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Maintaining the Scripture Principle Today

by Clark Pinnock

The adoption of the bipartite Christian Bible as the authoritative Scripture of the church was probably the most momentous choice ever made in the history of doctrine. By doing so, the church provided herself with a standard of identity to evaluate and shape her theology, life, and mission. Therefore, the place to begin a discussion of biblical authority is with the simple fact, not really disputed, that entrenched in Christian thinking of every kind is a belief in the Bible as the written Word of God. Even if we are not impressed with this belief or persuaded by it, we have to acknowledge it and appreciate why it is held to so stoutly. For better or for worse, belief in the Scriptures as the canon and yardstick of Christian truth, the unique locus of the Word of God, is part of an almost universal Christian consensus going back to at least the second century. Until the recent rise of revisionist theology, Christian thinking was done in the house of authority, a fact that is not doubted even by the writer most eager to overturn such belief, Edward Farley.¹ Theology in the premodern period was always done on the assumption that the Bible was the written Word of God.

More than an isolated belief, this conviction about the Bible was an integral part of a larger package of classical convictions and cannot be discarded without tearing the fabric of the whole garment of traditional Christian beliefs. Without much exaggeration one could say that the history of theology is a history of the interpretation of the Bible, so basic to this message was this medium. The way Christians have thought about God, Christ, humanity, salvation, and church is indebted to the teachings of the Bible. This is not to deny that cultural factors have entered into the various formulations at different periods, but simply to point out that the creed as we all know and accept it is utterly tied up with its scriptural foundations, making the authority of the Bible, if not a soteriologically indispensable belief (one can be saved by believing in Christ whatever one thinks of the Bible), then certainly an epistemologically crucial belief. Without belief in the authority of the Bible, there would not have been any creedal backbone to the Christian movement, and certainly not the bony structures of Nicaea and Chalcedon. Beliefs like the atonement and the resurrection unquestionably stand or fall with belief in biblical authority, and that is the measure of the seriousness of the modern debate about it. We are not arguing over some minor detail in Christian belief, like the rapture or the classes of angels, but over the basis of religious knowledge as such and how we know what God has promised and commanded. How can we worship God if we do not know who God is? How can we trust his promises if we do not know what they are? How can we obey God if we have no sure knowledge of his will? The reason Christians have felt historically that the authority of the Bible is a crucial conviction is that they have realized the Bible is needed to give us a reliable knowledge of the truth, without which we cannot exist long as Christians. Calvin spoke of this so practically when he referred to the Bible as the spectacles our dim eyes require to make out what the will of our creator is (*Institutes* I, chap. 6).

To be candid, however, the classical conviction about Holy Scripture was not always developed in sound and healthy ways, and some of our difficulties today are due in part to inadequacies in it. Given the polemical atmosphere between evangelicals and more liberal Christians, it is uncommon for conservatives to admit any un-ideal elements in the orthodox view of the Bible, but admit them we must if we hope to gain a fair hearing and to advance in our own understanding. There has been, for example, a tendency to exaggerate the absolute perfection of the text and minimize the true humanity of it. One of the weaknesses of the fathers, as Bromley notes, was their failure to give full weight to the human and historical aspects of the text. "The truth is that the fathers seem not to have appreciated the real significance of the human dimension

nor to have grasped the possibilities of a better exegesis that lexical, literary, and historical inquiry would present."² In addition, there was a strong, "catholic" tendency to link the authoritative Scriptures to an infallible ecclesiastical institution, thus providing even more security for the believer—more, in fact, than the Lord had planned for us. It must be obvious to any reader of classical theology that the people who spoke so highly of the infallibility of the Bible very often spoke just as highly of the church's creeds and hierarchy, and that they do not witness to what we today would regard as an evangelical position, though they are repeatedly cited by evangelicals today for that purpose.³ Evangelicals who hold to the sole authority of the Bible do not do justice to themselves when they appear to be uncritical of tradition, even when it happens to be tradition about the Bible. Rather than trying to argue unconvincingly, as Rogers and McKim did, that the traditional view of authority was less rigorous than we have thought (Woodbridge has shown it was very rigorous indeed), what we have to do is admit honestly that the old view of the Bible that we treasure is not biblical and serviceable in every detail today and, like every other theological topic, can use some improvement and development by the thinkers and scholars of our generation.⁴ We simply must transcend the neglect of the humanity of the Bible, so familiar in orthodoxy, and liberate the Bible from too close an association with mother church, an association that can easily smother its independent voice. The legacy we honor is noble and true, but it is not infallible or perfect, and we must be free to improve it if we can.

The Crisis of the Scripture Principle

Despite the ecumenical range and great antiquity of the classical conviction about the Bible as the written Word of God, we face a "crisis of the Scripture principle" today and with it the unmaking and unraveling of traditional Christian doctrine.⁵ Farley and Hodgson put it succinctly and accurately when they write:

Until recently, almost the entire spectrum of theological opinion would have agreed that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, together with their doctrinal interpretations, occupy a unique and indispensable place of authority for Christian faith, practice, and reflection. But this consensus now seems to be falling apart.⁶

Out of the liberal theological revision has come a flat denial of the Scripture principle in the classical sense, the collapse of the house of authority based upon it, and the subsequent disintegration of the orthodox creed. Whether the denial comes in a direct⁷ or in an indirect form⁸ does not matter much: the point is that the normative authority of the Bible has been called into question deliberately and repeatedly since Schleiermacher by adherents of the new theology.

But what can possibly explain such behavior? There are three basic reasons for this far-reaching change of theological opinion. The first and most important is the cultural shift to secular modernity beginning in the Renaissance, and to rationalist modernity, brought on by the Enlightenment, and the liberal response to it. The modern mind dislikes traditional authorities such as the Bible and insists on subjecting them to rational scrutiny. The final authority of the Bible can hardly stand if the message it conveys provokes, not belief, but unbelief. Ed Farley makes it plain that this is a fundamental reason for his own rejection of biblical authority.⁹ We face a rebelliousness in the modern period that seeks to edge God out of the world and leave humanity autonomous in it. To achieve this, the Bible that challenges this insurrection must be silenced as divinely authoritative.

The second reason, second also in importance, is the rise of biblical criticism of the kind that treats Scripture as a merely human document and frequently debunks its claims on various levels. Pretending to be a key to the elucidation of the text, criticism had the effect of situating the Bible so thoroughly in the human context as

From *The Scripture Principle*, by Clark Pinnock, © 1984 by Clark H. Pinnock. Used with permission from Harper & Row Publishers, Inc.

to make it well nigh impossible to consider its authority as anything more than human. It became less and less natural to regard the text as divine communication and more and more plausible to regard it as fallible human utterance.¹⁰ What made it even more difficult for the conservative believers who wanted to be honest in their study of the Bible was the burden of their own heritage, which had erred in both exaggerating the absolute perfection of the text and obscuring its genuine, humble humanity. They were thus not in a

students of the matter. How shall we use as authority a text that was written when people thought in very different ways than we do? How shall we respond to critical "discoveries" on a host of issues pertaining to biblical literature and history? What about the diversity of biblical teaching? How should we think about the present defective copies and translations? What books properly belong to the canon? How is the Old Testament authoritative when the New Testament appears to correct it? What is the nature of the

Why do Christian people believe the Bible to be God's Word? Because it has been able to . . . introduce them to a saving and transforming knowledge of Christ.

strong position to distinguish between the positive and the negative proposals that the new criticism advanced. To this day, this is the conservative burden. It makes it difficult for those who keenly desire to respect the Bible highly but are put off by the form the conservative tradition often still takes.

The third reason, though it is more in the nature of an afterthought, I suspect, is theological in character. Orthodoxy, it is felt, silences God from speaking today—locking him up in a book—and creates a petrified and rigid style of faith that is false to the dynamic transcendence of the Bible. It closes us off from appropriating fresh truth and creates a whole set of oppressive attitudes and dogmas. Surely, as Auguste Sabatier argued, religious experience is the heart of Christianity, and though this gives rise to dogmas in time, such are the work of human beings, not the declarations of God.¹¹

Leaving aside for the time being the conservative theologian might counter these three contentions, it is obvious that we have here a confrontation between classical Christianity based upon the Scripture principle and a neo-Christianity without a Scripture principle, a collision that, in the realm of theological ideas, makes the differences between Roman Catholic and Protestant seem trivial by comparison. Theology without the controlling influence of the Scripture principle could only degenerate into open-ended pluralism of belief that none could adjudicate, and its classical concepts could only suffer unlimited revision. The crisis of the Scriptures is in fact the crisis of Christian theology itself and the cause of the deepest polarization of all in the churches. The gap is unbridgeable between those who stand by the historic confidence in the infallible truth of the Bible and those who adopt the pancritical view, which relativizes the entire theological enterprise. Seeking reconciliation is always a good thing, as it is between theological liberals and conservatives, but when the full measure of the difference here is taken, I doubt that reconciliation is possible.¹²

The Struggle to Maintain the Scripture Principle

Seeing a real threat to the authority of the Bible and to the *benefit* of the churches, classical Christians today respond by wanting to defend and explicate the Scripture principle in this newly critical context. In one sense, they are in a strong position to do so. The conservative position is deeply rooted not only in the most ancient traditions but also in the Bible itself, as we shall see, and the task is made easier by the fact that the liberals are scrambling to find a viable alternative to it—not an easy thing to do. The church as a whole is not likely to respond well to a denial of the real basis of her apostolicity when nothing solid is proposed to be put in its place. In another sense, however, it is not so easy, because in the course of the criticism of the Scripture principle some very tough questions have been raised and placed on the agendas of all serious

claim the Bible makes for itself? Those who are honest in pursuing these issues (not all Christians are) know there are some hard questions for the conservative scholar to answer and know also that there is little agreement among such scholars how to answer some of them. Even though there is agreement on the basic approach to the Bible as God's written Word, and a widely felt desire to preserve unity among Bible-believing Christians in face of the present crisis, there is lack of consensus on some rather important questions and on what to do about them. From a distance it seems that everyone dwells in the same house of biblical authority, but closer in, it becomes quite apparent that the house contains various rooms and closets in which one or another of this mixed multitude resides. Thus there are debates among conservatives, despite the need for a united front¹³.

What obviously is needed is a systematic treatment of the Scripture principle that faces all the questions squarely and supplies a model for understanding that will help us transcend the current impasse. Though one has the impression that evangelicals are always writing such tomes, there are in reality almost no full-scale expositions that cover the ground adequately and set forth the evangelical conviction in a balanced and sensible way. Much of our work operates within a circle of limited visibility, presupposing evangelical readers, and never raises its eyes to the larger perimeter of the theological mainstream where such issues are discussed professionally and in depth¹⁴.

In a broad outline, I want to suggest a paradigm utilizing three dimensions: first, the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture that arises organically out of the Christian pattern of revelation; second, the human character of the biblical text as the form in which the Word of God was communicated to us; and third, the ministry of the Spirit in relation to the Bible and the dynamic interaction between the two. Such a paradigm is sufficiently broad to capture the major themes and specific enough, when opened up, to introduce the reader to a large number of issues without losing his or her attention.

More specifically, my treatment of the Scripture principle will focus on and orient itself to the kind of practical, evangelical emphasis found in 2 Timothy 3:15-17:

From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

In this wonderful text Paul places his emphasis on the plenary

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profitability of the Scriptures in the matter of conveying a saving and an equipping knowledge of God. He does not present a theory about a perfect Bible given long ago but now lost, but declares the Bible in Timothy's possession to be alive with the breath of God and full of the transforming information the young disciple would need in the life of faith and obedience. I think we can all learn from this kind of concentration and orientation¹⁵. It is important for us to stress the practical effectiveness of the accessible Bible in facilitating a saving and transforming knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. We must not shift the emphasis to the unavailable Bible of the past, about which one can speculate, or to the inaccessible Bible of the future, after the experts will (supposedly) have cleared away every perplexing feature of the text, removing all possibility of doubt. It is this present Bible we need to be able to trust, this New International Version or King James Version, and this practical purpose of communicating the saving knowledge of God we need to be focusing on. Furthermore, it is this Bible that all Christians have come to trust through the grace of God, and this purpose that has proven valid in their experience. Given by God's breath, the Bible proves to be quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword and gives life and truth to the one who trusts in Jesus. This is the doctrine of Scripture I am concerned to discuss and defend: Not the Bible of academic debate, but the Bible given and handed down to be the medium of the gospel message and the primary sacrament of the knowledge of God, his own communication, which

is able to reconcile us to God so that we might come to love and obey him. Not a book wholly free of perplexing features, but one that bears effective witness to the Savior of all.

Why, in the last analysis, do Christian people believe the Bible is God's Word? Not because they have all studied up on Christian evidences and apologetics, however useful these may prove to some. Christians believe the Bible because it has been able to do for them exactly what Paul promised it would: introduce them to a saving and transforming knowledge of Christ. Reasons for faith and answers to perplexing difficulties in the text, therefore, are supportive but not constitutive of faith in God and his Word. Faith rests ultimately, not in human wisdom, but in a demonstration of the Spirit and power. Therefore, let us not quench the Spirit in our theology of inspiration, whether by rationalist liberal doubts or by rationalist conservative proofs, because both shift the focus away from the power of God in the Scriptures and onto our ability to rationally comprehend these matters. There is, of course, a place for ordinary understanding with the mind and a place for scholarly discussion and vindication. But it is greatly overdone if we leave the slightest impression that we are able to ground faith in God's Word by rational arguments alone and that God's working in the human heart in response to faith is not the main cause of faith. The Bible is not so interested in our academically proving, as in our holistically seeing the truth, in our believing the gospel and obeying God. This is something I have had to learn myself, and it is a liberating truth¹⁶.

¹ Edward Farley, *Ecclesial Reflection: An Anatomy of Theological Method*.

² Bromiley, "The Church Fathers and Holy Scripture," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge, p. 217.

³ Virtually all evangelicals, including myself, have done this in times past, so eager are we to enlist such great worthies as Augustine on our side in the great battle with liberalism. Edward Farley calls our bluff on this practice very effectively; *Ecclesial Reflection*, pp. 83-105.

⁴ The subtitle of Woodbridge's book, *Biblia Authority is A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal*, and effectively refutes the view that classical theologians limited the inerrancy of the Bible to matters of faith and practice. The book referred to is by Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*.

⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Crisis of the Scripture Principle" in *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 1-14. I appreciated the candid humor of Maurice Wiles near the end of his book *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, when he asked himself, in view of the radical nature of the changes he was proposing, whether the title of the book ought not to be "the unmaking of Christian Doctrine." His instincts are on target, of course.

⁶ Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, ed. *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks*, p. 35.

⁷ For direct denials, in addition to the work of Farley and Pannenberg already referred to (notes 1 and 12), consult C. F. Evans, *Is "Holy Scripture" Christian?*; James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World*; and Holy Scripture: *Canon, Authority, Criticism*; Gordon D. Kaufman, *Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God*.

⁸ For indirect denials, note the shift of the "functional" authority of the Bible in a whole range of modern writers who take the Bible to be authoritative, not in its teachings as history but in its power to occasion new experiences of revelation in us. See David H. Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*. For Langdon Gilkey, the Bible is a fallible human witness reflecting all the biases and fears of its age and is subject to our correcting its errors. What he holds to be true is the symbolic structure and its power to illuminate our existence. See

Gilkey, *Message and Existence: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, p. 52 f. Many prominent theologians make the shift to the functional while continuing to pretend they are operating within the classical picture. Hodgson and King name Bultmann, Tillich, and Barth in this category: *Christian Theology*, p. 53.

⁹ Farley, *Ecclesial Reflection*, pp. 153-65.

¹⁰ Farley, *Ecclesial Reflection*, pp. 135-40.

¹¹ Auguste Sabatier, *Religions of Authority and Religions of the Spirit*.

¹² Compare Richard J. Coleman, *Issues of Theological Conflict: Evangelicals and Liberals*.

¹³ No conservative book I know of responds to anything like the full range of hard critical questions, though most of them are treated helpfully by someone somewhere. I hope this book will fill this important gap satisfactorily.

¹⁴ Barth and Berkouwer see themselves in line with the historic doctrine of biblical authority and address themselves to the contemporary discussion, but neither one, partly because of the European context, and partly because of their emphasis upon event rather than content, really speaks for or to the evangelicals in the English-speaking world. Carl Henry is the only one thus far to fulfill my prescription (*God, Revelation and Authority*) unless my own *Biblical Revelation* be mentioned as a poor second. There are signs that better work will come forth from the diverse circle that groups itself around the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. The appearance of Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, vol. 1, which will grow to three large volumes, is the best treatment of the subject so far in a full-scale systematic theology.

¹⁵ Paul's text is discussed helpfully in Edward W. Goodrick, "Let's Put 2 Timothy 3:16 Back in the Bible," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1982), pp. 479-87; and Howard J. Loewen, *Karl Barth and the Church Doctrine of Inspiration*, (Seminary, May 1976), chap. 2.

¹⁶ While still wary of fideism, I understand better what scholars like Daane; Berkouwer, Rogers, Bloesch, Barth, Wink, and Grounds have been trying to tell conservatives like me who have an overly rationalist bent.

Reading the Bible as an Icon

by Duane Christensen

In the Baptist tradition, icons do not play a significant role; unless of course, as some more liberally oriented critics would have it, the Bible itself becomes an icon. There is irony here: whereas some would accuse a good many Baptists of "bibliolatry", or worshipping the Bible, these same Baptists would be quick to point the finger back at those who produce and make use of icons, accusing them of idolatry, or worshipping images. And though the language used in both cases is pejorative, there may be value in an attempt to combine these two negatives to see whether the result may somehow yet be positive.

My introduction to the field of iconography was a meditation by Henry Nouwen on "Rublev's Icon of the Trinity" published recently in the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*.¹ I was struck with how deeply Rublev's icon spoke to Nouwen, and others as well, who have taken the time to enter deeply into its structure and symbolism. Let's take a brief look at this remarkable work, considered by some "to be one of the most perfect achievements in the history of art".²

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Nouwen was experiencing what he calls "a hard period of (his) life, in which verbal prayer had become nearly impossible".³ It was "a long and quiet presence to this Icon (which) became the beginning of (his) healing".⁴

Rublev painted his icon in memory of St. Sergius, in a desire to bring fifteenth century Russia together around the name of God so its people would conquer "the devouring hatred of the world by the contemplation of the Holy Trinity".⁵ He chose a moment in the Old Testament narrative of Abraham's three heavenly visitors in Gen. 18 to portray the Trinity. Notice that "the three men" of the story become three women in the icon. And the table which Abraham set for them beneath the oak of Mamre becomes an altar on which the flesh of the freshly slaughtered calf is placed in a chalice. The picture is shaped by two geometric forms. On the one hand, the figures compose a circle with the chalice at the center and each of the three figures speaks by means of her right hand. For Nouwen the central figure is God the Father and His two fingers point to the chalice and to God the Son.

The message is clear. It is the message of the incarnation itself; and the Son, understanding its full significance, accepts that painful



task in the gesture of the hand. The Holy Spirit opposite extends a hand of blessing on the action thus signified and at the same time directs our attention to the peculiar opening beneath the chalice. It is here, according to Nouwen, that the viewer is drawn literally inside the icon itself in an upward direction—through the chalice, to God the Father, and then to a tree.

At that point the second structural pattern becomes clear. For together with the alignment of the three faces, we now have a cross which speaks of the profound mystery of God's self revelation. As Nouwen put it, "It is a mystery beyond history, yet made visible through it. It is a divine mystery, yet human too. It is a joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mystery transcending all human emotions, yet not leaving any human emotion untouched".⁶

Is this a proper way in which to read the Old Testament? Are we permitted to use a single episode in a narrative complex in the book of Genesis as a window through which to view the whole of the Scriptures, as Rublev has done? I think so, in spite of the obvious tension such a reading creates with the historical critical method itself.

Then, the question of whether it is possible to press the analogy a bit further arises. Is it possible to read the Bible itself, as a whole, in a manner somewhat like Nouwen has read Rublev's icon? If we

the mountain of God's revelation to Moses where he too gains a glimpse of the glory of YHWH. But after each theophanic visitation the narrator is careful to comment that God was not present in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire. This time God communicates His glory through the awesome silence of His absence. Needless to say, the confluence of these two encounters with God on that same sacred mountain seem to point beyond themselves to another mountaintop experience where Moses and Elijah are joined by a prophet greater than either of them through whom the glory of God is revealed in what the Gospel writers call the transfiguration of Jesus.¹¹

These two groups of four books focus on Moses, over against the subsequent succession of leaders in ancient Israel which extends from Joshua to Jehoiachin, the last king of Judah who is released from prison in Babylon. These eight books are framed by the stories of the "Fathers" (Gen. 12-50) and the "Prophets". Joseph Blenkinsopp has noted the structural parallel between Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the "Book of the Twelve" so-called minor prophets, on the one hand, and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve sons of Jacob/Israel, on the other.¹² The designation of Abraham in the book of Genesis as a prophet (Gen. 20:7) who is the recipient of God's covenant promise now takes on a deeper dimension. In the

It is an empty tomb that draws each one of us inside the icon of sacred Scripture to discover the meaning of its curious structures.

take the long hours necessary to contemplate the structural detail of the Bible taken as a whole, is it possible to see the hand of an artist at work in the formation and structure of the canon of sacred Scripture? And if so, is it possible that this contemplative insight may touch our emotions and ultimately transform us? Let's take a closer look and see.

It is possible to see two structural configurations in the canon of the Old Testament which curiously seem to intersect and point beyond themselves to the same redemptive/revelatory act of God which Nouwen has seen in Rublev's icon. The first of these structures is concentric in nature and embraces what we commonly call the Law and the Prophets. At the center we have two groups of four books in the Hebrew canon: / Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy // Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings /.

The first group appears on first glance to be the story of Moses, beginning with his birth (Exod. 1-2) and ending with his death (Deut. 34). A closer look at detail within Exodus and Deuteronomy will reveal further aspects of a concentric arrangement. There are two "Songs of Moses", Exod. 15 and Deut. 32, which in turn frame two great covenant ceremonies under Moses' leadership—one at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19) and the other on the Plains of Moab (Deut. 29-31). The first of these is concluded by the giving of the "ten commandments" (Exod. 20) followed by the "Covenant Code" (Exod. 21-23); whereas the second is preceded by a second giving of the "ten commandments" (Deut. 5) followed by the "Deuteronomomic Code" (Deut. 12-26).⁷ And the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy seem to frame the two parallel wilderness books of Leviticus and Numbers. Edward Newing has investigated the concentric design of this section of the Pentateuch in some detail and argues that the very center is to be found in Exod. 33 which he calls the "Promised Presence", where Moses gets a glimpse of the glory of YHWH.⁸

According to A. H. van Zyl, the so-called Deuteronomomic History in the parallel group of four books also has a concentric design.⁹ We move from the conquest of the land under charismatic leadership (Joshua) to the loss of the land under monarchic government (2 Kings). In between we have the possession of the land under charismatic leadership (Judges and 1 Samuel) set over against the possession of the land under monarchic government (2 Samuel and 1 Kings). If I am not mistaken, this section too has a center which consists of two parallel mountaintop experiences on the part of Elijah.¹⁰ In 1 Kings 18 Elijah calls down fire from heaven in the great contest with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. In the next chapter Elijah, fleeing from Jezebel, makes his way to Mt. Horeb,

words of the great classical prophets of ancient Israel, the old epic story receives a powerful new meaning. Here we meet another structure within the Old Testament canon which points beyond itself as well.

The primary epic story of the Old Testament may be outlined in linear form in terms of a journey out of bondage in Egypt, through the waters into the wilderness, on route to the promised land. And though these terms are rooted in past events, however elusive they may prove to be to the historian, in the hands of the great prophets of Israel each of these symbols is transformed and projected beyond history into an eschatological dimension. The creation stories of Gen. 1-11 anticipate a new *Opus Dei*,¹³ the city of God which will be described as a "New Jerusalem". The people of God see themselves as once more in exile and bondage, awaiting a new deliverance which will carry them through the waters and the wilderness of a New Exodus to a New Conquest which will become the Kingdom of God.¹⁴

Is it any wonder that Luke, in his description of the transfiguration of our Lord, describes the conversation between Moses, Elijah and Jesus as focusing on "His Exodus" which was to be accomplished at Jerusalem (Luke 9:28-31)? As Rublev saw, in his own way, it is an empty tomb that draws each one of us inside the icon of sacred Scripture to discover the meaning of its curious structures. Those structures converge in a cross and a great circle, where the end is also the beginning.

¹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, "Rublev's Icon of the Trinity: A Reflection on the Spiritual Life", *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, XIV/5 (June-August 1984), pp. 8-9.

² Sr. M. Helen Weier, O.S.C., *Festal Icons of the Lord* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1977), p. 45.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9, col. 1.

⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9, col. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9, col. 2.

⁷ On the close connection between the Decalogue and chs. 12-26 of Deuteronomy see Stephen A. Kaufman, "The Structure of the Deuteronomomic Law", *MAARAV* 1 (1979), pp. 105-158, who argues that Deut. 12:1-25:16 is in fact a literary expansion of the Decalogue on the part of a single author.

⁸ Edward George Newing, "A Rhetorical & Theological Analysis of the Hexateuch", *The South East Asia Journal of Theology* 22 (1981), pp. 1-15.

⁹ A. H. van Zyl, "Chronological Deuteronomomic History", *5th World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. 1 (1969), pp. 12ff.

¹⁰ For a more detailed discussion of the concentric structure of the Deuteronomomic History which focuses on 1 Kings 18 & 19, see my article on "Huldah and the Men of Anathoth: Women in Leadership in the Deuteronomomic History", *SBL Seminar Papers 1984* (forthcoming).

¹¹ Cf. Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 227-36 and 422-28.

¹² Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), pp. 120-21 and G. Ostborn, *Cult and Canon* (Uppsala, 1950), p. 44 which is cited by Blenkinsopp.

¹³ The term is borrowed from Samuel Terrien, *ibid.*, p. 380.

¹⁴ Cf. Isa. 11 where all of these images appear.

Annie Dillard: Praying With Her Eyes Open

by Eugene Peterson

Annie Dillard is an exegete of creation in the same way John Calvin was an exegete of Holy Scripture. The passion and intelligence Calvin brought to Moses, Isaiah, and Paul she brings to muskrats, rotifers, and mockingbirds. She reads the book of creation with the care and intensity of a skilled textual critic, probing and questioning, teasing out, with all the tools of mind and spirit at hand, the author's meaning.

Calvin was not indifferent to creation. He frequently referred to the world around us as a "theater of God's glory." He wrote of the Creator's dazzling performance in putting together the elements of matter and arranging the components of the cosmos. He was convinced of the wideranging theological significance of the doctrine of creation and knew how important the understanding of that doctrine was to protect against the gnosticism and manicheanism that are ever-present threats to the integrity of the incarnation. Matter is real. Flesh is good. Without a firm rooting in creation religion is always drifting off into some kind of pious sentimentalism, or sophisticated intellectualism, or snobbish elitism. The task of salvation is not to refine us into pure spirits so that we will not be cumbered with this too solid flesh. We are not angels, nor are we to become angels. The Word did not become a good idea, nor a numinous feeling, nor a moral aspiration; the Word became *flesh*. It also *becomes* flesh. Our Lord left us a command to remember and receive him in bread and wine, in acts of eating and drinking. Things matter. The physical is holy. It is extremely significant that in the opening sentences of the Bible, God speaks a world of energy and matter into being: light, moon, stars, earth, vegetation, animals, man, woman (not love and virtue, faith and salvation, hope and judgment, though they will come soon enough). Apart from creation, covenant has no structure, no context, no rootage in experienced reality. Calvin knew all this, appreciated it, and taught it.

But, curiously, he never seemed to have purchased a ticket to the theater and gone in and watched the performance. He knew that it was going on and knew that it was essential that it go on. But he was busy reading scripture and seemed not inclined to attend

pray at the last not 'please,' but 'thank you,' as a guest thanks his host at the door. Falling from airplanes the people are crying thank you, thank you, all down the air; and the cold carriages draw up for them on the rocks. Divinity is not playful. The universe was not made in jest but in solemn incomprehensible earnest. By a power that is unfathomably secret, and holy, and fleet. There is nothing to be done about it, but ignore it, or see. And like Billy Bray I go my way, and my left foot says 'Glory,' and my right foot says 'Amen': in and out of Shadow Creek, upstream and down, exultant, in a daze, dancing, to the twin silver trumpets of praise" (PTC, pg. 270-71).

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (PTC) was published in 1974 when Annie Dillard was 28 years old. It won the Pulitzer Prize and brought widespread but short lived acclaim. Nothing she has written since has commanded an equivalent attention. This is unfortunate, because American spirituality needs her. It is difficult to account for her neglect, especially in the evangelical Christian community, which should know better. Her unpretentiousness (the telephone call that told her that she had won the Pulitzer pulled her out of a softball game in which she was playing second base) and her youthful beauty (she has long yellow hair and smiles winningly) account, perhaps, for the failure to take her seriously as a mystical theologian, which she most certainly is. Subsequent books have developed the articulation of her spirituality. *Holy the Firm* (HF), 1977, wrestles pain to the mat in a wild, unforgettable agon. If it were a poem, which it started out to be, my entry for a title would be "Annie Agonistes". *Teaching a Stone to Talk* (TST), 1982, takes up listening posts and watchtowers from Atlantic to Pacific coasts and in both American hemispheres, contemplatively alert for the sacred voice and presence. *Living by Fiction* (LF), 1982, shifts ground slightly, searching for meaning in what people create with words (fictions) using the same critical and contemplative disciplines with which she examines what God creates with word. Her early volume of poems, *Tickets for a Prayer Wheel* (TPW), provides many of the texts and images that are developed in the prose works.

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the theater himself. He lived for most of his adult ministry in Geneva, Switzerland, one of the most spectacularly beautiful places on earth. Not once does he comment on the wild thrust of the mountains into the skies. He never voices awe at the thunder of an avalanche. There is no evidence that he ever stooped to admire the gem flowers in the alpine meadows. He was not in the habit of looking up from his books and meditating before the lake loaded with sky that graced his city. He had other fish to fry. He would not be distracted from his scripture exegesis by going to the theater, even the legitimate theater of God's glory.

Annie Dillard has a season ticket to that theater. Day after day she takes her aisle seat and watches the performance. She is caught up in the drama of the creation, of the glory. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* is a contemplative journal of her attendance at the theater over the course of a year. She is breathless in awe. She cries and laughs. In turn she is puzzled and dismayed. She is not an uncritical spectator. During intermissions she does not scruple to find fault with either writer or performance—all is not to her liking and some scenes bring her close to revulsion. But she always returns to the action and ends up on her feet applauding, Encore! Encore! "I think that the dying

Annie Dillard Enters Holy Orders

Shadow Creek. It started out as Tinker Creek, burgeoning with life: "The creator goes off on one wild, specific tangent after another, or millions simultaneously, with an exuberance that would seem to be unwarranted, and with an energy sprung from an unfathomable font. What is going on here . . . that it all flows so freely wild, like the creek, that it all surges in such a free, fringed tangle? Freedom is the world's water and weather, the world's nourishment freely given, its soil and sap: and the creator loves pizzazz" (PTC 137). Then one night when she was out walking, Tinker Creek vanished and Shadow Creek blocked its banks (PTC 68). The meaning leaked out of the creek. Imbecility replaced beauty. She praises anyway. Dark shapes intruded: the giant water bug, the dragonfly's terrible lip, the mantis's jaw, the parasites that make up ten percent of living creatures (she calls them "the devil's tithe"). Brutality, pain, mindlessness, waste. "Shadow is the blue patch where the light doesn't hit" (PTC 69). It is child's play to "appreciate nature" when the sun is shining and the birds are singing. Something far more strenuous is involved when we face and deal with the cruelty and terror which the creation also deals out in spades. How we handle "the blue patch where the light doesn't hit" is the wilderness test for creation-exegesis. It is this test that pushes Annie Dillard into a religious vocation, into holy orders.

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Annie Dillard does not go in for nature appreciation; she is no gossip of the numinous. Nor is she an explainer, flattening existence into what will fit a rationalizing diagram. "These things," she says "are not issues; they are mysteries" (*TST*, pg. 64). She is after bigger game—after meaning, after glory, after God. And she will not, attempting a shortcut in her pursuit, brush aside a single detail of the appalling imbecility that she meets in the shadows.

Here is where she parts company with most of her contemporaries and becomes such a valuable ally in Christian pilgrimage. Avoiding the camps of neo-pagan humanists who go to the wilderness to renew their spirits, and neo-darwinist scientists who drag specimens into the classroom to explain them, she explores the world's text with the ancient but unfashionable tools of sacrifice and prayer. She embraces spiritual disciplines in order to deal with

lost" (*HF* 24).

She seeks orientation. She draws a map of the islands visible on the horizon, fixing their locations, giving them names. She is looking around—seeing, smelling, listening: "All day long I feel created . . . created gulls pock the air, rip great curved seams in the settled air: I greet my created meal, amazed" (*HF* 25). Even so, all is not well. She remembers a night in the mountains of Virginia when she was reading by candlelight and moths kept flying into the candle. One incinerated moth served the candle as a wick, and the flamed soared through it, "a saffron-yellow flame that robbed her to the ground like any immolating monk" (*HF* 17). There is pain out there. And death. There is also an immense mystery in it, something that has to do with sacrifice: the death gives light. The book she is reading is about the poet Rimbaud who burned himself

Annie Dillard does not go in for nature appreciation; she is no gossip of the numinous.

a Creator and a creation: "Then we can at least wail the right question into the swaddling band of darkness, or, if it comes down to that, choir the proper praise" (*PTC* 9).

Persons in the middle ages who withdrew from the traffic of the everyday to contemplate the ways of God and the mysteries of being, giving themselves to a life of sacrifice and prayer, were called anchorites (from the Greek, *anachoreo*, to withdraw to a place apart). They often lived in sheds fastened to the walls of a church. These spare shacks commonly had a world-side window through which the nun or monk received the sights and sounds of the creation as data for contemplation. These barnacle-like rooms were called anchorholds. Annie Dillard calls her cabin on Tinker Creek an anchorhold, and plays with the word: "I think of this house clamped to the side of Tinker Creek as an anchor-hold. It holds me at anchor to the rockbottom of the creek itself and it keeps me steadied in the current, as a sea anchor does, facing the stream of light pouring down. It's a good place to live; there's a lot to think about" (*PTC* 2). She announces her exegetical agenda. First, the active mystery of creeks: "Theirs is the mystery of the continuous creation and all that providence implies: the uncertainty of vision, the horror of the fixed, the dissolution of the presence, the intricacy of beauty, the nature of perfection." And then the passive mystery of the mountains: "Theirs is the one simple mystery of creation from nothing, of matter itself, anything at all, the given. Mountains are giant, restful, absorbent. You can heave your spirit into a mountain and the mountain will keep it, folded, and not throw it back as some creeks will. The creeks are the world with all its stimulus and beauty; I live there. But the mountains are home" (*PTC* 2).

It is clear now that this is not academic exegesis, weighing and measuring, sorting and parsing. This is contemplative exegesis, receiving and offering, wondering and praying. She describes her vocation as a blend of nun, thinker, and artist: "A nun lives in the fires of the spirit, a thinker lives in the bright wick of the mind, an artist lives jammed in the pool of materials. (Or, a nun lives, thoughtful and tough, in the mind, a nun lives, with that special poignancy peculiar to religious, in the exile of materials; and a thinker, who would think of something, lives in the clash of materials, and in the world of spirit where all long thoughts must lead; and an artist lives in the mind, that warehouse of forms, and an artist lives, of course in the spirit)" (*HF*, pg. 22).

Her vocational self-understanding is most explicit in *Holy the Firm*, written in three parts as the contemplative result of three consecutive days in her life when she lived on an island in Puget Sound.

On November 18 she wakes. The world streams in through her world-side window ("I live in one room, one long wall of which is glass" *HF* 22) and she is stunned by divinity: "Every day is a god, each day is a god, and holiness holds forth in time" (*HF* 11). She "reads" the world as a sacred script: "The world at my feet, the world through the window, is an illuminated manuscript whose leaves the wind takes, one by one, whose painted illuminations and halting words draw me, one by one, and I am dazzled in days and

out in the life of art, word-flames that illuminate the world.

Still, the day is, incredibly, fresh and full of promise. She notes that Armenians, Jews, and Catholics all salt their newborn. And all the first-offerings that Israel brought to the Lord were "a convenant of salt" preserved and savory. And—the "god of today is a child, a baby new and filling the house, remarkably here in the flesh. He is day" (*HF* 29). She salts the day, as she salts her breakfast eggs, anticipating delight, exultant.

On November 19 an airplane crashes in a nearby field. She hears the sound of the crash. The pilot pulls his seven year old daughter from the wreckage and as he does a gob of ignited fuel splashes her face and burns her horribly. On November 18 she wrote, "I came here to study hard things—rock mountain and salt sea—and to temper my spirit on their edges. 'Teach me thy ways, O Lord' is, like all prayers, a rash one, and one I cannot but recommend." (*HF* 19). She hadn't bargained on having to deal with a seven year old girl with a burnt off face.

On November 18 God "socketed into everything that is, and that right holy" (*HF* 30). Now, on November 19, a child is in the hospital with her grieving parents at her side and "I sit at the window, chewing the bones in my wrist. Pray for them . . . Who will teach us to pray. The god of today is a glacier. We live in his shifting crevasses, unheard. The god of today is delinquent, a barn-burner, a punk with a pittance of power in a match" (*HF* 49).

What is God up to? What is real? What is illusion? She asks all the hard questions: "Has God a hand in this? . . . Is anything firm, or is time on the loose? Did Christ descend once and for all to no purpose, in a kind of divine and kenotic suicide, or ascend once and for all, pulling his cross up after him like a rope ladder home?" (*HF* 47–8). And she faces the worst: "We're logrolling on a falling world, of time released from meaning and rolling loose, like one of Atlanta's golden apples, a bauble flung and forgotten, lapsed, and the gods on the lam" (*HF* 50).

She looks out of her world-side window and sees an island on the horizon that she hadn't noticed before. She names it God's Tooth.

On November 20 she walks to the store to buy the communion wine in preparation for Sunday worship at the white frame congregational church in the fir trees. Is there any accounting for this juxtaposition of the best and the worst, this grandeur and this obscenity of the past two days? She recalls and meditates the medieval idea that there is a created substance at the absolute base of everything, deep down "in the waxy deepness of planets, but never on the surface of planets where men can discern it; and it is in touch with the Absolute, at base . . . the name of this substance is: Holy the Firm" (*HF* 69). Everything eventually touches it. Something that touches something that touches Holy the Firm is in touch with the Absolute, with God. Islands are rooted in it, and trees, and the little girl with the slaughtered face.

Two weeks before, the little girl's parents had invited sixteen neighbors to their farm to make cider. Annie Dillard brought her cat and the girl played with it all afternoon. "All day long she was

dressing and undressing the yellow cat, sticking it into a black dress long and full as a nun's" (HF 40). She and the girl resembled each other in appearance.

She names her little look-alike friend, Julie Norwich. Juliana of Norwich was a fourteenth century English nun, an anchorite, who steadily and courageously, through a suffering lifetime, looked the world's pain full in the face, and summed up her contemplation in the remarkable sentence, "And all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." From anyone else that sentence would risk ridicule as glib gibberish, but from this nun, "thoughtful and tough . . . in the exile of materials" it is tempered truth, flexible and hard. Annie Dillard gives the name of the nun whose life of prayer transmuted pain to wellness to the girl whose face two weeks before was much like her own but now puts every concept of beauty and meaning and God to hazard, and in meditative prayer addresses her: "Held fast by love in the world like the moth in wax, your life a wick, your head on fire with prayer, held utterly, outside and in, you sleep alone, if you call that alone, you cry God" (HF 76). She invites her into the full goodness of life in the years ahead of her healing: "Mornings you'll whistle, full of the pleasure of days, and afternoons of this or that, and nights cry

She finds the orienting background to the story of Larry in the story of Israel, scared witless at Siani with its thunder and lightning, asking Moses to beg God, "Please, never speak to them directly again. 'Let not God speak with us, lest we die.' Moses took the message. And God, pitying their self-consciousness, agreed. He agreed not to speak to the people anymore. And he added to Moses, 'Go see to them, Get into your tents again'" (TST 70).

Now the entire non-human world is silent. We told God, like we tell a child who is annoying us, to shut up and to to his room. He heard our prayer. After these many centuries we are bored and fitful with the unrelieved patter of human speech. Even our scientists who earlier seemed to be the most determined of all to confine speech to the human are trying to teach chimpanzees to talk, decipher the language of whales, and listen for messages from some distant star.

The island in Puget Sound on which Larry is trying to teach a stone to talk is one result of Israel's prayer; the Galapagos Islands are another. Since Darwin's time scientists have gone there, treating the island as a laboratory in which to find meaning in a world dissociated from the living voice of God, to study the process of evolution, to unravel the biological story of the race. Annie Dillard

Annie Dillard does not use scripture to prove or document; it is not a truth she "uses" but one she lives.

love. So live." (HF 76).J

Then an abrupt turning, returning to her own vocation. Earlier she observed that "a life without sacrifices is abomination" (HF 72). Now she embraces this sacrifice, burning in a life of art and thought and prayer through the canonical hours. While "elsewhere people buy shoes" she kneels at the altar rail, holding on for dear life in the dizzying swirl of glory and brutality, and calls to Julie Norwich that she herself will be Julie Norwich. The last words of the book: "I'll be the nun for you. I am now" (HF 76).

Annie Dillard Reads Scripture

Even though her field is creation, not scripture exegesis, Calvin would not, I think, be displeased with her competence in scripture. She has assimilated scripture so thoroughly, is so saturated with its cadences and images, that it is simply at hand, unbidden, as context and metaphor for whatever she happens to be writing about. She does not, though, use scripture to prove or document; it is not a truth she "uses" but one she lives. Her knowledge of scripture is stored in her right brain rather than her left; nourishment for the praying imagination rather than fuel for apologetic argument. She seldom quotes scripture; she alludes constantly—there is scarcely a page that does not contain one or several allusions, but with such nonchalance, not letting her left hand know what her right is doing, that someone without a familiarity with scripture might never notice the unobtrusive ubiquity of biblical precept and story.

The verbal word of scripture is the wide world within which she gives her exegetical attention to the non-verbal word of creation. The revealed world of torah and gospel is the spacious environment in which she works out the localized meanings of sycamores, weasels, eclipses and sunlit minnows. A sense of proportion develops out of her scripture reading in which the so-called "general" revelation is subordinate to and enclosed by the "specific" revelation of scripture. She would agree, I think, with P.T. Forsyth: "It is a vast creation, but a vaster salvation."

One example: the title essay in *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, where I count seventeen allusions to holy scripture (not counting repeats) and three quotations.

She tells the story of Larry, her neighbor on a Puget Sound island, who is trying to teach a stone to talk. He keeps the stone on his mantle, "protected by a square of untanned leather, like a canary asleep under its cloth. Larry removes the cover for the stone's lessons" (TST 68). The quirky story of the island crank is representational: "Nature's silence is its one remark" (TST 69); we are restive with the silence and are trying to raise a peep out of mute mother nature.

goes there reading a different text, a creation text that is envired by a biblical text. She calls the Galapagos a "kind of metaphysics laboratory" (TST 73). She might as well have called them a prayer laboratory.

The sea lion is the most popular resident of the Galapagos, gregarious and graceful, welcoming and sportive, "engaged in full-time play" (TST 74). Visitors joke that when they "come back" they would like to come as a sea lion. "The sea lion game looked unbeatable." After long reflection and another visit to the island, she made a different choice: the *palo santo* tree. She had hardly noticed them on her first visit. The trees were thin, pale, wispy—miles of them, half dead, the stands looking like blasted orchards. If she were to "come back," she decided it would be not as a sea lion, evolved into the nearly human, but as a *palo santo* tree, devolved into the nearly dead. She chose the *palo santo* because even though "the silence is all there is," (TST 76), it is not a silence of absence but presence. It is not a sterile silence but a pregnant silence. The non-human silence is not because there is nothing to say but because in disobedience or unbelief or sheer terror we asked God not to speak and he heard our prayer. But though unspeaking, God is still there. What is needed from us is witness. The *palo santo* is a metaphor for witness. The premier biblical witness, John the Baptist, said "He must increase but I must decrease." The witness does not call attention to itself; what it points to is more important. Being takes precedence over using, explaining, possessing. The witness points, mute, so not to interfere with the sound of silence: the *palo santos* ". . . interest me as emblems of the muteness of the human stance in relation to all that is not human. I see us all as *palo santo* trees, holy sticks, together watching all that we watch, and growing in silence" (TST 74).

Witness is the key word in all this. It is an important biblical word in frequent contemporary use. It is a modest word—saying what is there; honestly testifying to exactly what we see, what we hear. But when we enlist in a cause it is almost impossible to do it right: we embellish, we fill in the blanks, we varnish the dull passages, we gild the lily just a little to hold the attention of our auditors. Sea lion stuff. Important things are at stake—God, salvation—and we want so much to involve outsiders in these awesome realities that we leave the humble ground of witness and use our words to influence and motivate, to advertise and publicize. Then we are no longer witnesses but lawyers arguing the case, not always with scrupulous attention to detail. After all, life and death issues are before the jury.

Annie Dillard returns us to the spare, simple, modest role of witness. We live in a time when the voice of God has been extin-

guished in the creation. We want the stones to talk, the heavens to declare the glory of God, but "the very holy mountains are keeping mum. We doused the burning bush and cannot rekindle it; we are lighting matches in vain under every green tree. Did the wind use to cry, and the hills shout forth praise? Now speech has perished from among the lifeless things of earth, and living things say very little to very few" (TST 70).

Our necessary and proper work in such a world is witness—for the *palo santo* trees. Out in the open, in our desacralized and much-studied Galapagos Island world, perfect witnesses, watching, mute, and waving our arms, calling the world's attention to what is, the silence—for "wherever there is stillness there is the still small voice, God's speaking from the whirlwind, nature's old song and dance, the show we drove from town" (TST 70).

"On a Hill Far Away", the anecdotal story that follows "Teaching a Stone to Talk", makes the same point with different materials. It is a winsome-pathetic account, told with sympathy and understanding, of parishioners of Jerry Falwell who have been instructed by their pastor to witness to every person they meet with, "Do you know the Lord as your personal savior?" But the witness is intrusive, inappropriately verbal, obsessive with duty, insensitive to context. Larry teaching his stone to talk and Jerry Falwell teaching his parishioners to accost everyone with, "Do you know the Lord as your personal savior" are more alike than different, both noble but grotesque parodies of witness.)

Two pithy quotations (but not marked as quotations), the first from the Old the second from the New Testament, conclude this essay: Quit your tents. Pray without ceasing.

Quit your tents. Earlier she had quoted from Deuteronomy: God ordered the Israelites who did not want to hear his voice, "Get into your tents again." It is time now to come out. Get out into creation. Our task, though, when we come out is not to put creation to use either for profit or piety: "All we can do with the whole inhuman array is watch it . . . We are here to witness. There is nothing else to do with those mute materials we do not need . . . We do not use the songbirds, for instance. We do not eat many of them; we cannot befriend them; we cannot persuade them; we cannot befriend them; we cannot persuade them to eat more mosquitoes or plant fewer weed seeds. We can only witness them—whoever they are" (TST 72-3).

Pray without ceasing. Prayer is personal openness to God, however he may present himself. It is the decision to be intimate with the holy. It does not demand, it is. The eccentric effort of Larry in teaching his stone to talk centers into prayer: ". . . like any other meaningful effort, the ritual involves sacrifice, the suppression of self-consciousness, and a certain precise tilt of the will, so that the will becomes transparent and hollow, a channel for the work" (TST 68). The effort to teach a stone to talk and undo the results of our earlier (Israel's) prayer is admirable and understandable—but futile. What is required is to listen to the silence. And the way to listen is to pray, for it is God to whom we are listening—not chimpanzee speech, not whale language, not extraterrestrial messages. "You take a step in the right direction to pray to this silence" (TST 76).

Annie Dillard Goes To Church

The American writers with whom Annie Dillard is often grouped—Henry Thoreau, Waldo Emerson, John Muir—didn't go to church. They distanced themselves from what they saw as the shabbiness and hypocrisy of institutional religion and opted for the pine purity of forest cathedrals. Emily Dickinson gave them their text: "Some worship God by going to church/I worship him staying at home/with a bobolink for a chorister/and an orchard for a throne." Their numerous progeny spend Sunday mornings on birdwatching field trips and Sierra Club walks. Annie Dillard goes to church: "I know only enough of God to want to worship him, by any means ready to hand . . . there is one church here, so I go to it" (HF 55, 57). It doesn't matter that it is out of fashion, she goes anyway: "On a big Sunday there might be twenty of us there; often I am the only person under sixty, and feel as though I'm on an archaeological tour of Soviet Russia" (HF 57). It is unfashionable because it is ridiculous. How can searchers after God and seekers after beauty stomach the "dancing bear act" that is staged in Christian churches, protestant and catholic alike, week after week? Annie Dillard, cheer-

fully and matter-of-factly, goes anyway. Her *tour de force* on worship, "An Expedition to the Pole", provides the image and rationale. Wherever we go, to the Pole or the Church ". . . there seems to be only one business at hand—that of finding workable compromises between the sublimity of our ideas and the absurdity of the fact of us" (TST 30).

In *Pilgrim* she wrote, "These northings drew me, present northings, past northings, the thought of northings. In the literature of polar exploration, the talk is of nothing. An explorer might scrawl in his tattered journal, 'Latitude 82 15' N. We accomplished 20 miles of nothing today, in spite of the shifting pack.' Shall I go nothing? My legs are long." (PTC 249). She describes the parallel goals. The Pole of Relative Inaccessibility is "that imaginary point on the Arctic Ocean farthest from land in any direction." Reading the accounts of polar explorers one is impressed that at root they were seeking the sublime. "Simplicity and purity attracted them; they set out to perform clear tasks in uncontaminated lands . . . they praised the lands' spare beauty as if it were a moral or a spiritual quality: 'icy halls of cold sublimity.' 'lofty peaks perfectly covered with eternal snow'" (TST 28). That is geography. There is an equivalent Pole in worship: "the Absolute is the Pole of Relative Inaccessibility located in metaphysics. After all, one of the few things we know about the Absolute is that it is relatively inaccessible. It is the point of spirit farthest from every accessible point of spirit in all directions. Like the others, it is a Pole of the Most Trouble. It is also—I take this as a given—the pole of great price" (TST 19).

She quotes Fridtjof Nansen on polar exploration, referring to "the great adventure of the ice, deep and pure as infinity . . . the eternal round of the universe and its eternal death" and notes that everywhere "polar prose evokes these absolutes, these ideas of 'eternity' and 'perfection' as if they were some perfectly visible part of the landscape" (TST 28-9). And she quotes Pope Gregory who calls us to Christian worship "to attain to somewhat of the unencompassed light, by stealth, and scantily" (TST 44).

She tells the comic-tragic stories of polar explorers who "despite the purity of their conceptions . . . manhailed their humanity to the Poles" (TST 29). The Franklin Expedition in 1845, with 138 officers and men carried a "1,200 volume library, a hand-organ playing fifty tunes, china place settings for officers and men, cut-glass wine goblets, sterling silver flatware, and no special clothing for the Arctic, only the uniforms of Her Majesty's Navy" (TST 24-5). It was a noble enterprise and they were nobly dressed for it. They all died. Their corpses were found with pieces of backgammon board and a great deal of table silver engraved with officer's initials and family crests. Dignity was all.

Sir Robert Falcon Scott had a different kind of dignity: he thought the purity of polar search dictated a purity of effort unaided by dogs or companions. He also died. "There is no such thing as a solitary polar explorer, fine as the conception is" (TST 27). Some of the most moving documents of polar writing, expressing his lofty sentiments, his purity and dignity and self-control, were found under his frozen carcass.

The explorers who made it weren't so fussy. They abandoned their roles, their privileges, their preconceived notions, and adapted to the conditions of pack ice and glaciers in the light-drenched land.

Annie Dillard going to worship—"a kind of nothing is what I wish to accomplish, a single-minded trek toward that place . . ." (PTC 251)—faces equivalent difficulties. Her experiences in the church's worship are interweaved with commentary on polar explorations. The amateurism is distressing: "A high school stage play is more polished than this service we have been rehearsing since the year one. In two thousand years we have not worked out the kinks" (TST 20).

The attempts to be relevant are laughable: "I have overcome a fiercely anti-Catholic upbringing in order to attend Mass simply and solely to escape Protestant guitars. Why am I here? Who gave these nice Catholics guitars? Why are they not mumbling in Latin and performing superstitious rituals? What is the Pope thinking of?" (TST 18).

The blithe ignorance is frightening: "Why do we people in churches seem like cheerful, brainless tourists on a packaged tour of the Absolute? . . . On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have

the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does not one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares: they should lash us to our pews" (TST 40). Explorers unmindful of "conditions" died. Why don't similarly unprepared worshipers perish on the spot?

Never mind. She sheds her dignity, sloughs off schooling and scruples, abandons propriety. "I would rather, I think, undergo the famous dark night of the soul than encounter in church the dread hootenanny—but these purely personal preferences are of no account, and maladaptive to boot" (TST 33). So she manhauls her humanity to her pew, gives up her personal dignity and throws in her lot with random people (TST 31). She realizes that one can no more go to God alone than go to the Pole alone. She further realizes that even though the goal is pure, the people are not pure, and if we want to go to the Land we must go with the People, even when they are playing banjos, singing stupid songs, and giving vacuous sermons. "How often have I mounted this same expedition, has my absurd barque set out half-caulked for the Pole?" (TST 44).

So she worships. Weekly she sets out for the Pole of Relative Inaccessibility, "where the twin oceans of beauty and horror meet" (PTC 69). Dignity and culture abandoned, silence and solitude abandoned, she joins the motly sublime/ludicrous people who show up in polar expeditions and church congregations. "Week after week we witness the same miracle: that God, for reasons unfathomable, refrains from blowing our dancing bear act to smithereens. Week after week Christ washes the disciples' dirty feet, handles their very toes, and repeats, It is all right—believe it or not—to be people" (TST 20).

The spiritualities involved in going to the Pole (and the creek, and the mountains, and to Church) are essentially the same. Why choose between them? Annie Dillard embraces both, and she deals with the hard things in both ventures, the absurd vanities in the explorers and the embarrassing shabbiness in the worshipers, with immense charity: "We are clumped on an ice floe drifting over the black polar sea. Heaven and earth are full of our terrible singing"

(TST 34). She is blessedly free, whether in the wilderness or at worship, of sentimentalism and snobbery (the twin sins of touristy aesthetes). She is as accepting of absurdities in Christian worship as she is of absurdities in polar exploration. She is saying, I think, that we have put up with nature sentimentalism and liturgical snobbery long enough. If there are difficulties in going to church they are no greater than those encountered in going to the Pole. Besides, as she says, "nobody said things were going to be easy" (TST 18).

Annie Dillard Prays With Her Eyes Open

There are two great mystical traditions in the life of prayer, sometimes labeled apophatic and kataphatic. Kataphatic prayer uses: icons, symbols, ritual, incense. The creation is the way to the Creator. Apophatic prayer attempts emptiness: the creature distracts from the Creator and so the mind is systematically emptied of idea, image, sensation until there is only the simplicity of being. Kataphatic prayer is "praying with your eyes open"; apophatic prayer is "praying with your eyes shut." At our balanced best the two traditions intermingle, mix, and cross-fertilize. But we are not always at our best. The western church, and even more so the evangelical church, is heavily skewed on the side of the apophatic, "praying with your eyes shut." The rubric for prayer when I was a child was, "Fold your hands, bow your head, shut your eyes, and we'll pray." My early training carries over into my adult practice. Most of my praying still is with my eyes shut. I need balancing.

Annie Dillard prays with her eyes open. She says, Spread out your hands, lift your head, open your eyes, and we'll pray: "It is still the first week in January, and I've got great plans. I've been thinking about seeing. There are lots of things to see, unwrapped gifts and free surprises" (PTC 15). We start out with her on what we suppose will be no more than a walk through the woods. It is not long before we find ourselves in the company of saints and monks, enlisted in the kind of contemplative seeing "requiring a lifetime of dedicated struggle" (PTC 32). She gets us into the theater that Calvin told us about and we find ourselves in the solid biblical companionship of psalmists and prophets who watched the "hills skip like lambs" and heard the "trees clap their hands" alert to God everywhere, in everything, praising, praying with our eyes open: "I leap to my feet, I cheer and cheer." (PTC 32).

Redeeming the Evangelical Experiment

by William Abraham

It is becoming increasingly clear that the recent renaissance of the evangelical tradition is proving to be more ephemeral than its advocates ever realized. The renaissance itself was real enough. In the 1950's and 1960's, there was a remarkable attempt to develop a conservative version of the Christian faith which would shed the worst of the fundamentalism of an earlier generation, incorporate what was best in critical scholarship, and include a serious social ethic. Billy Graham, perhaps more than anyone, launched this effort when he broke with fundamentalism and established an inclusivist policy in evangelism. He ultimately became accepted across the world. The cost to Graham was considerable: theologically, he had to rework his views in ecclesiology and on the activity of the Holy Spirit; personally, he had to endure the wrath of his fundamentalist brethren.

Graham, however, could never have made it on his own. He is an evangelist rather than a serious theologian, so it was fortunate that around him there gathered a new generation of scholars who provided the conceptual tools to cope with his break from fundamentalism. Chief among these were figures like Harold Ockenga, Carl Henry, Bernard Ramm, Harold Lindsell, Edward Carnell, and Francis Schaeffer.¹ Their efforts proved so successful that in a short time they had established themselves as the standard-bearers of

the evangelical tradition. Their vision of the heritage became rapidly institutionalized in educational centers like Fuller Theological Seminary and Wheaton College, magazines like *Christianity Today*, in para-church groups like IVCF, and in a host of media, from dictionaries to theological journals, publishing houses, conferences, and creedal announcements.

The material results and effects of the new vision are worthy of sustained applause. It spurred evangelicals to take academic scholarship seriously. It pressed evangelicals to heed the cry of a hurting world. It introduced evangelicals to the classical tradition of the church. It led to a much less suspicious attitude toward other Christians outside evangelicalism. It provided a host of Christians with a plausible body of doctrine. It called the church at large to take evangelism seriously. It gave hope to those who feared that Christianity required them to send their brains on a permanent holiday. Above all, it provided the resources and motivation that was needed by evangelicals if they were to think seriously and responsibly about their faith.

So successful was the shift out of fundamentalism into conservative evangelicalism that it is now very difficult to lump the two movements together and interpret them as one. James Barr has skillfully attempted to do this, but his efforts owe more to deliberate polemical intent than they do to historical accuracy. Barr has persistently failed to note that there was a deliberate break between conservative evangelicalism and fundamentalism; he has either not

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seen or acknowledged that there was a genuine evangelical renaissance in the last generation.²

Yet the substance of Barr's proposals are correct.³ The modern evangelical crusade still owes so much to the theology of fundamentalism that in the contest to preserve what is best in the evangelical tradition there is value in insisting that the commonly known modern version of the tradition is a timid and inadequate reworking of fundamentalism. This claim deserves attention, for it is a much more radical criticism of the movement than the criticism normally offered by evangelical insiders. The usual criticism is social and moral.⁴ Evangelicals, it is repeatedly said, have failed to develop an adequate social ethic; they have ignored the structural character of evil and failed to develop a suitable orthopraxis. But this criticism leaves the theology of modern evangelicalism intact and secure. Yet it is precisely the theology of the tradition which is least secure and adequate.

There are two ways of developing this thesis: the high way and the low way. In taking the high way one does theology proper. One argues carefully that modern evangelical theology fails as a coherent, systematic, and biblical expression of the Christian message. For example, its internal weighting of the various elements

practice that lies behind the great evangelical revival of the eighteenth century which created Methodism and sustains the Wesleyan tradition, one very quickly begins to question the theological adequacy of fundamentalism and its modern evangelical offspring. In other words, modern evangelicals have as much to learn from Wesley as do modern apostate or nominal Methodists who are presently wont to rattle the theological bones of their esteemed founder, shiver a little in embarrassed silence, and then return to business as usual. In fact there is so much to learn that it will take at least a generation for its full implications to be recognized and digested.

The crucial source of the Wesleyan tradition is John Wesley. There is scarcely a single important theological issue where Wesley has not something illuminating to offer.⁷ In his own inimitable fashion he wrote succinctly and critically on the central themes of any balanced expression of the Christian message. Creation, redemption, justification, assurance, sin, sanctification, grace, predestination, revelation, reason, authority, the sacraments, prayer, and so on, were thought through rigorously. His short, devastating critique of unconditional predestination has been either ignored or quietly assimilated; it has never been adequately answered.⁸ His inclusivist approach to the issue of authority, an approach that is genuinely

There is scarcely a single important theological issue where Wesley has not something illuminating to offer.

of theology is fundamentally Cartesian in character. There is an obsession with intellectual foundations, reflected most clearly in the debate about inerrancy, which suffocates the actual articulation of essential Christian doctrine and relocates the center of Christianity not in the affections but in the mind. Equally one could argue that the actual work done on the foundations is conspicuously inadequate. Thus the claims proposed about the Bible cannot be reconciled with the actual character of the Bible as we know it; they betray a superficial awareness of the analogical character of religious discourse; they invariably confuse divine inspiration and divine speaking, and they rest on arguments which are narrowly historical in nature.⁵ So might one travel along the high road of theology proper.

This is a difficult road to negotiate. The relevant data are rich and open to varying interpretation, the arguments are complex and long-winded, and in time the debate reaches an impasse in the quicksands of contested philosophical and hermeneutical presuppositions. So proponents of the modern neo-evangelical experiment will deny or fend off theological criticism. If need be, the Goliaths of the movement can readily summon a new round of scholarly weapons and armor to ward off the enemy. So leaders of the tradition can trade on the complexity to claim that they have reached the desired goal of theological coherence.

Yet it is debatable whether the exponents of the present expression of the evangelical tradition have the resources to mount a really substantive, theological defense of their position. On the contrary, the evidence indicates that several of the key architects, rather than take this difficult route, have regressed into a classical fundamentalist position. It is surely no accident that Francis Schaeffer's last work announced that the modern evangelical movement was set on nothing less than a disaster course.⁶ Equally, it is no accident that Jerry Falwell, a real old-fashioned fundamentalist, both by name and by nature, can team up with Harold Lindell and draw on his work in his efforts to revitalize the fundamentalism of the twenties and thirties. Schaeffer and Lindell are regressing into fundamentalism as a way out of the intrinsic theological instability of the neoevangelical experiment. Sensitive historical perception can see this quite clearly despite the fact we are in the midst of the process we are observing.

In mounting this kind of criticism of modern evangelicalism, one has abandoned theology proper and turned to historical analysis for evidence. In other words, one has left the high road of theological appraisal and turned down the low road of historical study.

It is exactly at this juncture that the current celebrations of the founding of Methodism are so crucial. By exploring the vision and

open to relevant considerations drawn from tradition, reason and experience, is a fascinating attempt to integrate the insights of both the Reformation and the Enlightenment. His doctrine of sanctification, despite its initial strangeness and ambiguity, is a valiant effort to allow divine grace to have the primacy over human evil and thereby drive out both pessimism and moralism from Christian ethics. His emphasis on a catholic spirit sought to kill sectarianism at its foundations; equally it makes clear that the real heart and soul of Christianity lies in the seat of the affections and not in doctrinal orthodoxy. Steady, critical interaction with Wesley's writings will bring to light a unique configuration of the central ingredients of the classical Christian heritage. In short, Wesley constitutes a crucial theological exponent and theological model of the historic evangelical tradition. Like Calvin and Luther, he is one of the great doctors of the heritage.

He deserves this status not just because his writings intrinsically merit such a reading, but because he also initiated and inspired a body of theological reflection every whit as impressive as that developed by the successors of Luther and Calvin. This fact can no longer be ignored. From Fletcher, Clarke and Benson in his own day, through Watson, Miley, Pope, Nast and a host of others in the nineteenth century, down to Gamertsfelder, Wiley, Hildebrandt, Sangster and a goodly number in our own century, there is a long line of recognizably Wesleyan theologians who deserve to be taken seriously. We need not here decide either the pedigree or the boundaries of the tradition. All we need to do is recognize its existence and thereby implicitly acknowledge the intellectual stature of its founder and mentor.⁹

In insisting on the theological stature of Wesley, I am not of course seeking to deny the role commonly assigned to Wesley in evangelical circles. Wesley was an evangelist, a church-builder, a genius of an organizer, a sacramentalist, a prophet, a social activist and reformer, a hymn-writer, a friend of the poor, and the like. In his own way he was even a competent logician and philosopher. But these common designations not only serve to highlight that he is a fascinating figure in the history of the church, they show how informed and rich he was as a theologian. It is precisely this latter designation that modern evangelicals have ignored or suppressed. Perhaps they have suspected all along that if they travel the low road of historical study in the origins of Methodism they will find the central thesis of this paper abundantly vindicated.

At the very least, such study reveals that modern evangelicalism is a far cry from the version of the tradition articulated by Wesley. Wesley offers a different weighting of the central elements of the Christian message. He offers a different analysis of religious au-

thority. He openly rejects the much beloved doctrine of eternal security. He provides a very radical analysis of the pastoral needs of new converts. He shows a remarkable openness to the Enlightenment. He cares passionately for the writings of the early Fathers of the church. He is ecumenical in outlook. He has a very pronounced love for the eucharist. He is utterly determined that everyone think and let think. Compared to the Wesleyan paradigm of the tradition, the modern evangelical experiment offers a very different articulation of the evangelical heritage. Like its fundamentalist parent, it has reduced the high peaks of classical Christian doctrine to a narrow range of concerns. It has failed to convince its own adherents that the issue of authority can be solved by invoking Warfield's doctrine of inspiration. It has only reluctantly, if at all, come to terms with the insights of the Enlightenment. It has very little sense of a catholic spirit. It has added precious little to the church's liturgical life. It is conspicuously lacking in any deep love and understanding of the diverse riches of the Christian past.

No doubt the contrasts could be drawn very differently than I have drawn them here. The point, however, is that contrasts must be drawn. One cannot work honestly and intensively with the theological proposals of Wesley without noticing how he differs quite radically from the editions of evangelicalism currently available. This in itself has radical consequences for evangelicals today.

It means that we must provide a much richer analysis of the internal, theological contents of the heritage. To follow the normal course and offer a list of doctrinal propositions as the essence of the heritage is totally inadequate. Such an approach is not just superficial, it is downright misleading. What we have to do is develop a complex historical narrative which brings out the inescapably contested character of the tradition. To be sure there are elements in common. Evangelicals are committed to a set of specific theological proposals. But they have differed quite radically across the generations on how best to express and defend these. Once one looks carefully at, say, Calvin, Luther, and Wesley, one soon sees that they are locked in mortal combat in a fascinating contest to capture the riches of the Christian gospel. Thus the contrasts across the generations call us to a radical revision of evangelical self-understanding.

They also call us to alter the present climate of debate. Rather than go for the quick kill by verbally excommunicating each other from the tradition, evangelicals should joyously enter into a serious contest to work out the riches of the heritage in optimum fashion. This will not be easy. It will involve eschewing the temptation to regress into fundamentalism. It will mean facing up to the serious inadequacy of the neo-evangelical experiment. Above all, it will require a full acknowledgement of the fallible and experimental

character of the evangelical position. Whatever it costs, evangelicals must abandon the spirit of hostility and suspicion so generously fueled by modern fundamentalism and provoke one another to out-think both their friends and their opponents in a spirit of mutual love and friendly rivalry. Celebrating the contribution of Wesley to the tradition can provide the catalyst for such a healthy development.

It can also spur us all on to the theological renewal of the tradition. Following the low road of historical study of a Wesley (or a Calvin, or a Luther, or a Warfield) has its limits. Remembering Wesley's achievement can, of course, do much for us. It can establish the contested character of the heritage and highlight afresh the great riches of the past. It can chasten our theological reflection and enliven our theological judgement. It can relieve us of the guilt and burden of the recent past and breathe new life into weary hearts and minds. It can even call into question the theological adequacy of the present phase of the evangelical tradition. It cannot, however, conclusively demolish or conclusively establish the theological legitimacy of any version of the heritage. To do that we must return to the high road of theology proper.

It is to this task that a fresh awareness of Wesley ultimately points. As things stand, his position threatens and calls into question much that currently passes for evangelicalism. Those who share this assessment must attempt to show that this is not idle talk by articulating a theology that outwits and outshines the present paradigm. Those who reject it must back up their opposing claims by providing better proposals than those enunciated by Wesley and his present admirers. Either way we are summoned to optimum theological performance. Either way life shall not be boring. Either way we can hope and pray that God will in this process redeem the current evangelical experiment.

¹ This is a small sample of a host of theologians who could be mentioned.

² Barr's recent book *Escaping from Fundamentalism* (London: SCM, 1984) shows no improvement on his earlier *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) in this respect.

³ Most evangelicals have missed Barr's deep concern to encourage the development of a responsible evangelical tradition.

⁴ Other criticisms have focused on failure to pursue critical study of the Bible, failure to develop adequate liturgical practices, failure to be suitably ecumenical, and so on.

⁵ Nowhere is this more obvious than in the debate launched by Jack Rogers and Donald McKim in *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

⁶ *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1984).

⁷ The best place to begin the study of Wesley is with Wesley's own writings. For a useful selection consult Albert Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

⁸ The full text of Wesley's "Predestination calmly considered" can be found in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler.

⁹ A useful descriptive survey of Wesleyan theology is provided by Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983). For a fascinating analysis of the "apostasy" of the Wesleyan tradition from its Wesleyan origins see Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965).

Religion and the American Dream: A Study in Confusion and Tension

by Robert D. Linder

"The American Dream" is an illusive concept.¹ Roughly speaking, it has something to do with freedom and equality of opportunity. As a matter of fact, in the political realm, it involves the shared dream of a free and equal society. The fact that the reality does not fit the dream is probably well known, for no society can be both free and equal at the same time. Even in a relatively open and mobile nation like America, there are still relatively few at the top of the heap, many more in the middle, and some at or near the bottom. Nevertheless, in the United States, even those who have the most reason to deny its reality still cling to its promise, if not for themselves, at least for their children. In any case, it can be said of the American Dream, in the words of sociologist W. Lloyd Warner, that "... though some of it is false, by virtue of our firm belief

in it, we have made some of it true."² What is true in the case of the American Dream and society-at-large also seems to be true in the realm of religion and the Dream.³

Puritan John Winthrop's oft-cited and well-known 1630 metaphor of "A City upon a Hill" and sometime Baptist and Seeker Roger Williams' less known but equally hallowed vision of a country in which, as he observed in 1644, "God requireth not an uniformity of Religion to be enacted and enforced in any civil state . . ." provide the background for understanding the historic tension between two aspects of the American Dream in religion. Over the years, the Puritan sense of cosmic mission as God's New Israel eventually became part of America's national identity and the Radical stand for religious freedom developed into the American ideal of religious and cultural pluralism. And so the two dreams of Americans for a religiously harmonious nation and a religiously free nation have existed side-by-side down to the present-day—sometimes in relative peace but often in considerable tension.⁴

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The First American Dream and Religion: Puritan vs. Radical

The Puritans who gave the country its rich imagery of America as a City on a Hill and as a second Israel lived with a great deal of tension themselves. They were, by self-definition, elect spirits, segregated from the mass of humankind by an experience of conversion, fired by the sense that God was using them to revolutionize human history, and committed to the execution of his will. As such, they constituted a crusading force of immense energy. However, in reality, it was an energy which was often incapable of united action because the saints formed different conceptions of what the divine will entailed for themselves, their churches, and the unregenerate world at-large. But, still, they were certain of their mission in the New World—to be an example of how a covenanted community of heartfelt believers could function. Thus, in New England the relation of church and state was to be a partnership in unison, for church and state alike were to be dominated by the saints.⁵

This arrangement worked fairly well for the first American Puritans, but in the second and third generations the tension began to mount between the concept of a New Israel composed of elect saints on the one hand, and the Puritan conviction that true Christians were those who had experienced a genuine conversion to Christ on the other. Everything in the New Israel depended on the saints. They were the church and they ruled the state. But what if the second generation did not respond to the call for conversion and the supply of saints ran out? The answer was eventually to create a device usually called the half-way covenant, whereby those of the second generation who did not experience conversion in the Puritan mold could be admitted to church membership after making a profession of communal obedience and thereby have their children baptized in order to place them under the covenant. The Puritans found how difficult it was to make certain that the second and third generations were soundly converted and thus qualified to keep the City on the Hill operating properly according to the ordinances of God.

In any case, the Puritans maintained their sense of destiny and purpose by means of this patch-work arrangement. However, the concept of New England as God's New Israel was given new impetus during the First Great Awakening in the first half of the seventeenth century. American theologian and Congregationalist minister Jonathan Edwards, for one, saw the hand of God at work in the awakening, in both a theological and social sense. Edwards believed that there would be a golden age for the church on earth achieved through the faithful preaching of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. The world thus would be led by the American example into the establishment of the millennium. In this, the New Englanders were surely God's chosen people, his New Israel.⁶

As most people know, the millennium did not come in Edwards' day or even immediately thereafter. Instead the First Great Awakening died out and the original theistically-oriented chosen nation theme was metamorphosed into a civil millennialism. This occurred in the period between the end of the awakening in the 1740s and the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775. It was in this era that the transferral of the central concepts of seventeenth-century Puritan ideology to all America, including the New Israel motif, took place. Disappointed that the great revival did not result in the dawning of the millennium, many colonial preachers turned their apocalyptic expectations elsewhere. In short, when the First Awakening tailed off, its evangelical spokesmen had to reinterpret the millennial hope it had spawned. In the process, the clergy, in a subtle but profound shift in religious values, redefined the ultimate goal of apocalyptic hope. The old expectation of the conversion of all nations to Christianity became diluted with, and often subordinated to, the commitment to America as the new seat of liberty. First France and then England became the archenemies of liberty, both civil and religious. In his insightful study of this development, historian Nathan Hatch concludes:

The civil millennialism of the Revolutionary era, expressed by the rationalists as well as pietists, grew out of the politicizing of Puritan millennial history in the two decades before the Stamp Act crisis. . . . Civil millennialism advanced freedom as the cause of God, defined the primary enemy as the antichrist of civil oppression rather than that of formal

religion, traced the myths of its past through political developments rather than through the vital religion of the forefathers, and turned its vision toward the privileges of Britons rather than to heritage exclusive to New England.⁷

Thus, the first Great Awakening was not only a significant religious event, but also a popular movement with wide-ranging political and ideological implications that laid the groundwork for an emotional and future-oriented American civil religion. The revolutionary generation began to build an American nation based upon religious foundations of evangelical revivalism. The latter-day New England Puritans were joined by many Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Dutch Reformed of equally evangelical persuasion in seeing themselves as jointly commissioned to awaken and guide the nation into the coming period of millennial fulfillment.

But in the process, where the churches moved out, the nation moved in. Gradually, the nation emerged in the thinking of most Americans as the primary agent of God's meaningful activity in history. They began to bestow on their new nation a catholicity of destiny similar to that which theology usually attributes to the universal church. Thus, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution became the covenants that bound together the people of the nation and secured to them God's blessing, protection, and call to historic mission. Most important, the United States itself became the covenanted community and God's New Israel, destined to spread real freedom and true religion to the rest of the world.⁸

In the nineteenth century, this transmutation of the millennial ideal resulted in what became known as "Manifest Destiny." Coined by journalist John L. Sullivan in 1845. Manifest Destiny came to mean for countless Americans that Almighty God had "destined" them to spread over the entire North American continent. And as they did, they would take with them their uplifting and ennobling political and religious institutions.⁹

But there was another religious dream abroad in the land which did not rest upon the model of a City on a Hill or God's New Israel. This was the belief in religious liberty which had grown out of the Protestant left, generally known as the Radical Reformation. This view originally stood alongside of and in many cases opposed to the idea that New England was God's New Israel. The classic spokesperson for this second concept was Roger Williams, founder of the Rhode Island colony—the first real haven for religious dissidents on American soil.

As already mentioned, Williams rejected the Puritan notion of a religiously covenanted community which could exercise political power. He valued religious liberty and religious individualism more than religious uniformity and religious communitarianism. In fact, he stoutly rejected the Puritan teaching that New England was God's New Israel and flatly stated that:

The State of the Land of Israel, the Kings and people thereof in Peace and War, is proven figurative and ceremonial, and no pattern nor president for any Kingdome or civill state in the world to follow.¹⁰

In sum, Williams boldly asserted his basic premises that civil magistrates are to rule only in civil and never in religious matters, and that persecution for religion had no sanction in the teachings of Jesus, thus undercutting the whole ideological foundation for the Puritan hope in creating a Christian state that would be a City on a Hill.

Quaker William Penn was also in this radical tradition. In both Baptist Rhode Island and Quaker Pennsylvania, religious liberty resulted in religious pluralism. This was all right with Williams and Penn, for both believed that this was the biblical way. But how could God's New Israel survive such a cacophony of spiritual voices? How could the religious mosaic which soon emerged in the new nation be reconciled with the view that America was God's chosen nation? How could any semblance of religious unity be achieved if religious liberty prevailed? In short, how could this religious smorgasbord ever be regarded as a covenanted community?

The answer lay in the willingness of Enlightenment figures like Thomas Jefferson to reach out to the New Israel exponents on the right and the religious liberty champions on the left in order to create an American civil religion. Jefferson, the great champion of

religious liberty and political individualism, also embraced the imagery of the United States as a second Israel. In his second inaugural address on March 4, 1805, Jefferson told the American people that during his second term as their national leader he would need:

... the favor of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our fathers, as Israel of old, from their native land and planted them in a country flowing with all the necessaries and comforts of life; who has covered our infancy with His providence and our riper years with His wisdom and power, and to whose goodness I ask you to join in supplications with me that He will so enlighten the minds of your servants, guide their councils, and prosper their measures that whatsoever they do shall result in your good, and shall secure to you the peace, friendship, and approbation of all nations.¹¹

Thus Jefferson articulated the belief held by most Americans of that day that the United States and not just New England was a City on a Hill.

The American Amalgam: Civil Religion

Exactly what was the civil religion which was able to subsume, for a time at least, these two divergent strands of the American Dream? Briefly stated, civil religion (some call it public religion) is that use of consensus religious sentiments, concepts and symbols by the state—either directly or indirectly—for its own purposes. Those purposes may be noble or debased, depending on the kind of civil religion (priestly or prophetic) and the historical context. Civil religion involves the mixing of traditional religion with national life until it is impossible to distinguish between the two, and usually leads to a blurring of religion and patriotism and of religious values with national values. In America, it became a rather elaborate matrix of beliefs and practices born of the nation's historic experience and constituting the only real religion of millions of its citizens.¹²

The first American civil religion was supported by both the nation's intellectuals—mostly children of the Enlightenment—and the country's Christians—mostly Bible-believing evangelicals. The intellectuals like Jefferson supported it because it was general enough to include the vast majority of Americans and because it provided the moral glue for the body politic created by the social contract. The evangelicals supported it because it appeared to be compatible (perhaps even identical) with biblical Christianity. In any case, from this confluence of the Enlightenment and biblical Christianity, American civil religion emerged to promote both the concept of religious liberty and the notion that America was God's New Israel!¹³

Under the aegis of American civil religion, the idea of the City on a Hill and God's New Israel was advanced to that of the "redeemer nation" with a manifest destiny. In other words, gradually, the old Puritan notion was infused with secular as well as religious meaning, and joined with political as well as religious goals. This was accomplished in the course of American expansion and by means of political rhetoric and McGuffey's Reader.¹⁴

The result of these developments is perhaps best illustrated by the story of President William McKinley's decision to annex the Philippines following the Spanish-American War in 1898. In November of the following year, McKinley, himself a devout Methodist layman, revealed to a group of visiting clergymen just how he came to sign the bill of annexation following a dreadful period of soul-searching and prayer:

I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I . . . went down on my knees and prayed to Almighty God for light and guidance. . . . And one night late it came to me this way—(1) That we should not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable;

(2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable;

(3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to

educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them. . . . And then I went to bed, and went to sleep and slept soundly. . . .¹⁵

In short, McKinley said that destiny and duty made it inevitable that the Americans should bring civilization and light—democratic civilization and biblical light—to the poor Filipinos! Manifest destiny had led God's New Israel down the primrose path of imperialism!

The concept that the United States is God's New Israel and a chosen nation is hardly dead. In his 1980 acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention in Kansas City, presidential nominee Ronald Reagan declared:

Can we doubt that only a Divine Providence placed this land, this island of freedom, here as a refuge for all those people in the world who yearn to breathe free? Jews and Christians enduring persecution behind the Iron Curtain; the boat people of Southeast Asia, Cuba and of Haiti; the victims of drought and famine in Africa, the freedom fighters in Afghanistan. . . . God Bless America!¹⁶

In many ways, Reagan's words in that instance extended the concept from America as a City on a Hill to America as a Cosmic Hotel, from the nation as a Model of Merit to the nation as a Magnet to the Masses.

President Reagan has used the City on a Hill/Manifest Destiny motif with telling effect on many occasions since taking office in January, 1981. For example, in September, 1982, he received roaring approval from a large crowd at Kansas State University when he asserted: "But be proud of the red, white, and blue, and believe in her mission. . . . America remains mankind's best hope. The eyes of mankind are on us . . . remember that we are one Nation under God, believing in liberty and justice for all."¹⁷ In March, 1983, he brought cheering evangelicals to their feet in Orlando, Florida, when he proclaimed to the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals: "America is great because America is good" and reiterated that this nation was "the last best hope of man."¹⁸ The idea that America is God's chosen nation, in a religious as well as in a political sense, is alive and well and living in Washington, D.C.!

While the former Puritan concept of a City on a Hill and God's New Israel evolved over the years from an evangelical, communitarian application to a religious, national one, there has been a parallel development from religious liberty to cultural pluralism. Originally, religious liberty meant that the various denominations were free to spread the Gospel as they understood it, without intrusion by either the government or a state church. In this context, an evangelical Protestant consensus emerged which made the United States in the nineteenth century into what historian William G. McLoughlin called "a unified, pietistic-perfectionist nation" and "the most religious people in the world."¹⁹ However, that consensus began to crack near the end of the century as new immigrants from non-Protestant churches or no churches at all flowed into the country and as the secularizing forces associated with Darwinism, urbanization, and industrialization made their presence felt in American society. And, as the country became more diverse, that diversity was protected—some would even say encouraged—by the nation's commitment to religious liberty. Thus, slowly but surely, religious freedom was translated into cultural pluralism.

However, by the post-World War II period, this cultural pluralism was beginning to strain the very bonds of national unity. It was a time of increasing tension and confusion. Looking back on the period 1945-1960, the late Paul Goodman lamented:

Our case is astounding. For the first time in recorded history, the mention of country, community, place has lost its power to animate. Nobody but a scoundrel even tries it. Our rejection of false patriotism is, of course, itself a badge of honor. But the positive loss is tragic and I cannot resign myself to it. A man has only one life and if during it he has no great environment, no community, he has been irreparably robbed of a human right.²⁰

Goodman's analysis was not only a modern jeremiad, however; it was also a plea for the emergence of a modern unifying concept

which would serve to hold the republic together. The destruction of the old evangelical Protestant consensus and with it the original American civil religion, and the emergence of cultural pluralism based on the American doctrine of religious liberty—and now reinforced by the melting pot myth—all spelled out the need for a new civil religion based on the new facts of American life. Ironically enough, during the very period when Goodman's observations most closely applied, a rejuvenated civil faith was emerging. This new civil religion took shape during the Eisenhower presidency and it was as amiable and ambiguous as Ike. It was now a civil religion which had been enlarged to include not only the three major faiths of the land—Protestant, Catholic, Jew—but virtually anyone who acknowledged a Supreme Being. The national mood of the 1950s

from traditions which accept the doctrine of religious liberty, but the movement has wholeheartedly embraced that part of American civil religion which emphasizes America's national mission as God's New Israel. How can a nation that is so culturally diverse speak in terms of a national mission? Unfortunately, the New Religious Right does not seem to acknowledge the reality of that cultural diversity but prefers to think of America as it was throughout most of the nineteenth century—a religiously homogeneous nation.

Moreover, the New Religious Right's millennial vision for America seems inconsistent and confused. Belief in America as a City on a Hill and as God's New Israel requires a postmillennial eschatology—the view that the Kingdom of God is extended through Christian preaching and teaching as a result of which the world will be

There are many similarities between the adherents of the Religious Right and the Puritans. Both seem to be movements composed of self-confessed godly people determined to change the moral climate of their day.

was congenial to an outpouring of religiosity, and examples of it abounded: national days of prayer, the addition of "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag in 1954, the authorization to place "in God we trust" on all currency and coins and the adoption of the same phrase as the national motto in 1956 are a few examples.

Interestingly enough, hard on the heels of the new upsurge of civil religion in the 1950s came a time of great political turmoil and widespread religious renewal in the 1960s. It was in this context that the New Religious Right emerged in the 1970s—galvanized by its hostility to theological and political liberalism alike. In many ways, this New Religious Right resembled the old Puritanism as it began to interact with the American civil religion. Its first order of business was to purify the church and state, to restore old values and old ideals, and, if possible, to put an end to the confusion and tension of the age.

The American Civil Religion in the Hands of the New Religious Right: the Confusion and Tension Heightened

The leaders of the New Religious Right of the 1970s found a civil religion which invested the civil officers of the country with a certain religious mystique; one which linked the social order to a higher and truer realm; one which provided religious motivation and sanction for civil virtue; one which, in short, served the functions of an established religion—and they liked it! It was a public religion which gave the majority of Americans an over-arching common spiritual heritage in which the entire nation supposedly shared. Because it did not appear to contradict their understanding of the American past nor their commitment to Bible Christianity, and because they did not have a profound understanding of civil religion or American history, and, further, because civil religion seemed suited to their goal of restoring America's spiritual and political vigor, New Religious Right leaders embraced the American civil religion as they found it. They did not seem to be aware of or understand one perplexing feature of the American public faith, pointed out by historian Sidney E. Mead and others—namely, that it included a central doctrine of separation of church and state. This concept is, of course, a legacy of the historic American emphasis on religious liberty. As such, it greatly complicates the operation of civil religion in America and provides the public faith with a substantial element of self-contradiction. In any case, the New Religious Right hardly noticed this in the beginning and is often perplexed by those who refuse to go along with such parts of its program as prayer in the public schools—a perfectly logical civil religion activity—because of the principle of religious liberty and its corollary separation of church and state.²¹

But this last point illustrates the fact that the appearance of the New Religious Right in the 1970s has exacerbated the old tensions associated with the two religious components of the American Dream. Most of the adherents of the New Religious Right come

Christianized and will enjoy a long period of peace and righteousness called the millennium. During the nineteenth century, post-millennial views of the destiny of America played a vital role in justifying national expansion. Although there were other explanations for the nation's growth, the idea of a Christian republic marching toward a golden age appealed to many people. Millennial nationalism was attractive because it harmonized the republic with religious values. Thus, America became the hope of the nations—destined to uphold Christian and democratic principles which eventually would bring spiritual and political freedom to the world.

This is exactly what the leaders of the New Religious Right, men like TV evangelist Jerry Falwell and best-selling author Tim LaHaye, believe. Falwell declares that the various activities of the Founding Fathers indicate that they "were putting together God's country, God's republic, and for that reason God has blessed her for two glorious centuries."²² He has written approvingly: "Any diligent student of American history finds that our great nation was founded by godly men upon godly principles to be a Christian nation . . . Our Founding Fathers firmly believed that America had a special destiny in the world."²³ LaHaye proclaims that: "America is the human hope of the world, and Jesus Christ is the hope of America."²⁴

The only problem with all of this is that Falwell, LaHaye and many other leaders of the New Religious Right are also premillennialists—adherents of that view of the future which claims that Jesus' return will be followed by a period of peace and righteousness before the last judgment, during which Christ will reign as king in person or through a select group of people. This kingdom will not be established by the conversion of individuals over a long period of time, but suddenly and by overwhelming power. Evil will be held in check during the millennial kingdom by Christ, who will rule with a rod of iron. Further, premillennialists believe that this kingdom will be preceded by a period of steady decline and by certain signs such as great tribulation, apostacy, wars, famines, earthquakes, and the appearance of the antichrist.

By way of contrast, nineteenth-century premillennialists, who then constituted only a minority of American Christians, did not believe that their nation was a recipient of God's special favor but was rather just another Gentile world power. In short, they did not support the view that the United States was God's New Israel. Moreover, premillennialists today still maintain a rather gloomy scenario of the future, including the concept of a time of great decline immediately preceding the second coming of Christ.²⁵

There has always been inconsistency on the part of premillennialists with regard to the interpretation of world events and their desire to be patriotic Americans. This is particularly marked in the New Religious Right.²⁶ Individuals like Falwell and LaHaye have felt called to enter the social and political arena, but they do not have a consistent eschatological base for such activities. In essence,

they want to support a certain type of postmillennial vision for America while maintaining a premillennial eschatology.

In fact, much of the New Religious Right's program seems to be contradictory and inconsistent. Perhaps this is because of its confused eschatology. A further problem with its millennialism is its encouragement of the new American civil religion with its emphasis on the chosen theme while ignoring the enormous cultural pluralism present in the United States today. There seems to be something bizarre about attempts to advocate any scheme to spread American political, cultural, and religious values to the world when nobody in this country seems certain what those values are anymore. Moreover, much that is proposed by the New Religious Right appears to contradict the historic American Dream of religious liberty—especially in terms of its drive to introduce state prayers into public schools, its advocacy of tax credits for those who send their children to parochial schools, and its insistence upon a large standing, professional army.²⁷

Conclusions

There are many similarities between the adherents of the New Religious Right and the Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Both seem to be movements composed of self-confessed godly people determined to change the moral and religious climate of their day. There also appear to be many of the same tensions in the two respective movements—especially the desire, on the one hand, for heartfelt religion to prevail and the wish, on the other, to impose a certain level of morality on society in general. There is, if you will, a perplexing contradiction in the movement which makes it want to create some kind of national religion (or quasi-state church) of “true believers.” As the Puritans discovered, it is impossible to combine the two elements in any meaningful way because true faith cannot be forced, especially in the context of religious freedom. It appears historically impossible to achieve the Puritan goals of an elect society composed entirely of genuine believers while at the same time allowing any sort of religious freedom which, in turn, makes the conversion experience meaningful. That was the Puritan dilemma and it may well be the dilemma of the New Religious Right as well.

What happened to the Puritans when they tried to impose their values—no matter how high-minded and uplifting to mankind they may have been—on a larger society? They met first with frustration, then with disillusionment, and finally with the prospect of either acquiescing to a new regime or going into exile. After three generations of attempting to bring godly government to England and after fighting and winning a civil war, Oxford don and Puritan divine Dr. John Owen in 1652 could only survey the Cromwellian regime and lament:

Now, those that ponder these things, their spirits are grieved in the midst of their bodies;—the visions of their heads trouble them. They looked for other things from them that professed Christ; but the summer is ended, and the harvest is past, and we are not refreshed.²⁸

In the end, what will happen to the New Religious Right if and when its participation in politics comes to naught? What will come of its vision and participation in the American Dream? If the concept of a New Israel and a covenanted community could not be implemented and maintained in a country like seventeenth-century England or a place like colonial New England with their culturally and religiously homogeneous populations, how can anyone expect such an idea to be successfully realized in an increasingly pluralistic society like the United States in the 1980s?

The New Religious Right, like the Puritan movement of old, may have to learn the hard way that the best that Christians can hope for in a largely unconverted world is genuine religious freedom in which to practice the Faith and preach the Gospel. That

part of the American Dream is still meaningful, precious, and possible. The live question of this generation is: can it be preserved? Adherents of the New Religious Right are trying to save the American Dream. But how ironic it would be if, in the process, they destroyed it!

- ¹ This is a revision of a lecture originally presented at a Conference on the American Dream, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS, April 21, 1983.
- ² W. Lloyd Warner, *Social Class in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. v–vi.
- ³ Christopher F. Mooney, *Religion and the American Dream: The Search for Freedom Under God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977). This collection of essays focuses on the “power and force of religion in civil affairs” and notes many of the contradictions and tensions in this aspect of the American Dream.
- ⁴ John Winthrop, *Papers*, A. B. Forbes, ed. (5 vols., Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929–1947), 2:295; and Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (London: n.p., 1644). Introduction. Also see Anson Phelps Stokes, *Church and State in the United States* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950); Leo Pfeffer, *Church, State, and Freedom* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953); Loren Baritz, *City on a Hill: A History of Ideas and Myths in America* (New York: John Wiley, 1964); Ernest L. Tuveson, *Redemptor Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Conrad Cherry, ed., *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971); and John F. Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979).
- ⁵ Alan Simpson, *Puritanism in Old and New England* (Chicago: University Press, 1955), pp. 19–38.
- ⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *Apocalyptic Writings*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).
- ⁷ Nathan O. Hatch, “The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen. War with France and the Revolution.” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 31 (July 1974): 429. Also see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Millennial Thought in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); and John F. Berens, *Providence and Patriotism in Early America, 1640–1815* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), pp. 51–80.
- ⁸ John E. Smylie, “National Ethos and the Church.” *Theology Today*, 20 (Oct. 1963): 314; and Berens, *Providence and Patriotism in Early America* pp. 81–111.
- ⁹ Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (New York: Knopf, 1963), pp. 31–32.
- ¹⁰ Williams, *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution*, Introduction.
- ¹¹ *Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), p. 21.
- ¹² The basis for this definition of civil religion is found in the following: Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America.” *Daedalus*, No. 96 (Winter 1967): 1–21; D. Elton Trueblood, *The Future of the Christian* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 83–102; and Will Herberg, “American Civil Religion: What It Is and Whence It Comes.” in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 76–88. For an evaluation of civil religion from two different but complementary points of view, see Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture*; and Robert D. Linder and Richard V. Pierard, *Twilight of the Saints: Biblical Christianity and Civil Religion in America* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978).
- ¹³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, ed. G.D.H. Cole (New York: Dutton, 1950) p. 139; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres Completes, Du Contrat Social*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (4 vols., Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 3: 368–375, 468; Ralph H. Gabriel, *The Course of American Democratic Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York: Ronald Press, 1956), pp. 14–25, 23–28; Sidney E. Mead, *The Nation With the Soul of a Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 56–57; and Seymour M. Lipset, *The First New Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), pp. 61–98.
- ¹⁴ Robert W. Lynn, “Civil Catechetics in Mid-Victorian America: Some Notes About American Civil Religion, Past and Present.” *Religious Education*, No. 48 (Jan.–Feb. 1973): 5–27.
- ¹⁵ *The Christian Advocate*, Jan. 22, 1903, pp. 1–2. Also see Charles S. Olcott, *The Life of William McKinley* (2 vols., New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 2: 109–111.
- ¹⁶ Ronald W. Reagan, “Acceptance Address: Republican National Convention Presidential Nomination.” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 46, no. 21 (Aug. 15, 1980): 646.
- ¹⁷ Ronald W. Reagan, “Believe in Her Mission,” Landon Lecture at Kansas State University on Sept. 9, 1982, published in full in *The Manhattan Mercury*, Sept. 9, 1982, p. B2.
- ¹⁸ Text of the Remarks of President Ronald W. Reagan to the Forty-First Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, March 8, 1983, Sheraton Twin Towers Hotel, Orlando, Florida, released by the Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, p. 1. See the report of the speech in *The New York Times*, March 9, 1983, pp. 1–11.
- ¹⁹ William G. McLoughlin, ed., *The American Evangelicals, 1800–1900* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 1.
- ²⁰ Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd* (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 97.
- ²¹ Mead, *The Nation With the Soul of a Church*, pp. 78–113; and Alfred Balitzer, “Some Thoughts about Civil Religion.” *Journal of Church and State*, 16 (Winter 1974): 36–37.
- ²² Jerry Falwell, *America Can Be Saved* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1979), p. 23.
- ²³ Jerry Falwell, *Listen America!* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), p. 29.
- ²⁴ Tim LaHaye, *The Bible's Influence on American History* (San Diego: Master Books, 1976), p. 59.
- ²⁵ For a discussion of this view, see Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millennialism, 1800–1930*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); and Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), pp. 17–40.
- ²⁶ For a first-rate examination of this particular problem, see Robert G. Clouse, “The New Christian Right, America, and the Kingdom of God,” *Christian Scholar's Review*, 12, No. 1 (1983): 3–16.
- ²⁷ For a discussion of the tensions created by this last point, see Robert D. Linder, “Militarism in Nazi Thought and in the American New Religious Right,” *Journal of Church and State*, 24 (Spring 1982): 263–279, esp. p. 276, n. 38.
- ²⁸ John Owen, “Christ's Kingdom and the Magistrate's Power,” sermon published in *The Works of John Owen* (24 vols., Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1850–1853), 8: 381. For the scriptural basis for Owen's allusion, see Jeremiah 8:20.

Evangelical Feminism: Reflections on the State of the "Union" (Part II)

by Harvie Conn

Where Do We Go From Here?

Obviously it is now apparent that evangelicals are divided. They find themselves willing to say to women, Let us be *all* we're meant to be. But they also keep asking, What is it anyway that we are *meant* to be?

A deep part of the reason for this is their struggle over Scripture's meaning. The general focus of most of the materials we have examined remains in this area of discussion. Only recently has the debate begun to be expanded into the sociological arena. And this, in fact, may be part of the reason why we cannot agree on exegetical questions. Socio-cultural predispositions have a heavier influence on the way we look at the Bible than even evangelicals are quick to see. Our commitment to what has been called "objective grammatico-historical" techniques of study still raises few disclaimers or qualifications about the meaning behind that verbal symbol, "objective."

Which side must we choose, if we decide to choose any? Surely our final decision must begin with a fundamental affirmation, a basic biblical touchstone around which all biblical pericopes orbit. The touchstone? Christ has come not to put women down but to lift them up, to remove the tarnish of sin's subordinationist drive and exalt women their original place as images of God.

Consistently throughout the Scriptures that defense of the full humanity of womanhood is made. Against the background of Babylonian and Assyrian law codes, in which women are basically property, the Bible moves far ahead. For the Egyptians only Pharaohs were living images of the gods. The king was closest of all men to the realm of the gods. But in Israel imagehood belonged to women as well as men, scullery maids as well as Pharaohs (Gen 1:27). In the ancient near east, life was cheap and especially female life. Who but the male could rule? In counterpoint to this, Genesis places rule over the creation at the feet of women as well as men. "And God blessed *them* and God said to *them*, . . . Rule" (Gen 1:28).

In a chauvinist world where honor was due to the male, God said, "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Ex 20:12). In a male world where women waited on their masters in the harem, the writer of Proverbs 31 asks, "An excellent wife, who can find her? For her worth is far above all jewels" (31:10). And then he describes the activities of this "excellent wife"—she is involved in real estate purchasing (16); she moves about in the business world, manufacturing and selling (24); her long hours and careful supervision of the servants bring blessing and honor to her husband and to herself (31:23–31). "Let her works praise her" not in the kitchen and the bedroom but "in the gates" (31:31).

In the first century world of Judaism which apparently classed women with "slaves," "heathen" and "brutish men," Jesus' gospel entourage was filled with women (Lk 8:1–3). Among his "disciples" were women. In a day when rabbis said that women could not study the Torah and debated the existence of their female soul, Jesus commended Mary for staying out of the kitchen and "listening to what he said" (Lk 10:38–42). In a day when women could not function as legal witnesses, it is women who are called upon by the angel at an empty tomb to witness the resurrected Christ (Lk 24:1–10). They stand at the cross with "all his acquaintances" (Lk 23:49).

In a world where synagogues were male gathering places, the Messianic gatherings became places so filled with women talking that Paul feared the non-Christian or Hebrew world might not understand their liberty in Christ. He urged them, for the sake of these outsiders, to exercise their liberty with restraint. He did not take it

away. As in other situations, the strong (in this case, the women) ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength (in this case, the men).

Are women second-class citizens of the kingdom for Paul? However we understand some of his difficult writing on the subject, women are never that for him. They are "the glory of man" (1 Cor 11:7). That is why they must pray in public worship with "covered head."²⁰ Their glory is so bright it will distract from the glory of God. The glory of man, woman, must be covered. To possess glory is not to be subordinate. To possess glory is to possess worth, importance, honor. To describe a person as the glory of someone else is to define that person in terms of weight, importance. So woman is the glory of man. Only with him can she really be woman and only with her can he be fully man.

How can this help us in evaluating our alternatives? It provides us with a criterion as we listen to evangelical scholarship. If egalitarianism should slip into a reverse sort of chauvinism, we must cry, "A woman is glory, but glory in mutuality with man before God. When hierarchical views slip into subordinationism (a more present danger), we must cry, "Christ restores women as images of God to rule the creation." The pattern of social roles, the pressure of cultural chauvinism, must not be allowed to create any categories, any exegetical judgments, which diminish her personhood before God and with men. All people are created equal and males are not more equal than females. The Bible does commend a basic sociality of the gospel. Interpersonal relationships are constitutive in the life of the new humanity. But they do not flow out of superior and subordinate roles. They flow out of covenant mutuality, man and woman together before God.

In all this, I clearly move toward the egalitarian side of our debate. But I see a danger in it as I do also in the traditional views. "There is a tendency among egalitarians to take a dualistic approach to Scripture, isolating the time-bound from the universal, the human from the divine, the rabbinic from the Christian."²¹ It is clearly and harshly present in Mollenkott, clearly and quietly present in Jewett.

The traditional view suffers from a parallel tendency. It spiritualizes the Bible by treating it a-historically. It often allows no time-bound, no situation-bound, context to mediate God-given truth. The egalitarian stumbles over the Bible's humanness; the traditionalist over Scripture's "supercultural," "supernatural" character. The former seems overcome by Scripture's time-relatedness; the latter seeks to deny this time-relatedness any real significance. Neither approaches Scripture as at one and the same time fully and completely God's Word-in-human-words.

I both fear and commend also the effects of the different agendas of the two groups. The egalitarian group seems consistently to be more sensitive to the social dimensions of chauvinism. Its concerns move much more regularly outside of narrow church-centered questions or the evangelical "Brady-bunch" type topics. This is its strength but also its danger. For the Bible is never concerned simply about society or about woman's place in it. Biblical perspectives never deal simply with the sequence of history as creation. The sequence is always creation/fall/redemption.

That is to say, what we have now in society is not what God intended. The picture of male-female mutuality drawn in Genesis 1 and 2 has been marred by human sin. And God's curse on that disruption of solidarity, always appropriate to the sin, has been the introduction of the battle of the sexes. We have no intention of introducing the reality of the curse in Genesis 3:18 here as one more divine sanction on female put-down. Put-down remains curse, not blessing, in the Bible.

We are simply trying to remind egalitarians that an essential key to the biblical understanding of female personhood in all its fullness

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is the Christological appeal to the Messiah who levels the pride of the male and lifts up humiliated women. The wide and warm concerns of the egalitarian for society must continue to relate questions of equality or, better yet, interdependence, constantly to what Christ restores, not simply what human cultures do not now display.

And similarly, the traditional group suffers from the reverse problem. Its agenda is heavily oriented to the institutional church and those feminist questions related to that narrowed interest. In Knight and Foh, for example, one senses that feminist issues are not really as crucial or as central to their concerns as is the more restricted issue of inerrancy. We do not mean to minimize the importance of that topic. We simply point out that it seems to have more controlling place in their list of priorities than those of the women's issue on a larger scale.

As a result, traditionalist positions can be more easily perceived by the non-church community as parochial and ultimately self-serving. If the egalitarian stands in danger of minimizing the importance of the fall in redemptive history, the traditionalist stands in danger of maximizing it. To those outside the church, the traditionalist is perceived as commending ecclesiastical sainthood, not humanization. And that sainthood again is seen as restricting female standing in the body of Christ to a "spiritual" role of equality, shorn of any implications for her cultural, economic or social roles. In the name of Galatians 3:28, an "ecclesiastical number" has been done on her. Even the non-Christian perceives "this is just not fair" when he or she sees the disparity between speaking of "spiritual" standing in Christ regarding the male/female pole but not of the Jew/Gentile or the slave/free poles.

Perhaps both groups could find some balance to their studies if they introduced into their work the biblical call for justice on behalf of women. Old Testament legislation shows an abiding awareness of the dangers of the abuse of power. And much of that concern for justice for the oppressed is aware also of the woman as the object of oppression. The widow (Ex 22:22-24), women taken captive in war (Dt 21:10-14), a virgin seduced (Ex 22:16-17), all offer samples of that sensitivity for justice, and compassion for the "sinned against."

There is no indication our Lord minimized those pleas for justice. In fact, He reinforced them on behalf of women. In his judgment against lust, He did not resort to the rabbinic tradition that blamed the presence of a woman. It was the sinful thoughts of the male which could lead to committing adultery (Matt 5:27-28). In the same way, He tightened the growing rabbinic looseness that misused the Mosaic "permission" of divorce (Dt 24:1-4) and sanctioned chauvinist anger at poorly cooked meals or a badly kept house as grounds for female dismissal (Matt 19:3-9). The background of these passages lies rooted in a call for justice or "righteousness." That needs to be more at the center of evangelical discussions.

A Third Evangelical Option

Though the bulk of evangelical writing belongs to the polarities of egalitarian/traditional, there is also evidence of the growth of a third and more centrist option. In fact, this writer suspects with others that, although the literature as a whole does not yet reflect it, the grassroots level of evangelical feminism moves in this centrist area. Its attitude toward the Scripture is more uneasy with Jewett than with Hurley. And its approach to male/female relationships is functionally more egalitarian in slant than traditionalist. But, even here, at the center, there are traditionalists whose agenda concerns and hermeneutical solutions are remarkably close to the egalitarians. Donald Bloesch's *Is the Bible Sexist?* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1982) is an example of this to me. The sub-title of his book sounds in a centrist posture. He seeks to go "beyond feminism and patriarchalism."

Closer to the egalitarian side of the center, but unhappy with an egalitarian viewpoint that resolves the problem through Pauline rationalizations or "contradictions," is that of Patricia Gundry. Her 1977 work, *Woman, Be Free!* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House) sees no need to look for theological schizizophrenia in allegedly evolving Pauline perceptions. In a style that focuses more on the existential cash value of the text for the spirit, she aims for a soft-sell exploration of egalitarianism. "Pat is a bridge person," says Letha Scanzoni. "She is not hostile. She truly believes God gave

gifts to both women and men."²² This brief book, and those that have followed it, *Heirs Together* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1980) and *The Complete Woman* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), place her firmly in a centrist position on Scripture. And closer on the egalitarian side of the continuum to the center than the far left of the scale.

Her 1977 work does not have the academic polish or exegetical sophistication of a Jewett or a Mollenkott. But that, plus her commitment to a position on Scripture identifiable with the vast bulk of evangelicals, may be her greatest asset. What I would call her devotional use of Scripture has always been a part of the evangelical's practical method of hermeneutics. It has always been a way of gaining access to the evangelical's heart. Gundry can speak to evangelicals in a way not possible for Jewett or Mollenkott.

A much more technical work, and more limited in scope, also belongs with Gundry as a representative of this more centrist posture. Richard and Joyce Boldrey re-issued a 1972 essay as a book in 1976. Entitled *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), the volume was brief but made a solid contribution to the discussion. It flowed out of their concern to demonstrate that "the Bible is not a straight jacket for women. . . Much of the traditional view is half-truth, part pure conjecture, and the rest totally false."²³

The orientation of the book was around the hermeneutical question of Pauline harmonization. But the Boldreys sought resolution without recourse to an alleged Pauline rationalization. Rather they saw Paul, in his pastoral concerns for women and their new liberty in Christ, as attempting to build a bridge. The bridge sought to cross over the real tension between radical Christian concepts and a Hebrew establishment society. Within the new order brought by Christ, mutual respect and interdependence was seen as characterizing the Pauline view of male-female relationships.²⁴ And, in those areas where tension rose between the old and the new orders of understanding, the Boldreys saw Paul making pastoral adjustments to a culturally conditioned setting.²⁵ But never at the expense of the liberty won for women by Christ in the new day. "If he did not seem to go far enough, let it be remembered that he went much farther than society as a whole would then sanction."²⁶

The Boldrey study has significance beyond its size. Though limited strictly to Pauline data, it was one of the first book-length works by evangelicals to place the question of "cultural relativity" at the heart of their study. And it did that while refusing to relativize what the authors called "timeless truths" of Christian freedom which they perceived as counter-cultural. And all this on behalf of egalitarianism. Still another feature unique to it was its usage of "the old and new orders" as a key for understanding the Pauline practice. For the first time to my knowledge, evangelicals were using the redemptive-historical categories of "already-not yet" as a foundation for exegesis on this issue.

Donald Bloesch's 1982 title belongs in the center, with a tilt toward the traditionalist side. But he is as far from that end of the spectrum as Gundry and the Boldreys are from theirs. With many egalitarians he supports the ordination of women to the church's teaching office. Yet with many traditionalists, he fears an ideological egalitarianism that obliterates any sense of differentiation in male/female relationships.

Calling his own point of view "covenantalism," he sees the goal of men and of women as more than ensuring the continuity of the family (as in what he calls patriarchy and what we have called hierarchism). Nor does he see it as the realization of human potential (as in egalitarianism). Rather it is "to become a sign and witness of the new age of the kingdom, to be a herald and ambassador of Jesus Christ. . . Christian covenantalism stresses the interdependence of man and woman, as well as their mutual subordination. At the same time, it makes a place for a differentiation of roles, recognizing both the dependency of woman on man and the necessity of woman for man in the orders of creation and redemption."²⁷

For Bloesch the biblical alternatives transform both poles of the debate. From the traditional side the principle of superordination and subordination is transformed by our common subordination to God, placing the glory of God before human happiness and the interests of our neighbors before our own. Headship is realized

through service, just as Christ was exalted in his humiliation. From the egalitarian side the principle of feminism sees woman now as the covenant partner of man. Yet the covenantal view seeks not the emancipation of woman (from home and family), but her elevation as a fellow-worker with her husband and her brothers and sisters in Christ in the service of the kingdom.

Bloesch, we suspect, comes very close to expressing a position that most evangelicals practice but do not necessarily preach (aside from his commitment to ordination). Future study may well expand the exegetical basis for a centrist position and enlarge its support base among evangelicals.

A Study Agenda for the Future

To achieve that goal, an evangelical study agenda will have to pay more serious attention to the following questions of hermeneutic. I still do not see them fully or adequately explored in any of the evangelical alternatives we have sketched.

1. How have our culturally formed sexist biases inhibited us from "seeing" the message of the Bible? Jewett argues for a conflict between the Paul of Galatians 3:28 and the Paul of Ephesians 5. Is the problem in the apostle or in Jewett? Is it fair to ask if Jewett's cultural commitment to egalitarianism is stronger than his commitment to *analogia fidei*? On the other side with a similar problem is George Knight. Rarely does he examine the traditionalist cultural put-down of women. And his strong defense of hierarchism, without this examination, does not keep the reader from assuming the two are really one for him.

2. How can we deal more adequately with what has been called "the horizon of the ancient text"? To understand the Bible, we must go through at least two different worlds of thought, the Bible and our own. How can we best try to reconstruct the situation of the original readers? More specifically, how was the text an answer to *their* problems, a response to *their* needs? When God commanded us not to covet our neighbor's ox or ass or wife (Ex 20:17), was that an affirmation to those first readers of women as an object of male property? Or an attempt, in a chauvinist culture of the ancient near east, to provide a defense of her integrity and worth? This means a deeper exploration of the original context, the *sitz im leben*, the setting, than most (excepting Hurley) are willing to try. The Scripture is not a literary and metaphysical gloss on a literal and systematic structure that it otherwise hides.²⁸ Its cultural universals come to us imbedded in the occasional, particular character of the Bible.

3. How shall we understand the nature of "creation ordinances" referred to frequently by traditionalists? Knight's exposition gives them a timeless quality. Let us grant, as I think we must, their normativity in providing us with guidelines for understanding relationships.²⁹ But how may we see them without presupposing also that they favor some subordinationist position and were so understood by Paul? Must we not also explore the pastoral way in which Paul, for example, handles them in his admonition against a woman's "teaching or having authority" over a man in worship (I Timothy 2:12-14)? The Paul who opposed Peter on the issue of circumcision (Gal 2:11-12) on another occasion circumcised his fellow worker to avoid offending a particular set of cultural sensitivities (Acts 16:3). Paul's concern for the perceptions of freedom in Christ by "those outside" (I Cor 11:5, 13-14) makes us ask, "Were creation ordinances 'the one and only' factor in making Christian decisions regarding women?"

4. This suggests still another question. Call it, as does Anthony Thiselton, "the horizon of the original readers."³⁰ How did Moses or Jesus or Paul seek to communicate "timeless truth" to the original readers in their given culture? Specifically, how was it done in such a way that did not present women's liberation in Christ as the destroyer of their social setting but clearly as its transformer, its "possessor"?³¹ How did the woman's liberty keep far enough ahead of a particular time and culture to continue being called "liberation" and yet, not so far ahead that it did not continue to touch and alter that context? I see this as a problem for both options we have studied.

5. There is still a third horizon we need to explore. It is the horizon of our century and, more specifically, its non-Christian eavesdroppers. Understanding comes when we fuse these three hori-

zons into an evangelistic packet, when the twentieth century listener's horizons engage with those of the text.

This we see as the major drawback of almost all the work we have reviewed. The egalitarian position comes closest to perceiving this need. Its presentation does not transform good news for women into bad news for our society nearly as much as the traditionalist perspective. Scanzoni and Hardesty's work remains the shining example in this connection. On the traditionalist side, Hurley is a far-back second place.

Nevertheless, one does not see in any evangelical treatment a large enough agenda to do this properly. This in turn may be related to commonly shared perceptions of "theology" among so many of the evangelical participants. What is the significance of contemporary motivations for our "doing" theology? Theology, many are finding, does not simply begin with exegesis and then consequently move on to questions of application. Hermeneutic is more like an ascending spiral than a linear progression or even a circle. It is motivated by a need to be supplied (application, to use the traditional language) and then engages in exegesis and the like in an effort to respond to that need (principles we traditionally call this step).³² It is not the reverse, as Foh argues,³³ or even "occasionally" so, as Johnston comments.³⁴ We cannot easily talk about "unchanging principles" which "consequently apply" to women and men today. Is this why so few titles delve into the cultural backgrounds against which the Bible was written? Is this why we commend Hurley for his intention but wish it were more systematically used throughout his book?

This principle demands we constantly keep before us our evangelistic purpose in writing and speaking of feminism. After all, we are still evangelicals. We cannot reduce the question to an in-house topic of conversation. The "old/new" structure of the Boldreys' book serves this purpose well. Another, using the creation/fall/redemption analogy, is that of James Olthuis' *I Pledge You My Troth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

Traditional language may need re-examination in this regard. Is the biblical concept of male "headship" adequately served by language that is still understood in a chauvinist culture as the verbal symbols of control instead of care, of rule and subordination instead of mutual covenant service? Can the traditionalist find other ways of defending his or her point of view without sounding like a subordinationist? How intimately related is the traditionalist understanding of headship to the prevailing chauvinist cultural understanding? Can the egalitarian find other ways of promoting women's liberation without sounding like an advocate for "biblical" lesbianism or a home-wrecker to the more conservative elements of our society? Or is this a propagandistic stereotype either created or exaggerated by traditionalists to discredit legitimate concerns by appealing to fears and emotions? Bloesch's centrist response might seem to indicate possible light at the end of these tunnels.

Role relationships need the insights of sociology and of cultural anthropology as we examine the biblical data afresh. How does our culture shape our understanding of roles in human interaction? How do roles shape our self-images? Are there not multiple roles each of us play in human society? Where will we find their common core? How can the Bible play its part in distinguishing between this "real" self and our socio-cultural personalities? How does language affect communication between culturally assumed roles? How does the Bible function as corrective here too?³⁵

What will our answers sound like for the question, "Would Jesus vote for the ERA?" Will they incorporate fully biblical ideas and still sound like the good news of the gospel to so much of our world that has been oppressed and beaten down? That remains the question.

¹ Robert K. Johnston, *Evangelicals at an Impasse* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p. 3.

² Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Comp., 1975), p. 14.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

⁴ Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 119.

⁵ Paul Jewett, "A Response from Dr. Jewett," *Theology, News and Notes*, Special Issue (1976), 22.

⁶ Susan Foh, *Women and the Word of God. A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publ. Comp., 1980), 19-21, 26, 29.

⁷ Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Women, Men and the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977), p. 104.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 107–119.

⁹ J. Ramsey Michaels, review of Paul K. Jewett, *The Ordination of Women*, in *Christian Scholar's Review*, Vol. XI, No. 4 (1982), 381.

¹⁰ George W. Knight III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 10–11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹² *Loc. cit.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁴ Foh, *op. cit.*, pp. 201–209.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 188–190.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 164–166.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁹ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (London: Inter Varsity Press, 1981), pp. 18–19.

²⁰ Hurley defends the view that the “covering” mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 11 was “of long hair” and not that of a veil (*ibid.*, pp. 168–171, 254–271).

²¹ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

²² Russ Williams, “Truth... and Consequences,” *The Other Side*, No. 109 (October, 1980), 18.

²³ Richard and Joyce Boldrey, *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–53.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁷ Donald G. Bloesch, *Is the Bible Sexist?* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1982), pp. 85–86.

²⁸ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

²⁹ Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

³⁰ Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons. New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Comp., 1980), pp. 10–17.

³¹ J.H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publ. Comp., 1960), pp. 169–190.

³² For a full discussion of the background to this suggestion, consult John R.W. Stott and Robert Coote, eds., *Down to Earth. Studies in Christianity and Culture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Comp., 1980), pp. 63–94, 316–318.

³³ Foh, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

³⁴ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

³⁵ Compare Jacob Loewen, *Culture and Human Values: Christian Intervention in Anthropological Perspective* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1975), pp. 412–427.

Diversity and Injunction in New Testament Ethics

by Stephen Charles Mott

Ethical social stances far-reaching in their implications for contemporary life are presented in two recent works on New Testament ethics by Evangelical scholars. Their writings stimulate theoretical consideration of the place of synthesis and the significance of concrete moral injunction in New Testament ethics.

The Great Reversal (Eerdmans, 1984), the title of Allen Verhey's study refers to the transformation of values brought about by the Reign of God. "The present order, including its conventional rules of prestige and protocol, pomp and privilege, is called into question" (Verhey, p. 15).

Richard N. Longenecker no doubt would allow "great reversal" to describe the principle of the gospel which makes relevant, in the words of his title, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Eerdmans, 1984). The cultural mandate of the gospel, "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal. 3:28), "lays on Christians the obligation to measure every attitude and action toward others in terms of the impartiality and love God expressed in Jesus Christ, and to express such attitudes and actions as would break down barriers of prejudice and walls of inequality, without setting aside the distinctive characteristics of people" (Longenecker, p. 34).

Verhey does not present the great reversal as a component of a unified New Testament ethic. Masterfully using all the tools of New Testament historical research, yet (with Longenecker) respecting its authority and defending the integrity of its ethics against critics, he describes the ethics of the various literary layers and forms of the New Testament so thoroughly that his work should stand as *the* introduction to the ethics of the literary forms and sources of the New Testament. His task is to describe the ethics in their diversity. In this book he seeks to show exegetically that the diverse categories of his hermeneutical model are grounded in the diversity of ethical approaches within the New Testament. The impossibility of presenting from it "one massive, undifferentiated whole" seems to be an extreme which serves for him as an argument against seeking a substantial synthesis of the ethics.

Longenecker, on the other hand, is synthetic in his approach. The fact that the form and order of Galatians 3:28 is found in other passages and in association with baptism leads him to follow Hans Dieter Betz in seeing the phrase to be from a baptismal liturgy of the early church. It thus reflected a general position of the first century Christians. Longenecker shows how common this concern is in the New Testament and how it was put into practice with reference to Jew-Gentile relations, slavery, and women. If Verhey appears to reject synthesis, Longenecker seems not to include enough of the diversity in his. He has indeed chosen the most significant ethical theme of the New Testament, where status is the central social ethical concern; but his theme is not the whole of the New Testament's ethical proclamation. It is not true that the three pairs

of Galatians 3:28 represent "all essential relationships of humanity" (Longenecker, p. 34). Ruler and subject, parent and child, rich and poor should not be reduced to any of the three, yet Scriptural ethics deals with them also. There also is too much ellipsis between the New Testament proclamation and the contemporary applications he posits.

The careful and balanced descriptive work done by Verhey is a necessary preliminary for a later stage in New Testament ethics in which the ethicist is more clearly involved with the New Testament material. As seen in his descriptive work, few people have the combined mastery of the disciplines Verhey has to do that further step. But as it stands now, the value for normative ethics of his careful discrimination by sources is frequently not obvious. For example, what ethical difference is there between watchfulness because God's Reign is at hand in the time of Jesus or watchfulness because the Parousia is at hand in the time of the church?

Some synthetic work is needed. The contemporary disciple and ethicist need more than the separate ethics of a score of New Testament books and literary sources. A base is provided in Longenecker's cultural mandate and also Verhey's use of coherence with the eschatological power and purpose discerned in the resurrection of Christ as authorization for the right use of Scripture. Norman Gottwald has recently written that we need to "question both the intellectually dismembered Bible and the spiritually unified Bible that scholarship and church now respectively present us" (Introduction, to *"The Bible and Liberation"*, ed. Gottwald [Orbis, 1983], p. 4). The spiritually unified Bible reflected our proper theological presupposition that the Bible is a revelation for hearers of all ages of the will of God for human conduct. There is a unity of divine purpose behind it. Scholarship rightly protested the arbitrary superimposition of external truth to the particularity of the documents. The first lesson that all of us had in biblical methodology was respect for its diversity, but resting in diversity can subtly be assumption of merely an historian's role and participation in the embourgeoisement of New Testament scholarship in the fear of asserting universal truth.

Much of the diversity of New Testament ethics is one of diverse situations rather than of diverse principle or ethical consciousness. The behavior called for in the lists of vices and virtues, for example, is no doubt demanded of all Christians and not problematic for any of the authors (cf. Wolfgang Schrage, "Korreferat zu 'Ethischer Pluralismus im Neuen Testament,'" *Evangelische Theologie* 35 [1975], 402-407). Generality can be discovered through tracing biblical categories themselves, such as Longenecker's inclusion theme or Verhey's great reversal, or the Reign of God. But using external categories of ethics or social sciences with critical awareness of their exegetical appropriateness will help disclose further shared perspectives. Our authors already have found benefit in using such external categories as the contrast of "force" to "personal appeal", "living the story", and "cultural mandate." The description of the

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great reversal quoted above has echoes of other contexts and historical struggles. More extensive and intentional use of contemporary studies of status would strengthen Longenecker's study. Neither author uses justice as a category. What concept of justice is assumed in the great reversal or in the inclusiveness in Christ? Verhey urges in application a consistency of Scripture with the secular concept of justice, yet this examination has not been done with attention to the Scriptures' own view, or views, of justice.

Verhey urges for interpretation dialogue between Scripture and natural morality. This is important, but first there must be a dialogue among the teachings within Scripture itself. There is indeed risk of distorting particular truth in achieving greater generality and summary for New Testament ethics, but that risk is already operative when one generalizes about the ethic within any one author or source.

Further, a generally agreed upon tenet of the communities from which the New Testament came was the fact that the Old Testament was their Scripture—even if they did not always have to insist upon it and even if they differed on the continued normativeness of ceremonial and separatistic materials. By neglecting this moral authority in the early church (e.g., 2 Tim. 3:16), both authors miss an available unifying factor. If we believe in a canon of sixty-six books, Longenecker is incomplete when he states it was twenty-seven books which were the authoritative expression of the Christian religion in the early church—then New Testament ethics must be informed by and inform a greater biblical ethics.

The hermeneutics of New Testament ethics is a central concern of both books. Longenecker presents with great cogency the problem encountered in many conservative constituencies: "It will not do simply to ask, Does the New Testament say anything explicit concerning this or that social issue? With the intent being to repeat that answer if it does and to remain silent if it doesn't" (Longenecker, p. 27). The excellent categories which Verhey used elsewhere to examine Walter Rauschenbusch's use of the Bible provide superior clarity in understanding the assumptions made by a given approach. One such assumption concerns what Scripture really is about. His own position is that the resurrection is central to its message. Movement from Scripture to moral claims today must be coherent with the transforming message "that God has already made his eschatological power and purpose felt in the resurrection" (Verhey, p. 183). Longenecker also holds that we must begin our ethical interpretation with "the gospel as proclaimed by the apostles and the principles derived therefrom" (Longenecker, p. 84). Verhey's categories are helpful in understanding Longenecker. Longenecker is not identifying a canon within the canon in his reference to "the Gospel." Rather, the assumption about the message of the New Testament identifies which principles belong to the newness of the message. They exist in tension with circumstantial regulations of order. I agree that recognizing this tension is essential for understanding New Testament ethics. In what Longenecker calls "a developmental hermeneutic," the way the proclamation and its principles were put into practice in the first century serves as signposts to guide us for our reapplication in our day.

In presenting such valuable criteria for discernment, the authors make statements about the concrete injunctions of Scripture which require close scrutiny to avoid misunderstanding their intent. They both repeatedly reject the presence of a code of conduct or a set of rules in the New Testament. Verhey states that it is inappropriate to ask ethical questions of the Bible at the moral-rule level. The concrete commands were not for all times and places. Our concrete decisions come rather, he holds, indirectly through guidance from what the New Testament provides regarding our ideals, loyalties and perceptions and fundamental dispositions and intentions. The initial impression that the commands of the New Testament are not prescriptive for present conduct is reinforced by a pattern in Verhey's book of posing a choice between a moral rule and a disposition. For example, he presents Jesus' statement on divorce as not a new moral rule but the formation of a disposition not to divorce even when the law allows it. Similarly, he states that the New Testament is not a systematic set of rules but rather the power of God transforming identities. In both types of cases we ask if there

is not an excluded middle containing more objective moral obligation.

An initial impression regarding a weakness on concrete obligation is reinforced by the authors' presentation of the Law. Longenecker states that "Christians... have ceased to regard their relationship with God in terms of law at all," even as an expression of their relationship with God (Longenecker, p. 12). Verhey finds Mark the most ill-disposed to rules and most ambiguous about the Law. But his examples have to do with aspects of the law that tied God's people to a nationalistic base. It would seem that in the divorce question Jesus contrasted one part of the Law (creation) to another, rather than putting it aside. In the matter of inner versus external purity, Mark could well have considered the vice list as being from the Law, and the logic is that the root is important precisely because of the agreed upon importance of its fruit. Is the Law replaced as the norm any more in the loyalty to Jesus' words in Mark 8:38 ("whoever is ashamed of me and my words") than in his words as the foundation of life in Matthew 7:24 ("everyone who hears these words of mine")? Verhey argues for the Law being replaced in the former but not in the latter. Verhey significantly states that for Mark the commandment of God is "not identical with any manipulable code or casuistry, even one based on the law" (Verhey, p. 79, cf. p. 43 where the Torah is associated with casuistry). Both authors view any role of discernment or exception as evidence that the matter at hand is not law, whether it is Jesus' injunction regarding possessions in Luke or the use of Jesus' words in the Pauline church. They thus miss the paradigmatic nature of the Hebrew Law and other ancient Near Eastern laws. The Law is not identical with an exceptionless code. The hermeneutic that the two authors are advocating is much closer in nature to the Law than they indicate. Biblical law is not the same as Verhey's moral-rule level as exceptionless codes, yet it calls forth behavior more concrete and substantive than his alternatives. Yet in its paradigmatic character it tends toward principles.

Verhey in fact approves appeals to the perspective and principles that stand behind the concrete admonitions of the New Testament. The concrete injunctions thus are bearers of ethical authority. What he and Longenecker resist is taking them as a timeless code that would command unthinking obedience. For Verhey, to examine them in light of broader purposes and with a view to their historical context is to function on the ethical rather than the moral level. His definition of the ethical level as identifying *which* rules are good (rather than what is the good *in* the rules) makes it more exclusionary in definition than it really is in function for him. The Chaldeonian image that Verhey suggests for the nature of Scripture would indicate that every Scriptural passage is both divine and human. Even of those injunctions addressed to a situation so distinct from ours that they cannot be directly applied, we must seek what was the divine word and ponder its meaning for us.

Verhey does seem to overestimate the difference between our situation and the first century. I would suggest, as one unifying factor, that primary groups are common to all of life and are molded only in part by special traditions. The sentiments and impulses that are related to them do not belong to any particular time, which is why the modern person can feel at home in the literature of the most remote and varied phases of life (cf. Charles H. Cooley, "Primary Groups," in *Theories of Society*, ed. Talcott Parsons et al. [Free, 1961], 1.316-18). Injunctions that govern primary group behavior will have more direct application in another culture than those which relate to more complex relations. Verhey's argument that we are not Matthew's community of "Jewish-Christians recently exiled from the synagogue" may or may not render that Gospel's rules inappropriate for us. But the burden of proof is to demonstrate that they are not.

My concern has been to indicate how further work may build upon the careful studies of Verhey and Longenecker and to caution against misunderstandings of their arguments. Because of their exegetical insight, their concern for context and for perspective and principles, the social reversal of the Gospel and its inclusiveness will be better appropriated in our time.

Evangelical Scholars Discuss Women and the Bible

Thirty-six evangelical scholars, sixteen women and twenty men representing eighteen different church bodies, met recently to challenge traditionalist views of women and the Bible.

The three-day colloquium, held October 9-11 at St. Francis Retreat House at Mayslake in Oak Brook, Illinois, grew out of concerns shared by Catherine Kroeger, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Minnesota; Stan Gundry, executive editor for academic books at Zondervan Publishers; and David Scholer, academic dean and professor of New Testament at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary.

For too long, the conveners argued, only traditionalist views of women in ministry have got much support from evangelical scholars. In hopes of furthering dialogue on the biblical and hermeneutical issues at stake, the three gathered a group of evangelicals who support women's full participation in ministry. Although several scholars representing traditionalist views were invited to present responses, all of them declined to attend.

The conference began with an impassioned plea from author and lecturer Patricia Gundry to recognize the pain that many women have suffered at the hands of the church. She summed up the issue in this way: "There is but one question in this conflicted issue, and only one. That central and watershed questions: Are women fully human?"

Gretchen Gaibelein Hull, who read Gundry's paper in her absence, added that "Role restrictions on women deny not only their full humanity but their full redemption in Christ."

Subsequent sessions tackled a variety of thorny issues. Key among them was the issue of whether an egalitarian view of women's roles is consistent with biblical authority.

Clark Pinnock, professor of theology at McMaster Divinity College, challenged the prevailing view among colloquium participants, arguing, "The adjective *biblical* clashes with the noun *feminism* in the term biblical feminism. If it is the Bible you want, feminism is in trouble. If it is feminism you desire, the Bible stands in the way." At best, he concluded, evangelicals ought to argue for a "Christianized patriarchy, one softened and modified by insights from Jesus' attitude toward women."

In contrast, Roger Nicole, professor of theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and a strong advocate of biblical in-

rancy, argued that "when a suitable understanding of Scripture prevails as well as an appropriate outlook on the role of women in the home, in society, and in the church," feminist aspirations need not be viewed as repudiating biblical authority.

In a paper on the meaning of the word *kephale* ("head") in the New Testament, Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen amassed evidence that the Greek translators of the Old Testament seldom, if ever, recognized a metaphoric meaning of the word that would suggest superior rank or authority. They thus cast doubt on the assumption that 1 Corinthians 11 and Ephesians 5 intend to teach that husbands have authority over their wives.

David Scholer and Walter Liefeld, in separate papers on 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians, shared the view that one of Paul's prime concerns in the passages dealing with women is that the gospel not be maligning by violations of contemporary standards of decency. In no case did they find universal principles that would preclude women from any form of ministry today.

Conference participants were challenged to be Christian change agents by Joan Flikkema, executive secretary of the Committee for Women in the Christian Reformed Church. She suggested thirty-four different strategies, ranging in risk from low to high, for changing institutional attitudes and policies toward the use of women's gifts in the church.

At the end of the colloquium, J. I. Packer, professor of historical and systematic theology at Regent College, expressed his conviction that we need a view of the church which stresses "life before order, gifts before office." "Gifts," he argued, "are for use; order is for canonizing their use. Gifts are given to all; gifts are not intended to be thwarted."

Throughout the conference, participants wrestled with a variety of tensions, characterized by Jeannette Scholer as those between "experience and truth, persons and status, egalitarianism and hierarchicalism, the prescriptive and the descriptive, proof-texting and hermeneutical consistency, creation and redemption, the church's function as a critic of society and its effort to be winsome within society."

The conference papers will be published by InterVarsity Press.

BOOK REVIEWS

Miracles and the Critical Mind

by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984. 325 pp.) Reviewed by Bernard Ramm, Professor of Christian Theology, American Baptist Seminary of the West.

Colin Brown's book is essentially a historical review of the apologetic interpretation of miracles from the patristic times to the present. Because it is such a substantial historical review it is a source book that will be around for a long time. It is not a dry summary of historical opinion, because Brown always adds his own interpretation to the opinions expressed. Furthermore, the book is extensively documented (in both English and foreign literature) revealing the great amount of research gone into the writing of the book.

It is a book aimed at the theological community, especially at the professorial level, although advanced seminarians may read it with comprehension. Brown does move with ability in philosophical, theological and biblical-critical territory as one must to do justice to the subject of miracles. He rightly adds the word *critical* to his title because a person cannot discuss miracles as if they were purely theological or philosophical problems. One must touch base with current New Testament studies,

and Brown does that.

There are four problems which persist in the discussion of miracles and which constantly surface in Brown's discussion: (1) Does a person accept or reject miracles on a prior accepted philosophical or theological position so that the discussion of miracles is really an after-the-fact matter? i.e., are miracles rejected because of their inherent unbeliefability, or accepted because of their evident historicity, or is the matter already settled by one's world view? (2) How do we vigorously defend biblical miracles and yet turn around and play the skeptic with miracles in other religious traditions? (3) How do we define a miracle? If we define a miracle as an event contrary to natural law, do we not make faith in a miracle sheer credulity? If we define miracle as a higher or hidden function of the laws of God, do we not undermine the uniqueness of the miracle or the shock of it? (4) How do we apologetically define the function of miracles without getting into a circular argument? Do we believe in the inspiration of Holy Scripture because of miracles? Or do we believe in miracles because they are in the inspired Holy Scripture?

When Brown comes to express his own opinions I find them marked by great common sense. Having reviewed the history of miracles in theology he knows the options and the pitfalls. In the final analysis, Brown accepts the biblical miracles

because they fit into the total Christian schema entered by faith in Jesus Christ and illumination of the Holy Spirit. Brown does not accept the evidentialists view of miracles because all historical "facts" (miracles included) are accepted or rejected by historians as they fit into the schema the historian works within. No historical event is a hard, factual datum, let alone miracles. Brown also has no sympathy with those who wish to explain miracles away by psychiatric explanations or other means to reduce them to natural events or to mythical stories originating in the early Christian communities.

Alan Richardson was Brown's first mentor in graduate work, and Brown treats Richardson's opinions on miracles with great respect. When Brown discusses evangelicals and miracles he is hard put to come up with scholars of academic weight.

My critical remarks are of a very secondary order. Somewhere in these deeply researched pages one will find every objection to the biblical miracles and every apologetic defense of the miracles. I would liked to have seen a reference to James Orr's book on David Hume (*David Hume: The World Epochs Makers*) for they are fellow Scots and Orr must both praise and damn his fellow Scot. A reference to J. A. Passmore would have also been appropriate; his evaluation was that Hume was the greatest of the

philosophers. I think too that Kornelis Miskotte's approach to miracles, (*When the Gods are Silent*) would be radically different than any of the men Brown discusses. Brown's work is such a welcome contrast to current charismatic chatter over miracles that a note on biblical miracles versus current charismatic nonsense about miracles would have been a welcome contemporary touch.

The Holy Spirit

by Alasdair I. C. Heron (Westminster Press, 212pp., \$11.95) Reviewed by Kevin V. Dodd, ThM Student, Fuller Theological Seminary.

This is not a book in systematic or dogmatic theology, but rather an examination of the Spirit in the Bible (including the intertestamental period), in the history of Christian theology, and in recent thought. Further, as the author readily admits, it is not meant to be an exhaustive survey; it is a selective and introductory one. Its purpose is to provide the reader with a map of the general terrain, with an overall perspective on what types of approaches have been used, and are being used, in the theological reflection upon the Holy Spirit.

In addition, Heron writes as one profoundly influenced by the concerns and directions of "neo-orthodoxy" (especially K. Barth and T. F. Torrance). This is reflected not only in the general structure of the book, but also in his specific comments concerning the various thinkers and approaches. This, of course, does not mean that he agrees with Barth at every point, for he does not, but that he finds the most promising avenues opened by Barth's methodology.

With this in mind, one can enjoy this well-written book without fighting the fact that it is meant only to be a selective and introductory survey of the material. In addition, one can fully appreciate the fidelity with which each position is presented. As in *A Century of Protestant Theology* (also intended as an introduction), Heron is remarkably true to the sources, even in the most elementary of summaries.

The book is divided into three relatively equal parts. The first part deals with the witness to "Spirit" in the Old Testament, the intertestamental period, and in the New Testament. The purpose in this is not to ascertain some unified approach within Scripture, but to demonstrate the development, the diversity, and the richness of its witness. The church, then, faced with questions not expressly addressed therein, had to follow through the implications and seek "to uncover the profound coherence of the realities" of which the Scriptures spoke.

The second part is entitled "Patterns in Pneumatology." After sketching the thought of Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, Heron focuses attention on Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, and the Cappodocians in the context of "the Lord, the Life-Giver" (from the Constantinopolitan Creed). "God's Love, God's Gift, the Soul of the Church" is the title of the next chapter in which western medieval thought is explored (including the *filioque*). Finally, Reformation and Post-Reformation thought is developed under the rubric of the Spirit as enlightener and sanctifier. In all of this, Heron is clear and concise. These patterns also offer some interesting avenues for further exploration (eg., p. 155).

The third part, on current issues, is arranged in three chapters dealing with pentecost and experience; spirit, soul, and world; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In speaking of experience, Heron notes that although it must not be made the fundamental category, neither must its importance be denied. Therefore, Liberalism was right in relating Jesus' experience and our own. Pentecostalism also offers a challenge to a Christianity that is not sufficiently

open to the movement of the Spirit on non-institutionalized, emotional levels.

Heron then notes various positions with regard to spirit in the human person. He sets up the problem with Kierkegaard and Buber, demonstrates the two alternatives by summarizing Barth and Rahner, and draws attention to Tillich's resolution. He doubts Tillich's success because his resolution depends "on the solidity of its basis in his whole system—about which perhaps few today would be highly confident" (147). This, unfortunately, is much too curt a dismissal (and it is not the only time this occurs). Concerning the Spirit and the world, Heron observes the contributions of Idealism, of Moltmann, and especially (though less explicitly) of T. F. Torrance in overcoming the dualism of spirit and nature. His language becomes increasingly doxological as he describes the victorious presence of the Spirit in space and time.

Finally, current thought on the Trinity is dealt with primarily by examining Lampe, Tillich, and Barth. Heron then offers some concluding reflections on the basis and significance of the doctrine of the Trinity, on the Holy Spirit as the "third person," and on the *filioque*. These reflections take serious account of ecumenical discussions, especially between East and West, and offer some very good suggestions in this regard.

This book is an impressive and helpful introduction. It does not assume any previous knowledge on the part of the reader. All Hebrew and Greek words are transliterated and defined. Nothing is introduced into the discussion without being explained in terms of its meaning and significance. The book is well focused; the style is lucid and engaging. If the book is to be faulted, it is because it shares the problems of any summary—selectivity, brevity, and simplification. But as a summary, it excels.

Christian Theology & Scientific Culture

by Thomas F. Torrance (Christian Journals Limited, 1980 138 pgs., \$7.50). Reviewed by J. Terence Morrison, Ph D; director of IVCF Overseas.

It is significant that Albert Einstein steps out in the first sentence of the preface. Torrance's concept of science is largely built on Einstein's work, particularly in the more popular explanations of science that Einstein has published. The book concerns itself with insights from modern science for theology, as well as insights from theology for modern science. As he says, "What is envisioned here is an exercise in conjoint thinking where theological science and natural science have common ground within the rationalities and objectivities of the created order but where they each pursue a different objective." One could bracket his interplay of science and theology by the unusual linkages of four men of science. In 1642, Galileo died and Isaac Newton was born, and in 1879, Albert Einstein was born and James Clerk Maxwell died. It is the captivity of much of modern theology to the out-of-date science of Galileo and Newton that Torrance decries. It is to release theology from that captivity that Torrance explicated and depends on the thought of Maxwell and Einstein. Two different scientific universes lead to two very different theologies. Unfortunately, Torrance has leaned on Einstein too heavily and uncritically; perhaps not sufficiently aware of the criticisms and disagreements available in the current literature. He talks about a "decisive switch from a totally mechanistic conception of the universe and the imperialistic science that went with it." Unfortunately no such decisive switch has yet occurred.

Having faulted him for over optimism, none-

theless I applaud his wide use of these new insights to investigate the history of theology. For instance, the Newtonian dualism which was incorporated into theology, perhaps via Kant, still clouds the air for theological thought even though it is "an anachronistic hangover from the 19th century". The damaging effect of this dualism can be seen where modern theology detaches Christ from God and Christianity from Christ. Thus Jesus Christ is robbed of the central or ultimate place in the Christian faith by those who would place the importance not on the person of Christ, but on the ideas he mediated about God and mankind. Christianity is separated from Christ, attached to the church, and regarded as an ecclesiastical institution which can be shaped according to a consumer dominated market. Torrance is by no means simply a champion of a classical conservative theology. A creationist would be upset by assertions that the Biblical account and the scientific account of origins express different kinds of relations that cannot be combined on one and the same level without confusion and even contradiction. On the other hand, he is a champion of a realist understanding of the resurrection stories. A Bultmanite would be made uncomfortable by his assertion that the empty tomb must be treated under ordinary, rational thought and tied in with the events of the historical Jesus in order to relate it to the real needs we have as human beings for salvation. If the resurrection does not involve the empty tomb, there can be no possibility of coordinating rational thought and speech about it with basic concepts and statements arising out of our ordinary life.

I found chapter three to be an amazing and exciting use of current scientific thought about the nature of light, particularly the Einsteinian insights to light, to give us new "theological" insights. Considering the physics of light leads Torrance to offer praise to God as the Creator of such a structured and ordered and beautiful universe. Flooded by light, yet a created reflection of the uncreated and unlimited Light which God himself is. However, in his enthusiasm for the Einsteinian insight into light, he also bumps up against the problem that Einstein faced in understanding the probabilistic nature of microphysics, (i.e., quantum mechanics). This illustrates that perhaps his reading has been selective and his training has been in other areas. Torrance also makes this new freedom of thought a tool in grasping the nature of contemporary theology. As an example, he notes that present day Process theology depends on the dominant mathematical physical outlook of what is essentially a Newtonian perspective in the universe and leads to a kind of determinism. In contrast to this determinism, he has seen that there is also a protestant pietism, or, in the opposite direction, the retreat of liberal theology into the fuzzy realm of poetic or oblique truth.

It is interesting to see Torrance's thought grapple with the growing presence of eastern religious thought in western theology. He sees that the break between image and reality, which flows out of this Newtonian scientific world view, is severe in modern man and that this inner split leads to a hunger for wholeness, which drives many to eastern religions, feeling that it is no longer available in Christian thought. Interestingly, Torrance says this struggle is characteristic of the whole of modern western culture, with its split between the sciences and humanities, the disintegration of form in the arts, and modern liberal theology with its revival of mythical thinking.

On his closing page, Torrance quotes with approval Walter Thorsen, a Canadian theoretical chemist, who's been writing quite a bit frequently, both on Michael Polanyi and on the new freedom in theological thought due to contemporary philosophy of science. Thorsen says, "I think that the scientific revolution and the new kind of thinking

it encourages should properly be understood as a new expression of Christian thought, not as a irrelevant and divergent secularism". Torrance has done just that for us in this book, taking a contemporary scientific world view derived from the scientific work and philosophical comment of Einstein and others, a new sturdy realism, he works to bring theological thought into the 20th century out of its captivity to the 19th century closed universe world view. I highly recommend this and other Torrance books to any student of theology.

The Shape of Scriptural Authority

By David L. Bartlett (Fortress Press, 1983, 161 Pgs., \$8.95 paper). Reviewed by Donald K. McKim, Assistant Professor of Theology, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

David Bartlett has produced an interesting book in which he examines the authority of Scripture in light of the various types of writings found in Scripture. He uses Paul Ricoeur as a base and tries to "suggest the kinds of authority these forms of literature claim—explicitly or implicitly—for themselves, and to suggest how these authoritative claims might be acknowledged, tested, and affirmed in the lives of believers and of believing communities." His six chapters consider then in turn: Authority in the Bible, the authority of Words, Deeds, Wisdom, Witness and then Canon and Community. Each of the central chapters examine the nature of the literature involved—prophetic, historical narrative, wisdom, witness (confessional, such as the confessions of Jeremiah, the testimony of Paul) and then speaks to how these forms function today. Thus the book has many biblical citations and references to biblical scholars, especially those most fully concerned with literary approaches to Scripture. The final chapter of "Canon and Community" is a good overview of current approaches and poses the continuing questions of how the canon provides a fundamental resource for the church's life and practice as well as how the community, the church, provides the context for the interpretation of the canon.

Bartlett is to be applauded for taking seriously the various literary forms of Scripture and for seeking to see how these function in light of the canon of Scripture as a whole and the church community that interprets Scripture. His approach in itself stresses the diversities of Scripture and prefers to center on the question of the "authority" of Scripture rather than its inspiration, since this allows him to look directly at the biblical texts themselves "to see what sort of authoritative claims they make—how they function authoritatively in the life of the community." Bartlett says, "This does not require a doctrine of inspiration, nor, for the most part, does it require a reconstruction of the history lying behind the writing and editing of the texts."

It is this bifurcation of authority and inspiration that may prove to be the most problematic aspect of this volume for evangelical readers. Regardless of internecine struggles over inspiration, those using the evangelical name today would, in the tradition of the Reformation, link Scripture's ultimate authority as God's Word to its nature, purpose and scope. And this content and purpose of Scripture is, theologically, related to claims of "inspiration" (Gr. THEOPNEUSTOS). How inspiration functions through the varieties of biblical writers, texts, interpreters and for us in the present day presents the questions to be explored. But to short-circuit this process by not giving attention to the concept of inspiration, its nature or how it relates to the diverse literary forms of Scripture would seem to leave a very wide gap in one's conclusions about "the shape of Scriptural authority." Bartlett acknowledges that the work of the Holy Spirit is in-

involved in establishing Scriptural authority, but goes on with his approach in order "to anticipate the ways in which the Spirit may work for believers, and to assume some kind of congruity between the literature of the Bible and the experience of contemporary believers."

This is a helpful volume for keeping us honest about the differing forms of Scripture and for reminding us again that Scriptural authority is a functional authority. Scripture is for Christians as Bartlett says, an "authoritative resource" for "faith and action", and the ground for "discussion and decision". But whether discussions of scriptural "authority" can be ultimately convincing apart from some acknowledgement of the theological character of Scripture itself in terms of inspiration, is questionable. Bartlett's book thus opens many doors but also leads us to face many others.

The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage

by B. A. Gerrish (University of Chicago, 1982, 422 pp., \$35.00);

A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology,

by B. A. Gerrish (Fortress, 1984, 79 pp., \$4.95). Reviewed by John G. Stackhouse, Jr., Ph.D. student, University of Chicago Divinity School.

Karl Barth once denied that F. D. E. Schleiermacher was a legitimate heir to the Reformation. He wrote that the line running back through Kierkegaard to Luther and Calvin and so to Paul "does not include Schleiermacher" (Barth's emphasis). As if anticipating this judgment a century earlier, Schleiermacher himself wrote, "Our lineage can no one take away from us. . . . We are legitimate sons of the Reformation and not bastards."

B. A. Gerrish, professor of historical theology at the University of Chicago, in these two recent books has attempted to refute Barth and to establish a clear link not only between the Reformers and Schleiermacher, but also between the two major forms of Protestantism they represent: classical and liberal, what Ernst Troeltsch called "Old" and "New" Protestantism. In doing so, Gerrish has provided essays which, if they do not convince the reader of his central thesis, will enrich—probably enormously—his or her understanding of the subjects he discusses.

The earlier book comprises fifteen essays written over a twenty-year period. The essays are in three sections: "Martin Luther," "Reformation Principles," and "The Reformation Heritage." An introduction to the thesis, contents, and scheme of the book sets up these essays quite usefully.

Readers of the first two sections will find trenchant discussions of crucial ideas in the thinking of Luther and Calvin: free will, the Word of God and the words of Scripture, faith, priesthood and ministry, eucharist, and the doctrine of God. Students of magisterial Reformation theology will turn often to these well-focused essays: Gerrish has read widely in the works of these two men, and skilfully distills the essence of their thought. In particular, Gerrish's essays deeply enriched my appreciation of the power of Luther's understanding of the gospel and of the beauty of Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper.

The third section explicitly links the "Old Protestantism," as exemplified by Luther and Calvin, with the "New," as represented by Schleiermacher and Troeltsch. And the hinge chapter, in my view, is the twelfth, entitled "Theology Within the Limits of Piety Alone: Schleiermacher and Calvin's Notion of God."

Gerrish here maintains that predestination is very far from the center of Calvin's doctrine of God. Rather, like Schleiermacher, Calvin understands

God centrally as Father, one with whom the Christian enjoys a relationship of filial piety. And it is this common notion of piety as the proper governing principle of theological construction that Gerrish sees as the crucial link between the Old Protestantism and the New. Both Calvin and Schleiermacher deplore speculation as the basis for dogmatics; both recognize a "hiddenness" to God's being; both appreciate that we know God only through his dealings with us, not directly as he is in himself. Gerrish is certainly correct here, for Calvin and Schleiermacher clearly recognized this epistemological limitation to which many modern theologians—orthodox and unorthodox—seem oblivious in their self-confident pronouncements about the nature of God.

But it is also here that Gerrish, honest expositor of Calvin as he tries to be, exposes the crucial difference between classical and liberal theology. Calvin, he acknowledges, offers a theology that is not only governed by piety, but founded upon scriptural exegesis. Calvin believes that God has revealed and does reveal himself uniquely in Scripture, and that its propositions function as norms from which any proper theology must arise and by which any theological formulation must be adjudicated. Schleiermacher, on the other hand, sees the Scriptures—and all other "confessions of faith" (for that is how he regards the Scriptures)—"not as external authorities, but as indexes to the evangelical religious consciousness" (Gerrish's phrase, p. 202).

Gerrish himself outlines this difference in discussing the two theologians' views of the Trinity. Essentially, Schleiermacher dismisses it as something which "could never emerge" in the religious consciousness, for, as Gerrish puts it, "it makes no difference to our living fellowship with Christ" (p. 205). Calvin, on the other hand, preserves the doctrine because, again in Gerrish's words, "he has no doubt at all that, albeit God speaks sparingly of his essence, the Scriptures do inform us of three hypostases or persons in the divine essence—that is, of an eternal distinction" (p. 206). The critical difference in the understanding of the place of Scriptural exegesis in theological method—which goes back to differences in epistemology itself—separates quite sharply the two theologians and their respective traditions.

After reading this final section, which includes two particularly useful essays on Troeltsch, whom most evangelicals scarcely recognize, let alone understand, my judgment on Gerrish's thesis is a "Yes, but. . . ." Yes, he has established a legitimate connection between Calvin and Schleiermacher in their shared view of piety as a governing idea in theology. But he has made too little of the crucial difference which Barth recognized: Calvin's belief in and dependence upon divine revelation through the Scriptures clearly distinguishes his theological method and conclusions from Schleiermacher's which rest on the interpretation of piety alone. And it is this difference between Old Protestantism and New, as much as any other, which continues to divide contemporary liberal theologies from orthodox and neo-orthodox theologies.

Gerrish's second book ostensibly has a less controversial goal: to introduce the essence of Schleiermacher's theology. Three essays, originally public lectures, discuss three fundamental ideas in Schleiermacher's thought. But Gerrish's concern to link Schleiermacher with Luther and Calvin reappears here too.

The first essay analyzes Schleiermacher's little "Christmas Eve Dialogue," and thereby illumines the heart of his theological method. It introduces Schleiermacher's crucial idea that "theology is nothing other than honest, critical reflection upon piety," that "piety, after all, is the actual object of theological reflection" (p. 31).

The next two essays follow from this, and dis-

cuss the two foci of the ellipse of Schleiermacher's theology: the doctrine of Christ as the only one through whom God is revealed as Redeemer; and the doctrine of God as the one who lives in all and in whom all exist. Thus Schleiermacher recognizes a consciousness of God in other faiths while preserving the uniqueness and supremacy of God's revelation in Christ. And the rest of his huge dogmatics, *The Christian Faith*, revolves around these two poles.

These essays make Schleiermacher more understandable than his own works do, and thus they admirably fulfill their purpose. They furnish guidance for the neophyte Schleiermacher student like nothing else in English (Gerrish recommends the English translation of M. Redeker's *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought* as the next step).

One quibble, however. Gerrish would like to apply to Schleiermacher the old label "liberal evangelical," and so link him not only with evangelical Pietists but also with the "original" evangelicals, Luther and Calvin. Now Schleiermacher was certainly "liberal" in the sense Gerrish means: one who had a "deep conviction that modern habits of thought demand radical theological change, a thorough overhauling of the meanings traditionally ascribed to Christian language" (p. 13). But it is unclear that "evangelical" can denote properly one who shares merely a religious consciousness associated with evangelical Protestants (in this case, German Pietists). It seems to me that "evangelical" always implies a particular message (an *evangel*) which goes hand in hand with a particular experience—indeed, a message which directly influences and does not merely represent that experience. So perhaps we can call Schleiermacher a "liberal Pietist"—he called himself "a Herrnhuter [Pietist] of a higher order"—but we should reserve "evangelical" for those who have "good news" at the heart of their religion.

In sum, B. A. Gerrish has provided essays which will challenge the theologically-minded Christian about issues of great importance in the history of theology, issues which clearly ought to inform current discussions. The price per page looks steep for both books, but these are *reference* books, to be consulted repeatedly with profit, and they are well worth their cost.

Readings in Christian Humanism

ed. J. M. Shaw, R. W. Franklin, H. Kaasa, and C. W. Buzicky (Augsburg, 1984, 685 pp., \$19.95). Reviewed by G. W. Bromiley, Senior Professor of Church History and Historical Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

Four scholars, two Roman Catholic and two Lutheran, have cooperated in compiling this series of readings which they have generally put under the heading of Christian humanism. The work opens with an introduction that defines the term and outlines the purpose of the collection. The readings fall into six main parts covering foundations, emergence, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the post-Reformation period, with an epilogue devoted to the theme of human liberation. Each part has its own historical introduction, and a brief sketch of a page or so fills in the picture regarding individual authors. There are over fifty of these, and they cover a wide span, beginning with Plato and ending with Gilkey. The selections vary, for creeds, hymns, and order find a place along with Canto I of Dante's *Paradiso* and Book IV of Milton's *Paradise Regained*.

The problem with a selection, of course, is the selecting. Roman Catholic and Lutheran collaboration has ensured a reasonable cross-section, but even so, doubts arise as to the truly representative

nature of the readers. Thus, the post-Reformation period claims no fewer than 328 of 635 pages of actual readings. Has humanism really enjoyed such a bountiful harvest in the modern era, or is it just that the age of printing has multiplied the available output? Again, certain works seem to claim an inordinate amount of space. Do we really need so much of *The City of God*, or so many chapters of the Benedictine Rule, or such a lengthy extract from Erasmus' *Enchiridion*, or all that material from Walker Percy?

The problem of longer or more dubious extracts, of course, is especially important because of some obvious omissions. The Greek fathers, for instance, might never have existed. The Reformation receives scant treatment. Indeed, the so-called humanist reformer (Zwingli) fails to secure an entry. In the modern era the Puritan contribution to science might have merited some attention and the development of the broader implications of Reformed teaching by the Kuyper school surely call for fleeting mention. More recently the failure to include C. S. Lewis will raise some evangelical eyebrows, and Karl Barth has many passages that demand consideration, such as his balanced discussion of eros or his remarkable evaluation of Mozart. Obviously, no selection can satisfy everyone, but this particular offering might have benefited from more representative editorial direction.

The introductory essays raise some contentious issues. Thus it seems to be assumed that *de iure* as well as *de facto* Christianity synthesized "the religious outlook of the Hebrew people" with "the philosophical outlook of classical antiquity." But might not this have produced a highly debatable hybrid rather than an authentically Christian humanism? More important, perhaps, is the contention underlying the general introduction that humanism is in itself a neutral thing which receives its meaning from such qualifying adjectives as secular, scientific, or Christian. The editors may well be right when they advise us not to accept the claims of secularists to a monopoly of humanism nor to join with ultraconservatives in constantly campaigning against humanism as though the secularists were right. Yet the polemic against the Christian Right is not wholly on the mark, for some of its goals might well be regarded as in line with an authentic humanism, and those who contend for Christian humanism often favor a liberal version of the faith which weights the element of humanism strongly at the expense of the Christian component.

On balance, however, one is inclined to think that the general thesis of the essay is convincing. A proper focus on God establishes true humanity rather than reducing it. Humanism, then, can take legitimate as well as illegitimate forms. Christians should support the former as well as opposing the latter, as they have constantly done in their various educational and cultural ventures. Indeed, in the last analysis only Christianity can produce a truly authentic humanism. In so far as these readings help toward the attainment of that goal, they deserve both a warm welcome and wide circulation.

Evil and the Morality of God

by Harold M. Schulweis (Hebrew Union College Press, 1984, 145 pp). Reviewed by Steven S. Sittig, Ph.D. candidate, Claremont Graduate School.

Schulweis is concerned to prevent theodicy from denying the legitimacy of humanity's complaint about the suffering of the innocents and the prospering of the wicked, and from so redefining godliness that belief in the divine ends up at odds with our human moral sensibilities. Two related theological errors place theodicy in this hard place: First, presuppositions of divine perfection err by limiting

one's ability to ascribe to God sympathy, pain, suffering, change, community, etc., depending on the theology in question. Aquinas and other scholastics, for example, so elevate the perfection of God's knowledge and wisdom that a consideration that there could be a lessening of perceived evil is ruled out as inconsistent with God's metaphysical design. Hartshorne, Wieman, and Tillich are included as metaphysical theodicians with analogous shortcomings to their approaches.

Secondly, Schulweis defines personalistic theodicies as those which presume a moral Subject as creator of the universe, in a special relation to humanity apart from the relation to nature. But this Subject-as-person becomes morally unintelligible to us at critical times, as when Barth refers to *das Nichtigste* as that sinister nothingness which only the divine can comprehend and engage, or as when Kierkegaard portrays the teleological suspension of the ethical. Buber and John Hick are included in this approach, and Schulweis finds all falling into appeals to the mystery of the divine morality just when human moral sensibilities would conclude the divine morality is inept or faulty.

The common failure of the two theodical strands Schulweis finds to be in their falling prey to the subject-predicate grammar in which the respective theologies are formulated. The presumption of a divine Subject is a natural one, given traditional locutions about the divine; but a proposal for a subjectless predicate theology is Schulweis's positive thesis. If the theological task is transformed from proof of the existence of the subject, to proof of the reality of the divine predicates, then contending that the humanly comprehensible qualities of goodness, love, intelligence, and creativity are worthy becomes the task. The search becomes one for godliness, not God.

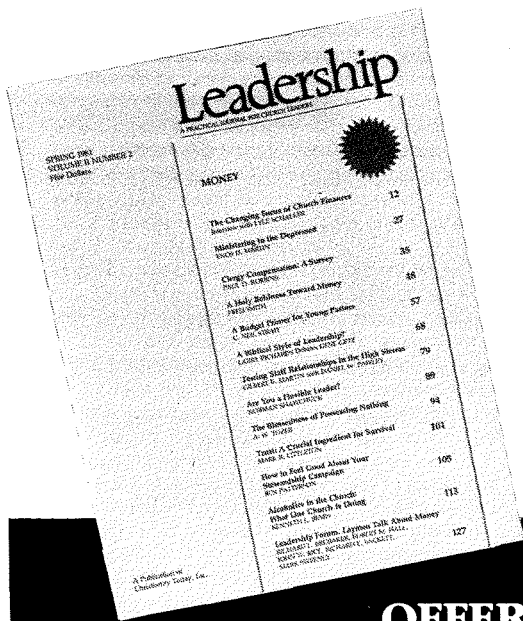
This work has much to commend it, both to students of "technical" theodicy and pastoral theology. Several objections to the thesis are anticipated, but dealt with too briefly in the final chapter. The author argues with rigor, and with a clear sensitivity to the practical end of the topic, which is to my mind the central issue of faith in this, the century of Holocaust. His criticisms of the figures cited above are not without overstatement, but his thesis is worthy of attention. "Complaint theology", in which one admits to God one's sense of offense at the way things are going, is a rich OT and rabbinical tradition. Schulweis draws on this and other Jewish sources which are too infrequently brought to bear on a topic often made one of logic. A brief foreword by Chaim Potok will endear this book to his admirers.

Omnipotence and other Theological Mistakes
by Charles Hartshorne. (State University of New York Press, 1984, 144 pp + xi, \$9.95 paper) Reviewed by Alan Padgett, Pastor, San Jacinto (Cal.) United Methodist Church.

In this brief, inexpensive paperback, Hartshorne has written one of his best books. It is not his most profound work, but it is an excellent introduction to his thought, and to process theology. This book will communicate to the educated lay person and is bound to find its way into college and seminary classrooms. The book is well written: the writing is clean and in good style, and the ideas and arguments are admirably clear. I highly recommend it for those interested in Hartshorne or in process theology.

Since the work is bound to be widely read, I should like to respond to it. The very nature of this task makes it, unfortunately, a mostly negative one. The criticisms that follow should be read in the light of my overall praise for this work.

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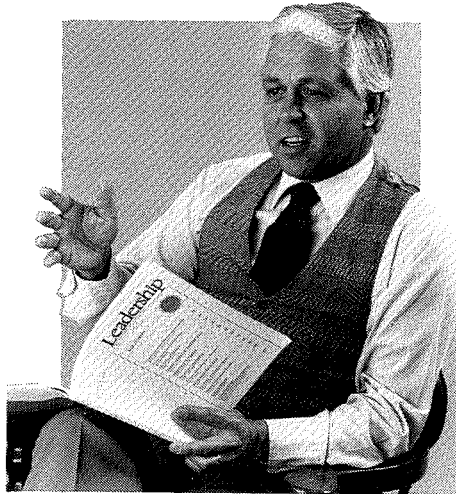
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and its caricatures of other theological options. The major foil is "classic theism", which turns out to be Catholic Scholasticism and Protestant Orthodoxy—hardly what I would call "classic" today. These views are dated, rationalistic aberrations from true biblical Christianity. Hartshorne can easily overthrow this straw man, making room for his more sophisticated position, his "new" theism. Yet the idea of a finite deity who feels for his/her children but can't overcome the evil in the world is hardly new. It is at least as old as Zoroaster, Plato, and Norse mythology.

The first chapter is the longest and most important. It centers on six so-called mistakes concerning deity: perfection, omnipotence, timelessness, impassability, immutability, and revelation. There are many points where I agree with Hartshorne over against Scholasticism; for example, in his rejection of an abstract, absolute perfection in God.

The section on omnipotence has its good points, but the definition of omnipotence as perfect power is one of the more inferior. From the fact that God has all possible power it does not follow that (1) God causes everything to happen, nor that (2) God decides exactly what will happen in the world. Classical biblical Christianity has always affirmed human freedom and dignity as *Imago Dei*, since God creates *ad extra*. If God has *infinite* power, giving independence to humans in no way limits him. Omnipotence means God can bring any possible event about, not that he is the only agent, or the only being with power.

Hartshorne seems to think his finite deity solves the problem of evil, since his God can point to human choice and nature as thwarting the divine will. But this problem can be modified to fit Hartshorne, too. Since he believes that (4) God irresistibly lures creatures to his will, as much as possible given their level of freedom, and that (5) there is an *infinite* past relationship between creation and Creator, it seems to follow that (6) if God's lure is stronger than Evil's, the present must conform to the will of God, or (7) if Evil's lure is stronger than God's, the present must be maximally evil, or (8) there is in the long run a balance between God and Evil. Both (6) and (7) seem absurd, so (8) seems the logical choice. But this is hardly consistent with Hartshorne's process view. Moreover, since in the infinite past God has not conquered Evil, "She-He" (Hartshorne's term) *never* will. This hardly solves the problem of evil! The discussion of the free will defense is weak, since Hartshorne only complains that it does not deal with natural evils (yet free will defenders like Austin Farrer and C. S. Lewis have dealt with it!).

On timelessness, Hartshorne does very well. He quite rightly points to the superior notion of eternity as everlastingness. His critique of God's impassability is equally correct. Certainly Scripture affirms that God relates to us emotionally, and suffers when we sin (especially on the Cross!).

The next topic is not as well done. His discussion of immortality rests on equivocation. Hartshorne has, let us call it, an "artistic" concept of immortality, i.e., that our work lives on after us and other minds remember us. Yet even if God's "enjoyment" of us is perfect, that is *not* what theologians and others mean by immortal. The Biblical view of the resurrection of the body (a quite different view from immortality) is not even discussed. Hartshorne should abandon the word immortality in defining his view.

The discussion of the "mistake" of revelation may be the worst part of the book. Once again, Hartshorne sets up a false dichotomy between his view and a naive concept of Biblical inerrancy which he identifies as "classic." Of course his view is better than the one he attributes to Christianity! Has he read nothing on this subject written since the Second Helvetic Confession? Perhaps he thinks

Gordon H. Clark represents all of Christendom!

Chapter two is a rather straightforward discussion of dualism and monism, with Hartshorne opting for panpsychism. The only major problem is his caricature of the biblical view, equating it with magic ("Let there be light"="Abracadabra"!). No serious criticism is made of creation *ex nihilo*.

Chapter three presents a criticism of creationism, and an argument for a theistic evolution. Such a view was also put forth by "classic" Christian biologists in Darwin's day, like Asa Gray and Aubrey Moore. The idea that evolution is based on "chance" according to modern science, is incorrect. Most scientists only admit random happenings at the sub-atomic level; some not even there. Also, most scientists accept the Big Bang theory of cosmic origin (i.e., they reject the idea of an infinite past for matter). For one who complains so loudly about how Christians are ignorant of modern science, these are interesting errors.

The final chapter centers on the love of God, and general questions. Hartshorne argues for a model of God in which the world is to God as I am to my body. A cell in my body is related to me, as I am related to God. As a panpsychist, Hartshorne believes that even a cell has some feelings and some freedom. Of course, this freedom is limited. I find this model very curious for a theology that lifts up personal freedom. After all, even if my cells have some freedom, in the end I am in control of my body. A modern Biblical Christianity offers a model of *greater* freedom than Hartshorne's process view, by emphasizing creation *ad extra*, wherein God gives us autonomous power and freedom apart from his own.

In sum, I recommend this book. It is well written, and contains many good points. Many will find this a good introduction to process theology, and to Hartshorne himself. Its greatest weakness is the many false dilemmas that result from the author choosing to identify Christianity with a rationalistic orthodoxy of a bygone era. His criticisms and ultimate rejection of biblical Christianity would have carried more weight if he had chosen to dialogue with a more modern, sophisticated version of Christianity (e.g., Richard Swinburne). Of course, his own views look more attractive next to Protestant Orthodoxy; I doubt it would be as tempting next to modern evangelical thought. But this central weakness is outweighed by the book's strengths and utility. Let's hope that the work does not delude many people into thinking that the view he rejects has anything to do with Christianity today!

Justification and Sanctification

by Peter Toon (Crossway, 1983, 162 pp., \$6.95).
Reviewed by Richard A. Muller, Associate Professor of Historical Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary.

Peter Toon deserves commendation for this remarkably lucid little book and for the series in which it appears, *Foundations for Faith*, of which he is the general editor. The intention of the series is to provide introductory surveys of important Christian doctrines for college students and concerned laity. The success of this volume and of the others in the series is notable, particularly in terms of the balance of presentation between scriptural, exegetical study, historical survey and contemporary statement. Toon's *Justification and Sanctification* is particularly strong in its presentation of the biblical materials, the Reformed side of the Reformation and of the issues in post-Reformation and modern theology.

The weakness of the volume—at least in part explained by constraints in size—lies in its highly selective approach to patristic and medieval the-

ology. Toon, for example, notes briefly that justification and sanctification were not separate in the theology of Aquinas, but he does not investigate the issue. As a result he does not point clearly to the way in which the essentially forensic view of justification, propounded by the Reformers (Calvin in particular) led to the distinction between justification and sanctification propounded by their successors; and, in Protestant orthodoxy, to the delineation of an *ordo salutis* or order of salvation. Much of the difference between contemporary Roman Catholic doctrine and orthodox Protestantism can be accounted for by the continuity of the Roman Catholic view with much patristic and medieval theology in its assumption that justification is not purely forensic.

Toon's exposition of Wesley's teaching is felicitous, as are his discussions of Tillich and Berkouwer. The omission of Barth is somewhat regrettable, though Toon's reasons for doing so are sound and, in addition, the comparison of Tillich and Berkouwer provides a clearer sense of the breadth of the spectrum of Protestant views. Catholics, however, may wonder at the choice of Newman's pre-conversion lectures on justification as a representation of the Catholic position, even though the subsequent impact of Newman on Roman Catholic thought was considerable. On the other hand, Toon's consideration of Schmaus' theology will be of great value both to Roman Catholic readers and to ecumenical discussion. What is most apparent here is the fairness of Toon's presentation and his desire to provide the historical and contemporary material as a basis for and an approach to theological formulation.

In summary, the book succeeds both descriptively and substantively in introducing the doctrines of justification and sanctification to college and also to beginning seminary students. There are a few lacks in the book, as noted above, but these can easily be overcome in class by a perceptive instructor or by an energetic student willing to engage Toon's ample bibliography.

In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins
by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Crossroad, 1983, 357pp.)
Reviewed by Linda Mercadante, Ph.D.
Candidate in Theology/History of Doctrine,
Princeton Theological Seminary

In this meeting of biblical interpretation and feminist theology, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza intends not only to restore the stories of women to early Christian history, but to demonstrate this as the history of both men and women. Fiorenza fully believes and intends to demonstrate that the biblical canon and tradition is androcentric. Yet she also demonstrates the possibility of maintaining an allegiance to the Christian faith and Scripture without at the same time supporting the subordination of women.

This is not, however, simply an apologetic for the Bible, as Fiorenza claims that so much of Christian feminist theology has been. Rather, *In Memory of Her* is a forthright reappraisal of the biblical text in light of a "hermeneutics of suspicion". As the theologian, biblical scholar and Christian, Fiorenza has a personal interest in helping to vindicate the Christian faith from the accusation that since the Bible has largely been written, translated, canonized, and interpreted by males, the core of the faith is male-centered.

Yet as a woman, and a feminist scholar, she also has determined to take seriously the above accusation and honestly reflect on it using, with considerable expertise, the skills she possesses as an experienced biblical scholar. The fact that she

places herself as an interface between traditional biblical scholarship and feminist theology makes this at times a very uncomfortable book to read, but also a very exhilarating experience. For in her imaginative reconstruction (and this has always been the function of history), women emerge as if from the shadows and stand out in the open upon the stage of early Christian history.

In making this reconstruction, Fiorenza realizes that even with the best of scholarly work and a carefully comprehensive approach, she will be accused of "special interest" and run the risk of not having her work taken as seriously as it warrants.

Biblical scholars... do not perceive the question [i.e., the hiddenness of women] as a serious historical problem of great significance for the reconstruction of early Christian history and theology... Seen as a 'woman's problem' the issue belongs to books and symposia on 'woman' but not in the program of exegetical conferences or in the pages of an exegetical *Festschrift*... The tacit assumption underlying such expressed or unexpressed reservations is that scholars who do not reflect or articulate their political allegiances are 'objective,' free from bias, nonpartisan and scientific. Yet, anyone even slightly familiar with the problems raised by the sociology of knowledge or by critical theory will have difficulty asserting such scholarly objectivity on scientific grounds. (p.xvi)

Fiorenza refutes the usual objections to feminist theology by arguing that

If scholars employ philosophical, sociological or psychological analyses for reconstructing new interpretive models of early Christian development, nothing should prevent us from utilizing feminist heuristic concepts as well, in order to reconstruct an early Christian history in which women are not hidden and invisible. (p.xvi)

In fact, of course, she does use such concepts and with them brings to light some very challenging insights about early Christian history. For instance, she argues that Mary Magdalene and Peter held comparable positions of honor as leaders of the prophetic renewal movement begun by Jesus in Palestine. She also demonstrates that because of the key significance and centrality of house churches in the missionary movement, women occupied positions of leadership in early Christianity, and that the gradual patriarchalizing of the church came about partly as a move to shift leadership away from women and slaves so that the church would blend in more effectively with the surrounding Greco-Roman culture.

For those readers who find exegetically-based issues like the above a more accessible entry into this subject, Fiorenza urges that they skip the first section of the book and instead begin with the exegetical material, returning to the hermeneutical issues in Part One later. But I found Part One to be the most stimulating and incisive part of the book since it brings together the whole range of approaches to the gender issue in biblical interpretation today and analyzes each with discernment.

Fiorenza is bold in this section, saying things that will surely make persons in each camp cringe. Mary Daly's method is laid bare to a Sartrean existentialist base and defined as androcentric. In saying this, Fiorenza is fully aware that Daly's model has claimed just the opposite for itself, by calling the margins of social reality, where women have always lived, in fact the true center. But Fiorenza insists that

Although Mary Daly maintains that this model is gynocentric, one must not overlook the fact that it does not have the power to break the androcentric patriarchal model, which situates women on the margins and boundaries but does not allow them to claim the center of patriarchal culture and religion. (p.38,n.50)

Rosemary Ruether and Letty Russell are both put into the category of neo-orthodoxy, a method which is highly untenable, Fiorenza argues, because it attempts to 'save' the Scriptures by divorcing their content from their form.

How can one distinguish between Script and Scripture, if the formal element is the culturally conditioned historical text, while the posited 'Archimedean point' is an abstract

theological principle and transhistorical symbol expressed in historically contingent and thus variable language? (p.16)

Fiorenza puts Ruether, along with other more conservative Christian feminists, in a sort of "defenders of the faith" category, whether they take the neo-orthodoxy form vs. content approach, or outrightly defend Paul as a "liberationist" and blame the church's historically poor treatment of women on misinterpretation of Scripture. This approach is inadequate, she says, for it fails to take the feminist critique with the seriousness which it warrants and, ironically, could instead be used to "rescue biblical religion from its feminist critics". (p.19) While this rescue mission might seem, on the surface, to be of great value, one gets the decided impression, after reading Fiorenza, that it would be akin to rescuing Pharisaism from the message of Jesus. Al-

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though Fiorenza is a Roman Catholic, her work's ultimate concern supports the Protestant principle of *reformatio semper reformanda*.

For Fiorenza wants no less than to reclaim the liberating power of the gospel while reclaiming the powerful stories of women in early Christianity.

As the root model of Christian life and community the Bible reflects biblical women's strength as well as their victimization. Therefore, the Bible is source for women's religious power as well as for their religious oppression throughout the history of Christianity to the present. A Christian feminist theology of liberation must cease its attempts to rescue the Bible from its feminist critics and assert that the source of our power is also the source of our oppression. (p.35)

This last statement is a crucial one for understanding Fiorenza's "hermeneutic of suspicion" and is the key to her approach to Scripture. By taking the Bible as source of both liberation and oppression, Fiorenza has deftly combined the most salient messages of both sides of the debate over gender. By recognizing that Scripture reflects the gradual patriarchalizing of Christianity, she recognizes the serious validity of the "post-Christian" feminist critique, and indeed even grants validity to those who insist that the Bible teaches male superordination.

But by also recognizing the liberating power inherent in the Christian message, she explains the appeal of Christianity to women throughout the ages. In order to effect this reconciliation, however, Fiorenza cannot hold onto a static or monolithic view of biblical authority or canonicity. In fact, she asks that we allow her to "bracket" the question of biblical authority while she develops her argument, and she also insists on the necessity of using extra-canonical sources to help examine the canon. These methodological principles will no doubt prove problematic to many readers, yet few will disallow the strong points of her exegetical and historical arguments.

Although much more could be said about these exegetical and historical findings, it is the hermeneutical issues which must be considered first, as Fiorenza challenges readers to a new awareness of the complexity of the issue of androcentrism in Scripture.

BOOK COMMENTS

The First Day of the New Creation: The Resurrection and the Christian Faith
by Veselin Kesich (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982, 206pp., \$7.95).

The resurrection of Jesus, his ascension, and the resurrection of the believer are the major subjects of this well-written and edifying book. Each is reviewed from the vantage point of careful exegesis, current critical discussion, and the theological traditions of the church. The result is a fairly comprehensive—though not always highly original—discussion of what the New Testament has to say about resurrection. The principal reason, however, for taking special notice of this book lies not in its inclusive treatment of the issues but rather in its author's identity. Veselin Kesich is Professor of New Testament at St. Vladimir's Seminary and a member of the Eastern Orthodox Church. To find such a one discussing the writings of Rudolf Bultmann, Vincent Taylor, John A. T. Robinson, and Willie Marxsen is surprising. The theologians of the eastern church are not exactly known for paying keen attention to western biblical scholarship. Perhaps, then, *The First Day of the New Creation* augurs a

change in the ecumenical climate, one in which Orthodox thinkers will enter into earnest exchanges with historians and theologians outside their rich tradition—or so one dares to hope. In any event, Orthodox Christians—and others—should find Kesich's work a useful introduction to a theme fundamental to all Christian faith.

—Dale C. Allison

Breaking Boundaries: Male/Female Friendship in Early Christian Communities,
by Rosemary Rader (Paulist Press, 1983; 117pp.; \$6.95).

Among the questions often asked by those who have studied our experience of friendship, one has become difficult to discuss honestly and objectively in our day: Is friendship possible between men and women? Many of the classical writers on friendship were persuaded that it was not. The reasons are fairly obvious: Erotic love may enter into friendship and transform it into something quite different. (For example, eros will always resent the presence of a third party, whereas friends will normally welcome another who shares their interests.) Moreover, many have thought that friendship was most easily established between those who were, at least roughly, equal; perhaps, therefore, friendship between men and women has been difficult to sustain in many different times and places.

Rader's study suggests that one exception to this general rule can be found in early Christian (3rd to 5th century) celibate communities. Devotion to the celibate ideal minimized the dangers of sexual attraction. The equality of likes and dislikes that friendship required was provided by mutual commitment to a celibate life. And the reciprocity and support which celibates needed made heterosexual friendships important.

There is much information of historical importance and interest in this little book and much food for thought about friendship. Yet, one is left with a serious question: If mutual commitment to celibacy was the factor which made possible the circumstances in which friendships between men and women flourished, what does that say about its possibility in the lives of most of us? Were the classical theorists nearer the truth than we like to imagine?

—Gilbert Meilaender

Our Search for Identity
by Marianne H. Micks (Fortress Press, 1982, 167 pp., \$8.95).

In her exploration of what it means to be created "in the image of God," Marianne Micks states that her major purposes are "to rethink Christian anthropology in dialogue with contemporary thought" and at the same time "to remain in active dialogue with biblical and historical anthropology". Her thought-provoking list of chapters in itself makes a worthy contribution to the first of these goals. The second is less well achieved by her use of a different group of thinkers around which to focus the discussion in each chapter. This technique, along with Micks's accessible style, makes for easy and interesting reading; but it sacrifices precision, scope and depth. Theologians and even the Bible itself lose their complexity and ambiguity when tailored to fit Micks's seductively clear categories. To say, for example, that Jesus used words "to include, not to exclude people" requires one to exclude, not to include, rather a lot of problematic texts.

Such questionable assertions, plus uncritical as-

sumption of the results of modern critical scholarship, plus an identification of "human wholeness" with salvation, push the whole effort inevitably in the direction of loss of the transcendent dimension, occasional assertions to the contrary notwithstanding. Even when Micks makes good affirmations that touch the moderate, rational intellect, they somehow fail to stir the soul. This attempt to pour old wine into new wineskins shows the skins—though useful—to be in the end too small.

—Marguerite Shuster

In Search of Humanity
by John Macquarrie (Crossroad, 1983, 261 pp., \$16.95)

In the Preface of his latest book, John Macquarrie states that the "best approach to many of the problems of theology and philosophy is through the study of our own humanity." Thus, *In Search of Humanity* explores what it means to be human, discussing the topics of: Becoming, Freedom, Transcendence, Egoity, Embodiedness, Cognition, Having, Sociality, Language, Alienation, Conscience, Commitment, Belief, Love, Art, Religion, Suffering, Death, Hope and Being. In an effort to move away from "archaic" and "emotionally loaded" terms, Macquarrie has purged his theological anthropology of jargon and adapted new words for traditional concepts which are still valid. Prof. Macquarrie, a Canon of Christ Church Cathedral at Oxford, writes from squarely within the Christian tradition. However, he dialogues not only with Christian theology, but also deals with philosophers (primarily Continental), scientists, sociologists, psychologists and other religions as well.

Macquarrie understands that we live in an age where, for most people, "God has become an indistinct blur, the total disappearance of which would make little difference." Therefore, he believes that our best hope for redirecting humanity towards the transcendence of God is by unveiling the transcendence in human existence and demonstrating their relationship.

Macquarrie's perspective and methodology will not sit well with many within the evangelical tradition, but that does not detract from the significant effort he has made in this work. It is a book that should be read by anyone attempting to come to grips with the questions and issues raised in developing a meaningful theological anthropology for today.

—Rev. J. Mark Hendricks

International Politics and the Demand for Global Justice
by James Skillen (G.R. Welch Co., Ltd and Dordt College Press, 1981, 143 pp., \$7.95).

While the dispute between moral skepticism and idealism in international affairs is nothing new, James Skillen has added an important and timely dimension to the debate. Joining the ranks of many evangelicals who are disillusioned with both the naivete of the idealists and the ethical cynicism of the political realists, Skillen attempts to chart an alternate course that recognizes both the human condition and the biblical demand for justice.

Skillen is quick to remind his readers that the "legitimacy" of power in the world today is determined both in the East and West by its ability to achieve economic or political prosperity. Ethical norms, particularly those based upon a universal concept of rights are at best, sporadically employed. Such behavior is consistent with traditional political realism which declares that in the absence

of a common judge to adjudicate over international disputes, there can be no place for morality. Instead, the "realists" argue that *self-interest* ought to be the only author of foreign policy. For this reason, one cannot be a political realist (in the traditional sense) without also being a moral relativist. In reminding his readers of this critical fact, Skillen has skillfully driven a wedge between the authority of the biblical notion of justice and the predominant political theory of our age.

In concluding his work, Dr. Skillen declares that in a world of interdependent States, there can hardly be peace or stability apart from a pursuit of justice. Ironically, the traditional maxim is inverted. Morality is not determined by self-interest, but self-interest by morality.

—Kirby A. Kautz

Justification: An Ecumenical Study

by George H. Tavard (Paulist Press, 1983, 114 pp. plus notes and index, \$7.95).

A needed resource for theological study is historical work on the significant doctrines of Christianity that follow the doctrine throughout the history of the church. In *Justification: An Ecumenical Study*, George Tavard presents a short study of the doctrine of justification which fills a part of the need on this particular doctrine. The book gives only minimal attention to biblical material and no attention to the Fathers outside of Augustine. In the Medieval period the Carolingians, Anselm, Bonaventure, Aquinas, and Scotus receive the major attention. The center of the book is the study of Luther and reactions to Luther in the Council of Trent, John Wesley, and contemporary Catholicism.

The most important section of the book is Tavard's discussion of contemporary Catholic approaches to Luther's doctrine of justification, surveying the more irenic approaches such as his own and that of Rahner and Küng. After pointing to the progress of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on specific points, Tavard raises the question whether, if justification is not merely one doctrine among many but the center of all doctrine, these dialogues have really been speaking to the main point of contention at all. One would hate to see the Lutherans give up their most unique and crucial contribution to the church as part of the dialogue process.

Evangelicals would do well to contemplate this question, especially in light of the distinction Tavard draws between Luther and Wesley. Have Evangelicals as well as Catholics failed to understand Luther and his *theologia crucis*? If Tavard's assessment of Wesley is correct, this could be true.

—Robert A. Kelly

The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age

by George A. Lindbeck (Westminster Pr., 1984, 144 pp, \$9.95).

Lindbeck, professor of Historical Theology at Yale, has written a brief, provocative, and programmatic essay about the nature and truth of religious language. He develops a typology of three approaches to the truth of religious language: the cognitive (propositional truth), the experiential-expressive (symbolic truth), and the cultural-linguistic (regulative and practical truth).

According to Lindbeck, the cognitive approach to religion is old, narrow, and unfruitful for inter-religious dialogue. Lindbeck also has some solid criticism of the symbolic approach typical of comparative religions and liberal theology today. He

rightly insists that religious experience is *not* the same 'at bottom,' and that religions are quite different in their world-views. He opts for the 'cultural-linguistic' view (or what I call the ethical-functional view). Religion is a learned way of life, and doctrines are not so much cognitive descriptions as rules for living.

Perhaps I am too much of a Hegelian, but I would like to see a *synthesis* that preserves the truths in each of these three approaches rather than the antithesis that Lindbeck develops. For example, the cognitive approach in many sections is a whipping boy or straw man; its best proponents such as T. F. Torrance are not mentioned. Against Lindbeck's section on truth in religion, the adoption of *just* an ethical-functional approach to religious language short-circuits the basic question of truth in religion, and leads in the end to religious relativism. Criticism aside, I recommend this work as a clear and forceful presentation which theologians should carefully consider.

—Alan Padgett

The Religious Imagination

by Andrew M. Greeley (William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1981; 242 pages; \$18.00)

Andrew Greeley hypothesizes that one's religious imagination—the images one has of Jesus, God, heaven, and Mary—have a more powerful influence on one's religious attitudes and behavior than do propositions and dogma. He thereby beckons a shift in sociological thinking and research, which up to now has focused on more overt measures of religious commitment.

After setting out his theory concerning the origin and role of the religious imagination, Greeley presents research findings which show how such factors as religious experience, nature, family and friends, Catholic education, and the parish influence the development of the religious imagination. He then goes on to show the relationship of a well-developed religious imagination to social concern and involvement, sexual ethics, marital satisfaction, feminism, and other variables.

Major trends noted by Greeley are the importance of relationships, sermons, and the parish priest in developing the religious imagination; the role a well-developed religious imagination plays in increasing marital satisfaction and social involvement; a rising religious consciousness among teenagers; liberalizing sexual ethics among Catholic laity; and continued stability of Catholic families.

Greeley's failure to adequately describe his survey sample weakens the book. We are informed only that they are young adult Catholics and former Catholics—a narrow enough sample to limit the applicability of Greeley's findings. A major strength is the direction given to researchers and religious leaders in considering the dynamic role of the unseen elements of religious conviction.

—Esther Byle Bruland

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