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# BULLETIN

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

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

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

## Personal Renewal: Reflections on "Brokenness"

by Roberta Hestenes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual brokenness can come in different ways:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Toward Old Testament Ethics*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### *The New Testament and Homosexuality*

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

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

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