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Reflections on Capitol Punishment

Contents

Page

Editorial: Ministry "To the Max" 65
Ralph W. Kline

Who Deserves to Live? Who Deserves to Die?
Reflections on Capital Punishment 67
Norman P. Dake

What Do You Make of Indian Theology? 78
T. M. Philip

The Empathic Apologist: Pastoral Counseling
Insights into Christian Apologetics 87
Douglas E. Chismar and John S. Brent

The Theology of the Cross and Social Ministry 95
Robert A. Kelly

Ministry to the Aging –
Touching the Theological Bases 100
Harry Coiner

The Third Felon 105
Maynard E. Stokka

Rainbows 106
Gary Blobaum

A Book Worth Discussing:
Frederick W. Danker: **Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field** 107
A. T. Kraabel

Book Reviews 111

Briefly Noted 122

Drawings by Stacy Boorn

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Ministry "To the Max"

Modern talk does not necessarily mean true modernity. The Valley girls, for example, trivialize evil into something merely grody; their prognosis for life is redundant and boring; unwittingly, they show us the emptiness of materialistic life. Their "to the max," however, captures exactly the type of ministry to which our authors invite us.

Norman P. Dake leads off with a discussion of capital punishment, a topic of dramatic importance with the recent execution by injection in Texas. His are poignant questions: Is the execution of criminals for the good of society? Is it in the service of God who warns against repaying evil with evil? With strong biblical arguments he challenges the state's rights to use capital punishment. His list of the purposes of punishment — retribution, restitution, rehabilitation, deterrence, and protection of society and of the offender — provides the information necessary for a responsible discussion in your contexts.

Half way around the world **T.M. Philip**, a doctoral candidate at Christ Seminary — Seminex, learned the meaning of contextuality: the continuing transformation of every society and every human life by the Gospel of God's work within it. Indian philosophy speaks of three *margas* or roads for attaining liberation, and now contemporary Christian theologians pursue these ways of knowledge, devotion, and action. Our colleagues in the Asian subcontinent try to define the Gospel on the basis of Indian-Hindu, pre-Christian thought patterns, but they also speak of the previousness of Christ, the startling discovery that the encounter between the true God and the human family is previous to the presence and words of the missionary.

One path to Christian witness is apologetics, the offering of a rational explanation for the hope that is in us. **Douglas E. Chismar** and **John S. Brent** show that apologetics — or any other kind of evangelism — would be facilitated by an empathetic attitude by the would-be witness. Is our Christian witness hampered by the fear others have that conversation with us is not a safe place to unburden hurts and secrets? An empathetic encounter lowers defensiveness, affirms the

non-Christian — and leads to change! The successful Christian witness understands the non-Christian's perspective, but invites that person to consider another perspective which better puts the pieces of life together. Sensitive evangelizing requires a supportive relationship, which refuses to let people close themselves off from hope, renewal, and the claims of God on life.

Social ministry does not result from forgetting the Gospel, but from remembering it. **Robert A. Kelly** offers eleven theses which ground such ministry in a theology of the cross. Christians are called to identify — in proclamation and action — with those whom society considers most expendable. Social ministry relieves immediate needs, but it also engages in advocacy, in attacking the roots of poverty, and in announcing God's judgment on sinful systems and sinful oppressors. The goal of social ministry is to maintain a dialogue between those who live under the shadow of the cross and those who live under the shadow of human sin.

Harry G. Coiner, now in retirement, shares what it means to minister to the aging. His essay is laced with biblical mindset, explicit and implied, as he speaks of a God who works a blessing of refinement in the afflictions of old age. The goal of any ministry is to help folks cling to a God who is too holy to do anything wrong. The laity and clergy who want to minister to the elderly should know that they place highest priority on person-to-person interaction and a witness that gets into the Bible and digs out its truth.

Two poems by **Maynard E. Stokka** and **Gary Blobaum** help us unravel the joy of Christ's death and resurrection in 1983. Do not his sacrifice "to the max" and his glorious resurrection empower and inspire our ministries? As they say in the valley,

Totally!
Feh Shur!

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Who Deserves To Live? Who Deserves To Die? Reflections on Capital Punishment

Norman P. Dake

Chaplain, St. Louis County Jail and County Hospital

The charge was capital murder. The accused was a young man whom I had come to know quite well during the several months he was incarcerated while awaiting trial. The inmate's lawyer had asked me if I would be willing to testify in the penalty phase of the capital murder trial.[1] Specifically, he was interested in knowing whether there were any redeeming characteristics that the accused man possessed that might persuade a jury that he deserved to live.

That was an easy question to answer. During the time of our relationship, I had come to know this young man in a way far different from that portrayed by television reporters and the newspapers. It was not a ruthless, cold-hearted killer that I saw, but rather a loving, caring human being. I saw a man who was disturbed by what the publicity of his front-page case was doing to his family. I saw a man who was concerned about the effect a long-term incarceration might have upon his marriage and his relationship with his son. I saw a man who was committed to his Lord Jesus Christ, who had completed a course in the basics of Christian faith, who had been baptized in a jail service, who attended a weekly Bible class, and who genuinely struggled to live out his Christian faith in the hostile environment of his jail cell. I had no trouble coming up with reasons why this man deserved to live.

Yet I had all the trouble in the world answering the attorney's question. It seemed to me to be the wrong question. It assumed that society is justified in deciding that in some circumstances a convicted killer deserves to live and in other circumstances deserves to die. More fundamentally, one is obliged to ask whether anyone — individual or group — has the right, under any circumstances, to take the life of another.

Not Ours to Take

Human life is not ours to take. It belongs to God, who created it. That is a basic affirmation of our Christian faith (Hebrews 11:3). Through biology and genetics we understand how life is transmitted from one generation to the next. Through the eyes of faith we see the hand of God at work in the creating and sustaining of life. That divine parenthood makes life precious. What makes human life sacred and uniquely different from any other form of life is that it is life created in God's own image (Genesis 1:27). No matter how dimmed or tainted that image may have become because of sin, it remains an essential part of us (Genesis 9:6), male and female. We were made to be in relationship with our Creator, to be responsive and responsible to God. Our accountability before God

[1] In Missouri, capital murder cases have two phases. In the first the jury decides on guilt or innocence. If a guilty verdict is returned, the trial then has a second phase to assess punishment. Either the death penalty or life in prison with no parole for 50 years can be recommended by the jury.

requires a recognition that human life is not our private possession to do with as we please.

God has a second claim upon the life that he has created. It is the claim of the cross, by which God has bought back that life has been spawned by sin. Martin Luther, in his explanation of the second article of the Apostles' Creed, dramatically confessed this second form of divine ownership:

> I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, delivered me and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold but with his holy and precious blood and with his innocent sufferings and death.[2]

Luther has personalized what the Scriptures universalize. Christ's redemptive work was done for the benefit of all (2 Corinthians 5:14-15), even convicted criminals (Luke 23:39-43). There is a double mortgage on human life. By virtue of his creating and redeeming activity, God holds title to both.

The giving and the taking of human life is God's domain. Even when overcome by grief, Job was able to affirm this essential truth. "**The Lord** gave, and **the Lord** has taken away; blessed be the name of **the Lord**" (Job 1:21). Whenever a human life is brought to a premature end by forces other than those provided by God in his created order, God's name is not blessed and neither is ours. This is true whether death occurs on one of our city streets at the hand of a violent killer, or on death row in one of our state penitentiaries at the hand of a public executioner.

The Role of the State

But hasn't God delegated this jurisdiction over life and death to the governmental authorities? Certainly the state has long assumed the authority to carry out the death sentence. John the Baptizer (Mark 6:27), James (Acts 12:2), and Jesus himself are evidence that the Roman government and vassal officials resorted to capital punishment whenever it seemed politically expedient. Yet these very examples should give us pause, lest we concede uncritically the legitimate use of capital punishment to the governing authorities.

In Romans 13:1-7 St. Paul makes one of his strongest statements in support of governmental authority. "If you do what is evil, look out, for the one in authority does not bear the sword in vain" (13:4b). What does St. Paul have in mind when he uses the word "sword"? Does he mean capital punishment? Is he speaking about military force? Or is he using the term in a more general sense to refer to all of the powers possessed by the governing authorities? Based on the context of this statement, the last definition

[2] Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 345.



seems to fit best. St. Paul is addressing a community of Christians who had some questions about their obligations to the government. The payment of taxes and customs fees was at issue as was the according of honor and respect to those in authority (13:6-7). While affirming that Christians owe allegiance to God (12:1ff.) and love to their neighbors (13:8-10), Paul also acknowledges that they have an obligation to conform their behavior to the standards set by the civil authorities (13:1-7).

This conformity, however, is not blind obedience, but rather a declaration on the part of the citizenry that it recognizes in the duly constituted authorities the beneficient hand of the Lord.[3] The authority for any form of government comes from God (13:1). The state has the authority to punish those who do that which is evil rather than the good (13:2-4), because the offenders have subverted the very institution that God has appointed to maintain order and seek the best interests of all citizens. But does this authority to punish include the right to impose the death sentence? That is hardly what Paul had in mind in Romans 13. Paul uses the word "sword" as a "symbol of the penal power of the state"[4] and as a "symbol of the power of the authorities to punish evildoers."[5] Paul is not advocating capital punishment for tax cheaters and flag burners. He is encouraging the Christian community to pay its taxes and to give respect to the governing authorities in response to the government's efforts on behalf of the common good.

The first half of Romans 13:4 is therefore also crucial to our evaluation of the use of capital punishment. "The one in authority is God's servant *(diakonos)* for your good." Two questions arise. The first, which will be discussed later in connection with the purposes of punishment, is whether the execution of criminals is for the good of society. The second is whether the death penalty is in the service of the God who warns us against repaying evil with evil (12:17) and taking vengeance into our own hands (12:19). Such violence is not the stuff of which the Kingdom of God is made.

Jesus himself condemns the use of violence. On the night of Jesus' arrest, Peter (John 18:10) wanted to put up a fight. In the ensuing melee the chief priest's slave lost an ear. Jesus responded to this vio-

[3] See Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1982), pp. 400-401 for a treatment of how rulers are to be channels of the divine benefits to their subjects and, in return, recipients of public respect.

[4] Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* IV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 525, n. 11.

[5] Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament,* 2nd ed., rev. and aug. by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 496.

lent episode by healing the slave's ear (Luke 22:51) and rebuking the offending disciple. "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). This is not Jesus' authorization for the use of capital punishment. It is rather Jesus' affirmation that the Kingdom of God is not going to be established by force of arms. It is a protest against the policy of "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" (5:38). Violence breeds violence. Those who engage in violent behavior will suffer at the hand of violence. My friends in jail have another way of saying it. "What goes around, comes around. You reap what you sow." Jesus' words ought to serve as an admonition not only to those individuals who are tempted to use violence, but also to those societies that are bent on institutionalizing violence by legalizing executions.

The Old Testament comes much closer to condoning executions. Following the flood, God made a covenant with Noah and his sons that included this provision: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image" (Genesis 9:6). Old Testament scholar Otto Eissfeldt suggests that this saying may have been a part of a formal pronouncement made by the elders when a death sentence was imposed or when an execution was carried out.[6] The justification for the death sentence was contained in the solemn saying itself: ". . . for God made man in his own image." The sacredness of human life was an element of the covenant with Noah that God wanted to emphasize.

Yet even the life of a murderer is sacred to God. When Cain killed his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1-16), Cain knew that he deserved to be punished. Yet God did not require Cain's life in return for Abel's. God's verdict against Cain was to make him a fugitive and a homeless wanderer upon the earth. That sentence made Cain fear for his life and he cried out in terror to God, certain that whoever would find him would kill him. But no one killed Cain, because the Lord put a mark on him to protect him from any vengeful hand. Such was the value that God placed on the life of a murderer like Cain.

Why Do We Punish?

Precisely because human life is sacred, the taking of another's life is not to be condoned. From the very inception of civil communities, the human race has sought to condemn in the strongest possible terms those who have usurped God's power over life and death. Murderers have been punished for their offenses against God and society. But what purposes ought punishment to serve? Does capital punishment further those ends?

1. **Retribution.** The offender ought to

[6] Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction,* trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 68.



be "paid back" in some way for the offense that has been committed. There needs to be a distinction, however, between retribution and vengeance. Retributive justice demands, first of all, that punishment be taken out of the hands of an angry mob. In the case of an accidental death — what we would today call manslaughter — Old Testament societies provided cities of refuge where the accused had the right to seek sanctuary until legal proceedings could take place (Numbers 35:9-15, 22-28; Deuteronomy 19:1-10). For example, if a person were chopping down trees in the woods and the axe head flew off and struck and killed a neighbor who was standing nearby, the wood chopper could flee to a city of refuge to escape the vengeance of angry friends or neighbors (Deuteronomy 19:5). Punishment is to be meted out after careful evaluation of the circumstances and not on the basis of heated emotions.

Retributive justice demands, secondly, that the punishment fit the crime. This was the intent of the Old Testament Law of Talion:

> Eye for eye,
> tooth for tooth,
> hand for hand,
> foot for foot,
> burn for burn,
> wound for wound,
> stripe for stripe.
> (Exodus 21:24-25).

The Law of Talion was to serve as a curb for overzealous law enforcers. Excessive punishment becomes vindictive. The divine admonition, "Vengeance is mine," (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30) is a reminder that punishment is not to be a vengeful overreaction to crime, but is to be made commensurate with the offense.

Jesus takes the matter a step further in the Sermon on the Mount. He challenges the Christian community to rise above the "eye for an eye" mentality (Matthew 5:38-42) by responding to hate and evil with love (5:43-48) and mercy (5:7). Punishment that is not tempered by love and compassion for the offender becomes little more than vindictive retaliation that tempts the offended parties to stoop to the same level as the offenders and to return "evil for evil" (Romans 12:17).

Although modern society has come a long way from the days of lynching parties and mob rule, much of today's retribution remains vengeful. Angry citizens cry out for capital punishment because they are frustrated by their seeming powerlessness in the face of violent crime; eager prosecutors need little encouragement to launch into emotional tirades in an effort to convince juries that convicted murderers deserve to die. We have succeeded in taking vengeance out of the streets and putting it into our courtrooms, and the second evil is worse than the first. Now our vindictive natures are legitimated under the guise of justice and of law and order. Yet if we are honest with ourselves, we will recog-

nize that most often our motivation for punishing law offenders is nothing less than vengeance, and therefore a usurpation of God's power (Romans 12:19).

Perhaps one of the reasons our society has not been able to move beyond "an eye for an eye" is that it has only in recent years been able to achieve even this standard of justice. Prior to 1977 rape of an adult that involved no loss of life was punishable by death. However horrified we may be by these violent assaults on human dignity, we should not condemn this violence by condoning capital punishment. The punishment must fit the crime.

Our society has a long history of administering punishments that are vindictive. There is yet room for us to learn new approaches that incorporate the love, mercy, and forgiveness to which our Lord calls us.

To be opposed to capital punishment is not to be soft on crime. The current alternatives to the death sentence — like Missouri's sentence of life in prison with no parole for 50 years — can hardly be regarded as slaps on the wrist. Anyone who has seen the inside of some of our state and federal penitentiaries knows that they are anything but country clubs or college dorms. Prison life is tough and time is hard. Yet there is life, and those who oppose capital punishment value that life and recognize that there are other purposes of punishment besides retribution.

2. **Restitution.** Punishment should not only "pay back" offenders for their crimes, but should provide an opportunity for them to "pay back" their victims. The legal codes of the Old Testament contained provisions for restitution (for example, Exodus 21:18ff.). They recognized that the guilty parties had a responsibility to those people whom they had wronged.

The victims are often the forgotten people in our criminal justice system. Our legal documents reflect this exclusion of the injured parties when they read, "The State vs. John Doe," as though the state were the only grieved party. To ignore the needs of the victims is to put the burden of crime disproportionately on their shoulders. Some lose only property; others lose feelings of security and self-worth because of the trauma of their experience; still others lose their lives.

It goes without saying that there can be no adequate compensation for the loss of a life. Murderers cannot bring their victims back to life. A deceased spouse cannot be replaced, even if the survivor should marry again. Another child is no substitute for a child that has been killed. But is there no way for convicted killers to make some amends for their crimes? Is there nothing they can contribute to the society they have wronged? Is there no way for them to be held accountable for the ongoing needs of the victims' families, for support of



dependent survivors, or for providing professional assistance to families who must cope with an unexpected loss?

An executed criminal can make no form of restitution. To put convicted killers to death is to deprive them of any opportunity to make amends for their offenses, and to preclude any use of punishment for a compensatory purpose.

3. **Rehabilitation.** Punishment ought to offer some opportunity for the offender to come to repentance and to receive forgiveness. "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). God punished the nations of Judah and Israel for their injustices and unfaithfulness. But it was not punishment for punishment's sake. His overriding purpose was to bring about a change of heart and mind. "Turn again, then, to your God, hold fast to love and justice, and always put your trust in your God" (Hosea 12:6). Even though God felt the hurt and anger of a jilted husband, he could not put away his unfaithful bride. He could not destroy his people (Hosea 11:7-9).

Our society is great at punishing, but it is not so good at forgiving. It has the notion that some crimes, including murder, can not and should not be forgiven. Convicted killers are regarded as being beyond the reaches of reform and rehabilitation. If we cannot put them out of our world through executions, then we would at least like to put them permanently out of our society by locking them up for so long that they will never again see the light of day from outside a prison cell.

Do we not underestimate the power of God? God was able to transform a Saul into a Paul and thereby turn his chief persecutor into his most ambitious witness (Acts 9:1-31). God even used a murderer to bring about a most miraculous deliverance for his people; the man's name was Moses (Exodus 2:11ff.). Certainly God is able to transform the most despised criminals. As long as we hold sacred the life of even the most notorious killer, God is able to bring about a renewed experience of his love and forgiveness.

4. **Deterrence.** Punishment can sometimes have a beneficial side effect if it can discourage others from making the same mistake that got a criminal in trouble with the law. Deterrence, however, can never be the primary purpose of punishment, but only a by-product. If deterrence is made the overriding goal of punishment, offenders end up suffering for the criminal inclinations and potential offenses of others rather than solely for their own misdeeds. That is unjust. Except for Christ, God's punishment is directed against those who transgress his law and not against any substitutes. Deterrence, therefore, should never be the only reason for administering punishment.

One of the arguments put forward in support of capital punishment is that it

will make an example of a convicted murderer and serve warning that society will not tolerate the taking of human life. The intention is that potential killers will think twice before they strike. Most murders, however, are crimes of passion. They are not planned; there is no premeditation.[7] An argument erupts, a deadly weapon is at hand, and a person is killed. The threat of punishment is not a deterring factor because there is no conscious deliberation.

In cases where intent and premeditation are involved, however, it must be asked whether a deterrent effect can be achieved by the use of capital punishment. Or is there some means less extreme, such as the threat of long-term imprisonment, that would serve the same deterring purpose as the death penalty?

The empirical evidence indicates that capital punishment does not serve as a deterrent.[8] Early research, involving comparison of states with the death penalty to those without it, revealed that the death penalty had "no discernable effect" on homicide rates.[9] In 1967 Canada decided to abolish capital punishment for a five-year trial period, one of the aims being to determine if there was any resulting change in crimes of violence. Results of that experiment indicated no increase in violent crimes attributable to abolition.[10] Consequently, Canada made the abolition of capital punishment permanent. More recent investigations have demonstrated that capital punishment not only has no value as a deterrent, but actually produces the exact opposite results.[11] The death penalty has a "brutalizing effect" upon potential murderers who learn from legally sanctioned executions that killing is the way to deal with people who have given offense. The result is that murder rates *increase* when executions are carried out. All of which suggests that Jesus' words about violence breeding violence (Matthew 26:52) apply to societies as well as to individuals.

[7] Robert H. Loeb, Jr., *Crime and Capital Punishment* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1978), p. 37.

[8] One exception is the work of Isaac Ehrlich, "The Deterrent Effect of Capital Punishment: A Question of Life and Death," *American Economic Review* 65 (1975): 397-417, who calculated that one execution saved seven or eight lives. Subsequent researchers, including Peter Passell, "The Deterrent Effect of the Death Penalty: A Statistical Test," *Stanford Law Review* 28 (1975):61-80, have found fault with Ehrlich's methodology and have been unable to replicate his findings.

[9] Thorsten Sellin, *The Death Penalty* (Philadelphia: American Law Institute, 1959), p. 34.

[10] Ezzat A. Fattah, *A Study of the Deterrent Effect of Capital Punishment with Special Reference to the Canadian Situation* (Canada: Department of the Solicitor General, 1973).

[11] Kilman Shin, *Death Penalty and Crime: Empirical Studies* (Fairfax, Va.: Center for Economic Analysis, 1978), p. 29. See also "Study Links Executions, Homicides," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 9 March 1981.



The best deterrent to crime is swift and certain punishment. But some crimes go unobserved or unreported. Some offenders are never apprehended. Lack of evidence keeps others from being brought to trial. For those who are prosecuted, conviction is never guaranteed. Consequently, even the deterrent effect of threatened imprisonment becomes watered down. Moreover, because of log-jams in the courts and legal maneuverings on both sides. our criminal justice system has rarely been able to provide penalties that are either swift or certain. The deterrent effect of any punishment is therefore somewhat suspect, and the deterrent effect of capital punishment is in any event unproved.

5. **Protection.** Punishment ought to serve two protective functions.

a. *Protection of society.* Protecting its citizens from crime is one of the responsibilities of government. The removal of offenders from society has become the normative pattern for providing this protection. Because the death penalty is such an extreme form of punishment that removes a convicted killer not only from our society but from our world, it can be argued that long-term imprisonment can provide the same degree of protection and is therefore to be preferred as more humane.

There is a danger, however, in any form of punishment that only removes an offender from society. We can delude ourselves into thinking that, once an offender has been sentenced or executed, we have adequately dealt with the crime problem. That is simply not true. It is little wonder that our society has imposed stiffer and stiffer penalties, and its citizens have felt more and more unsafe! Until we as a society have addressed the myriad of factors that contribute to crime — including poverty, inequality, ignorance, underemploymt, and drug abuse[12] — the crime rate will continue to grow.

Moreover, a societal attitude that says, "lock them up and throw away the key" is nothing less than an abdication of our responsibility for those who have broken the law. "Out of sight, out of mind" has become our standard approach to those who are incarcerated, but no one has ever been helped by being forgotten. As Christians we have a word of judgment and a word of forgiveness to bring to law offenders. We would do well not to forget that, but rather to "remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them" (Hebrews 13:3).

b. *Protection of the offender.* Punishment ought to provide in some way for the protection of the convicted. Judicial proceedings that ensure due process, and prison facilities that foster humane treatment help to protect law offenders from abuse that might be inflicted by others.

Offenders need also to be protected from themselves. When it comes to capital punishment, there is the risk that some offenders may actively seek execution and thereby allow their own evil im-

[12] See Shin, pp. 36, 184; and Loeb, p. 38.

pulses to do them in. Some may have a death wish, and others may see it as a way of making a name for themselves. But because human life is sacred and is not ours to take, the state should not become the collaborating partner which facilitates the demise of those who seek their own destruction.

When all of the purposes of punishment are taken into account, the death penalty is reduced to questionable value.

Who Decides?

People decide. Police officers decide whom to arrest; prosecuting attorneys decide for whom they will issue warrants; grand juries decide whom to indict; judges and juries decide whom to convict and what the sentence will be. No matter how well-intentioned and no matter how well-trained, people make mistakes. It is inevitable.[13] In the matter of capital punishment, it is an irreversible mistake. Once an execution has been carried out; the state can no more restore the life of the mistakenly condemned person than convicted killers can bring their victims back to life. This is not just a hypothetical situation. Documented studies have turned up instances of faulty convictions in capital murder cases where the executions had already been carried out before the miscarriages of justice were discovered.[14]

People are also prejudiced. Whether this prejudice is conscious or not, discrimination results. In 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court *(Furman v. Georgia)* acknowledged that the death penalty is disproportionately imposed and carried out on the poor, black people, and members of unpopular groups.[15] There is also evidence to suggest that if the victim is a white person, a convicted killer is more likely to receive the death sentence than if the victim is black.[16]

Because God has made all people in his image, one human life is as valuable as the next. Punishments that are as discriminatory as the death sentence can have little place in a nation that would pride itself on providing equal protection[17] for all its citizens.

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[13] See Charles L. Black, Jr., *Capital Punishment: The Inevitability of Caprice and Mistake,* 2nd ed., aug., (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981) for a discussion of the factors that may produce errors.

[14] Hugo A. Bedau, ed., *The Death Penalty in America* (Chicago: Aldine, 1964), pp. 434-452.

[15] Although blacks comprise only 15% of the population of the United States, they represent 41% of the inmates on death row. This is not because black people commit 41% of the capital murders, but because they tend to be poor, less able to make bond and do the research and interviews that may help their case, and less able to afford quality counsel.

[16] "Murder Victims' Race Important," *Sojourners* 7 (February 1978):7.

[17] U.S. Const. amend. XIV, sec. 1.



There are now over 1,000 people on death row in the United States.[18] The federal Bureau of Justice Statistics recently suggested that we may soon see executions carried out at the rate of more than three per week.[19] Even if no more people were to be sentenced to die (and it should be noted that in 1981 the number of people on death row increased at a rate of three per week), we could have an execution every other day for the next six years! That is the prospect we face unless, and until, capital punishment is abolished once and for all.

Walter Berns relates the story of a ship that struck a rock in a stormy gale and sank, leaving only one sailor desperately clinging to a piece of wreckage in the dark of night. Eventually he was washed up onto an unknown and deserted beach. When dawn broke and the sailor was able to rub the salt from his eyes, he looked around to learn where he might be. The only human thing he saw was a gallows. "Thank God," he exclaimed, "civilization!"[20]

Is that the kind of civilization we desire? Can that kind of civilization be said to be in the service of God and for the benefit of the human race (Romans 13:4)? In Jesus Christ we have a Lord who has been to the gallows for us so that we might not receive the sentence we deserve, but might have life instead. That is the message we bring to a world that is struggling with issues of death and life.

[18] The NAACP put the number at 1,038 as of June 20, 1982.

[19] 'Nation May See Executions At Rate Of Three A Week," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 19 July 1982.

[20] Walter Berns, *For Capital Punishment: Crime and the Morality of the Death Penalty* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 3.

What Do You Make of Indian Theology?

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"As I went around the world, I was frequently asked, What do you make of liberation theology (from South America) or black theology (from Africa or the States)? No one, even in India, asked me, What do you make of Indian theology? That seemed a pity. For there is a good deal more of it than I certainly realized. But it has not travelled, and only too little of it has been published in the West." So says John A. T. Robinson, in the preface of his book: **Truth is Two-Eyed.**[1] The intention of this paper is not to discover reasons for this blackout, but rather to make a meager attempt to throw some light on the Indian theological scene by making a brief presentation of the earnest efforts made by a few Indian Christians to contextualize Christian theology in India.

Sometimes the figure of a potted plant is used the describe the Hellenized vision of Christianity brought to India. This pot has to be broken if the plant is to take roots in Indian soil. This is not an easy task because of what has been described by a Western interpreter of Indian theology as the "Latin Captivity of the Church" in India (Robin Boyd) or by an Indian theologian as "the Indian Church's tutelage under Western missionaries or Eastern ecclesiastics" (M. M. Thomas).

The task of the Indian theologian has been described as to proclaim the Christian gospel "with challenging relevance" (Hogg) in the Indian context. M. M. Thomas concurs as follows: "By the current use of the term 'Indian Christian Theology' what we mean is the struggle of the Church in India to 'proclaim the gospel into the contemporary situation' of modern India, using the tools derived from the religious and secular environment obtaining here."[2] Early attempts at indigenization collected conceptual tools from Hindu religious traditions and the Indian classical culture while more recent attempts chiefly concentrate on the "India of secular humanism." Indian theologians realize that if the content of the gospel is to confront the context of modern India as a proclamation of good news, it has to address both the religious context as well as the secular ideological context of India.

The creative contributions from the Third World to contemporary Christian theology raise the question of the relationship between content and context. To live and think authentically in one's own context is the prime motivation of the Third World theologies. This has given rise to creativity, vitality and variety of Christian thought in the Third

[1] John A. T. Robinson, *Truth is Two-Eyed* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979), p. x.

[2] M. M. Thomas, "Towards an Indian Understanding of Jesus Christ," in Mathai Zachariah, ed., *The Indian Church: Identity and Fulfillment* (Madras: C.L.S., 1971), p. 17.



World countries. A new understanding of the Christian Mission, the relation between Christian faith and indigenous cultures, Christian participation in nation-building and in the struggle for development, justice and liberation — these have been some of the contextual issues that Third World theologians are grappling with and attempting to articulate.

Writing a foreword for a book containing the essays of Asian Theologians, Charles West comments, "What happens here is not just the indigenization of a 'foreign message'; nor is it only the revolutionizing of an old society. Contextuality means rather the continuing transformation of every society and every human life by the gospel of God's work within it. To discern this and make it known is the aim of all these writers."[3]

The Three "Margas"

A typology of the Indian Christian theology can be worked out in terms of the three roads or *margas* for attaining *moksha* or liberation. They are the following:

Jnana Marga (the way of knowledge)
Bhakti Marga (the way of devotion)
Karma Marga (the way of action)

According to the Hindu understanding, the devotee who walks through *Jnana Marga* overcomes the mist of *maya* that finally leads to the merger of *atman* (individual soul) with *Paramatman* (the Supreme Soul — *Brahman*). The great exponent of this teaching was the 8th century Philosopher Shankara.

The way of *Bhakti* refers to the path of love or even emotional devotion to a personal god. Exponent of this teaching was Ramanjua of the late 11th and early 12th century. The way of *Karma* refers to the path of action (both good deeds and ritual obedience), and it has the least priority compared to the previous two in traditional parlance because it is delegated to ordinary people with no scholarly or mystical talents. But in modern times this has received a better recognition with a new interpretation given to it by Mahatma Gandhi who preferred to describe himself as a follower of *Karma Marga.* According to him selfless service to God and humanity is the supreme way of self-realization.

These three thought-forms of the different *margas* have provided Indian theologians with media for the expression of Christian belief in an indigenous form. Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya has a preference for the path of knowledge while Bishop Appasamy espouses the path of devotion. More recently, those in dialogue with secular humanism in India would prefer the third approach. M. M. Thomas, who is considered as "the true

[3] Charles C. West, "Foreword by a Western Thologian" in Douglas J. Elwood, ed., *Asian Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980), p. 11.

given of modern Indian theology,"[4] attempts to hold the three in balance while holding a preference for the third one, and he elicits the following comment from Boyd which Bishop Robinson quotes: "One feels that if Gandhi had become a Christian, and had lived through the turmoil of the quarter century since his death, his theology might have been somethig like this."[5] Three representative theologians, one from each group, will be discussed briefly.

Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya (1861-1907)

Upadhyaya's friendship with two C.M.S. missionaries led to his conversion in 1888 at the age of 27. He joined the Roman Catholic Church, choosing as his name Theophilus which hs translated as Brahmabandhab (the friend of Brahman). From the very beginning he was unhappy with the western "coating" of the church in India. He felt that "Indian thought can be made just as useful to Christianity as Greek thought had been to Europe."[6] His desire to start a *matha* (monastery) did not come to fulfillment because of the lack of cooperation from the Roman Catholic Church. Later he became more and more involved in the developing national struggle, and he was among the first who advocated political independence for India. He also adopted several cultural practices of Hinduism as he felt that he was culturally a Hindu while being at heart a Christian. He was arrested on a charge of sedition and shortly thereafter became ill and died at the age of 46.

Like Bonhoeffer, Upadhyaya's work remains incomplete. However, as Boyd points out, Upadhyaya began new lines of thought and suggested new possibilities of interpreting the Christian gospel in an Indian setting.

The Trinitarian Interpretation of *Saccidananda*

It was Keshub Chunder Sen who first attempted to work out an analogy between God as *Saccidananda* and the Christian Trinity. Upadhyaya followed this up in his famous "Hymn on the Trinity."[7]

I adore,
Being, Intelligence, Bliss
The highest goal,
Despised by the worldly, desired
by the holy saints.

[4] Johannes Aagaard, The Presidential address at the fifth Conference of the International Association for Mission Studies, January, 1982.

[5] Op. Cit., p. 142. Cf. Robin Boyd, *Indian Christian Theology* (Madras, C.L.S., 1975), p. 330.

[6] Quoted by R. Boyd, Ibid., p. 64.

[7] Quoted by M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1969), pp. 101-102.



I adore,
The Supreme, Primeval, Highest
Full, indivisible,
Transcendent, yet immanent.

I adore,
The One with inner relations
Holy, self-contained,
Self-conscious, incomprehensible.

I adore,
The Father, Highest Lord,
Unbegotten,
The rootless Principle of the Tree
of Existence,
Who creates through Intelligence.

I adore,
The Son, uncreate, Eternal Word,
Supreme
The Image of the Father, whose
form is intelligence
Giver of highest Release.

I adore,
The Spirit proceeding from Being
and Intelligence,
The Blessed Creator, intense
Bliss, the Sanctifier,
Swift in movement, speaking
through the Word,
The Giver of Life.

The terminology of this hymn is mainly derived from Hinduism. The symbolism of "the living tree" is dear to the Hindu. The highest Indian word that can be used for God, as the unqualified Absolute, is *Brahman.* Traditionally, Brahman can be interpreted only negatively ("neti," "neti" = not this, not this). And yet Indian thinkers have always held that there is one legitimate description of Brahman as Being ***(Sat),*** Intelligence ***(Cit),*** and Bliss ***(Ananda)*** [Sat + Cit + Ananda = Saccidananada].

According to Upadhyaya, *Brahman* as *Saccidananda* can be understood fully only in terms of the Christian Trinity. Upadhyaya is not a Hindu drawing a parallel between *Saccidananda* and the Trinity. "Rather, having come himself to know God in Christ, his own personal experience of God is triune, and he find the Vedantic teaching fulfilled here in a more meaningful way even than in Sankara."[8]

Upadhyaya attempts to explain the doctrine of Incarnation with the aid of the concept of human nature in *Vedanta* Philosophy. According to *Vedanta,* human nature is composed of five sheaths or divisions *(Kosha).* They are:

Physical *(annamaya)*
Vital *(pranamaya)*
Mental *(manomaya)*
Intellectual *(vinjanmaya)*
Spiritual *(anandamaya)*

These five sheaths are presided over by a personality which knows itself and is but a reflected spark of the Supreme Reason, who abides in every man as the prime

[8] Robin Boyd, *Indian Christian Theology,* p. 73.

source of life and light. Upadhyaya says that "the time-incarnate Divinity is also composed of five sheaths; but it is presided over by the Person of the Logos himself and not by any created personality *(aham)*. The five sheaths and the individul agent, enlivened and illumined by Divine Reason, who resides in a special manner in the temple of humanity, make up man. But in the God-man *(Nara-Hari)*, the five sheaths are acted upon directly by the Logos-God and not through the medium of any individuality *(aham)*."[9]

Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya has been described as "the Indian Clement of Alexandria" because he regarded *Vedanta* as "Tutor unto Christ." His limitation is that he attempted to develop Indian Christian Theology within a Thomistic framework. This has been a bane of Catholic attempts at indigenous theology, according to M. M. Thomas, with two recent exceptions, namely, Panikkar and Klostermaier. Upadhyaya's emphasis on the will of God and ethics is weak and this led him to accept cultural expressions without discrimination.

Sadhu Sunder Singh (1889-1929)

Sunder Singh was not a theologian in the technical sense, but his writings and recorded sayings are full of Indian theology. Hence K. Baago is correct in saying that "His contribution to an indigenous Christian theology in India is therefore much larger than a superficial reading of his writings reveals."[10] Both Upadhyaya and Sunder Singh were converts from Hinduism, lived as Christian Sanyasns, advocated indigenous methods in the mission of the Church, tried to formulate their theology in indigenous terms and stood outside the organized Church. If Upadhyaya's leanings were towards the philosophical tradition of Hinduism, Sunder Singh was attracted to the *Bhakti* tradition.

Sunder Singh's mother, who was a woman of outstanding devotion and love, brought up her son in the *bhakti* tradition of Hinduism as well as of the Sikh religion. By the age of seven he knew **Bhagavad Gita** by heart, and by sixteen he had read the **Granth** of the Sikhs, the **Quran** of the Muslims and several of the Upanishads. Even though he was introduced to Christianity in the mission school he was strongly opposed to this "foreign religion." He had an intense spiritual thirst to obtain the realiztion of God. One night he decided to commit suicide, but the same night he had a vision of Jesus and at the age of sixteen he was baptized. Since he felt that he obtained *Samadhi* through a vision of

[9] M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, p. 106.

[10] Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity* (Madras: C.L.S., 1969), p. 70.



Christ, he decided to become a *Sadhu.*

Sunder Singh is always Christocentric in his thought. The starting point of theology for him is the personal experience of Christ. He had a negative approach to Church dogmatics. He said, "We Indians do not want a doctrine, not even a religious doctrine; we have enough and more than enough of that kind of thing; we are tired of doctrines. We need the Living Christ."[11] By faith we get engrafted into Christ and thus we become new creatures. Christ and the believer maintain in union their separate identities. There is no vedantic absorption. The same illustration taken from **Chandogya Upanishad** to demonstrate *tat tvam asi,* "that art thou," is explained by Sunder Singh to mean faith-union with Christ, without the absorption of personality.

Sunder Singh's doctrine of sin is original in the sense that he retains several features of the Hindu doctrine of *Karma.* "Because man is fallen, he sins; he is unable in his own power to do what is good. And that sin, in the nature of things, brings with it its own retribution, through the internal change and hardening of man's character, the degeneration of his whole personality — in an inevitable process which might even be called *Karma.* This *karma,* the result of our sinful actions, can cast us into hell, unless we avail ourselves of the salvation offered in Christ."[12]

Sunder Singh's attitude towards the non-Christian saints of India is a positive one. He accepts the validity of certain kinds of Hindu religious experience. Insofar as this experience is true and valid it is attributable to Christ and the Holy Spirit, even when no such acknowledgement is made. According to him, "Christiantiy is the fulfillment of Hinduism. Hinduism has been digging channels. Christ is the water to flow through these channels."[13] While genuine truth-seekers are guided by the light of the star, those who are in Christ are guided by the light of the sun. He felt that the European form of Christianity is a hindrance to Christ and so he used to say, "Indians greatly need the Water of Life, but they do not want it in European vessels."[14]

Sunder Singh's theological thought pattern is very much indigenous, and since it is highly Christocentric, it got ready acceptance within the church. But his exposition of the Christian doctrine is far from systematic. Except for Bishop Appasamy, other Indian theologians have been slow to follow up Sunder Singh's theological methods.

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[11] Quoted by Robin Boyd, Op. Cit., p. 105.

[12] Ibid., p. 101.

[13] Ibid., p. 107.

[14] Ibid., p. 109.

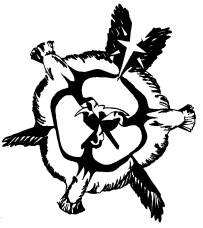
P. D. Devanandan (1901-1962)

Paul Devanandan, a Christian minister's son in Madras, came under the influence of K. T. Paul, a leader of the Indian Independence struggle and a friend of Gandhi. He had his theological education at the Pacific School of Religion, California and at at Yale University. First he was a Professor at the United Theological College, Bangalor and later he became the founder-director of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society along with M. M. Thomas. He gave one of the major addresses at the New Delhi assembly of the World Council of Churches. His important works are **Christian Concern in Hinduism** (1961) and **Preparation for Dialogue** (1964).

With Devanandan a new development takes place in Indian theology and that is a greater interest in "contemporary Hinduism" instead of classical Hinduism, and an attempt to articulate the meaning of Christian faith in interaction with the contemporary socio-political context. The ideologies that operate to build a new future for Independent India need to be considered seriously by the Christian theologians, along with the religions in India. Devanandan's contribution is that he provided a basic framework for a theology of dialogue in the context of Christian participation in nation-building activities and in encounter with Neo-Hinduism in that process. Devanandan observed that "the real problem in Hindu India is to effect a synthesis between the traditional world view and contemporary secularism. Thoughtful Hindu leaders are wrestling with this problem and it is in relation to this concern that the good news of God incarnate in Jesus Christ will have to be spelled out."[15]

Devanandan takes up the concept of Jesus Christ as the *Adipwinsha* (the Divine Man, the bearer of a New Humanity/New Creation) from Keshub Chunder Sen and Upadhyaya, later developed by P. Chenchiah. Devanandan further interprets the thought of Jesus as the first-fruits of a new creation, breaking into history, and directing it towards the final consummation. It is not a natural evolution as Chenchiah seems to think, but rather a radical decision for Christ or conversion that brings the new creation. Along with the personal dimension of the new creation, Devanandan underscores the social as well as the cosmic dimensions, and it is worked out in terms of eschatological hope and historical fulfillment. According to him, the eschaton, which in the biblical terminology can be described as the "hope of glory" is already present wherever the new creation is in being. That means the present is so to say conditioned by the future, and the future kingdom is already in operation in

[15] P. D. Devanandan, *Preparation for Dialogue,* Quoted by R. Boyd, Ibid., p. 203.



changing men and communities in the present history.

Devanandan sees the changes happening in Hinduism as part of the transformations taking place in the present history due to the impact of the new creation in Christ. For example, over against the traditional view, Neo Hinduism attaches great importance to the material world, the importance of history and the possibility of transforming the world and society. That means the reality of the new creation has a wider sphere than the church. All persons, not merely Christians, are taken up in the great redemptive movements in history. A new humanity is now in the making "in which all persons are being reconciled to God, one to another, and to each to his own self" and it is possible to look for signs of the new creation outside the church. M. M. Thomas also follows this line of thinking and interprets it as follows:

"Like Chenchiah, Devanandan emphasized that the new creation in Christ is not merely something that touches human history from without as a tangent touches a circle, instead it becomes a process that takes hold of the process of human history from within, and gives it shape and direction. It makes it possible for faith to look for the signs of God's new creation in Christ, not only in the transformed lives of individuals, but also in the struggles and purposes of men to renew structures of society, culture and religion and to transform earth and heaven in the name of the dignity and destiny of man."[16]

Basic Issues on Indigenization

A few basic issues related to the task of indigenization or contextualization in the light of the experiences of Indian theologians are pointed out as concluding remarks.[17]

The Role of Pre-Understanding

The origin and development of the Christological formulations in the New Testament shows that the interpretation of "who Jesus is" takes different lines and depends on differing pre-Christian thought-patterns, whether mythical or metaphysical, held by the witness or the hearer. The church faced this issue when it crossed the frontier from the Hebrew to the Hellenistic milieu. Indian theologians feel the same theological dynamic in their attempt at doing theology in the Indian context as it means a crossing the frontier from the Western to the Indian-Hindu milieu. M. M. Thomas finds the danger in leaving the mythical or meta-

[16] M. M. Thomas, "Toward an Indigenous Christian Theology," in G. H. Anderson, ed., *Asian Voices in Christian Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980), p. 32.

[17] For a detailed exposition, see M. M. Thomas, "Epilogue: Criteria of an Indian Christian Theology" in *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance,* pp. 284-318.

physical thought-patterns of the context untackled. There is also danger if it plays a normative, rather than an ancilliary function. So he proposes the following solution.

"When metaphysical or mythical thought-patterns are used as normative rather than ancillary, as basic rather than subsidiary to the givenness of the Christian truth, there is danger. But this cannot be avoided by ignoring metaphysics and myths; in fact, it is increased where a people's pre-understanding is left alone without bringing it under the service of the Christian Gospel. They will remain pre-Christian in their mind, and this will affect the whole person in due course. Their response to the Christian faith, being unrelated to their inner thought-patterns, will remain limited and immature. The answer to the danger therefore lies in learning to speak of Christ in terms of pre-understanding, and in that process to transform and develop those patterns themselves, bringing them into dialogue with the Gospel of Jesus Christ along with its biblical background."[18]

The *Previousness* of Christ and the Work of the Holy Spirit

The missionary context is an important aspect to be considered in the development of Indian theology. The insight that the encounter between God and man in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit is previous to the presence and words of the missionary has come to be increasingly recognized in the modern missionary experience. For example, D. T. Niles, the missionary-theologian from Sri Lanka says, "The important thing to recognize is the fact that that which determines the Church's mission remains independent of it. . . . This means that those engaged in the mission must be prepared to encounter in their work the result of God's free initiative, the previousness of Jesus Christ in every situation, the all-embracing work of the Holy Spirit within which the mission of the Church is set."[19] Then the task of the missionary is to "expose the ever-present Christ" (M. Warren). The Church which is called to participate in God's mission should be willing to discern the ferment of the Kingdom even outside its frontiers and the interpretation of this theological dynamic is an important concern for an indigenous theology. M. M. Thomas says, "The ferment of the Kingdom of Christ and of Salvation-history is not confined to the church. The Church is to discern, witness to, respond to and (in relation to the theological task we are considering) interpret the dynamics of the Kingdom or salvation in every situation."[20]

[18] Ibid., pp. 303-304.

[19] Ibid., p. 301.

[20] Ibid., p. 308.

The Empathic Apologist: Pastoral Counseling Insights into Christian Apologetics

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Ashland and Mansfield, Ohio

Several years ago, a leading Christian apologist crossed swords with a well-known "death of God" theologian in a public debate. After it was all over, many members of the audience found themselves left with curiously ambiguous feelings about the outcome. The Christian apologist had clearly "won" the debate, but the sympathies of much of the audience went to his opponent. Why? Because the "death of God" theologian had somehow managed to maintain a calm, personable and kindly disposition. This appealed to the audience in a way that the biting arguments of the apologist did not.

It is our goal in this article to show that apologetics has greatly suffered both in image and effectiveness due largely to a widespread ignorance of the basic principles of interpersonal dynamics. We would like to call attention to some of these oft-overlooked principles and illustrate the manner in which they might be fruitfully applied to apologetics.

Apologetics as it is Usually Done

Christians are often quick to accuse the nonbeliever of "rationalism" i.e., the idolatrous elevation of human reason. Christian apologists themselves, however, have sometimes been extremely prone to this same transgression. Typically, the apologist has mastered a set of rather sophisticated arguments designed to take his philosophical opponent down to the mat as quickly and convincingly as possible. Be it one of the traditional proofs, a set of historical and scientific evidences or a method of critical attack on the opponent's ill-fated position, his weapon burns in its holster just waiting to be compellingly employed.

This picture seems most absurd when one considers that the "encounter" described is between two living persons who are to discuss heartfelt beliefs concerning such things as moral right and wrong, the meaning and purpose of life, or courage in the face of death. The apologist often pursues these matters as an intellectual predator in pursuit of his prey.

Of course, not all apologists approach their subjects with a bristling attitude, and many textbooks devote an initial chapter to the importance of the working of the Spirit and faith in personal conversion.[1] However, the balance seems to be

[1] Some examples are Floyd Hamilton, *The Basis of the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); Oliver Barclay, *Reasons for Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1974); Clark Pinnock, *Set Forth Your Case* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971); John Gerstner, *Reasons for Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1967); and Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Arrowhead Springs Col.: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972). A rare exception is E. J. Carnell, *Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948), which offers seven pages on "the practical human predicament." Hayden V. White, *The Ordeal of Liberal Humanism*, 2 vols., vol. 2, *Since The French Revolution* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970, p. 199).

somewhat off. Generally, the bulk of a standard textbook is devoted to developing the various available arguments for Christianity — arguments for God's existence, theodicies in response to the problem of evil, treatments of religious language, the resurrection and miracles, etc. Unfortunately, such texts generally overlook questions of practical methodology, and offer virtually no attention to the manner in which one comes to develop a relationship with the nonbeliever in the context of intellectual discussion.

Apologetics is often characterized by an offensive and threatening tone. This in turn brings forth a defensive and argumentative spirit in the other person which is certainly counter-productive. In addition, the approach suffers from a certain lack of depth, due to its overly intellectual and abstract subject matter. This makes it extremely difficult to move from the apologetic task to that of evangelism.

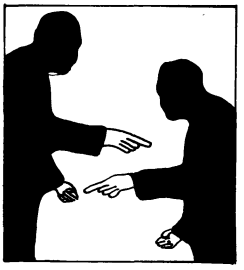
In general, the apologetic approach fails due to the impersonal, unfeeling and detached manner it idealizes in seeking to establish purely intellectual credibility. No genuine interpersonal contact has been made, unless accidentally, and the significant concerns and feelings of both participants are prevented from coming to expression. When all is said and done, they never truly meet as persons.

Too often, Christ, the master of ideas and the great dialectician, is substituted for Jesus of Nazareth, lover of men and women, the doctor of ailing souls. Interestingly enough, it was in considering Christ in terms of this latter image, as a doctor to the sick, that we were led to the study of pastoral counseling and therapy in search of a more appropriate model for apologetics. It is to this area that we now turn.

A More Positive Approach

Christians understand that they have a biblical responsibility to offer an explanation for the hope that they hold. From 1 Peter 3:15-16 we learn that this should occur in a way that affirms the person and genuinely effects a positive outcome. There are obviously methods of approaching such dialogue which are more conducive to meaningful communication than others.

People have been conditioned by our society to be impersonal and self-justifying. This is a condition which may be unique to the twentieth century and hence not generalizable for apologetics, but it is an important determinant in any current and relevant approach. People have come to assume that "putting up walls" is both natural and practical in interpersonal dialogue. It seems odd and self-defeating that much applied apologetics should be taught to the tune of this same impersonal viewpoint. The response to such an object-oriented ap-



proach tends (not surprisingly) to be similar to the individual's response to other elements in society which also treat the person as secondary. The study of interpersonal dynamics, especially pastoral counseling, has been much occupied with understanding and offering therapy to those caught in this impersonal form of relating. It is thus of great value to the apologist in getting beyond culturally-induced forms of hostility and defensiveness, so as to achieve communication and establish meaningful relationships.

The relevance of input from the field of pastoral counseling becomes increasingly apparent when one considers the resemblance between the counseling relationship and the apologetical dialogue. Each is concerned with the personal history of the individual, seeking to gain an understanding of the experiences that brought that person to his present position. Both counselors and apologists are interested in the way a person experiences objective reality and interprets it subjectively. They are also curious about the individual's life goals, and how the present situation and mindset contribute to or detract from their realization.

The material mentioned above is not unlike that revealed in the unfolding of a trusting friendship. As self disclosure occurs in a developing primary relationship, it may be anxiety-provoking. There is always the risk of rejection. An atmosphere of trust and acceptance is a prerequisite to such personal disclosure.

Facilitating Empathy in an Interpersonal Encounter

The concept of *empathy,*[2] much discussed by person-centered therapists, embodies receptive qualities. When this feature is introduced into an apologetical, or any interpersonal, encounter it will lead from superficial defensiveness to a warm and honest relationship.

The psychologist Rollo May describes a personal experience of empathizing with another:

> While he talked I sat perfectly relaxed and let my eyes rest on his face. I permitted myself to become absorbed in his story. And soon I was so completely engrossed that I was unconscious to our physical surroundings in the room and was aware only of this boy's frightened eyes, his tremulous voice, and the fascinating human drama which he was describing.[3]

Empathy is a holistic involvement of all portions of our being. Three particular aspects are especially important to facilitating an empathic relationship, "the spiritual," "the mental," and "the physical".

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[2] Rollo May (*The Art of Counseling,* New York: Abingdon Press, 1967 p. 77) has defined empathy as "The feeling, or thinking, of one personality into another until some state of identification is achieved. In this identification real understanding between people can take place; without it, in fact, no understanding is possible."

[3] Rollo May, *The Art of Counseling,* p. 76.

The spiritual. In any dialogue it is easy to find ourselves hearing words instead of meanings, words unaccompanied by feelings and personal experiences. As a result, the non-Christian receives merely a fragment of our attention while our minds wander or we formulate our next brilliant response.

A fundamental step toward correcting this, employing Martin Buber's terminology, is to move from an I-It orientation to one of I-Thou. I honor the other individual with the same significance with which God honors me. The way I encounter God and the way I encounter another human being must not contradict. After all, are we not interested in communicating something of the nature of Christ along with our message? A healthy approach is to come to the other person with a sense of his or her spiritual significance as a person. Our encounter with the other person is a "spiritual event," and hence of great importance to God. As Christians, it is only proper that we should regard the interpersonal encounter as important and deserving more than a fragmentary part of our energies.

The mental. Our frame of mind also has great impact on the quality of empathy we extend. Prerequisite to the attainment of interpersonal love and acceptance is a temporary suspension of our own biases and "right to judge." As Carl Rogers has written:

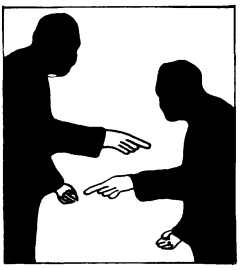
> To be with another in this way means that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another's world without prejudice. In some sense, it means you lay aside yourself and this can only be done by a person who is secure enough in himself that he knows he will not get lost in what may turn out to be the strange and bizarre world of the other, and can comfortably return to his own world when he wishes.[4]

Unless we are willing to humble ourselves and regard the word of another individual as more important than our own impulsive judgments we cannot expect to experience genuine empathy.

As we allow ourselves to experience another person in this way, emotions may be stirred within us. Emotional immaturity commonly expresses itself in apologists in two ways. Being unaware of their own internal emotional climate or their inability to express their feelings congruently, they remain stoical or lose control. This results in a disparaging or insulting tone. They find it hard to accept that a person could be simultaneously an unbeliever and an emotionally honest person.

The physical. As we consider how best physically to present ourselves to the non-Christian, it is valuable to contemplate how we prefer others to present

[4] Carl Rogers, "Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being," *The Counseling Psychologist* 5, No. 2 (1975), p. 4.



themselves to us. There is little more annoying than attempting to express one's emotionally-laden beliefs to someone who is staring blankly into space. When eye contact is maintained, we communicate that what the others are expressing is valuable, simply because they are articulating their own heartfelt experience.

Obnoxious habits such as finger tapping and crossed leg swinging may detract from the focal point of conversation. It is much more comfortable to dialogue with a person who sits in a relaxed but attentive fashion, and who, when something of particular importance is being said, leans slightly forward. At an especially sensitive moment, a gentle touch may be appropriate.

It might also be noted in passing that many of these suggestions are more easily facilitated if the encounter is not pursued on a noisy street corner or some other distracting or public place. Also, time is an important ingredient. Authentic interpersonal dialogue is never conducted in haste, and the apologist who frequently looks at his watch is probably wasting his time.

Person-centered counselors emphasize that viewing communication as a holistic experience is essential. A "trusting environment," in turn, leads to opportunities for one's own truth system to be shared (in any case, the Christian one). As an outgrowth of the established primary relationship, the non-Christians are encouraged to consider an alternative belief system, while honestly and nondefensively examining their own. It is no surprise then that a common byproduct of empathic encounter is *change*. Rogers reports:

> Research evidence keeps piling up, and it points strongly to the conclusion that a high degree of empathy in a relationship is possibly the most potent and certainly one of the most potent factors in bringing about change and learning.[5]

Empathy in dialogue constitutes an effective method of lowering defensiveness and affirming the non-Christian as a person. We have sought to note some essential aspects involved in building an empathic relationship. The achievement of empathy serves to heighten the significance of the dialogue for both persons. The more "intellectual" dimension of the apologetical dialogue can then occur in a trusting arena where there is more likely to be receptivity.

Am Empathic Approach to Apologetics

What has empathy to do with the task of the apologist to give reasons and arguments for his faith? How is building a case intellectually to be integrated into achieving rapport interpersonally?

[5] Carl Rogers, "Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being," p. 3.

A. Setting the Atmosphere

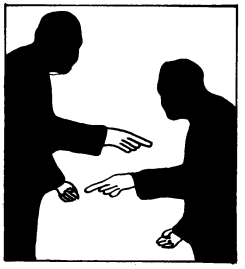
It might be imagined that where truth is the object, nothing can resist that "force of ideas"; even those non-Christians most entrenched in their position cannot resist the compelling power of a sound argument. Numerous apologists have made this boast. Unfortunately, they overlook the fact that even in the face of a compellingly sound argument, several counter-strategems remain close at hand to the unbeliever. An unbeliever, for example, can appeal to tangential considerations, demanding full explication of each before being willing to continue on in the mainstream of the argument. Other such strategies include irrationalisms, haranguing, *ad hominem* attacks, or appeal to an area of knowlege unfamiliar to the apologist. All are effective roadblocks and detours thrown into the path of the apologist intent on "compelling them to come in" by means of rational argument alone. While in some cases such tactics result from sheer stubbornness or indifference of the non-Christian, we would argue that these cases are not nearly so prevalent as may be imagined. Rather, such counter-productive behavior results from fear, insecurity, and in general, the sense that this is not a safe place to unburden the hurts and secrets of one's heart.

If a non-Christian is to comprehend the belief system of the apologist, accurately assessing the weight and significance of its various components, he or she must somehow reach out beyond the confines of his own system to this strange new way of looking at the world. A number of philosophers have noted the extreme difficulty of making this "paradigm shift" (to use Thomas Kuhn's terminology); one does not easily and quickly grasp hold of meaning structures incommensurable with one's own.[6] On the other hand, the experience of an empathic relationship, set in an atmosphere of trust and openness, can greatly encourage an individual to self-exploration. Creativity and even curiosity flourish in an environment of friendly support. Without it, the non-Christian finds that he or she "just can't understand" why these things are so important and thrilling to the Christian.

We have seen that setting the right atmosphere simply aids one in gaining a hearing for one's arguments through reducing impediments and enhancing the other person. Paul, after years of experience, summarizes this well in advance to the young Timothy:

> Have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponent with gentleness. God

[6] See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed., rev. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).



may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will (II Timothy 2:23-26).

B. How to Argue Empathically

Does an empathic approach affect even the substance, as well as the style, of the argument? The following are four axioms which help to shape an empathic approach to apologetical argumentation.

(1) **There is no chasm between personal matters and intellectual beliefs.** One's rational activities cannot (and should not) be radically separated from one's other concerns as a person. Beliefs are an expression of uniquely personal commitments and experiences. The apologist should beware of overly-intellectualized expressions of the world and life; he or she should seek to help the non-Christian discover and clarify the factors which motivate and lie behind expressed beliefs.

(2) **There is no conflict between relating interpersonally and dialoguing intellectually.** The best arguments are those which offer convincingly superior ways of dealing with life, especially in regard to the sorts of experiences shared by the non-Christian. The non-Christian must come to see that Christianity offers a better way to interpret and face up to life; it offers the best explanation and support for the things worth believing.

One cannot speak about these issues if one has not, empathically speaking, experienced them. Too often, the apologist answers questions the unbeliever is not asking, and portrays God as saving what the individual does not want. Through empathic dialogue, the apologist enables the non-Christian to discover the things he or she truly values and seeks; the apologist is then in a position to demonstrate how Christianity best provides a basis for these things.

(3) **The beliefs of others are best assessed when viewed in light of their presuppositions.** This means that the best approach to considering the viewpoint or philosophy of another is (a) to consider it as an entire, interconnected belief system, and (b) to start "from the bottom up." Viewing it as a complete system, as opposed to arguing about specific issues (e.g., the resurrection of Christ or whether there is a link between apes and men) helps us to better assess the overall strengths and logic of the other's position. The best way to gain a picture of the entire system is to ask questions relating to the non-Christian's broadest beliefs and most influential and formative experiences. This usually leads in time to the person's presuppositions, which constitute the most basic values and assumptions supporting and integrating a belief system. Speaking of these things helps us get to the *real* issues. Often these presuppositions are interpretations given to some of the most

significant life experiences. Assuming that a relationship of trust and openness has been established, these things can be talked about — and they are *well* worth talking about. Two of the best ways to gain an awareness of these presuppositions are (1) to ask questions, and (2) to listen attentively.

(4) **Openness to belief-change is enhanced by the experience of interpersonal rapport.** We have maintained throughout this article that the motivation to change can be elicited and encouraged by establishing honest interpersonal relationships characterized by a high degree of openness. Yet, being receptive to the other person and his or her viewpoint does not entail a relativistic attitude towards truth. Here the analogy with counseling sheds some light. The skillful counselor, expressing acceptance of the client, seeks to clarify and reflect back to the client the client's own feelings and interpretations. In doing this, the counselor does not necessarily agree with the client's way of seeing things. In the same way, the apologist must learn to communicate acceptance of the other person, acknowledging their difference of views, all the while encouraging the non-Christian toward a healthy questioning and reconsideration of beliefs. The apologist understands the non-Christian's perspective, but invites that person to consider another perspective which better puts the pieces together. Non-Christians thus find themselves in a supportive relationship, yet challenged by an alternative viewpoint which refuses to let them close themselves off from hope, renewal, and the claims of God on life. Interpersonal rapport is an unforgettable, and very special encounter.

The Theology of the Cross and Social Ministry

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Early in the Reformation, Martin Luther enunciated the Theology of the Cross as the basic principle to criticize late Medieval epistemology, scholastic and popular doctrines of grace, and the papal doctrine of the church. Jesus' death on the cross, said Luther, proves that we cannot reason our way from natural phenomena to God, that we cannot save ourselves by our works, and that we cannot assume that the outwardly successful institutional church is the true church. Luther used the Theology of the Cross to cut away false ideas, and as a foundation for building a new and better structure. To continue the Reformation means to continue the application of the Theology of the Cross to new areas of the teaching and the action of the Christian church. Only as we expose our doctrines and our practices to the crucifixion of Jesus will we abe able to finish — or at least to move in the direction of finding — that Luther began.

Among those issues that we could bring under the cross is our social ministry. I still remember my years as a "missionary-at-large" when I had to justify every effort that even smelled like social ministry as something called pre-evangelism. The mission board had to be assured that there would be a tangible, statistically measurable return for the efforts which we expended on the pressing ethical, social, and political issues of our neighborhood and the world. Was this a social ministry criticized by and founded on the *Theologia Crucis?* I think not. In the following theses we will try to begin the process of bringing social ministry under the cross.

1. **God does not provide an explanation of the problem of evil and human suffering. Instead, he chooses to identify with those who suffer and are victimized by evil.**

There can be little doubt that all those who have attempted to provide a rational explanation for suffering have failed. Scripture provides no answer — that *is* the point of Job, after all. Philosophy and natural theology too can only provide answers that are ultimately unsatisfying. There is no good reason when a child is killed by a drunk driver, refugee women are raped and robbed by pirates, racists enforce apartheid at the point of a gun, terrorist bombs kill innocent people, or nuclear weapons threaten to kill us all. The exploiters are rewarded with wealth and power; the poor are rewarded with hunger and oppression. Anyone who would attempt to explain this is a fool.

The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth reveals a God who does not try forcing us to accept an explanation for the problem of evil. God instead chooses to become a human being, to become one with those who suffer, and to suffer himself. Rather than explain evil, he chooses to become one who is victimized by evil and to suffer that most gruesome death of deaths by crucifixion.

2. **The most fundamental norm for the life and teaching of the Christian**

Church is our worship of a crucified messiah.

On the cross Jesus of Nazareth cried out, "My God, my God, who have you abandoned me?" According to the tradition of his time, he had not only been condemned to death justly, but he had also, because he had been hung on a tree, been condemned to eternal death by the Law. Religious people consider us immoral weaklings and the intellectuals consider us fools. We are a scandal to the whole world.

In our life as the people of Christ we can never venture very far from this truth. Whenever we formulate doctrine it must be in the light of who this Jesus is whom we confess as Lord and Savior. Whenever we take a stand on issues of ethics, lifestyle, or politics, we must stand in the knowledge that our Lord was the accursed and abandoned Jesus of Golgatha. When we forget that, we begin to proclaim our theology and our lives in glorious self-righteousness. We see our systems as complete and perfect, and we excuse our lives of plenty in the midst of pain and poverty. We institutionalize the church and glorify our achievements.

3. **Since the church is the body of Christ, it is called to identify with those whom society considers most expendable.**

By stating that the crucifixion of Christ is the norm of our earthly existence as Christians, we also identify with the suffering of those who are victimized by evil. This is not to say that the victims of this world are any less sinners than those who victimize. Rather, the victimizers seem to make a "greater profit" from the existence of sin than others. If we are to be the body of the crucified Christ, we will choose to identify with those at whose expense profit is made. While both the slumlord and the tenement dweller are sinners in the sight of God, we are called to identify most with the one at the bottom of the economic and social hierarchy. The more expendable society considers people to be, the more we are called to identify with those people. We are called to stand in their shoes, to experience what they experience, and to suffer their pains. The specific shape of our identification is the visible ministry of the church.

4. **The church identifies with the expendable both in its proclamation and in its action.**

Our efforts in the world cannot ever become merely words or merely actions. Both proclamation and action are mandated by the crucifixion of Jesus. As we proclaim Law and Gospel to a system based on the necessity for some to be powerful and some to be weak, we must not allow our proclamation to become lost in vague generalities about "sin" and "salvation." Jesus announced himself in the synagogue at Nazareth as the one who had come to proclaim release to the captives and good news to the poor. While it is obviously true that every person is captive to sin, we weaken the proc-



lamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ if we neglect what is equally obvious: the world's political and economic structure creates a few wealthy captors and many poor captives. Law and Gospel must be applied to this specific situation in order to be real Law and real Gospel.

The action thrust of our ministry is the focus of our thoughts here, and that too must be determined by the cross. Because we worship a Christ who identified with the suffering of humanity, we dare not allow our action to degenerate into bandaids that relieve some needs for the moment, but actually help to maintain the status quo and to continue the suffering. Rather, our action is to be patterned on the action of Jesus. We are to take responsibility for the world's ills and take the results of those ills on ourselves. When Jesus told his disciples to take up their own crosses and follow him, he was not asking them to identify with the Godforsaken and to be crucified. He calls us to equivalent action.

5. **The process whereby the church actively identifies itself with the victimized and the suffering is called social ministry.**

We call it social ministry because it is directed outward toward the world, to serve the needs of the human race. By serving others we serve our Lord himself. We call this ministry social because human needs occur within social networks and relationships. Politics, economics, culture, and families are the arenas of our service. We call our action ministry because we act as Jesus' disciples and in response to his call.

What we thus label social ministry is nothing more or less than a process by which we fulfill our discipleship. The goal is faithful service of Christ — and faithful service to people in Christ's name. The means are the same means Christ used: identification with the poor and oppressed, taking the part of people who suffer under the domination of evil.

6. **Social ministry serves the immediate needs of oppressed and suffering people.**

When the hungry need food, when refugees need shelter, when the sick need healing, when the unemployed need assistance, when the troubled need counsel, when victims need aid, it is the task of the Christian church to meet those needs. This is the bedrock of all social ministry under the cross. It is also that aspect of our social ministry where it is easiest to lose the perspective of the cross. We always give aid as those who are less than the sisters and brothers in need. Our call is to identify with people as our Lord identified with them.

7. **Social ministry takes the part of the oppressed and the suffering.**

Because of the way the world is structured, social needs are often influenced or caused by government agencies or corporate entities. In many cases help means causing these organizations to change their behavior. For every single case of welfare fraud, there are many cases where welfare agencies fail to pay

benefits to those who are legally entitled to those benefits. In many cases the persons affected do not know their rights or are intimidated by the organization. Since most church members are educated and middle class, they are much more likely to be heard by a welfare department worker, for example, than is an unemployed woman with three children who has no money to buy food. Christians can act as advocates for those who are not often heard by the system. Acting as an advocate can also be a very practical device for helping middle class people experience what it feels like to deal with government agencies and corporations as a poor person.

8. **Social ministry attacks the roots of suffering and oppression in human political systems and cultural patterns.**

There was perhaps a time when we could imagine that suffering and oppression in the world were the results of isolated, individual situations. Now we know better. The very structures of our political and economic life incorporate human error and evil into their operation. We cannot live without structure in this world, but our attempts to create structures often demonstrate our fallenness. Our political, economic, social, and cultural structures can work to create divisions between the powerful and the weak and to maintain each group in its respective position. Social ministry must engage these structures, and it must attempt to bring change. We cannot structure society according to the Gospel; we can attempt to structure it more according to the justice of the Law. There is a role for the church in seeking social change, because this also is a way by which suffering people can be helped. To say that the church ought to "stay out of politics" is absurd. In a political society it is impossible to remain free of politics. The church can choose to remain silent and thereby support the status quo, or it can work to change structures to introduce more justice into the system.

9. **Social ministry identifies the source of suffering and oppression as human sin.**

Part of social ministry under the cross is to announce God's judgment against sin. In his commentary on Psalm 82 (LW 13, 49-50), Luther stated that one of the prime duties of the preacher is to point out and condemn the sins of the rulers. It is perhaps this aspect of our social ministry that makes us most uncomfortable. As preachers we are afraid that our words will make people angry and make us unpopular; as hearers we are afraid that our own sins will be pointed out. But it is necessary for the church to say that hunger in Africa is not isolated from American consumption, that oppression in Latin America is not isolated from the foreign policy of the United States, that poverty is not isolated from the profits of corporations whose stock we own, that ghettos and suburbs spring from public policy. If we are to preach credibly against sin, we cannot ignore the sins



that do the most damage to people, that breeds poverty and hunger in the third world.

10. **In order for our social ministry to be a cross oriented ministry, it must include social service, advocacy, social change, and prophetic preaching.**

In responding to those whom our society considers expendable, we must leave no stone unturned, no potential avenue unexplored. Social ministry under the cross is an organic whole designed to enable Christians to bring peace and well-being to the world. If any aspect is forgotten or avoided, the organism will be denied a part of its being. If we ignore the immediate needs in order to deal with the larger issues, we are not truly concerned with people. If we ignore the larger issues in order to provide immediate aid, we deny people long-term solutions. This is not to say that every Christian or each congregation must do all things or be all things. The church, after all, is a *body,* with many members. The coalitions, networks, and harmony among Christians are a necessity for social ministry.

11. **The goal of social ministry is to maintain the dialogue between the people who live under the shadow of the cross and those who live under the shadow of human sin.**

Through all of our approaches to social ministry, we learn to live in the skins of people who face hunger, pain, fear, poverty, powerlessness, and oppression every day. As we experience the pain of others, we can begin to walk with them on the road to a better life in this world and to participate in God's efforts to rule the world with his justice. As we look from the cross to those who suffer we will learn to speak their language. We will interpret our own ministry to the suffering and oppressed in the light of Christ's suffering. We are called to do social ministry apart from any immediate concern for gaining a hearing for our preaching, yet as we suffer along with the poor, they — and we — will understand the Gospel far better than ever before.

Ministering to the Aging — Touching the Theological Bases

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God Pities Our Finiteness

"Who can understand our human vulnerability?" As people grow older, they face loss of meaning in life, the neglect of their family, their personal unresolved guilts and griefs. Some experience confusion and misunderstanding about their religious faith and practice. Others are hounded to their graves by moral and ethical problems as well as by physical and psychological weaknesses. Psalm 90 begins, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations," and goes on to remind us that we are "to be turned back to dust" and that "the span of our years" is but toil and sorrow, "they are soon gone, and we fly away." And yet, the psalmist's confidence is in the pity of God. He cries out, "Make us glad as many days as thou hast afflicted us . . . let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us."

Trust in God Makes the Difference

How does it all add up? Growing old may be faced with stoicism — this is the way it is, so face it. Or we may face aging with rebellion and resentment — why did God make me this way? It isn't fair. Or we may move into our later years with fears heaped upon fears — who shall deliver me from my enemies? How different is the joyful hope of the glorious liberty of the children of God: "I commend my life to you, dear Lord, I trust your gracious Fatherly care."

While the potter has the right to use the clay as he wishes (Rom. 9:1), we also know that "all things must work together for good to those who are loved of God and called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28ff.).

With trust that God is graciously in charge of life, the believer can spend his or her last years with grace and dignity, free from devastating fear. Faith will receive the Word of God and live it out in submission and obedience, that is, in hopeful trust. Anxiety and fears about old age, sickness, and dying indicate a lack of willingnes to trust the Lord's way with us. Let the heartbeat of God's Spirit within the breast of the aging whisper again and again: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whem shall I fear" (Ps. 27:1). Let the Christian say, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in thee" (Ps. 56:3). How many times did Jesus say, "Don't be afraid, just believe?"

God Refines Us Like Gold

The autumn season of life can actually become a beautiful time to "show forth the praises of God" by harvesting the fruits of the Spirit — fruits like love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23). God calls to use these years for his glory by growing in likeness to Jesus and in giving ourselves to the doing of

his will. There are many promises in the Scriptures which lead us to trust God in the midst of the difficulties and distresses associated with aging and dying. Isaiah of the exile has God say: "Even to your old age I am he (who bore you from the womb), and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and I will save" (Isa. 46:4).

What about the afflictions of old age? Can these be accepted as a mark of God's love? The answer is yes in the sense that God can be trusted to work a blessing of refinement because of them. Life is tested by adversities, and Christians may rejoice in them because God has his hand in all of it. In the first chapters of Second Corinthians Paul catalogues his troubles, and they are many, but then in chapter five he fairly sings with joy over what "living by faith" in his living Lord has meant for him. Likewise, Peter sums it all up from his own experience: God keeps his blessings safe for us in heaven. Be glad when you are sad because of trials — their purpose is to prove that your faith is genuine. Your faith, much more precious than gold, must be tested that it may endure. "Then you will receive praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed" (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3-7). Is this not the sum of it all, as St. Paul puts it: "Every temptation that has come your way is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your power to resist; at the time you are tempted he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out" (1 Cor. 10:13).

God Does What He Wants

We act in sinful pride when we attempt to pass judgment on God. God can do anything he wants to do, any time he wants to do it, any way he wants to do it, and for any purposes he desires to accomplish. The Christian, whose heart is lifted to God in trust, can rest in the assurance that his or her state, whatever it may be, is not an accident of fate nor a tragedy. This may be said in another way: In faith the Christian clings to a God who is too holy to do anything wrong, too powerful to be overcome by any hostile force, too wise to make a mistake, and too loving to do anything unkind. The psalmist wrote, "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4, 5).

We are to look upon the signs of aging as tokens of the fulfilled life that awaits us with God in heaven. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21).

The Aim of Ministry to the Aging

Christian ministry to the elderly will have as its central target the God-in-Christ dimension of life, secure in the promise of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. For the believer the life in and with God is already eternal, a present reality which gives meaning in a life committed to his love and care. This personal, committed relationship brings peace and purpose in life, coupled with a living hope. In Christ all events and relationships of life become new (2 Cor. 5:16-21).

Therefore, Christian ministry to the aging will be founded on the essence of the Gospel, the power of God unto sal-

vation, aimed toward completeness, healing, fulfillment, at-one-with-God-ness. St. Paul puts it like this: "He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness, and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). By grace, God's children are enabled to say yes to God's yes to them in Christ. All the promises of God find their yes in him (2 Cor. 1:20). A yes like this one: "Fear not, I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isa. 43:1).

Life Beyond the Present

To live triumphantly in the aging years includes at least three elements: a) an open and cheerful acknowledgement of what our humanness means before God; b) a resolute trust in what God has done, is doing, and will do in our lives to take care of our human problem; and c) an awareness of life's purpose.

Christian ministry will properly build upon God's covenant of grace in Holy Baptism. I shall never forget the answer I received from a nursing home resident to the question: "What do you consider to be for you the central passage in the Bible?" He thought for a moment, then replied, "It's Romans 6, verses 3 and 4." And then he quoted these verses from memory: "For surely you know this: when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptized into union with his death. By our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life."

The Shape of Ministry to the Aging

Recent survey data reveals that the elderly are most likely to place the highest priority on person-to-person interaction and/or communication in conversation and prayer. Also highly meaningful was the opportunity to talk about health problems, feelings of loneliness and isolation, emotions of grief and/or depression involving a sense of self-worth, adjustment to a health care facility, or problems with living alone at home. In a health care facility, there were problems with the staff and other residents that needed airing. The hearing and understanding of such feelings take time and patience coupled with compassion and empathy. Busy pastors and/or chaplains, who have heard the same stories time and again, as well as relatives and friends who have listened, may tend to make their visits brief and somewhat perfunctory. Survey data reveals that nursing home residents appreciate a caring, listening, understanding, supportive contact and visit.

An organized and trained lay ministry could meet an evident need through some type of "adoption" program. John and Mary simply adopt an elderly shut-in or a nursing home resident who has no special caring friends or relatives who visit on a regular basis. This ministry could well be aimed at helping the "adopted" face the reality of disability, the need for specialized care, and age-limited capabilities. These "adoptive" friends may help their "adopted" to

a. explore, understand and accept the Christian theology of aging, of dying, and of the resurrection;
b. plumb, ponder, understand, and believe the scriptural promises of God in Christ;

c. become involved, according to their abilities, with other persons according to their needs;
d. lift high the cross where they are, with whom they live, and in whatever form is possible and proper in the given situation.

In summary, life is affirmed within the context of one's relationship with God, self, community, and environment. A chaplain said, "One needs to be sensitive to the emotional trauma involved in the aging experience and understand the various losses the aging sustain. Along with that, one needs to be willing and able to help facilitate the grieving, healing, and sustaining process by offering spiritual assurance and comfort, by taking the time to listen and understand the feelings of the elderly, and by talking through with them matters of health and wellbeing."

The Formal Ministry of The Word of God

The next highest priority of ministry, according to the survey, focused on the presentation of the Scriptures in sermons and Bible classes. Spiritual assurance was most appreciated while a focus on punishment of sins and hell was a clear loser. I have been told many times in nursing homes that "I appreciate a sermon that gets into the Bible and digs out the truth." A sermon "off the cuff" comes off with doubtful honors. Bible study sessions that relate the Word of God to relevant needs and concerns are much appreciated. Participation in Holy Communion is equally appreciated.

The Focus of the Ministry

Christian theology affirms that no one can stand before God (either today or on the Last Day) except by God's own righteousness. Is the conclusion to be: Get busy! Do good! Go after righteousness! Not on one's life! Righteousness that counts before God is God's own gift in Jesus Christ. So the surprise of Christianity is that righteousness is gratis, it's a free gift with a name — Jesus Christ. And God himself gives birth to the faith that lays hold of this righteousness in Christ — that, too, is his gift.

God talks to us about ourselves and we are to hear *what* God is saying to us about ourselves. The good news is really good for us when we have a proper sense of the bad news of our situation. Much preaching of the Gospel is without power because it seeks to give people good news who have no sense of their need for it. Or putting it another way, the *answer* of the Gospel is given to people who have not been helped to ask the *questions* that make the Gospel the necessary and indispensable answer.

Christians need to have help from the Scriptures on how to *use* Christ. They need to learn again and again how to let both the Law and the Gospel move into life — the Law to expose those areas where self-seeking idolatry is still thriving and making its own claims of goodness before God; the Gospel to have Christ overtake those areas of the condemned old creation and enable the new man or new woman to function as part of the new creation.

The Ministry of the Caretaking Staff

I have asked many persons who are working in health care facilities why they chose to do so. The answer almost invariably was, "Because I like (sometimes it was love) old people." Variations at times included, "I feel that I can be of special help to people here" or "This is

my ministry." One nurses' aid said, "This work fulfills me."

Members of the caring staff have abundant opportunity to convey the love of God personally through actions that demonstrate such love and kindness, concern, consideration, and compassion. When the love of God is shared, life may be possible of affirmation in spite of negative circumstances. The quality of life in a health care facility is not determined solely by its physical nature, its furnishings and equipment, the diet, or the quality and manner of nursing care. These givens may simply maintain body and physical life. Total care involves activities which, by God's grace and design, will create and enhance the sense of wholeness and wellbeing or which will serve to help the residents become more independent, feel more dignified, and maintain a significant degree of their personhood. A resident said it this way: "God's love becomes real in my experience through those who love and serve me because they know God's love themselves. And I feel secure and whole."

Ministry on the part of relatives and friends, the visiting or staff nurse, the visiting pastor or chaplain, as well as the ministry of the elderly themselves toward others may be summarized and envisioned as we paraphrase the words of Jesus in Matthew 25: I was lonely and depressed, missing my home and family, and you visited me. You patted me on the back and gave me a smile and I felt better. One day I was feeling low and wanted to talk with someone. You held my hand and listened to me and my mood changed. I was bored to death and you came along with a wonderful book which did a great deal for me. I just couldn't get to like the food in the place and you brought me goodies that the nurse let me have. I wanted to write to my son but couldn't manage it and you did it for me. One day I was very hopeless about my life and you read a wonderful psalm to me and prayed with me. I needed spiritual comfort and assurance and the chaplain spoke directly out of the scriptures to my sorrow and it passed away. We need to get together and have some fun together in this place, so the activities director gives us exercises together, lets us play games, leads us in some singing and we all feel happier. Yes, it was the King who summed it up when he said, "I tell you, indeed, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these sisters and brothers of mine you did it for me!"

The Third Felon

Death marches by three.
Three felons
Carry crossbeams to death-row.

One has stolen only for himself,
Killed with one blow.
The second has fought for Israel.
The third one . . .
Flung to his scaffold, has
Gambled with death and died.

On the third day
One angel and two angels cry,
"Why do you stare into the empty
grave-lock?
He's gone from this starting gate to
Galilee
Past the caring hands of women
To James, to Peter the rock,
To Mary of Magdala and all."

Three days —
And alleluias like thunder-trumpets
roll.
Alleluias boomerang, strike the
edge of our three-storied universe, and
Return like waves on the sea-wall.
The windows of heaven open for all to
see.

Trees on the Isle of Eden bloom again.
Snakes rewind in reverie.
The great divorce is over
And the races of mankind sing in har-
mony,
"I AM" has come to his own."

Maynard E. Stokka
Granton, Wisconsin

Rainbows

When the hull heaved down
on Ararat, old Noah,
and you stood with history
the width of your shoulders,
was that God's bow?

Then tell me, if you can,
why — when the story
was narrowest of all and he
the neck of the hourglass —
the sky was black?

Or is the bow a ribbon?
See it waved in the sky,
dear storm-skipper,
behind bonnets
of baptized children,
skipping to church on Easter, giggling
in the rain.

Gary Blobaum
Millville, PA

A Book Worth Discussing: Frederick W. Danker. *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field.**

A. T. Kraabel

Dean, Luther College, Decorah, Iowa

"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors *(euergetai)*," Luke 22:25. According to Frederick Danker, much of the language of the New Testament is dominated by a single image from the Graeco-Roman world, that of the Benefactor, a person of *arete* (distinction, excellence) who gives his aid *gratis* to the city or the nation. He is motivated often by the desire for honor and esteem from those whom he has aided. Such recognition is usually forthcoming; the same social context which creates the benefactor also prompts a response of public gratitude. The philanthropist bestows a building on the city, the general restores to it its freedom, a judge arbitrates its most vexing disputes, an artist wins its musical competition, and the community responds with a decree, an inscription and often a number of privileges. In the case of an outstanding musician, these included "the right of citizenship, to him and to his descendants, priority in consulting the oracle, right of proxeny, priority in judicial proceedings, inviolability of person, front seating at the contests, immunity, the right to own land and a house, and all the other honors that are accorded to exceptional men" — no. 9, an inscription of Delphi of A.D. 79.

It is difficult for moderns to imagine how ubiquitous was this "cultural experience of reciprocity." In Hellenistic and Roman times it was the most common theme of the two most important means of public communication, coins (which Danker does not discuss), and inscriptions. Socially and politically it assumes aristocracy or autocracy, the way of the world in New Testament times.

People were called "benefactor" (and "savior") not because of fine qualities innate but unexpressed, but because of what they *accomplished* in the public arena for the common good. Extraordinary accomplishments *identified* people who were out of the ordinary, higher on the human scale, closer to divinity. Thus Danker's benefactors are physicians, philanthropists, musicians, emperors, Roman officials and deities. It is his argument that the benefactor-recipient relationship is the same in any case, or differing only in degree: virtue and excellence are God-like qualities in the benefactor, and thus he may be seen as "more divine" than the rest of us. And gods are the archetypal benefactors: it is their nature to benefit mortals in

* *St. Louis: Clayton, 1982. 509 pages. Cloth. $29.95.*

superhuman ways.

The relationship of benefactor and recipient could degenerate into one characterized by intimidation and raw power on the one side, or flattery and veniality on the other — under despots or unworthy emperors that would not be uncommon. But in most of Danker's examples the relationship of mutual obligation works at a higher level: the patron's genuine sense of obligation to his fellow citizens, and the people's equally honest response to his good will. Danker would claim that in the ancient church much of Christology and of the doctrine of God assumes this Graeco-Roman image.

Over half of this long book is devoted to a series of fifty-three Benefactor texts. Most are inscriptions, but Danker also includes the "Apostolic Decree" from Acts 15 and several selections from the LXX. He then reviews the terms for the qualities of the benefactor, for the benefits granted, and for the response of the recipients as these are known from the inscriptions. He examines New Testament instances of the Greek words used in the inscriptions to determine if the semantic burden they carry in the Biblical text is the same. A person of excellence, enthusiastic, generous, spares no expense, pious, righteous, modest, of exemplary character — thus the benefactor. His benefits include social stability, relief from oppression, aid in times of natural disaster, and also healing, in the case of physicians and of such deities as Isis and Asklepios.

The response to all of this is first of all gratefully to *remember* the donor and the gift; such verbs as *mnemoneuo* and *mimnesko* are frequently used in honorific documents. Indeed the relationship of reciprocity *required* this response; without it the whole arrangement would have collapsed. This gratitude would express itself in an activity: the issuing of an honorific decree, the creation of the inscription, and — most important — the emulation of the donor by other citizens. A third century B.C. inscription from Delos was typical: it honors a local philanthropist "so that all may know that [we] understand how to honor [our] benefactors, and that more may be responsive to the best interests of the city, as they see worthy people in receipt of honors." Such response could be assumed: further gifts from other wealthy people, other forms of community support from the rest.

Danker is surely correct in putting this idea in the background of the New Testament conception of the reaction of Christians to the benefactions of God and of Christ. In Graeco-Roman society such a response could be assumed. The rhythm of reciprocity was much the same whether the benefactor was mortal or immortal: the responses to benevolence were demonstrations of gratitude and further gracious acts. The question of the relationship of indicative to imperative in Christian thought and action would have been simpler in New Testament times. The Christians' obligation to show their gratitude through acts of love may not always have been fulfilled, but at least the links which bind God's acts to actions of those whom he has benefited are clear enough. "We love because he first loved us" was no new teaching, but a summary in slightly elevated language of a fundamental pattern of social relationship in the Graeco-Roman world.

Not only did the recipients *remember* the benefactor's gracious actions and strive to emulate his generosity. They also "bore witness" to his goodness. This too was part of the pattern. The in-

scriptions themselves are such a witness, and they frequently use the verb *martyreo* to characterize what they do.

Two final elements of Danker's hypothesis: the first is his frequent distinction between what the early Christian missionary *said* and what his Graeco-Roman auditors *heard.* The words may have come laden with Palestinian/Old Testament/Jewish Christian meanings, but for the most part they entered Gentile ears and were processed by minds formed in Graeco-Roman society and tuned to its categories of thought and expression. What the audience heard — or read in the earliest Christian texts — is the more important thing, not what the speaker or writer intended. There must have been creative misinterpretation often, as words which came out of one religious system were "understood" in a quite different social and intellectual context.

Finally, Danker writes often of "chancery style," by which he means the elevated phrasing and vocabulary of the benefactor inscriptions and the public and formal language of the orator and the imperial bureau. It is this style which he finds in word and phrase in much of the New Testament. It is the style of the benefactor texts.

Before the evaluation of the book, consider three odd facts. 1) When hunting "parallels" to the Greek of the New Testament we usually are sent to literary texts — Philo, Plutarch, even Sophocles — when the language of the ubiquitous inscription must have been much more familiar to the average reader in antiquity. 2) We persist in explaining the New Testament first on the basis of Judaism, but most of the New Testament went to a largely Gentile readership. 3) Christianity itself, whose mother is Judaism, became overwhelmingly a Gentile movement within its first hundred years. There is paradox here because Christians persist in studying the New Testament vertically, interpreting it by moving "down" from the Old Testament or "up" from the more developed theology of the church fathers and the Middle Ages. Danker urges a horizontal approach, with more attention to the broad study of the Gentile world contemporary with the beginnings of the faith.

Is the book successful? Does his method work? Not as well as Danker believes it does. For one thing, the key vocabulary from the inscriptions is not widely used in the New Testament; *arete,* for example, occurs only five times, three of those in 2 Peter. Benefactor itself *(euergetes)* appears only once, in Luke 22:25 cited at the beginning of this review. In addition the degree of density varies; "chancery style" is particularly common in Luke-Acts, the Letters of Paul, 1 and 2 Peter, 3 John, and Revelation, but even here there are differences. Danker's parade example is 2 Peter; there "chapter one and especially 1:1-11, consists largely of specialized prose, with the diction, syntax and ethos drawn from the world of political statement and official correspondence and vibrating with the spirit of Hellenism." But its other two chapters, while they "reveal a writer expert in satire and they offer Koine Greek in turgid form," nevertheless are "without a dominating semantic field."

Buy the book, in spite of these comments? Yes! It is indispensable to any serious study of the New Testament as an ancient document, yet it is written in an easy style never marred by untranslated texts in foreign tongues. Take it, your Greek New Testament and Bauer — Arndt — Gingrich — *Danker* (same

fellow) on a study break or summer vacation. You won't need anything else. Read the inscriptions over at one sitting for an important new perspective on the Greece, Egypt, and Asia Minor of the first Christian missionaries. Consider the frequent non-religious use of words now thought wholly religious, such as *soteria,* "salvation/deliverance," or *pistis,* not "faith" here by "commitment." (Here we would be helped by a complete *index verborum.*) Meet the philanthropist with what is by far the longest honorific text (no. 19), whom no one today has ever heard of. Take a fresh look at "The Parable of the Benefactor of Jericho Road", Luke 10:30-37, or at the same author's view of the crucifixion as not an accident but a necessity, "the definitive act of God's providential concern" — God the majestic Benefactor. Weigh Danker's connection — which is surely correct — between the inscriptions' emphasis on "remembering" benefactors and the phrase "in remembrance of me" in the accounts of the Last Supper in Luke and Paul — but not in Matthew and Mark!

Danker's argument should be heard; if you listen, it will bring about a permanent improvement in your understanding of the New Testament and its world. "We are constituted by nature to be benefactors to others": that could claim to be a major theme of the New Testament message, even though it was written by the pagan emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Book Reviews

SHARING POSSESSIONS: MANDATE AND SYMBOL OF FAITH. By Luke T. Johnson. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981. xvi and 160 pages. Paper. $8.95.

When your lay delegate, returning with you from a church convention, admits that her most troublesome religious-ethical issue is how she handles her affluence, you know that Johnson is on to something important in this monograph. He has taken as his task to do some "theological reflection on one of the knottiest questions imaginable: the connection between being a Christian and the way we own and use things."

He knows better than merely to line up all the Bible passages about owning things and then to reduce them to a handful of rules. Such a simplistic approach could hardly harmonize "sell all you own," "hold your possessions in common," and "give alms to the poor" — to take just three possibilities offered in Luke-Acts.

What's needed is a deeper analysis, all the way down to the core issues: What does it mean to be a "real" person? To "have" a body? To talk about "my" possessions?

Johnson recognizes that every attempt to control our bodies and to rely on our possessions — which are extensions of our bodies — in order to determine our authentic selfhood . . . Every such attempt is a species of subtle idolatry.

What's needed, he thinks, is a reappropriation of divine grace — a clear recognition that everything we are and have is God's gift to us, that we do not have to justify our existence by accomplishing or possessing anything, that we are not diminished when we share what we are and have with others. In his own words:

> *The first and most fundamental meaning of possessions, then, is their expression of the human response of idolatry or faith before the mystery of existence. Possessions are not good or evil in themselves; they derive significance from the way they extend our bodies in the world and thereby symbolize and effect our response to reality. There is a very close connection, therefore, between self-disposition and the disposition of possessions* (pp. 79-80).

And how can Christians use their money and goods in a faith-full way? Radical self-imposed poverty is out, Johnson concludes. Furthermore, communal lifestyles — whether of the medieval monastic or modern utopian brands — are too impractical over the long haul.

Johnson holds up the ancient Jewish practice of almsgiving for modern Christians to emulate. Such charity (in the best sense of the term) is the kind of sharing which promotes justice for the lesser endowed. Such sharing also allows Christians to free themselves from the tyranny of things.

It's hard to fault Johnson's program, except that it depends overmuch on how folks *think* about themselves and their possessions. He still leaves largely dangling the answer to: "What shall I *do* with all this stuff I've accumulated?"

Mark I. Wegener, Pastor
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WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT SEXUAL MORALITY? By James P. Hanigan. New York/Ramsay: Paulist, 1982. 121 pages. Paper. $3.95.

The "they" in this book's title refers almost entirely to Catholics. Hanigan, a moral theologian at Duquesne University, outlines and evaluates the offi-

cial Catholic positions on sexual ethics along with some of the more prominent efforts by theologians to amend them.

First considered are the factors precipitating the reexamination. In contrast to a tradition that is suspicious of sexuality and emphasizes its procreative aspect, a new, closer reading of Scripture reveals a biblical affirmation of sexuality precisely as unitive of persons. A better understanding of biological reproduction and the dignity of women also forces a rethinking of sexual ethics.

After summarizing official Catholic teaching from 1930 to the present, Hanigan focuses on the birth control controversy, since it is fundamental to all the rest. He devotes a chapter to the majority report of the papal commission on birth control that recommended a change in the official Catholic position. Even though Pope Paul VI rejected its recommendation, it is significant for its arguments that God's will cannot simply be identified with biological laws of nature and that the morality of individual sex acts is not to be judged apart from the total context of a marital relationship.

The remainder of the book is devoted to outlines of revised approaches to sexual morality: **HUMAN SEXUALITY** by A. Kosnik *et al.,* a study commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America; **THE SEXUAL LANGUAGE** by A. Guindon; and **SEXUAL MORALITY: A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE** by P. Keane. After several pages on the arguments proffered to uphold the tradition, Hanigan suggests that a consensus is developing on at least four issues: that sexuality is not trivial; that its primary significance lies in the direction of interpersonal love; that sexual morality requires the promotion of intimacy; and that sexual expression must be socially responsible.

Hanigan writes well and has a firm command of his subject. He helps the reader to appreciate the variety of analogies being ventured to understand sexual expression in its deeper human significance: sexuality as integrative and relational (Kosnik *et al.*); as language (Guindon); as ritual expression (Burtchaell); and Hanigan's own suggestion, that sexuality is either labor, work, or action. But more than a paragraph is required to convince a reader that the immorality of autoerotic sexual activity lies in its being labor or work.

In trying to cover so much material in so few pages, Hanigan's summaries sometimes sacrifice nuance for the sake of being concise. He is even-handed in pointing out the weaknesses in both the tradition and the attempts to revise it, but without always offering alternatives. As ever, it is easier to be critical than constructive.

Ronald Modras
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MORAL THEOLOGY: A CONTINUING JOURNEY. By Charles E. Curran. Notre Dame/London: Notre Dame Press, 1982. xiv and 238 pages. Cloth. $14.95.

For Catholic conservatives the name of Fr. Charles Curran raises as much of a red flag as that of Hans Küng. They think of him only as a leading voice of dissent when Pope Paul issued his encyclical on birth control in 1968. That was not a thoughtless or inconsistent act on Curran's part. He has written at length on the necessity of responsible dissent in and for the sake of the church.

The nine chapters of this book are a collection of essays and addresses authored by Curran these last several years on such topics as academic freedom, the distinctiveness of Christian ethics, aging, *in vitro* fertilization and embryo transfer, the contraception revolution, and the role of religion in forming American public policy. The unifying thread running throughout them is the historical character that marks all contemporary theology. It is not enough for the church's pastors and teachers merely to repeat past formulations. Christians are a pilgrim people, and Christian ethics necessarily bears the marks of a journey.

Curran describes moral theology as playing the role of a scout on this journey, going on ahead to explore the new terrain. It does not jettison the past but realizes that Christians require guidance in order to respond adequately and faithfully to new realities. Curran criticizes Catholic theology for not giving enough importance to the scriptures in its moral thinking in the past. But he likewise criticizes Lutherans for failing to give enough importance to the moral wisdom based on creation and the realization that redemption affects the world we live in. Curran is very much a Catholic in eschewing the "sola" in favor of the "and." The scriptures are the primary but not the only source of ethical wisdom available to Christians.

Curran stands out among Catholic moralists for the seriousness with which he has entered into dialogue with the Lutheran tradition. His writing emphasizes the need to consider the human condition of finitude and sinfulness. This latest book is as good an introduction to his thinking as any.

Ronald Modras
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HANDBOOK OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM. By Richard N. Soulen. Second Edition. Atlanta: John Knox, 1981. 239 pages. Paper. $9.95.

HANDBOOK FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES. By Nicholas Turner. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982. 144 pages. Paper. $8.95.

We no longer believe that it is necessary to be a member of a spiritual elite and master secret passwords in order to journey safely through the circle of the seven spheres and enter at last into the bright and fiery orb of heaven — or do we? Have you never felt left out, shunned, by ignorance of the slang of the in-group or the language of the natives? Knowing the names of plants or of chemical compounds or of ships of the line is still the beginning of a certain kind of wisdom and is surely a badge of membership.

Soulen and Turner do not belong to any dark coven of lexicographers, but they are cheerful mystagogues — and generous, too. They are happy zealots of the alphabet.

Stand these two books side by side on the shelf and it would be easy to grab the wrong one. They are both dark red or maroon paperbacks, and the titles are nearly identical. The similarities extend to the contents.

The bulk of each volume consists of a glossary of technical terms used by biblical scholars. Both authors have in view the beginner in scientific biblical studies who frequently feels overwhelmed by the cant and argot of the trade.

Turner's volume includes over 1500 entries, and Soulen's around 600. In addition, Soulen's book is a hundred pages longer than Turner's. Obviously one thing these statistics indicate is that the individual entries in Turner's book tend to be far briefer than those in Soulen's.

Turner's book is a dictionary and Soulen's resembles a short encyclopedia. But that does not tell the whole story. Turner says in his introduction that he is consciously presenting a dictionary or glossary and that it is not the aim of his book to teach. His is a book of definitions to be used alongside the standard texts. In one sense Turner is a competitor of Soulen but in another sense is not and does not intend to be. Turner's book maintains the look and function of a dictionary.

On the other hand, Soulen very deliberately aims to teach. His book is an abbreviated introduction to the methodologies of biblical criticism. The entry on "Biblical Criticism" is an introduction to the field and to his individual entries on textual criticism, literary criticism, historical criticism, form criticism, and the rest of the family. These articles on methodologies constitute the backbone of the work as a whole, and all the other articles or entries are auxiliary and supportive.

This new edition of Soulen offers over 40 additional entries to account

for recent developments (such as Canonical Criticism, Semiology, Rhetorical Analysis), brings revisions of 40 more articles, and now includes bibliographical data in all major entries.

Both are fine volumes with different uses and different kinds of help, despite their many similarities, and these authors have put into their debt not only beginning students. Advanced students and pastors will find aid in these works, and so will any teachers who tend to specialize and lose track of developments outside their own immediate field of interest.

Robert Smith
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EVANGELICAL CATECHISM: CHRISTIAN FAITH IN THE WORLD TODAY. American Edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982. 416 pages. Paper. $4.95.

This is a translation and an American adaptation of the **Evangelischer Gemeindekatechismus** (c. 1979), originally prepared by the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany. The catechism is intended for adult individuals and groups who already have a foundation of Christian faith and desire more in-depth study. Not intended to replace Luther's catechism, it builds on this foundation as it helps Christians face the contemporary scene. In the words of the editors, it attempts to relate "the gospel of Jesus Christ to the needs and challenges of modern life." Thus it begins with the question, "Who am I?" and the many dimensions of human life.

Each of the twenty-four discussion chapters provides a contemporary understanding of Christian teaching and helps readers to participate in a living discussion of Christian faith and life for our time. The reflection section includes Bible and hymn selections and pertinent quotations from writers of every age. Especially useful are the excerpts from other cultures, giving the catechism a dimension that goes beyond the American scene. It also helps the reader in a greater appreciation of some of the new hymns found in the **Lutheran Book of Worship.** The many illustrations are a valuable asset.

The catechism will also be a help to pastors in assisting them to make the old Lutheran articles of faith more meaningful in a contemporary setting. We pastors are often not aware how little our familiar phrases and words register with our listeners, who pick them up from us as undigested cliches. This catechism will enable people and pastor to speak of their faith to others in a meaningful way.

The editors have also provided a Leader's Guide for 50¢ extra.

Author C. Repp, Sr.
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CONSCIENCE AND CARING. By Geoffrey Peterson. Philadephia: Fortress, 1982. xii and 84 pages. Paper. $3.95.

Here is another valuable book in the Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling Series edited by Howard Clinebell. Peterson, who teaches pastoral theology and directs a counseling service in Australia, is convinced that one can often get to the heart of a pastoral situation by asking, "What is happening here with conscience?" In discussing the different kinds of consciences (tormenting, weak and underdeveloped, confused, righteous, and maturing healthy), Peterson focuses on understanding and helping persons with their value conflicts, ethical dilemmas, and moral hiatuses. He uses ample examples to illustrate his theory.

A major goal of pastoral care and counseling and of preventive education, says Peterson, is the development of a maturing healthy conscience — a conscience that is liberated through the acceptance and forgiveness of God, shaped and developed by participation in the Christian community, continually growing, caring (i.e., not just symptom concern but authentic accepting of another person and a giv-

ing of the total self in a warm relationship), socially responsible.

While the concept of "conscience" may seem stretched for some, Peterson provides an effective framework and methodology for those who counsel with persons suffering from conscience problems.

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CALLED TO FREEDOM: LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. By Daniel L. Migliore. Philadelphia: Westminster. 1980. 130 pages. Paper. $5.95.

Liberation theology is the heresy for our time. This assertion is not the point of Dan Migliore's book, but the book does provide evidence to justify the claim.

It is characteristic of heresy that it insists on substituting a single true perception for the more complex totality that constitutes the full truth. Migliore begins his theology, in good Barthian fashion, by both proclaiming the central authority of Scripture and warning against determining in advance how Scripture is to be interpreted. In his very next breath, however, he maintains that "the authority of Scripture lies in its message of God's liberating activity." As with other liberation theologians, he eschews a major effort at arguing against the propriety of other views. He does not show, for example, why the gospel could not be the good news of forgiveness, or of individual self-worth, or of a transformed humanity, or of the possibility of openness to and harmony with God, or of unpredictable potential. And when he does argue against traditional theologies — which he does — he is as inclined to emphasize their deficiencies as to identify their relevance to his own viewpoint.

Yet what better description of salvation could there be? His actual objection, as he makes clear, is that traditional theology has concentrated on the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ, but he overlooks the opportunity to show that liberation theology simply wants to interpret the claim more broadly and to encourage the incarnation of God's love more widely. Perhaps this oversight reflects a hazard that accompanies anyone engaged in calling attention to a new viewpoint, but it is precisely the stuff of which heresies are made.

In other parts of the book (*e.g.*, when he deals with Jesus as Liberator), Migliore is willing to limit the role of liberation theology to one of highlighting a theme that has been missing in traditional theologies. Moreover, he makes a point of identifying shortcomings within particular liberation theologies. He opposes those that appear to be simply one more ideology trying to impose its viewpoint on others. He objects to those that find evil only in society and not also in individuals. And he warns against "transforming the Christian message of salvation by grace through faith into a religion of works." This commendable effort to be evenhanded also serves, however, to highlight the onesided (heretical) strains resident within liberation theology.

If this theology be heresy, however, it is at least a heresy *for* our time. It is not simply a heresy that has developed during our time, but it is a partial formulation of Christian truth which we desperately need to hear. Migliore does a good job of showing how liberation theology (as it deals with Scripture, Jesus, the Trinity, spirituality, and death) applies to current problems and makes us aware of them. Borrowing from Robert McAfee Brown, he includes an excellent illustration of how it induced a change in the role of Mary in the spiritual awareness and practices of Central American peasants, from one based on viewing Mary as standing on the moon, dressed resplendantly and wearing a crown of stars, to one based on her historical status as a peasant — a status in which it was more appropriate to view

her as walking in the dirt and as wearing only old clothes and an old hat.

In general, the book does a good job of presenting the viewpoint of liberation theology to the general reader who knows nothing about it. With a few exceptions, mentioned below, it does not offer much that is new to the person who is familiar with the theology. Unfortunately, without such familiarity, the cutting edge of some secondary issues might be missed, because of the cursory fashion in which they are presented. The need to liberate masters, as well as the poor, is one such issue, as is the role of violence. Moreover, Migliore gets so excited about the new insights of liberation theology that he does not always state explicitly, at the outset of his discussion of a particular topic, what the particular insight is. It takes a while to learn that this theology's new understanding of God is that divinity includes suffering and weakness. Nor does he always explain, justify, or illustrate some of his claims, such as the claim that the authority of Scripture is functional, that the doctrine of the Trinity must be narrated, that consumerism is meaningless, and that American comfort is built on the poverty of others. (Not that any of these claims are necessarily false, but especially in the case of the latter two, in order for them to justify his position they themselves must be substantiated.) One surprising omission (since it is one of liberation theology's most important contributions) is explicit recognition of the power structures of society and of the issue of the use of power.

Migliore's greatest contribution deals with the doctrine of the Trinity. Paraphrasing Eberhard Jüngel's formula that God's being is in becoming (but not as process theology understands it), Migliore suggests that God's being is in self-giving (Father to Son and Son to Father) and is therefore communal. With this understanding, the Trinity is seen as an attack on the concept that ultimate freedom is absolute, uninvolved, and capricious, in favor of the view that freedom, in its essence, is a form of sharing. The force of some of Migliore's statements is blunted, however, by his persistence in speaking of God anthropomorphically, without pointing out that he is doing so. As a result, it appears that his comments on the Trinity are intended to describe an entity named "God," rather than making what might be more readily recognized as the more profound claim that reality at its most ultimate is communal. Similarly, the Christian view is not that one more entity (viz., God) should be added to the throng of sufferers, but that reality at its best does not consist solely of limitless joy but *includes* (even at its best, i.e., in God!), in particular circumstances, suffering. (Such an exciting notion, it should be noted, would not limit the realization of the Ultimate to the end of history.)

Finally, this book offers more than a reinterpretation of some doctrines. Again and again it presents, appropriately, a call to action on behalf of the oppressed, as a reflection of God's love. For, in the words of Jürgen Moltmann quoted in the book, "Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is."

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THEOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, VOLUME I: THE MINISTRY OF JESUS IN ITS THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE. By Leonhard Goppelt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. xxvi and 292 pages. Cloth. $15.95.

Though Leonhard Goppelt's work is less well known in America, his influence on the German scene has been considerable: author of many New Testament studies, participant in ecumenical studies, and founder of two Protestant theological faculties (Munich and Hamburg). His crowning work was his **Theology of the New Testament,** the first volume of which was completed prior to his death in 1973 and is presented here.

The first volume is limited to the Gospels, with heavy emphasis on

materials Goppelt feels are authentic to Jesus. Major themes include the kingdom of God, repentance as demand/gift, ministry of healing and eschatological renewal, Jesus' self-understanding (titles of Jesus), Jesus and the church, and Jesus' death and resurrection.

Unique is Goppelt's concern that it be a catalyst for further conversation in the dialogue between exegetical and systematic theology. On the one hand, this is a first-rank exegetical work, meticulous and comprehensive in its biblical research and wide-ranging in its conversation with other scholars. On the other hand, Goppelt seeks to present not merely a summary of theology as found in the New Testament, but a theology which grows from the New Testament. We who share his Lutheran heritage quickly recognize emphases like the theology of the cross, sacramental theology, centrality of faith, etc.

There will be scholars who will question the validity of his "catalyst" approach. Others will question his rather maximalist approach to assigning materials to Jesus — and some occasional fuzzy lines between "genuine" and redacted items. Others, like this reviewer, will find his style rather cumbersome. All, however, will be challenged by both his exegetical insights and his broader vision. Indeed, we await the second volume, **The Variety and Unity of the Apostolic Witness to Christ,** edited posthumously and presently in the process of translation.

Henry Rowold
Concordia Seminary
Chia Yi, Taiwan

MANUSCRIPTS OF THE GREEK BIBLE: AN INTRODUCTION TO PALEOGRAPHY. By Bruce M. Metzger. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981. ix and 150 pages. Cloth. $17.95.

The heart of this book consists of 45 facsimile pages of Greek manuscripts of the Old (13) and New (32) Testaments. The pages of the book are large (8½ x 11), and most of the manuscripts are reproduced in actual size. At least one specimen is offered from each century from the second through the fifteenth, and of course some centuries are represented by several. All were chosen because of some special feature, whether paleographic, historical, or textual.

On the page facing each facsimile is a description of the manuscript page (identification, summary of paleographic and codicological features of the manuscript as a whole, importance of the page reproduced, bibliography).

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The opening section of the book discusses in 56 pages such matters as the state of research, the making of ancient books, the history of Greek handwriting, special features (nomina sacra, stichometry, lectionaries), and how to date a Greek manuscript.

The plates in Part II and the text in Part I are amply cross-referenced. They were carefully designed to support one another, and indeed they add up to a deceptively simple but really excellent introduction to the whole field of Greek paleography.

Metzger's expertise and enthusiasm for his subject combine to make this a delightful and useful volume.

Robert Smith
Christ Seminary — Seminex

MANUSCRIPT, SOCIETY AND BELIEF IN EARLY CHRISTIAN EGYPT. By Colin H. Roberts. London: Oxford University Press, 1979. 89 pages. Cloth. $23.50.

At the turn of the century Adolf von Harnack observed that we are nearly in the dark about the history of Christianity in Egypt until the end of the second century when Demetrius became bishop (A.D. 180). Eusebius (4th century church historian) tells us next to nothing, declaring Mark to be the first bishop of Alexandria and then merely listing the names of the next ten bishops before Demetrius. Codex D at Acts 18:25 says that Apollos who was from Alexandria preached the word "in his homeland." Evidence for the life of the church in Egypt before 180 is scant.

Walter Bauer in 1934 explained the strange silence of Eusebius and of all the other sources from the early church by suggesting that the orthodox of the fourth and fifth centuries were embarrassed by the fact that Egypt had been essentially heterodox (from the point of view of their later orthodoxy) up to the end of of the second century. Writing in **The Cambridge History of the Bible** (I, 298) in 1970, Robert Grant broadcast Bauer's thesis, saying that "in the second century, as far as our knowledge goes, Christianity in Egypt was exclusively heterodox." Extending the thesis of Bauer, Bardy and Vööbus have proposed that the earliest form of Christianty among the Copts (native Egyptian population) was Gnostic.

Colin Roberts reaches a contrary conclusion on the basis of his fresh examination of the early Christian manuscripts of Egypt. He lists all the Christian papyri, both biblical and non-biblical, Greek and Coptic, which in the general judgment of paleographers are to be assigned to the period before A.D. 300. The Christian books which have come down from second century Egypt stress the connections between Christian faith and the Old Testament. Furthermore, specifically Gnostic texts are exceedingly rare and docetic texts are wholly absent. Outside the Bible **The Shepherd of Hermas** was the most widely read book (found in seven manuscripts). It is evidence of Jewish-Christianity in Egypt and of a link between Rome (place of origin of **The Shepherd**) and Alexandria. **The Treatise on the Passion** by Melito of Sardis is found in three Greek and two Coptic manuscripts, and is further evidence of anti-Gnostic conviction in early Egypt.

The teaching and personality of the two Egyptian Gnostic leaders Basilides and Valentinus impressed the Christian world outside Egypt and were remembered, but the history of Christianity in early Egypt should not be constructed out of that memory alone.

Roberts examines the system of *nomina sacra.* Nomina sacra is a term used to denote a strictly limited number of words, fifteen at most, whose sacred character is stressed by abbreviation or contraction. They divide into three classes:

1) Jesus, Christ, Lord, God.

2) Spirit, Man, Cross.

3) Father, Son, Savior, Mother, Heaven, Israel, David, Jerusalem.

When these words were used in manuscripts they were abbreviated, a horizontal line was inscribed above the abbreviation, and sometimes they were written with gold ink (those in class

one) or in silver (the others). In a somewhat analogous fashion some modern Bibles emphasize the sacred character of Jesus' words in red letter editions.

Roberts believes the system originated in Jerusalem in a Jewish-Christian community which focused on the power of the divine Name (cf. baptism, healing and salvation in the Name of Jesus in the early chapters of Acts and the power of the Name in primitive hymns such as Phil. 2:9).

For Gnostics the Old Testament was not sacred and the inclusion in the list of Israel, David, and Jerusalem seems un-Gnostic.

The names in class one together with Spirit, Cross and Father represent a core common to all Christians. The rest of the names give the list a Jewish-Christian flavor. As a whole, the list constitutes a kind of Jewish-Christian creed, and its use is therefore evidence of anti-Gnostic sentiment.

The development of the system with its presumption of control and organization thgeother with the obvious care lavished on written documents has its parallel in the non-Christian Jewish community, but the system itself is essentially Christian.

At the tag end of the second century under Pantaenus the school of Alexandria became vigorously anti-Gnostic, and soon a missionary advance began among the Copts. It is difficult to imagine the elitist, intellectual, upper class Gnostics moving vigorously in mission to the native population, but it is plausible and probable that the middle class and lower middle class orthodox did begin the mission and promote it.

The picture of Egyptian Christianity which emerges from Roberts' study is one in which docetism was rejected, the Old Testament was accepted, revelation was held to be accountable to all, and not just to an elite, and a common core of books was gradually defined. The wheat and tares were growing together in second century Egypt.

Robert Smith
Christ Seminary — Seminex

THE ETHIC OF DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM. By Robert Benne. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981. xi and 267 pages. Paper. $10.95.

FIVE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES. By Robert Heilbroner and Lester Thurow. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc. xi and 140 pages. Paper. $5.95.

These are both useful books on economics for people whose primary concerns are ethical.

Benne's book is intended to correct a bias that predominates among the ethicists who lead the churches' theological reflection on economic issues. Few church-related ethicists rely much on the mainstream of contemporary economic thinking. They tend to draw instead on the work of dissenting economists (Marxists, the *dependencia* school, perhaps *Galbraith*) who are more critical of the political and economic system of this country. Benne argues that the U.S. system of capitalism combined with democracy is morally defensible, and that it has been undervalued by other ethicists partly because of a lack of understanding of economics.

In Part I of the book, Benne outlines the theological and philosophical criteria by which he judges social systems. He leans heavily on Reinhold Niebuhr and John Rawls. In Part II, the heart of the book, Benne argues against the charge that oligopolistic corporations really run the country. He presents evidence that most parts of the economy are competitive and our politics indeed democratic. He highlights the morally attractive features of U.S. democratic capitalism.

Finally, in Part III, Benne talks about directions for reform. He suggests a new kind of economic growth that will be more responsive to resource constraints. He argues for increased attention to the needs of the poor, and for resistance to the hedonism and self-centeredness which democratic capitalism tends to foster.

Although **The Ethics of Democratic Capitalism** is more conservative than

most contemporary theological writing about economics, Benne finds the Reagan administration's economic policies deficient in their concern for justice. Perhaps this book will help other church ethicists better understand those aspects of the U.S. system which are indeed worth conserving, in order to be more effective in critiquing and correcting the faults of the current resurgence of conservatism in this country.

Heilbroner and Thurow's book is not theological, but it is directed to non-economists who want to better understand the ethical and political aspects of five particularly urgent economic challenges — coping with inflation, overcoming recession, understanding government spending and taxing, defending the dollar, and living with less energy.

Heilbroner and Thurow have little use for the Reagan administration's economic policies either. They explain other possible approaches to inflation and recession, for example, that would not penalize poor and low-income people so severely. On the other hand, their analysis is well-balanced, intended to allow others to apply their own judgments about who should win and who should lose from political decisions about economics. The book was, in fact, recommended to me by a Reagan supporter.

Because of its brevity and neat division into five chapters, **Five Economic Challenges** would lend itself to use by church study groups, as well as by individuals who want to make more informed ethical judgments on some of the most politically pressing economic issues of the day.

David Beckmann
Economist, World Bank
Washington, D.C.

THE IDEA OF DISARMAMENT. By Alan Geyer. Elgin, Illinois: The Brethren Press, 1982. 256 pages. Paper. $11.95.

Alan Geyer identifies himself as "a sometime political scientist, a somewhat marginal ethicist, and a completely unsuccessful activist" who writes "as a wounded veteran of dozens of international conferences on disarmament." In short, Geyer is endearing and qualified to offer us an insider's view of the maddening, cynical, deadly scenario called the arms race.

We are offered documented, credible analysis of the nuclear build-up, the premeditated failure of arms control talks, the limitations of deterrence and counterforce, and the search for viable politics of disarmament. In all of this, Geyer is systematic and methodical — tiresomely so. We are given 21 reasons for rejecting and doctrine of deterrence, 10 critiques of counterforce doctrine, 10 factors in the development of the U.S. conventional military market, 8 sources of powerlessness about disarmament, and 7 scenarios for disarmament. We grow weary of counting.

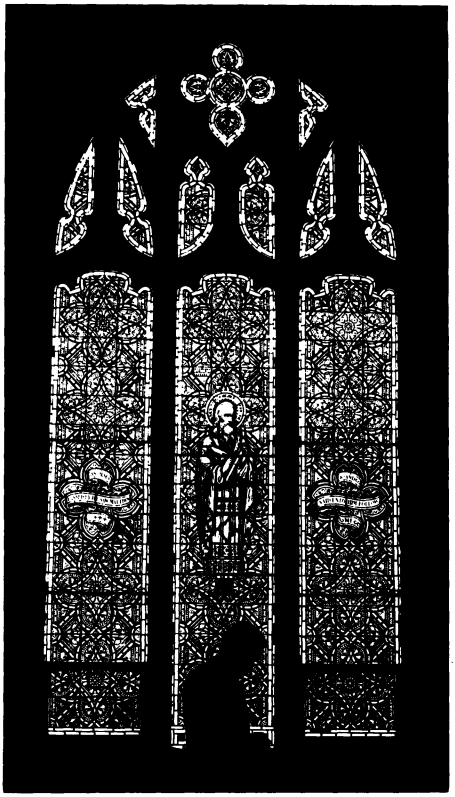
Geyer is refreshing and at his best in analyzing nuclear diplomacy: "Our diplomats have been preoccupied with banning weapons we don't have, agreeing not to make weapons our government never intended to make, protecting places where nobody lives (such as Antarctica, the Seabed, and the Moon), and preventing *other* countries from getting the kind of weapons we keep producing."

This is no primer on disarmament. It is an advanced, detailed study which may be of some service to the already well-informed activist. One gets the sustained impression in reading this book that its deepest value may be in cataloging the myopia and cynicism of diplomats, strategic planners, government leaders, Pentagon officials. There is little basis for honest discussion with the folks in charge. The idea of disarmament will remain only a wistful idea unless we learn the discipline of non-violent resistance to the arms race.

Dennis Jacobsen, Pastor
Trinity Lutheran Church
Jersey City, New Jersey

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Briefly Noted

Buddhism and Christianity — Their Inner Affinity. By Antony Fernando. (Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, Sri Lanka, $4.80). The author, who has doctorates in Christian theology and in Buddhist studies, presents here a study of the "Sermon of the Four Noble Truths." The affinity he finds is that the transformation of the inner personality of men and women was the main concern of the Buddha and Christ. Since the founders of the two religions advocated such transformation or liberation, he urges their modern day representatives to collaborate in the execution of this vital mission.

A Synopsis of the Four Gospels. Edited by John Bernard Orchard, O.S.B. (Mercer University Press, $9.95). The Two-Gospel (Griesbach) Hypothesis argues that our Greek Matthew was a main literary source of Luke and that both Luke and Matthew are the two main literary sources of Mark. Orchard's new English synopsis of the four gospels is based on this hypothesis and will enable students to grasp the fundamentals of the relationships between Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John if this listing is the chronological order of composition. This synopsis, of course, is not "neutral," but then neither are those of Aland, Huck-Greeven, or Throckmorton.

Lutherans in Slovakia. By August A. Skodacek. (Available from the author, 455 Wilkinson Avenue, Youngstown, OH 44509, $5.35). S. summarizes the historical events and developments of Lutheranism throughout the Slovak lands from 1517 to 1982. Extensive attention is given to the causes and character of the reformation in Slovakia, the early synods, the hymnals and liturgical developments, the confrontation with pietism and rationalism, and the church today in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

Confessing One Faith: A Joint Commentary on the Augsburg Confession by Lutheran and Catholic Theologians. Edited by George Forell and James F. McCue. (Augsburg, $15.00). In twelve chapters twenty-four prominent Lutheran and Roman Catholic scholars assess to what extent a common understanding of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 is possible. The title of this book reveals the happy results, and the authors go on to affirm: "It is a conclusion of our common work that the CA not only had the intention of bearing witness to the common catholic faith but that to a large degree its assertions must actually be understood as an expression of that catholicity." "The common understanding of justification in the CA is a common understanding of the center of the Christian faith." *Te Deum,* anyone?

The Community and Message of Isaiah 56-66. By Elizabeth Achtemeier. (Augsburg, $7.95). Fifteen lessons from the three-year lectionary come from these chapters, which are some of the most difficult for modern students of the Bible to understand. A. popularizes recent scholarship, especially that of Paul Hanson, and holds that this Third Isaiah is a spokesman for a Levitical-prophetic party in sharp dispute with the dominant Zadokite priestly faction. Third Isaiah believed that temple-building and priesthood are secondary to humble and contrite faith in God. Speaking for a disenfranchised minority in Israel, he saw hope for change only in direct intervention by God.

The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament. Vol. 3. 1 Chron.-Song of Songs. Edited by John R. Kohlenberger III. (Zondervan, $19.95). Volumes 1 and 2 were noted with welcome in previous issues *(CurTM* 8[2]:124, Vol. 1; 9[1]:inside back cover, Vol. 2). This volume completes the historical books and contains the poetic and wisdom books according to the English canonical order. The New International Version is printed down the right margin and



shows how the poetry is understood by contemporary scholars. Extremely literal word-for-word equivalents are printed between the lines. Those with a weak understanding of Hebrew will be able to profit immensely from this tool.

Introduction to the Criticial Study of the Text of the Hebrew Bible. By J. Weingreen. (Oxford, $7.95). In this concise and careful introduction to textual criticism, W. reviews the common types of errors that entered manuscripts over the years and discusses how to resolve some classical problems. He errs, however, in advising textual criticism only when the text seems impossible since it is clear that the scribes often removed difficulties in producing the smooth text we now have. Our text should be placed beside all the ancient evidence for variation, and then the best reading chosen on an eclectic basis. He provides no introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls beyond the great Isaiah scroll, and his bibliography lacks references to major studies and handbooks by Cross, Klein, Tov, and Würthwein.

Christian Initiation: Reborn of Water and the Spirit. Institute of Liturgical Studies, Occasional Papers 1. (Valparaiso University, $7.00). Six essays, a sermon, and a banquet address from the 1980 Liturgical Institute at Valpo deal with such issues as baptism, confirmation, first communion, and praxis and their relationship to justification, eschatology and ethics.

Joshua. The Anchor Bible 6. By Robert G. Boling and G. Ernest Wright. (Doubleday, $14.00). Wright, who died in 1974, wrote the 85-page introduction to this commentary while Boling prepared the fresh translation and the commentary on the text. Boling thinks that Joshua went through two deuteronomistic redactions. The first, prior to 609, emphasized Joshua's leadership and the loyalty of the people as the army of Yahweh; the second, during the exile, puts emphasis on ingenuity and a sense of humor as the best response to violence. The book of Joshua demands much geographical and archaeological knowledge of a commentator since it consists almost exclusively of stories about the conquest and the settlement of the tribes in Palestine. Boling is right on top of such information as, of course, was Wright, his late teacher.

The Prophets. By James M. Ward. (Abingdon, $6.95.) This book is part of a series designed to help Christians relate the meaning of the biblical texts in their own times to their meaning in our time. W. surveys briefly the prophetic corpus (pp. 21-33) and then discusses specific pericopes under the topics "The Call and Response of the Prophet"; "Worship and Idolatry"; "The Righteousness of God"; and "Who Is Like our God?".

In the Beginning: Creation Myths from Ancient Mesopotamia, Israel and Greece. By Joan O'Brien and Wilfred Major. (Scholars Press, $8.25). Though readers may bristle theologically and exegetically at the use of "myths" in the title, this book is a useful collection of stories of the creation of the cosmos (Enuma Elish, Gen 1, and Hesiod's Theogony) and stories about the creation of the human race (Atrahasis, Gen 2-3, Hesiod's Works and Days). An essay is included on the culture of each of the areas in the title, plus a fourth dealing with the role of women in all three cultures.

Dictionary of Modern Theological German. By Helmut W. Ziefle. (Baker, $9.95). Ten thousand words (from das A

und das O to zwölfmal, twelve times, every month of the year) comprise this handy lexicon designed for those who want to tackle German theological scholarship. Other German-English dictionaries lack many technical terms that appear in the Bible and in the works of German theologians.

Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties. By Gleason L. Archer. (Zondervan, $16.95). After a 26-page essay on the importance of inerrancy, A. proceeds through the whole Bible book by book and attempts to explain away apparent discrepancies, alleged contradictions, and questionable behavior by God's people (Rahab's lie, the wars of conquest). Some of his brief and popularly-written answers to these dilemmas are more convincing than others. Evaluate this item: The Bible states that rock badgers and rabbits chew the cud and are forbidden as food. A. argues that since these animals move their mouths sideways, they *seem* to chew the cud. Hence the biblical classification would be more helpful to hunters looking for food in the forest. Those critics who think that many of these problems result from multiple authorship, the chronological gap between events and the literature recounting them, or from the fact that the Bible is at once the word of God and the word of fallible people are not likely to chuck out their libraries or their years of previous study, but they ought to give respectful attention to A.'s defense of the Bible we all love.

Christ in the Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue. By John T. Pawlikowski. (Paulist Press, $7.95). The greatest thing about this book is the way P. reports the numerous christological proposals by participants in the Jewish-Christian dialogue and the way he serves as referee in this discussion. The weakest part of the book is his own christological proposal. A theology of the cross gets very underplayed (to him it reveals only the vulnerability of God and his dependence on humanity), and he views the Christian gospel as mere information disclosure: "The Incarnational Christology that I advocate must ultimately be understood as the revelation to the human family that its humanity can be made whole because of the ability of people to be touched in the deepest realms of their consciousness by the humanity of God and its saving power." For him Incarnation and Sinai provide a blueprint by which we can achieve full wholeness. In rejecting a "simplistic prophecy-fulfillment Christology," he neglects the catholic verity that the "Messiah crucified," though a stumbling block to the Jews, is for Christians the surprising fulfillment of God's plan.

Has God Rejected His People? By Clark M. Williamson (Abingdon, $7.95). Williamson traces the sad story of the alienation between Christians and Jews, with special attention to anti-Judaistic elements in the New Testament and in the history of the church (from the epistle of Barnabas to the writings of Karl Barth). His critique of Christianity is justifiably severe but too often inexact. When a service he attended failed to include a reading from the Old Testament, he inferred that the congregation did not consider it part of Holy Scripture. He concedes that Jesus was not patriarchal but then claims that Christianity became much more anti-woman than Judaism ever was. So? Anti-Judaism supposedly led to undemocratic church government, unjust social structures, a loss of communal awareness and an inadequate ethic of eating. His positive proposals include imitating the rational and moral aspects of Judaism, patterning the ministerial office after the rabbinate, and observing Jewish holy days, including *Yom HaShoah* (the day marking the Holocaust). Cheap shots, unfortunately, are not uncommon. (Seminarians who dislike the mood at *Yom HaShoah* will probably also avoid Good Friday in his view; "We need to learn to see Jesus more as a Jew than as a Lutheran"). His impassioned and welcome plea for pluralism side-steps how Christians who affirm a high Christology relate theologically to Jews who do not. Williamon states that if we were to ask the true Messiah



when he comes if he is Jesus of Nazareth, come for the second time, the answer might be "Yes," "No," or "What's it to you?" That he flippantly chooses the third response is part of the central weakness of this book.

To Empower as Jesus Did: Acquiring Spiritual Power Through Apprenticeship. By Aaron Milavec. (Edward Mellen, $39.95). Since Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs to perform the same feats which he enacted in his own ministry, Milavec concludes that the disciples assimilated Jesus' own personal powers during their apprenticeship under his direction. Consequently, Christianity must not leave its adherents unengaged and unempowered.

The Shape of the Liturgy. By Dom Gregory Dix. Additional Notes by Paul V. Marshall. (Seabury, $19.95). The major contribution of this classic, first published thirty-seven years ago, can be summed up as follows: "One understands the origin, growth, and theology of the ancient rites by inquiring primarily into their 'shape,' or basic patterns, before making other inquiries, which are sometimes fruitless, as was the search for the text of 'the' primitive anaphora" (Paul V. Marshall).

To Change the World. By Rosemary Radford Ruether. (Crossroad, $8.95). Both the church and the reader stand indicted by Ruether as she presses for an authentic Christology. Much of what many of us take to be established and final truth is, in her understanding, provisional and incomplete. She identifies four contemporary issues she feels are the most critical if Jesus is to be the Christ in today's world: Political commitment in the light of poverty and oppression (Latin American liberation theology); Anti-Judaism and religious intolerance (Jewish-Christian relations); Justice for the female half of the human race (feminism — with the intriguing subtitle: "Can a Male Saviour Save Women?"); Human survival in the face of chronic environmental abuse (ecology and human liberation). (Dennis R. Fakes, Pastor, Divinity Lutheran Church, Oregon, Ohio.)

Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci communes 1555. By Phillip Melanchthon. (Baker, $11.95). This is a paperback reprint of the first English translation (made in 1965) of the standard textbook for Lutheran theological education during the first century after the Reformation. Essays by Clyde L. Manschreck and Hans Engelland trace the development in Melanchthon's thought between 1521, when the **Loci Communes** were first published, and this, its final edition.

Day by Day We Magnify Thee. By Martin Luther. (Fortress, $9.95). Here is a selection from Luther for every day of the church year. First published in 1946, the church year is pre-LBW (hence Septuagesima and a Trinity season), and the biblical citations are KJV. These lively meditations will provide many a nugget to honor Luther and Luther's God in the former's 500th anniversary year.

Great Themes from the Old Testament. By Norbert Lohfink, S.J. (T. & T. Clark/Franciscan Herald Press, $10.95). In these fifteen essays, Lohfink deals with themes like unity, pluralism, liberation, leisure, the future, and power. He writes as a confessing Roman Catholic and as someone who has shown massive erudition in the priestly and deuteronomistic writings. From these deep perspectives he addresses contemporary ecclesiastical and ethical issues in a stimulating

way. The book's jacket unfortunately gives the biographical data for Gerhard Lohfink, the author's very gifted brother.

Genesis. Volumes 1 and 2. By G. Ch. Aalders. (Zondervan, $24.95). These are the first two volumes in the Bible Student's Commentary, a translation of the conservative, 62 volume Dutch series entitled **Korte Verklaring Der Heilige Schrift.** Aalders, who was born in 1880, wrote these volumes in 1933 and 1936, and his discussion of other scholars ends in the late 20's. While critical of the source hypothesis, Aalders believed that the Pentateuch was written by someone in the period of Saul and David, using travel journals and laws left behind by Moses. Designed for the lay reader with no knowledge of Hebrew, this work has been modified for English use by incorporating the text of the New International Version into the commentary discussion.

After the Cross. By Hugh J. Schonfield. (A. S. Barnes, $7.95). The author proposes that Jesus was given a drug designed to put him in a death-like stupor when he uttered the cry of dereliction from the cross. Jesus planned to "recover" in Joseph's tomb, having called people to repentance by his voluntary suffering on their behalf. The scheme failed, in S's view, either because the soldier put a spear in Jesus' side, or because he overdosed on an Essene vinegar brew. Jesus was then buried far away, and his tomb was never found. This historical and theological nonsense merits mention only because Schonfield earlier achieved great notoriety with his theory of a "Passover plot" and because the dust jacket hails the book as a carefully documented work by an eminent authority on Christian origins. Beware!

The First Photographs of Jerusalem: The Old City. Edited by Ely Schiller. (Ariel, $30.00). Most of the black and white pictures in this volume were taken in the nineteenth century and reveal a city uncluttered by the great expansion of the post-war generation. The great sacred buildings were already there a hundred years ago though the debris was often piled around them (Robinson's arch was barely above ground level), or extraneous buildings were affixed to them (the Jaffa gate was topped by a tall clock tower!). The pool of Hezekiah and the Pool of Israel are no longer to be seen in Jerusalem; the surrounding countryside in these prized pictures seems arid and unproductive by modern standards.

The New Century Bible continues to appear from Eerdmans in paperback form. New arrivals include the following, with the date of original publication also indicated: **Ezekiel,** by John W. Wevers (1969, $6.95); **I Peter,** by Ernest Best (1971, $5.95); **James, Jude, 2 Peter,** by E. M. Sidebottom (1967, $5.95). **The Pastoral Epistles,** by A. T. Hanson ($6.95), is a new publication in 1982. Hanson holds that these epistles are pseudonymous, written between 100 and 105 C.E. The author had three purposes: to provide a handbook for church leaders that would strengthen the authority of ordained ministers; to alert church leaders to the necessity of fighting against heresy; and to assert the Pauline tradition among the churches in the Aegean area. In the Pastorals the church sets out into the second century, tackling its practical problems with vigor and success.

Another important series, The Daily Study Bible, has also recently issued two more volumes (For earlier reviews of books in this series, see **Currents,** 1982, 320): **Genesis,** Volume 2, by John C. L. Gibson and **Exodus,** by H. L. Ellison (Westminster, each $5.95). The authors report the fruits of current scholarship in popular form, following the text of the RSV. Pastors or lay people will find here rich resources for teaching in a parish, or they might try to work through these books as a palatable way to do daily study and meditation.

The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text. By Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad. (Nelson, $13.95). The text printed in Nestle Aland's 26th edition and the United Bible Societies' 3rd edition is closely akin to the great codices Vaticanus



and Sinaiticus. Its superiority was argued in detail by Westcott and Hort in the 19th century, and it is preferred by the majority of New Testament scholars today. But the *majority* of Greek manuscripts, most of them much later than *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus,* reflect a text much like that translated in the *King James Version.* Thomas Nelson, incidentally, is the publisher of the *New King James Version.* A special second apparatus shows all the variants between the majority text and the text reflected in the editions of *Nestle-Aland* and the *United Bible Societies.*

Luther as Interpreter of Scripture. Compiled and introduced by Hilton C. Oswald and George S. Robbert. (Concordia, $8.95). Fourteen selections are here reprinted from the American Edition of **Luther's Works** to show the Reformer's understanding of specific doctrines and to reveal his changing style and the influence of development and environment on his expository work. The selections range from 1513 to 1543.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Volume Two. (Eerdmans, $35.00). Though the title is old (first published in 1915), the contents of this volume are almost totally new and represent an impressive and extensive (1,175 pages; 360 photographs) treatment of biblical subjects from E to J. Readers of this journal will be happy to see that it includes articles by Frederick W. Danker on Ephesians (a lengthy and balanced discussion of the pros and cons of Pauline authorship) and Jude. Especially in articles dealing with the authorship of books like Exodus, Genesis, and Isaiah the "conservative" or non-critical position is maintained though the discussions struck me as quite fair, thoughtful, and worthy of serious reflection (an exception might be the notion put forth on Genesis that Moses reworked eleven cuneiform tablets in writing Gen 1-36). The dozens of authors, however, come from a wide spectrum, including the Jewish community. W. H. Brownlee's discussion of Ezekiel proposes multiple authors and redactors and even a Palestinian locale for the prophet; he represents one of the more radical approaches to this prophet in contemporary scholarship. In this case a two-page supplement by W. S. Lasor represents a more conservative position. With this volume the **ISBE** reaches a standard of excellence surpassing even that of Volume One, which also received favorable notice in **Currents** (8 [1981] 63-64).

Praise and Lament in the Psalms. By Claus Westermann. (John Knox, $16.50, cloth; $9.50, paper). Some of the most important work in the form criticism of the Psalms has been produced by W., an emeritus professor of the Old Testament at Heidelberg. This volume contains his The Praise of God in the Psalms (first published in English in 1965) and four other extensive essays on the Lament form, three of which have not appeared heretofore in English.

The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History. By Richard D. Nelson. (JSOT Supplement Series 18; $14.95, paper; $22.50 cloth; $10.95 and $15.95 respectively for subscribers for JSOT). The author now teaches Old Testament at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. In this reworked dissertation he presents detailed arguments in support of the idea

that the Deuteronomistic History was first issued as propaganda for the reign of Josiah, and that it was subsequently revised in exilic times. The most important alternative to this proposal is associated with Göttingen and holds that none of the several redactions of the history antedates the final destruction of Jerusalem in 587.

An Introductory Bibliography for the Study of Scripture. By Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S.J. (Biblical Institute Press, $8.50). The aim of this revised handbook is to present a list of titles of reasonable length with which the student who is beginning the study of Scriptures should become familiar. Some 24 categories are listed (e.g., Bible dictionaries, gnostic materials, hermeneutics) and the list is deep enough to give even an advanced student a good introduction to the field. For most of the books cited, reference is made to representative reviews in periodicals. **The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible,** for example, is followed by excerpts of reviews by H. Hummel and R. W. Klein. Since neither of us liked the book, potential buyers of whatever theological persuasion should consider themselves adequately warned!

3. Esra-Buch. Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit. By Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann. (Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, DM 22). Here we have an introduction and an annotated translation of the book known as 1 Esdras in English versions of the Bible. Pohlmann published an important monograph on this book in 1970.

The Bible: Its Story for Children. By Walter Wangerin, Jr. (Rand McNally, $12.95). The author is a graduate of Christ Seminary and a pastor in the AELC. His novel, **The Book of the Dun Cow,** has received wide critical acclaim. This children's Bible does not talk down to kids, but it retells the biblical narrative in lively fashion as a work of art, a song acceptable to God. W. writes with vigor and verve, in a style meant to be read aloud. Theological sophistication shows through as he blends his introduction to the period of the judges with apt citations from Hosea 11. Naturally, the narrative parts get fuller treatment, but sections are also devoted to the prophets and to Paul. While this is not a Bible translation, there is no reason why it could not be used occasionally for the reading of lessons in public worship. Its best setting in life will be around the supper table or in a child's bedroom. Four-color pictures are lavishly scattered throughout the text. Just as his novel is as much for adults as children, this Bible will please and edify children of God of any age.

Job. By Norman C. Habel. (John Knox, $4.50). This volume is part of the Knox Preaching Guides that are designed to make tested exegesis result in fresh pastoral application and creative sermon outlines. H., formerly of Christ Seminary — Seminex, has not lost his ability to communicate and to turn a nifty phrase. As he guides the reader section by section through the book, he frequently provides outlines both of the biblical argument and of a possible Christian sermon (e.g. on chap. 19: Dreaming of our redeemers; Job's dreaming; more than a redeemer). H. makes frequent connections to the Christian gospel and proposes a lenten cycle of Joban sermons including Ash Wednesday, all the Sundays in Lent, Holy Week, and Easter.

Eerdman's Handbook to the World's Religions. Edited by R. Pierce Beaver and others. (Eerdmans, $21.95). A number of recognized scholars discuss religion itself, the ancient religions (of Egypt, Greece and Rome), the primal or animistic religions (twelve case studies, including Papua New Guinea, African religions, North American Indians), living religions of the East (Hinduism, Buddhism, Baha'i), the people of a book (Judaism and Islam), and Christianity. The final 45 pages are a Rapid Fact-finder, or glossary, to people, terms, and ideas. The whole book is laid out in a very attractive and interesting way. Whether readers are seeking academic information or are on a spiritual quest is up to them; the descriptions aim to be objective, without evaluative judgment.

LUTHER'S CATECHISM COMES TO AMERICA: THEOLOGICAL EFFECTS ON THE ISSUES OF THE SMALL CATECHISM PREPARED IN OR FOR AMERICA PRIOR TO 1850. By Arthur C. Repp, Sr. [ATLA Monograph Series, No. 18] Metuchen, N.H., and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., and The American Theological Library Association, 1982. xiv and 297 pages. Cloth. $22.50.

This is essentially a bibliographical study of the more than 200 different issues of Luther's catechism prepared before the middle of the nineteenth century. A thorough appendix catalogs no less than 210 different editions and versions, beginning with Johan Campanius' **Luther's Catechism Translated into the American Virginian Language,** i.e. the Delaware Indian tongue, which was published in 1696 at the personal expense of King Charles XI of Sweden. From then until 1850 the reader meets catechisms in all the languages used by Lutherans in America, and gets acquainted with most of the prominent figures in Lutheranism's first two centuries on these shores. [There are actually far more than these 210 titles discussed, for the author also deals extensively with European catechisms used in the New World.]

There is the **Fundamental Instruction** of Justus Falckner, the first book printed by a Lutheran clergyman in America. Interestingly enough, the first German catechism published in America was not produced by a Lutheran, but by the Moravian Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. We find catechisms prepared by Carl M. de Wrangel, John C. Kuntze, Frederick H. Quitman (the notorious rationalistic catechism), John G. Schmucker, Ernst Ludwig Hazelius, David Henkel, John G. Morris, Elling Eielsen (for the printing of which he made a roundtrip on foot from Illinois to New York City), and F. K. D. Wyneken, just to mention a few.

What is most interesting is the varied contents of these catechisms. They are all based on Luther's Small Catechism, but that work sometimes undergoes such surgery that Luther would hardly recognize his work. Some examples: Zinzendorf spiritualizes his interpretation of "daily bread" to interpret it primarily as the Word, and only secondarily the necessities of life. John George Lochman, president of the General Synod, publishes a nonconfessional catechism, lacking any reference to the word "Lutheran," and defining the gospel as "what we are to believe and what we are to do, in order to live right and die happy." Again and again the peculiar doctrinal emphases of their authors find their way into the catechisms, for example, the divine obligation of the Sabbath, that only baptism performed by a certified pastor is valid, or the means of grace as "those things which have a tendency to impress the mind with divine truth."

This book is far more than a bibliographical survey, however. Its real interest is in depicting the sort of catechetical training that went on in the church. One way for the historican to do that is to look at the material used for instruction. No book in the Lutheran church, save the Bible (and perhaps one might argue about it), has ever been as significant as the Small Catechism. It is not too much to say that it has been the primary document of Lutheran identity, and thousands upon thousands of confirmands have been nourished from its pages. Arthur Repp has here done us a great service in making available a work which details how the catechisms used in America before 1850 reflect the theology actually taught in the church.

Yet a question still remains, perhaps one that is unanswerable from looking at the catechisms themselves. It is the question of how much the catechisms express the theology of the church, and how much they shape it. Or do they mutually affect one another? This is a thought-provoking question, and if it is one you have never before considered, you should read this book.

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