. This third edition includes everything in the second (both substituted Vatican II material on the church for the *Humani Generis* encyclical of the first edition) plus over one hundred pages of additional material including the Athanasian Creed, the London Confession (1644, interestingly, without updated language), the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Vatican II), and recent declarations on the mission and unity of the church. These are important additions to a very fine book.

—Kevin Dodd

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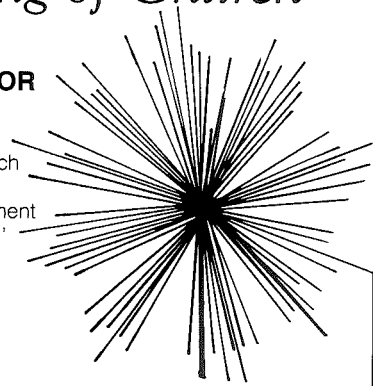
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**When The Kings Come Marching In**  
by Richard J. Mouw (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983,  
96pp., \$3.95).

Conceptions of God's future kingdom affect one's view of the present world. In this meditative reflection on the "New Jerusalem" of Isaiah 60, Richard Mouw enlightens us concerning some significant elements of continuity between future life in the Holy City and the present order in which we live.

Within Isaiah's vision, the "ships of Tarshish," "kings of nations" with their wealth, and other symbols characterizing our unredeemed world and culture are not simply judged and destroyed as some eschatology and piety would lead us to believe. Instead, there will be a transformation on a cosmic scale in which Jesus Christ (the light of this Holy City) will bring all empirical structures (political, social, economic, religious, etc.) into conformity with His Lordship. Our posture toward culture is to be like that of our Lord who calls us to await the transformation of oppressive and haughty patterns of human authority by identifying with the lowly. This means Christ's redemptive ministry must be given full reign in all areas of human life, in addition to the individualistic.

The distinctive value of Mouw's effort is that it supplies an example of how to give exegetical content to the predominantly philosophical-theological formulations of the "transformationalist" perspective on Christianity and culture. More broadly, it offers all readers a new appreciation for the integral relationship between the "already" and the "not yet" without getting tangled up in the differences over millennial positions. Finally, the readable style, as well as personal and concrete applications, make this short work an excellent tool for educating a congregation about these very relevant Biblical concerns.

—Robert G. Umidi

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**Human Rights: A Dialogue Between the First and Third Worlds**

by Robert A. Evans and Alice Frazer Evans (Orbis, 1983, 264 pp., \$9.95).

This work consists of eight "case studies" of complex social conflicts and personal dilemmas in countries ranging from the United States to the People's Republic of China. Each study is followed by commentaries by Christians from other parts of the world. The authors' intent is to promote dialogue between first and third world Christians and, to that end, it includes bibliographies and questions for use in Church discussion groups.

The case studies succeed brilliantly. The stories are moving and provocative and will challenge the commitment and thought of any reader. They are a testimony to the value of a case study approach in theological and political analysis and make the book recommended reading for seminarians and teachers.

There are three major drawbacks to the book. First, the discussion materials are too advanced for the general reader. Second, while the commentaries are drawn from many parts of the world, they are all of very similar political and theological orientation, ranging from social-democrats to liberation theologians. The dialogue that results is thus quite narrow and evades the real divisions among Christians. Third, it is not clear what the authors mean by "human rights." Apparently every injustice is characterized as one of "rights," which so overloads the term as to make it virtually meaningless.

—Paul Marshall

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**Together Toward Hope: A Journey to Moral Theology**

by Philip J. Rossi, S.J. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983, 201 pp.)

This book is born of the conviction that both Catholic moral theology and Anglo-American moral philosophy fail to understand moral reality in its most fundamental terms: as freedom in the service of our likeness to, and dependence upon, one another. Jesuit philosopher-theologian Philip J. Rossi responds with a Kantian analysis of freedom to pull us out of the "crisis" of being impotent "to sustain, intact and unambiguously, the set of moral beliefs and practices bequeathed to us from the past" (p. 4). He purports to give an "argument" that goes as follows: (1) A proper analysis of moral freedom requires that we acknowledge "our likeness to one another and that we go on together as a community." (2) This acknowledgment requires the imagining of future possibilities for fulfillment. (3) This imagining provides a context for the theological idea of hope. The concepts of freedom, mutuality, imagination and hope that are developed in this argument help explain how moral practices are formed and continued through imagery, liturgy and worship.

What Rossi calls an "argument" is more a display of rough coherence of definitions than rigorous reasoning from premises to conclusions or careful analysis of conditions necessary for thinking or acting. The reader will often get lost in unnecessary verbiage and oft-repeated summaries. The value of the book is its creative use of recent Kant scholarship challenging those who charge Kant with a formalism of abstract moral principles. The way this is brought to bear on narrative contributes to discussions in narrative theology by raising questions of theory and truth-claims too easily dismissed in that literature. These assets, however, are severely threatened by the simplistic relation Rossi establishes between philosophy and theology, the lack of clarity in his writing and reasoning, and the absence of theological perspective in his analysis of our modern "crisis" and "moral" reality.

—Douglas J. Schuurman

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**What Would You Do?**

by John H. Yoder (Herald Press, 1983, 115 pp., \$6.95).

"What would you do if a violent person threatened to harm a loved one?" Most people (depending on whether they are pacifists or nonpacifists) have either used this question or have had this question used on them. The purpose of this short volume is to respond to this question from the pacifist perspective.

In Section 1, Yoder deftly brings to light and then calls into question the assumptions behind this question. In so doing, he attempts to establish a pacifist response which is logical, realistic and Christian. In Section 2, we get a look at other strategies which have been used by pacifists in response to this question. Essays by Leo Tolstoy, Joan Baez and Dale Aukerman are among the seven essays in this section.

But does the pacifist response work? While Yoder refuses to use success as his final ethical criterion, he devotes Section 3 to actual accounts of situations when the pacifist response has indeed been successful. Essays by Tom Skinner and Gladys Aylward are among the six comprising this section.

Yoder has done us a service in bringing together this volume. It has the distinction of being a serious contribution to theological ethics while at the same time being readable and entertaining. This is a book that can and should be read by pacifists and non-pacifists—whether they be in the classroom or in the pew.

—Randall Basinger

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**God's Activity in the World: The Contemporary Debate**

edited by Owen C. Thomas (Scholars, 1983, 240pp., \$8.50).

This collection of essays by contemporary theologians and philosophers such as Farrer, Gilson, Gilkey, and Bultmann offers a critical appraisal of divine presence and activity in the world. At least four distinct positions are offered by the twelve contributors: (1) *Personal Action*. This position is based on the analogy of human personal action and argues that God is an agent, a singular being, existing in time and having some locus from which His action proceeds. (2) *Primary Cause*. This traditional viewpoint asserts that God as primary cause acts in and through all secondary causes in nature and history. (3) *Process*. Based on the philosophy of Whitehead and Hartshorne, this approach posits a God who acts in all events by influence or persuasion. If God acts as an efficient cause, it is not through overt, sensible, observable actions. He acts by constituting himself in such a way that other events take account of him. (4) *Uniform Action*. Maurice Wiles insists that to speak of God acting in history is to speak of the varying human response which is elicited by the unvarying divine presence in historical events.

The approach of process theology is clearly favored by editor Owen C. Thomas, who has included essays by the process theologians Ogden, Cobb, and Griffin. This view, says Thomas, treats the perplexing questions of divine activity most clearly and fully. God acts in all events, is the partial cause of all events, and the sole cause of none. These twelve essays are enlightening, provocative, and challenging—worth while reading viewed through the theological tradition as critically reinterpreted.

—Frederick R. Pfursich

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FAMILY VIOLENCE & THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

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**Human Life: A Biblical Perspective for Bioethics**  
by J. Robert Nelson (Fortress Press, 1984, 194 pp., \$10.95).

The thesis of this work is "that a theory of human life, whether philosophical or theological or both, is indispensable to the reaching of valid decisions of a bioethical nature" (p. 155). The author's main concern is not to present the "biblical position" on gene-splicing, abortion, or other specific issues. Rather, he attempts to show the need for a clear, comprehensive, and optimistic understanding of human life (chapters 1-2), to delineate the biblical teachings concerning such life (chapters 3-4), and to propose a biologically, philosophically, and theologically informed definition of life that not only considers what life is, but also what it means and what gives it value (chapter 5). Finally, this "workable" definition of life is applied—although much too briefly—to the realm of genetic engineering (chapter 6).

The strength of *Human Life* lies in its generally careful discussion of the Hebrew and Greek terminology for the concept of life, and in Nelson's thorough and nuanced definition of life. However, the book would be more useful as a guide to decision-making if the writer had correlated more directly the consideration of specific bioethical issues in the final chapter with the discussion of relevant scriptures and arguments in earlier chapters so as to make more evident his theological foundations and ethical methodology.

On the whole, though, the work is a solid contribution to Christian ethics. A book of this sort is a must for anyone grappling with the issues of human life.

—Robert V. Rakestraw

**Readings in Moral Theology No. 4: The Use of Scripture in Moral Theology**  
edited by Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick (Paulist, 1984, 384 pp., \$9.95 pb.).

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in the methodology and appropriateness of using the Scriptures for contemporary ethics. In this volume, seventeen essays in this discussion have been reprinted. The eminent American Catholic ethicists who edited it are to be complimented for the quality, divergence of approach, and theological diversity represented in their selections. Evangelical authors include Richard Mouw, John Howard Yoder, and Allen Verhey. The selection by Verhey is appreciated because it makes available the methodology of his important unpublished doctoral dissertation on Walter Rauschenbusch's use of the Bible. Well known articles by Curran and James Gustafson also are made available. The approach to the Bible in liberation theology is presented and analyzed, including black (James Cone) and feminist (Elisabeth Schaussler Fiorenza) approaches. Readers accustomed to ethical propositions and norms of the Bible being applied to all of life will find the articles by Jack Sanders and Stanley Hauerwas controversial and hopefully stimulating. I make a response to them in my article in the second and third issues of *Transformation* (the new international journal of Evangelical social ethics from the World Evangelical Fellowship). This anthology provides a solid presentation of a broad spectrum of current approaches to the hermeneutics of the Bible and ethics.

—Stephen Charles Mott

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Dr. James M. Phillips, Associate Director, OMSC.

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### **Foundations of Evangelical Theology**

by John Jefferson Davis (Baker, 1984, 282 pp., \$9.95 pb.)

This book is intended to serve as a general introduction to systematic theology from an evangelical perspective. It is notable for being oriented to the world mission of the church, to the responsibility of cultural reclamation, and to the North American context.

One of the most interesting features of the author's own perspective is his commitment to a modified Christian reconstructionist position. He likes the work of R.J. Rushdoony and the post-millennial hope for the christianisation of culture, but questions the propriety of trying to impose the Mosaic social ethic upon a modern country. In this way he lifts up the positive contribution of that school called "Chalcedon" without carrying forward their implausible kind of theonomy.

The book starts out with a discussion of evangelical theology in North America. Going over familiar ground, Davis notes that it is neither fundamentalist or modernist. Chapter two goes into theological method, and emphasises the importance of contextualising biblical truth in the modern setting. On several occasions Davis warns against anti-intellectualism in evangelicalism, a danger to which we are prone on account of our history in pietism and revivalism.

Several chapters follow which are given over to topics such as revelation, Scripture, reason, experience, and tradition. Although they do not go very deep, they are informed discussions of issues that matter in theological method. It is interesting that in the treatment of revelation he would be particularly concerned about the impact of God's Word upon society and not just theology. Similarly the title of his chapter on reason is suggestive: "Reason: a Kingdom Extending Tool." They illustrate the political dimension of the whole book, and the new variety of liberation theology we are now seeing on the right.

At the end of each of the eight chapters we find a generous bibliography. The footnotes are conveniently found at the bottom of the pages. This is a wise and well-informed book, a good sign of growing vitality in evangelical theological reflection. It does not get into heavy issues very far, but it points us in the proper directions.

—Clark H. Pinnock

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### **Religion: The Great Questions**

by Carmody, Denise L. and John Carmody (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983. ix + 182 pp. \$9.50).

Most introductory texts to the world's great religions treat them separately, as integrated systems of belief. This approach helps students understand the internal logic of each religion, but does little to provide them with a framework for a critical comparison between them. Denise and John Carmody have opted for comparison, and introduce students to the major religions by looking at the answers they give to four universal questions.

The questions the authors raise have to do with the nature of the human search for reality, meaning and purpose; the essence of evil; the concept of God; and the definition of the good life. To each they give three answers chose from the world's great religions with special attention given to Christianity and Buddhism.

The comparative approach is a refreshing change because it forces both students and teachers to seek answers to central religious questions we all should ask, rather than to look at religions only as historical movements. Unfortunately, the answers

given are drawn piecemeal from various traditions within these religions with little attempt to show their overall claims to truth. Moreover, evangelicals will disagree with much of the Christianity presented which is drawn from the more liberal traditions. In the end the impression is left that religion is a matter of subjective preference rather than of objective truth and eternal consequence. But this is characteristic of most phenomenological (and Hindu) approaches to religion.

—Paul G. Hiebert

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### **Book Comment Contributors**

The following reviewers have contributed book comments in this issue: John W. Alexander is President Emeritus, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship; Randall Basinger is Associate Professor of philos-

ophy at Messiah College; Kevin Dodd is a Th.M. student at Fuller Theological Seminary; Paul G. Hiebert is Professor of Mission Anthropology at Fuller Theological Seminary; Robert A. Kelly is Director of Admissions and Records, Fuller Theological Seminary; Paul Marshall is Senior Member in Political Theory, Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto; Stephen Charles Mott is Professor of Social Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Seminary; Clark H. Pinnock is professor of theology, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario; Frederick R. Pfursich is a Ph.D. candidate at the School of Theology, Fuller Seminary; Robert V. Rakestraw is Ph.D. candidate in theology and ethics at Drew University; Douglas J. Schuurman is Instructor in religion and theology at Calvin College; Robert G. Umidi is Chairman of the Dept. of Political Studies at North-eastern Bible College.

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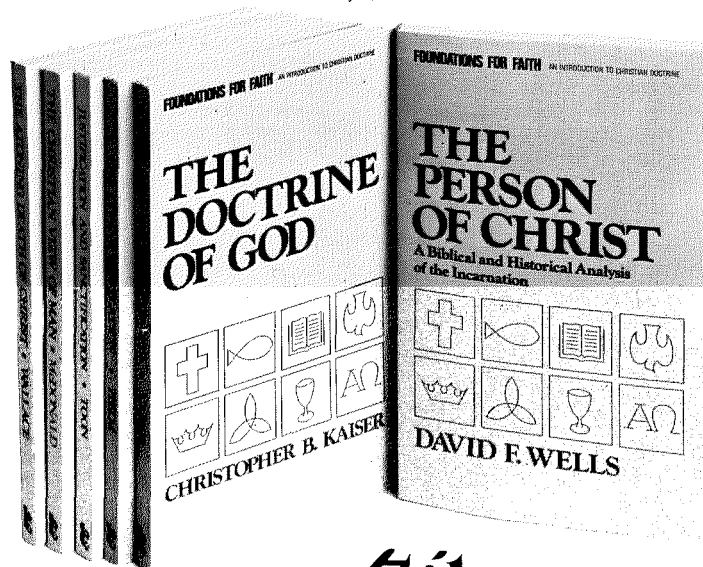
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