AUGUST 1980
VOLUME 7
NUMBER 4

CURRENTS in theology and mission

CRISIS AND COMMUNITY IN JOHN
Adela Yarbro Collins

CHRISTIANS AND OTHER RELIGIONS
Theodore M. Ludwig

Contents

Editorial: Christians and Other People 193

Crisis and Community in the Gospel of John 196
Adela Yarbro Collins

Christian Self-Understanding and the Other Religions 205
Theodore M. Ludwig

Hans Küng – Catholic? 215
Ronald Modras

North American Responses to Liberation Theology 221
Ralph Moellering

American's Democratic Society and the Authority of the Church 231
Jon Diefenthaler

Those Lively Prophets—Zephaniah Ben-Cushi 239
James A. Rimbach

John Bugenhagen: Confessor Behind the Scenes 243
Kurt K. Hendel

A Book Worth Discussing: James M. Childs, Jr.
Christian Anthropology and Ethics 246
Gary M. Simpson

Childs Replies 250

Book Reviews 254

Drawings by Nina Buettner Bliese

Staff

Editor: Ralph W. Klein
Asst. Editors: Richard H. Bliese, Arthur L. Going
Circulation Manager: Kristina Ferber
Editorial Board: Wesley Bartels, Thelda Bertram, Ronald Fels, Walter Glaeser, John Gugel, Barbara Kloehn, Donald Krueger, Arthur Otto, Kenneth Rogahn, John H. Tietjen, Robert Werberig.

Printed in U.S.A.

CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION is published bimonthly, February, April, June, August, October, December, by Seminex, a non-profit organization, 607 N. Grand Blvd., St. Louis, Mo. 63103, to which all business correspondence is to be addressed. Subscription rate is $8.50 per year. Second Class Postage Paid at St. Louis, Mo. 63103.

CURRENTS is indexed in Elenchus, IZBW, NTA, OTA, Religion Index I (formerly IRPL), Religious and Theological Abstracts, and Theologische Literaturzeitung.

(ISSN: 0098 – 2113)

Christians and "Other People"

Jean-Paul Sartre (d. 1980) once wrote, "Hell is other people." He was protesting against the idea that others — a spouse, an enemy, or society — might define us or keep us from fidelity to our true selves. His acute insight, of course, is not the whole story, and most of us would regard misoxeny (hatred of strangers) or xenophobia (fear of strangers) as neurotic, perhaps even sub-Christian. When we Christians are members of a family, a congregation, a denomination, or a nation, "other people" always form a part of the scene.

The Christians for whom the Gospel of John was written had experienced hostility from the local Jewish community, the Roman authorities, and many average citizens. According to **Adela Yarbro Collins,** the Johannine Christians compensated for their isolation from others by seeing the church as a collection of individuals, without differentiated roles, status, structure, or hierarchy. Their positive, egalitarian solidarity, however, was matched by a feeling that membership in other groups was "darkness." Since this polarization toward outsiders fails to do justice to the complexity and ambiguity of human experience, Ms. Collins invites us to affirm our human solidarity within the Christian community and to extend that solidarity to include others.

Theodore M. Ludwig argues that it is essential to Christian self-understanding that we take seriously the teachings and practices of those committed to alternative religious truths. Dialogue with other religions may help call us back to genuine Christian ideals such as servanthood and the losing of our lives for the sake of others. We may be reintroduced to the mystical and the sacramental, to the centrality of praxis, and to the compelling experience of the oneness of God and the oneness of the human race. From Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam we may learn that the mystery of God is greater than our grasp of him.

The Vatican's declaration that German professor Hans Küng can

no longer be considered a Catholic theologian shows once more that polarity exists among Christians as well as between them and others. **Ronald Modras,** a Roman Catholic priest who earned his doctorate under Küng, defends the catholicity of his teacher. How can Küng be uncatholic since his views are echoed by such prominent Roman Catholics as Gregory Baum, Avery Dulles, Walter Kasper, and Piet Schoonenberg? How can Küng be disciplined for attempting to interpret the doctrine of infallibility, the meaning of which has never been formally defined? Lutherans share the pain of their Roman Catholic sisters and brothers over this case. It raises once more the old questions of authority, freedom, and discipline. How should we handle those with whom we disagree? Who decides what is permissible teaching and the limits of dissent? What awesome irony that the "other people" we Christian people confront are often other Christians!

Liberation theologians place strong emphasis on the social dimensions of the gospel and highlight the antithesis between the gospel and an unjust society. They urge us to interpret the Scriptures in solidarity with the victims of oppression and call for a radical reappraisal of our affluent life style and our prevailing value system. **Ralph Moellering** provides a capsule summary of the leading liberationists and of the critiques raised against them by evangelicals, right-wing Roman Catholics, and others. Given our government and economic system, solidarity with the have-nots often means hostility from (and toward?) the haves. Who said a discussion of Christians and other people would be one-dimensional?

The founding fathers of the United States put all kinds of limits on church authority, including the first amendment of the Constitution. **Jon Diefenthaler** shows that the church in America has been expected to promote a specific kind of authority, which he calls civic righteousness. It often fails in this task because it thinks that nothing is religious unless it's Christian, or because it gets

involved in particular political causes, where it may become as debatable a political issue as any other in the public arena. Whether democracy endures in church or state depends on freedom, clearly established goals, and responsible participation of the people.

James A. Rimbach introduces us to the prophet Zephaniah. The prophet's context was set by the decline of Assyrian power, and his message was that the Day of Yahweh threatened Judah and a whole string of other people in surrounding nations. Zephaniah also foretold that a purified remnant would survive the time of testing and live out the ideal of Yahweh's people. The prophet and his modern interpreters call all people of God to account, to change, and to faith.

Christians owe other people a clear confession of their faith. **Kurt K. Hendel** continues his anniversary series on the Augsburg Confessors by describing the role of John Bugenhagen. He was, among other things, Luther's pastor, but of primary importance were his organizational and educational activities, by which the evangelical confession took root and grew in northern Germany. Coarse Pomeranian that he was, his implementation of the Augustana forms a model for confessing in the varied contexts of life that merits imitation by Lutherans four and a half centuries later.

Our relationships to other people are often crisis-filled. At their best they are more celestial than hellish, as if they were a fragrant oil poured upon the head and falling over the beard. Our service of God, in fact, is usually evidenced by — or contradicted by — our fidelity to these others. The hungry, thirsty, foreign, naked, sick, and imprisoned other people in our acquaintance are often none other than he whose death and resurrection have turned us all into such other people.

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Crisis and Community in the Gospel of John

Adela Yarbro Collins

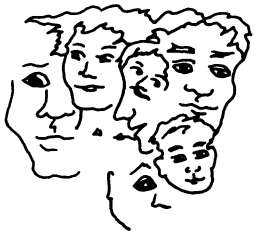
In the first of his Shaffer lectures at Yale Divinity School on the Gospel of John, later published in English under the title *The Testament of Jesus,* Ernst Käsemann observed that critical scholarship had destroyed the traditional opinion that the gospel was written by the apostle John. He went on to express regret and frustration at the fact that scholarship had failed so far to replace the traditional point of view with a new theory which could locate the gospel securely in time and space. In other words, as he put it, interpreters of John are groping about in the dark.[1]

Given the scarcity of hard, *historical* evidence, a number of scholars have attempted to discern the *social* setting of the gospel from the text itself. J. Louis Martyn, Wayne Meeks and Raymond E. Brown have suggested that the gospel can be read on two levels: the ministry of Jesus and the situation of an early Christian community.[2] Such an approach is complicated by the apparently complex literary history of the Gospel of John. Most commentators find in it traditional material of the type present in the Synoptic gospels, and they think that a single author, the evangelist, is responsible for the basic shape and perspective of the gospel. In addition, other authors, editors, and redactors are sometimes posited to account for certain peculiarities in the composition. These various writers are sometimes designated "a Johannine school" because of the overall unity of style and perspective in the gospel. Martyn and Brown see continuity in all the literary stages of the gospel and thus consider it to reflect the history and perspective of a particular "Johannine" community. Such matters are too complex to be dealt with in any detail within this essay; only a few presuppositions and hypotheses can be expressed. It is likely that the Gospel of John is the product of more than one writer. It does not necessarily follow, however, that it reflects the history and perspective of a particular coherent, organized community. The starting point for this study is the gospel in its present form, and the perspective that it reflects.

It is unlikely that this perspective was shaped entirely by experiences unique to the writer or writers. Rather, the Gospel probably reflects experiences common to a number of Christians living in a particular time and place. On the other hand, the Gospel does not simply *reflect* those experiences. Its author or authors

[1] E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) 1.

[2] J.L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968; rev. ed., Nashville: Abingdon, 1979) and *The Gospel of John in Christian History* (New York: Paulist, 1978) 90-121; W. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *JBL* 91 (1972) 44-72; R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979).



articulate an *interpretation* of the situation; within the limits of the Gospel genre, they offer insight into the readers' situation and propose a response to it.

The Social Setting of the Gospel of John: Crisis

The question of the Gospel's social setting and function is of interest to Christians today trying to relate their faith to the world in which they find themselves. Martyn, Meeks, and Brown agree that a decisive factor in the setting of the gospel is the trauma of Christian expulsion from the synagogue and continuing hostility between Christians and Jews. Meeks' study supports the conclusion that expulsion from the synagogue was a crucial element in the formation of the Gospel's perspective and probably in its composition. He points out a striking analogy between the presentation of Jesus as the man from heaven, the alien being who passes through this world, and the social situation of the implied readers, cast out of the synagogue and thus alien, isolated. The Christology of the gospel and its characterization of believers as "not of this world" make sense as twin responses to a social crisis. Such a crisis can be inferred from the Gospel and its nature defined further with the help of contemporary sources.

Rejection by the Jews

The primary aspect of the crisis is conflict with the synagogue. The many controversies between Jesus and "the Jews" probably reflect debates between Christians and Jews at the time the Gospel was being written. There are three texts which indicate that the controversy had reached the point of crisis. The first occurs in the narrative about the man born blind who is healed by Jesus and eventually cast out of the synagogue. His parents are questioned by "the Jews" and are afraid of them because "the Jews had already decided that, if anyone confessed Jesus as Christ, he would be expelled from the synagogue" (9:22). The second passage appears near the end of the account of Jesus' public ministry in a section which describes the rejection of Jesus, presumably by the Jews. "Nevertheless, many, even of the rulers, believed in him, but they did not confess on account of the Pharisees, lest they be expelled from the synagogue." (12:42) The third passage is in the farewell discourse. Jesus is presented as predicting, "They will expel you from the synagogue; indeed, an hour is coming when whoever kills you will think that he is offering service to God." (16:2)

Martyn concludes that these passages reflect a formal and irreversible separation of church and synagogue brought about by a decree of the rabbinic academy at Jamnia under Gamaliel II. This decree involved one of the Eighteen Benedictions, which was a prayer regularly recited in synagogue worship. An allegedly early form of the relevant lines reads, "Let the Nazarenes,

[presumably Christians] and the Minim [heretics] be destroyed in a moment and let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous." Martyn acknowledges that it is conceivable that Christian Jews could have participated in services where this prayer was recited, rationalizing the situation in one way or another. He argues that Christian Jews who had aroused suspicion were detected when the officers invited them to lead the congregation in praying the Benedictions. His thesis is that a Christian Jew would falter at the curse on the Nazarenes and thus be detected and subsequently exiled.[3]

Martyn's theory has been criticized and does in fact go beyond the evidence. There is no compelling reason to think of a universal, formal decree from Jamnia when reading John 9:22, "The Jews had already decided that, if anyone confessed him as Christ, he would be expelled from the synagogue." The dichotomy between disciples of Jesus and disciples of Moses expressed later in the chapter (9:28) is more likely to reflect a situation in the early Church than in the ministry of Jesus, as Martyn argues. Nevertheless, these passages do not necessarily reflect a final and universal separation of Christians from the synagogue. They can plausibly be read as a reflection of a purely local situation. Likewise, Jesus' prediction in the farewell discourse, "They will expel you from the synagogue" (16:2), and the remark about the rulers in 12:42 can be understood in terms of a limited and local Jewish action. Therefore, the date of the relevant decree, which is disputed in any case, cannot be used to date John.

The prediction ascribed to Jesus in the farewell discourse is an indication that the crisis involved more than expulsion from the synagogue, ". . . indeed, an hour is coming when whoever kills you will think that he is offering service to God" (16:2). On the basis of this passage, Martyn concluded that the Jewish council in the city where the Gospel was written had been legally arresting missionaries from the Johannine community, trying them on a charge of leading the people astray, and executing them.[4] This hypothesis is unlikely due to the fact that, beginning with the time of Augustus, capital punishment could be ordered only by the governor in Roman provinces. It is, of course, possible that Christians were killed by Jews in a spontaneous mob action or secretly by conspiracy, but the evidence of the New Testament and other early Christian literature implies that much of the Jewish persecution of Christians took the form of denouncing them to the Roman authorities. Persecution leading to death probably took this Roman route most often.

---

[3] Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, ch. 2.

[4] Ibid, ch. 3.

Rejection by the Wider World

These considerations indicate a further aspect of the crisis which forms the background of the Gospel of John. Hostility from the local Jewish community was evidently a major cause of the sense of isolation expressed in the Gospel as the lot of the disciples of Jesus. This sense of isolation would be greatly reinforced, for Christians or Gentile as well as of Jewish origin, if the Roman authorities and the local populace were also hostile to Christians as well. The perception of such general animosity finds expression in various ways in the Gospel, especially in the negative use of "world" to represent those who reject Jesus and his disciples. The rejection by "the world" is manifested most explicitly in the Gospel by the unbelief of the Jews; nevertheless, the image chosen, "world," has much broader connotations. It is likely that the image reflects a wider experience of rejection than conflict with the Jews alone.

It is impossible to be specific about the reasons for this sense of a wider rejection, since we cannot place the Gospel in time and space with any certainty. Given the execution of Jesus by a Roman official, it is quite conceivable that his followers were in similar danger at various times and places between the crucifixion and 64 C.E., the date of the persecution by Nero in Rome. This danger would probably have become acute only upon the formal, legal accusation of Christians before the Roman magistrate on a specific charge. It is very difficult to reconstruct what that charge was, and in the early period, there were probably a variety of charges. By the time of Nero's execution of Christians, they had become a recognizable group and were disliked and distrusted by the populace of Rome. There is evidence that, in the second century, many provincials harbored an intense hatred for Christians, and it is likely that this animosity was already widespread in Nero's time. Christians were despised for a variety of reasons. They, like the Jews, were accused of "hatred for the human race." This accusation was based on the refusal of many Christians to take part in the civic life of the empire because of the religious syncretism which would be involved. They were also thought to be guilty of various crimes, such as incendiarism, incest, and cannibalism. Members of other religious groups, such as worshippers of Dionysus, were accused of similar crimes. Finally, certain educated Romans despised Christians for their alleged superstition and obstinacy. After Nero's persecution the danger of conviction by Roman magistrates was probably increased. The danger of denunciation must have been present from the very beginning, wherever and whenever local Jews wished to dissociate themselves from the new movement or to contain its spread. Denunciation by Gentiles became an added danger once the movement had attained notoriety.

The Social Function of the Gospel of John: Community

The Gospel of John reflects a setting which seems to have been perceived by the evangelist as a crisis. This crisis involved hostility from the local synagogue, denunciation before the Roman magistrate, and disdain on the part of the local population in general. The Gospel responds to this crisis in two ways. On the one hand, it expresses a vision of community life which could compensate for the isolation from other social groups. On the other hand, it provides a view of reality which reinforces the integrity of this community over against a hostile world.

The Inward Dimension

The nature of the community envisioned by the Gospel of John can be illustrated in terms of a basic polarity in all forms of human social interaction. Victor Turner, an anthropologist at the University of Chicago, has named the two poles "structure" and "communitas."[5] By social "structure" is meant the frame of social order in most societies, the patterned arrangements of roles and statuses. This mode of social interaction is based on a view of society as differentiated and segmented. The basic units are statuses and roles, duties and expectations tied to one's place in a social order. Structure is usually hierarchial. "Communitas" is a mode of interaction based on a view of society as an undifferentiated whole. The lack of differentiation and segmentation is related to an emphasis on what human beings have in common, rather than on their differences. The basic unit is the concrete individual who relates to others in an immediate and egalitarian way. Each mode of interaction has its benefits and dangers. Any particular social group is characterized by both elements, though to differing degrees.

According to Turner, symbols of communitas, and sometimes the experience of this mode of interaction, are most commonly found in relation to three types of social situation: liminality, outsiderhood and structural inferiority. "Liminality" comes from the Latin word *limen* or threshold. It characterizes a situation "betwixt and between," a state of transition between one role and another, one status and another. Especially in rituals of transition, the participants are stripped of all differentiating characteristics and "ground down" to their common humanity. "Outsiderhood" is the condition of being permanently or temporarily set apart

---

[5] V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969) and "Social Dramas and Ritual Metaphors" and "Metaphors of Anti-structure in Religious Culture," *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1974).

from the behavior of status-occupying, role-playing members of a particular social system. Examples of individual types of outsiders are shamans, diviners, hippies, and hoboes. "Structural inferiority" is the occupation of the lowest status in a particular system of social stratification.

The Gospel of John presents the Christian as an outsider, explicitly set apart from the religious and social system of the local Jews, and implicitly from the local provincial culture and civic life. The community envisioned by the Gospel, being "in this world, but not of it," is clearly a group characterized by outsiderhood. The Gospel proposes a vision of community primarily characterized by the type of interaction we have been calling "communitas."

The Gospel's implied view of the church is of a gathering of individuals characterized only by their union with the Father, the Son, and the Paraclete, and thus with one another. There is little segmentation into offices, roles, or hierarchy. Rather, all are disciples. Being a disciple involves loving the other disciples of Jesus (13:34-35). This love which is commanded by Jesus is closely linked to the unity for which he prayed. Unity in the Gospel of John is best understood as the solidarity of those of heavenly origin, as Käsemann suggested.[7] The egalitarian character of this community is expressed in the titles given to the members, titles which express their relationship to one another as well as to Jesus: friends (15:13-15), 3 Jn. 15) and brothers (20:17, 21:23, 1 Jn. 2:9—11 and often, 3 Jn. 3, 5, 10).

The undifferentiated, immediate and egalitarian character of Christian community as envisioned in the Gospel of John makes sense of several distinctive features of the Gospel which have often drawn the attention of its interpreters. A variety of factors would have to be taken into account to explain any one of these features fully, but together they cohere as expressions of communitas in a setting of outsiderhood.

One of these features is the peculiar attitude of the Gospel toward sacraments. There are allusions to Christian baptism and eucharist in the discourses, especially in the dialogue with Nicodemus (3:3-5) and in the discourse on bread from heaven (6:51); but, the baptism of Jesus is not narrated and there is no account of the institution of the eucharist at the Last Supper. No commands of Jesus to repeat such actions are recorded (contrast Mt. 28:19 and Lk. 22:19). It is unlikely that the evangelist was unaware of such traditions. Rather, he seems to have omitted them purposely. The result is that baptism and eucharist are portrayed as opportunities for individuals to encounter the heavenly world and be transformed by it. Such an understanding deemphasizes the importance of the institutional church as the medium of salvation.

[7] Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 67.

Another distinctive feature is the minimal interest in church offices and in any sort of division of labor within the Christian community. The word "apostle" only appears once (13:16) and then in a non-technical sense. Peter is consistently subordinated to the Beloved Disciple. The disciples who are most prominent in the Synoptics do not have a major role in John; others, like Philip, Nathanael and Thomas come into the foreground. The result is that Peter and the Twelve, the traditional "pillars" or "foundation stones" of the church, do not function as straightforward symbols of authority in the Gospel of John. Chapter twenty-one shows that the leadership of Peter is recognized. Nevertheless, his symbolic function as the preserver of tradition and authoritative leader is diminished by his relationship to the Beloved Disciple. Brown and others believe that the Beloved Disciple was a historical person who functioned for the Johannine community in a way analogous to Peter's role vis-a-vis other communities. A serious difficulty with this theory is that the Beloved Disciple is never given a name. His anonymity seems to indicate that he is a fictional character who lends validity to the perspective of the Gospel. He may also represent the ideal or model disciple for the readers.

The images which are used for the Christian community in John are interpreted in a non-hierarchical way. One such image is the flock of sheep in chapter ten. The command of Jesus to Peter in chapter twenty-one, "Feed my sheep," shows that the Gospel recognizes human leadership. But the status and authority of Peter and others like him are tempered by the denial of Peter and Jesus' three-fold query, "Do you love me?" These elements show the fallibility of leaders and the conditional character of their role. The parable of the good shepherd and its interpretation in chapter ten show that Jesus is, in reality, the only true shephed of his flock. The image of the vine and the branches shows no differentiation of role in the community. The emphasis is on the relationship of individuals to Christ and God. It is God who prunes the vine, not human representatives of God or Christ. These images of an undifferentiated, egalitarian community are reinforced by the narrative of the foot-washing in chapter thirteen. Even if the disciples are understood as leaders who in some sense represent Christ, their leadership is to be characterized by loving service.

The direct union of the individual believer with Jesus, and through him with God, limits the authority held by any leader or officer of the community or of the larger church. The abiding presence of the Paraclete and the promise that he would teach the disciples (14:26) limit the authority of any teacher. All members of the community share equally in the life and the truth revealed by Jesus.

Another notable characteristic is the

prominence of women in John relative to the other gospels. The Samaritan woman in chapter four is the recipient of revelation and teaching by Jesus. She goes and tells others living in her city about Jesus, and they subsequently believe in him. This narrative may reflect a situation in which women functioned as missionaries or as proclaimers of the word. Within the gospel as a whole, there is a striking contrast between Nicodemus in chapter three and the woman of chapter four. Nicodemus is a character occupying a high position in the traditional Jewish hierarchical structure; he is male, a Jew, a ruler, and teacher of the people. Yet he does not understand Jesus. He is not helped to come to greater understanding, but is rebuked and left in what is at best a state of imperfect faith. Contrasted with him is a character of low status; she is female, a Samaritan, and of questionable moral character (4:16-18). Yet she is led to greater understanding of Jesus, and her faith is put in a favorable light. Such a reversal of normal expectations makes sense in a community of outsiders.

Martha engages in a revelatory dialogue with Jesus in chapter eleven which climaxes in her confession of Jesus as the Christ. This confession is similar in content and solemnity to that of Peter in the Synoptics. Mary Magdalene is the first to see the risen Lord (20:14-18). She is commissioned to tell the others and her witness is recorded, "I have seen the Lord" (20:18). No rejection of her testimony by the others is recorded. The women in Matthew are commissioned in the same way, but their testimony is not recorded. The women in Luke are also commissioned. Their testimony is not quoted; in fact whatever they said was received by the others as an idle tale. The Gospel of John seems to envision a community in which women participate actively and fully. The unlimited participation of women in community life is congruent with an emphasis on the concrete individual rather than on roles, status, structure and hierarchy.

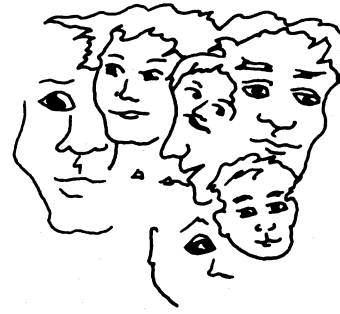
The Outward Dimension

The Gospel of John calls for a Christian community characterized by an egalitarian solidarity. Such a vision is surely a positive social identity. It does have its negative side, however. Since the vision functions, in part, as compensation for the loss of solidarity with other groups, it is not surprising to find that membership in the other groups is presented as undesirable. The dichotomy between followers of Jesus and non-believers is expressed in the Johannine dualism of light and darkness, falsehood and truth, heaven and earth. Already in the prologue those who receive the Word are contrasted with those who do not. Those who do are born of God, while those who do not are born of blood, flesh and the will of man (1:10-13). In a similar passage, believers are those who come to the light because their deeds are of God, while non-believers are those

who love darkness, because their deeds are evil (3:18-21). Elsewhere, it is implied that those who accept Jesus are "of heaven," while those who do not are "of the earth" (3:31-36). In chapter eight, "the Jews," who are the prototype of the unbeliever, are said to be "of this world" (v. 23), and "of the devil" (v. 44). By implication, they are associated with falsehood, while believers are linked to the truth (vv. 31-32, 44-47).

Whoever wrote the so-called First Epistle of John was clearly influenced by the Gospel of John, and implicitly offers a particular interpretation of it. In 1 John we find the dualism of the gospel extended not only to non-believers but also to Christians with whom the author disagrees. This dichotomy is most clear in chapter four. Those who hold incorrect opinions about Jesus are "of the world" (v. 5), whereas "We are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (v. 6). The reader wonders what principle for self-correction such a perspective has. Its dangers are obvious.

Cosmic dualism is one of the recurring mythic patterns which help human beings make sense of a world characterized by conflict, and pervaded with physical and moral evil. Such a perspective is often illuminating and helpful in understanding human nature and action. But when humanity is divided into two groups which are diametrically opposed, the mythic pattern ceases to do justice to the complexity and ambiguity of human experience. In the case of the Gospel of John, the human dualism is in real tension with the basic presupposition of the goodness of creation (1:1-4; 3:16-17; cf. 1 John 2:2). We can understand John's radical human dualism as an attempt to deal with a perceived social crisis and thus realize that the gospel is shaped by the circumstances in which it was written. At the same time, his basic affirmation of human solidarity *within* the Christian community is of more lasting value. The challenge for us is to make that solidarity a reality, and then extend it.



Christian Self-Understanding and the Other Religions

Theodore M. Ludwig

Valparaiso University

In our interconnected world near the end of the twentieth century, no one can adequately grapple with the theology and mission of the church without being acutely aware of the alternative religious truths and practices in other world religions. Traditionally, Christians have left the study of other religions to a few specialists in apologetics and missiology — those equipped either to defend Christian truth against other claims or to work out strategies for converting those of other religions to Christianity. Pastors have needed to be only minimally acquainted with other religions — enough to establish a homiletical foil for Christian truths. And the people at the local parish? Nurturing them in Christian truth has usually meant shieding them from upsetting exposure to the claims to truth in other religions.

Of course, the rapid growth of new popular religions and quasi-religious movements in America in recent years has brought the problem of other religions much closer to home for many pastors and parishes. We must, after all, defend our children against the seduction of the Moonies, the Krishna people, the likes of Jim Jones' Peoples Temple. Thus a whole spate of articles, books, and TV programs has focused attention on these movements. Unfortunately, many of these are characterized by social scientific concerns or by Christian jingoism; they have contributed little to real understanding of the religious vision and values of these groups. And even less effort has been made, on the parish level at least, toward understanding the Muslim sensitivities of the large numbers of Arab and Iranian students in our midst, the Buddhist convictions of the local Vietnamese families or (even after "Holocaust") the practices of our Jewish neighbors.

However, Christians should grapple seriously with these alternative religious truths, not only to understand the people who practice these religions, important though this is in our age of a global civilization. It is essential to the Christian's *self-understanding* that he or she take seriously the teachings and practices of those committed to alternative religious truths. For, "He who knows one religion understands none." (Max Mueller) The blinders we Christians put on to shield ourselves from the threat posed by conflicting religious claims may in fact deprive us of an adequate understanding of Christian theology and mission. Such blinders perpetuate age-old distortions of Christianity in the form of arrogant imperialism and triumphalism; they keep us from seeing important Christian resources for faith and practice in the modern world.

Monologue, Polylogue, Dialogue

In looking at other religions and, more importantly, the people who practice them, the model of understanding that seems most consonant with Christian values is interpersonal *dialogue.* It is

through genuine encounter or dialogue with the "other," giving myself and receiving from the other, that I discover my own full personhood, as demonstrated so well by writers like Martin Buber and Reuel Howe.[1] In contrast, the "blinders" approach is characterized by monologue, the attitude that I am complete in myself and need to receive nothing from the other. In religious terms, monologue is based on a sharp dichotomy of truth and falsehood; exclusivist, intolerant forms of Christianity are well-known in church history past and present.

There is, of course, another attitude toward religious truth widely accepted today, the so-called "Protean" attitude,[2] in which the person changes shape and form with each new influence to come along. Needless to say, a lifestyle of simply responding to all the voices in such a polylogue is as unsatisfactory in religious commitment as it is in human personality development. Yet it is true that the trend in our times seems to be toward such a Protean view, an eclectic syncretism, or constant shifting from one new religious fad to the next.

But Proteus never engaged in dialogue. For genuine dialogue requires a firm starting point in one's own convictions and values and the intention to grow in them, not to abandon them. At the same time, dialogue implies an openness to the experiences and expressions of others, an ability to listen to them with respect, a readiness to receive something from them. It should be made clear that behind the Christian attitude of dialogue lies an important theological presupposition: God is at work in the world today, as he has always been, also in the practitioners of other religions. No dialogue is possible if one takes the theological view of Karl Barth, for example, who insists that "religion is the contradiction of revelation, the concentrated expression of human unbelief."[3] But the biblical emphasis is on the continuing creatorship of God, the universality of the covenant with Noah, the insistance that God has made his will known to all people, and above all the Logos-incarnational perspective of John 1 — such biblical themes and motifs compel the Christian to look for God's activity in human culture even beyond the confines of the Christian church. In Athens St. Paul expected to find — and did — Athenian witness to

---

[1] Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Scribner, 1960); Reuel Howe, *The Miracle of Dialogue* (New York: Seabury, 1963).

[2] See, for example, Robert Jay Lifton, *Boundaries: Psychological Man in Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books [Random House], 1970), pp. 37-63. For an excellent overview of the ideas of leading Christian thinkers about the truth of other religions, see *Attitudes Towards Other Religions: Some Christian Interpretations,* ed. Owen C. Thomas (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

[3] See Karl Barth, "The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion," *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), vol. I, part 2, pp. 280-362.



the one God who made all people that "they should seek God and, it might be, touch and find him." Indeed, the Logos-theology of John 1 compels Christians to anticipate the prevenience of Christ, the "light which enlightens everyone," among those who search for God today.[4]

Such a theological presupposition means that Christians look to other religions with the expectant question, "What is God doing in these religions?", open to the possibility that people in these religions have actually experienced God's workings — and that therefore we may learn something about God from them. Dialogue involves a risk, a risk that we may change, grow, or discover new dimensions of our own religious understanding.

In its origins Christianity was stamped with the structure of dialogue. The dialogue began within Judaism itself, a religion long characterized by dialogue as the mainstay of the relationship between people and God and between people and people. Early Christians lived in daily contact with people committed to alternative religious interpretations: Jews, participants in gnostic redemption mysteries, or in the Roman state religion. St. Paul and the church fathers took a dialogical attitude toward other religous truths, pointing especially to their preparatory and educative role in relation to Christ.[5]

The increasing triumph of Christianity over other religions, however, together with its dissociation from its parent Judaism, led to a gradual decrease in dialogue. With the Constantinean establishment of Christianity as the new exclusive state religion came the disenfranchisement of other religions as worthy partners in dialogue. A poignant symbol of this changeover from dialogue to triumphal monologue is the plea of Symmachus in his losing battle to preserve the statue and altar of Victory which had been placed in the senate house by Julius Caesar: "It is impossible that so great a mystery should be approached by one road only." The question was not decided through his dialogue with St. Ambrose but simply by imperial fiat.

Of course there were periods of dialogue and creativity in post-Constantinean church history; one thinks of the revitalization of imperial Christianity by the infusion of outlooks and rituals of the northern barbarians, or of the vision of Cardinal Nicholas of

---

[4] See especially Robert D. Young, *Encounter With World Religions* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970); E.L. Allen, *Christianity Among the Religions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960); Heinz Robert Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (London: Burns & Oates, 1966); Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1965).

[5] Acts 14:15-17; Acts 17:22-31; Justin Martyr, *Apologia* I, ch. 46; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I, 5.

Cusa that behind all the different religious practices there stands one universal religion.[6] But it must be said that, in general, the swing to exclusive dominance by Christianity changed the character of this "Way of life" (Didache), for now imperial structures and triumphalistic attitudes became dominant. No longer did Christians have to dialogue with those committed to alternative religous claims — and when dialogue is lost, it seems, imperialism takes over. Whe ever heard of *dialoguing* with the Christ-killers? or the infidel Turks? or the Plains Indians or the Zulus?

Geniune dialogue, when one listens with some respect and openness to people of another religous experience, challenges the smug sense of superiority and exclusive possession of truth. And the challenge is not to abandon Christianity but to live up to it — to return to genuine Christian ideals which have atrophied in the long period of Christianity's reign in power. The most important benefit of dialogue with people of other religions can be to help Christians recover the early Christian sense of being pilgrims in a religious search, a pilgrimage in which challenges and guideposts can be found also in the religious traditions of others. And if it is such a pilgrimage shared with others, then the Mystery which urges us on cannot be claimed as an exclusive possession but as the Logos which enlightens everyone.

The Jews

The most immediate challenge comes, if we will but hear it, from our friends and neighbors who represent the ancient people of God, the Jews. From ancient times Christians have charged Jews with having a sense of superiority as the chosen people. It would seem incumbent on the Christian today, as a beginning in dialogue to take two steps: becoming familiar with what Christian leaders of the past have said about the Jews (Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* would be a good place to begin); and ask the neighborhood rabbi what it means to be the chosen people of God. It is a heavy responsibility to be a part of the elect people of God, says Seymour Siegel; the supreme test of election is *kiddush hashem,* "The sanctification of the Name," bearing witness to the one God in the world even to the point of martyrdom.[7] Christians are reminded that their crusading knights have probably martyred more for the sanctification of the Name than they have had martyrs, and they should repent.

---

[6] See Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1958), pp. 26-100; Nicholas Cusanus, *De Pace Fidei.*

[7] Seymour Sigel, "Election and the People of God," *Speaking of God Today: Jews and Lutherans in Conversation,* ed. Paul Opsahl and Marc Tannenbaum (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), pp. 39-46.

Yet in no sense can the Jewish peoplehood idea be seen from the Christian's point of view as a superior, exclusivist role; traditional Jewish teaching holds that the Gentiles also share in redemption by means of the seven Noachian commandments. Indeed, Jewish thinkers like Maimonides and Rosenzweig have looked upon the Christian movement as part of God's plan to bring his Torah to the whole of human society, to perfect the world to serve him (the neighborhood rabbi, of course, may not agree with Maimonides and Rosenzweig). But, on the Christian side, the very continued existence of the Jewish people is a challenge to Christian dogmatic assertions about exclusivist possession of truth and mission. The ancient people of God stands yet today as a constant reminder that God's ways are far beyond our feeble attempts to define and thus control them: "O the depths of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments and inscrutable his ways!" St. Paul's discussion of the mystery of the Jews as God's people ended with such an expression (Rom. 9-11), and we too can renew that sense of mystery and wonder associated with the pilgrimage of the people of God by opening our eyes to the meaning of Judaism.

Above all, the challenge lies in the stance of the Jews, persecuted and oppressed, yet stubbornly faithful to their calling, dying with the *shema* on their lips. At the end of Andre Schwartz-Bart's novel, *The Last of the Just,* Ernie prays wearily as he is led into the gas chamber with a group of children and his own wife: "O God, O Lord, we went forward like this thousands of years ago. We walked across arid deserts and blood red seas, through floods of salt-bitter tears. We are very old, we are still walking. Oh let us arrive finally."[8] The Christian is driven back to Isa. 53, to the Passion story, to St. Paul's exhortation to share Christ's mind as the servant who poured himself out to death on the cross. And the question has to be posed: does the Christian of today look very much like the servant on the cross, the servant of Isa. 53 — or do we leave that to Ernie?

The Buddhists

Jesus of Nazareth and his followers were Asians — and the other religions of Asia present many of the same kinds of challenges and guideposts. It is humbling, for example, to read the common Buddhist meditation on compassion or loving-kindness (realizing that my own recent prayers had to do mainly with what I want for self-enhancement):

> Now I charge every particle of my system, from head to toe, with thoughts of boundless loving-kindness and compassion . . .

[8] Quoted by Sigel, *ibid.*, p. 53.

> Mentally I create an aura of loving-kindness around me. By means of this aura, I cut off all negative thoughts, hostile vibrations. I return good for evil, loving-kindness for anger, compassion for cruelty, sympathetic joy for jealously . . . What I have gained I now give to others. Think of all seen and unseen beings, living far and near, men, women, animals and all living beings, in the East, West, North, South, above and below, and radiate boundless loving-kindness, without any enmity or obstruction, towards all . . . Think that all are your brothers and sisters, fellow-beings in the ocean of life.[9]

Of course, many will be quick to point out, Buddhist *Karuna* or compassion is quite different from Christian *agape* (rooted in the Buddhist value of No-self over against the Christian assertion of individual self-worth). Yet once again the challenge cannot be hidden: what has happened in Christianity to the image of the One who poured himself out for others, who said, "Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it"? In spite of miming St. Paul's "I am all things to all people," have we left it to the bodhisattva to live out the vow of being a "man for others"? "I shall be the inexhaustible treasure of all the needy . . . I am the light for those who need light; the bed for those who need a bed; and the servant of those who need service. I am all these to all."[10]

The bodhisattva is the supreme ideal of human spiritual achievement for millions of Mahayana Buddhists. Saints have fallen on hard times in Christianity (no doubt in Buddhism also). But doesn't the Buddhist vision present a challenge to the Christians to take a hard look at his own imitation of Christ — not the royal Christ of the emperors and crusaders, not the turn-me-on Jesus of the new crusaders, but just the servant who gave himself for others? And the Christian who has gone to this first step in dialogue might be driven to ask the next, deeper question: is the Buddhist ideal of the negation of the grasping self in favor of the one Self really more antithetical to Christ's teachings than is our modern Christian scramble for self-enhancement, our grasping for control and security, our self-concerned emphasis on spiritual reward both on earth and in heaven?

Vertical Transcendence and Horizontal Solidarity

Christians pride themselves on belonging to a "prophetic" religion (an

---

[9] See Nandra Thera, *Buddhism in a Nutshell* (Ceylon, 1966), pp. 60-62.

[10] *The Great Asian Religions: An Anthology*, comp. by Wing-tsit Chan et al. (New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 74.

honor shared, of course, with Jews and Muslims). The prophetic element is the insertion into human history and society of the proclamation of God's will, to call people back to live in accordance with that will. Christian thinkers have often associated the prophetic character of Christianity with the condemnation of "religion" as such, described as the man-made rituals and assurances of self-justification. In particular, Christians have seen the prophetic protest directed against the mystical and sacramental dimensions of religion — cultic rites, sacrifices, devotion to the gods, mediation rituals — in favor of the demand for obedience and faith. According to Kraemer

> "The mystic, who triumphantly realizes his essential oneness with God . . . commits in this sublime way the root sin of mankind, 'to be like God' . . . Hence the universal religious consciousness of man has everywhere produced the most abhorrent and degrading filth that perverted human imagination and lust can beget."[11]

But this same Christian protest against human involvement in the sacred has no doubt led, as some have argued, to the secularization process which has advanced steadily in the so-called Christian West and which has given rise to the technological society in which humans attempt to manage and control everything. After much praise of this new "secular city," now we are beginning to hear voices warning that increasing secularization and technological advance are fast flattening our world and society into a one-dimensional reality, in which the only operating value is efficiency and in which all spiritual goals have been lost or co-opted. Most ominous of all, the supposed prophetic voice of the Christian churches has also become entrapped in this one-dimensionality; church and seminary and renewal institute alike are run along the lines developed by experts in businesses and corporations, the "bottom line" being cost efficiency per product. Something is missing — some other dimension.

Hindus

An encounter with Hinduism (real Hinduism, not some of the imported American pop varieties) is a bewildering experience. Gods and godesses seem more populous in this world than human beings — some 330 million of them, according to one tradition. Divine, human, and natural seem part of one organic whole, with temples growing out of the soil like huge plants, filled with sensuous and surrealistic images of the gods: playful Krishna with his Radha, gory Kali, phallic Shiva, voluptuous goddesses. And diverse rituals and practices

---

[11] Hendrik Kraemer, "Continuity or Discontinuity," in *The Authority of the Faith,* ed. International Missionary Council (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 113.

meet the eye everywhere, from massive festivals to individual loving care for the god's image, from god-centered ecstasy to solitary ascetic yoga. All this may indeed be "the most abhorrent and degrading filth that perverted human imagination and lust can beget," as Kraemer has written. But did Kraemer really *listen* to the Hindus? There is another dimension, a dimension of transcendence, which the Hindu meets everywhere every day. It is a reality which does not allow the Hindu to sink into the one-dimensionality of our flattened, technological, post-Christian world. Some bemoan the backwardness of Hindu society. But is there not a challenge here to be heard by Christians who seriously listen? We may talk a lot about the presence of Christ among us — but do we actually expect to meet up with that kind of transendent dimension, even inside other churches? Do we even know how to participate in rituals and festivals and meditation in such a way that we are open to the experience of the transcending reality?

The rich variety of symbols and rituals in Hinduism — and in many of the other religions — can remind Christians of the richness of Christian symbols and rituals, most of them long-forgotten in the streamlined version of Christianity "practiced" today. We can only hint here, for example, at the importance of the feminine dimension in Hindu sacrality. Many voices even within Christianity have recently exposed the almost complete suppression of that dimension in Christian theology and ritual. Dare we ask the question: what can we learn about God from the Hindu goddesses? Perhaps that shock would help us learn to see some of the feminine symbols hidden in the Christian tradition.

Early Christians often described Christianity simply as "the Way." Hinduism — like most of the Asian religions — looks upon the religous quest as a "way" of life, a lifelong praxis, in which one moves slowly toward the goal of oneness with the transcendent reality. All along the way there are countless signals of transcendence, suited to everyone at his particular stage. Bewildering — yes. Heathen — perhaps. But does not the Christian hear from India a genuine prophetic voice, calling us away fom our slide into one-dimensional secularity, reminding us of the mystical and the sacramental, turning us back to the centrality of praxis, helping us to look for the dimension of christic transcendence in our midst?

Muslims

Camped in the old castle in Kerak, Jordan, this summer, we were awakened every morning about 3:00 by the first sonorous calls to prayer, wafting intermingled from the three or four minarets in the area: "Allah is great; I testify that there is no God but Allah; I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah; come to prayer, come to prayer." And

around 9:00 pm, as we were falling asleep after an exhausting day on the dig, came the fifth and last call to prayer. Islam has become the "whipping-boy" of the religions today, with many emotional, uninformed diatribes being spoken and written against this supposed "religion of the sword." Much of our anger, of course, is tied up with the threat of curtailment in our once-unbounded access to the world's oil resources.

But what if we were really to listen to the Muslims in openness, willing to learn or re-learn something about God and man from them? It is quite amazing, for example, to realize that at any hour of the day or night, somewhere in the world the Arabic call to prayer is being sounded out, a continual testimony to the centrality of the one God and his will for his creation. It staggers the imagination to picture people all over the world, most especially in the so-called third world, demonstrating the oneness of the human race by facing the same *axis mundi* and reciting the same testimonies to the one God. Is there anything in Christian experience like the pilgrimage to Mecca, where people from all races and economic classes don the *ihram* of total equality and, in the rituals of the pilgrimage, see themselves as representative of the brotherhood of mankind standing before the one creator?

There is in Islam a powerfully simple and compelling experience of the oneness of God and the corresponding unity of humankind. When Malcom X was asked by fellow pilgrims in Mecca what had impressed him the most, he answered, "The *brotherhood!* The people of all races, colors, from all over the world coming together as *one!* It has proved to me the power of the One God."[12] Admittedly Islam is a "simple faith" in contrast to the complexities of Christian dogmatics. But precisely there lies the challenge: have we allowed Christian teaching and practice to become so complicated so as to become divisive, splintering the oneness of God and the oneness of humankind? Christians also have a festival of unity, the eucharist. But instead of being a testimony of the "one loaf, one body," the sacrament of unity seems often to promote division. Christ prayed that his followers would be one, as he and the father are one, as a testimony to the world that God had sent him. Perhaps the Muslim challenge can provide impetus for Christians to rediscover that urgent sense of unity as a form of witness to the oneness of God and the centrality of Christ's mission.

Conclusion

These are only beginning suggestions of the kinds of challenges which Christians should be hearing from people who

[12] *The Autobiography of Malcom X,* with assistance of Alex Haley (New York: Grove, 1966), p. 338.

practice other religions. Before the dialogue moves very far they will encounter other important challenges: the positive Chinese conception of the humanity and educability of humankind, the Jewish and Muslim high view of human nature and rejection of the idea of original sin, the Hindu's refusal to limit the divine reality to any particular form of expression, the Buddhist sense of the relativity and impermanence of all reality, and many more. Each religion of course has its own center, its own richness of interpretation and practice. Thus an attitude of dialogue toward these religions involves more than just a casual acquaintance. Further, a "dialogue" naturally involves taking and giving, and certainly Christians have challenges to make to those of other commitments also.

Yet it does seem time to listen a little, in contrast to the monologue so characteristic of Christianity. The most important beginning lies in a change of attitude, the recovery of the Christian sense of pilgrimage and sacrifice and discovery, together with the humility of knowing that the mystery of God is greater than our grasp of him.



Hans Küng — Catholic?

Ronald Modras
Associate Professor, Department of Theological Studies, St. Louis University

When seventy American Catholic theologians responded to the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and stated that "Hans Küng is indeed a Catholic theologian," it was not a protest. It was a statement of fact. With respect to infallibility, which was the issue most emphasized by the Vatican statement on Küng, the fact is — Küng is not alone.

The Vatican's effort to discredit Küng and have him removed from the Catholic theological faculty of the University of Tübingen, is essentially an attempt to isolate him, not only from his colleagues on the Tübingen Catholic faculty, but from the Catholic theological community at large. Küng's theology, however, leans heavily on the findings of Catholic biblical scholarship, particularly that of New Testament exegetes. His theological method is one that is shared by the majority of Roman Catholic as well as other Christian theologians in the West; that is, he interprets infallibly defined dogmas as well as Scripture in the light of the historical milieu in which they arose, expressing their meaning in contemporary categories. In this Küng is not easily isolated.

The seventy American signers, who expressed their affirmation of Küng's Catholicism, did so with the acknowledgement that, "no one of us necessarily agrees with the opinions on particular issues of any other Catholic scholar, including Hans Küng." It would be impossible to ascertain how many of the seventy substantially agree with Küng's thesis that infallibility is tantamount to indefectability, an abiding in truth despite errors. There is no doubt, however, that more than seventy Roman Catholic theologians, not only in North America but throughout the world, have grave reservations about the understanding of infallibility that developed between the two Vatican councils and is apparently still alive and well in Rome today. The problem, however, is that it is not altogether clear just what the Vatican's understanding of infallibility is. No council or pope has ever defined what constitutes the nature of infallibility. Vatican I simply presupposed its meaning, defining *that* infallibility exists and *who* is infallible. But the Council never said anything about *what* infallibility is.

It is out of the question to survey all the literature that Catholic theologians produced in the last ten years on the nature of infallibility. It is possible, though, to demonstrate that Küng is not alone in his attempt to grapple with the meaning of the word, and that some of the Catholic Church's most prominent theologians fall more on Küng's side of the spectrum than the other. Gregory Baum, Avery Dulles, Walter Kasper, and Piet Schoonenberg are Catholic theologians who are hardly to be brushed aside as lightweight.

Gregory Baum

Canadian ecumenist Gregory Baum

wrote on dogma and infallibility soon after the conclusion of the Council, since Vatican II constituted for him such a "profound doctrinal reform." On ethical issues like religious liberty and on defined dogmas such as "no salvation outside the Church," Vatican II represented not only a logical development but a quantum leap. In an article entitled "Doctrinal Renewal" (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* 1965), Baum criticized the traditional notion of infallibility and the exaggerated veneration for the church's teaching authority:

> The magisterium which announces and, at certain historical moments, defends and explains the Gospel infallibly is not an inerrant magisterium; it is the teaching authority of a pilgrim people, walking not by sight but by faith, which eagerly listens to God's Word and continues to be taught by it. In this context it is possible to assert that the magisterium has made mistakes. This is the Christian reality revealed in Christ which must be carefully distinguished from the myth of an omniscient teaching authority. (p. 378)

For Baum, the primary locus of the church's magisterium is the liturgy and its proclamation of the gospel. Dogmatic formulas are secondary and, although authoritative, not necessarily infallible, since infallibility applies only to proposing the revealed gospel and to issues which are absolutely necessary for the preservation of the gospel. Writing in *Concilium* 21 (1967), Baum concluded:

> It would seem, therefore, that the Church cannot always tell whether a particular teaching is held infallibly or not. The notion of universal ordinary magisterium is still too vague and the object of infallibility can be circumscribed only abstractly. The Church often does not know what she knows. (p. 78)

Avery Dulles

American Jesuit Avery Dulles is deservedly renowned for his seminal and most serviceable book, *Models of the Church.* But Dulles has also authored what is perhaps the most incisive study of dogma produced in this country in the last twenty years, *The Survival of Dogma.* In that book, Dulles criticizes the idea that there could be revealed doctrines immune to historical limitations and capable of being imposed by the sheer weight of extrinsic authority. Such a notion reflects juridical thinking and a rationalist concept of dogma. Without explicitly rejecting this rationalistic view of dogma, Vatican II depicted revelation primarily as a vital interpersonal communion between God and humankind. Dulles makes four important points:

> 1. Dogmas cannot be simply identified with revelation. They serve an important and even in-

dispensable function in bringing people into contact with God's revelation of Himself. "But revelation itself cannot be limited to spoken or written words, nor do such words of themselves constitute revelation." (p. 155)

2. Dogmas speak of eschatological realities which transcend our present experience and power of conceptualization. They speak provisionally, metaphorically, with approximative imagery. They are not scientific statements but "mystagogical," almost sacramental, transmitting not the idea but the reality of God's presence. (pp. 157-58).

3. Dogmas are not above change. The meanings of words change according to changing circumstances, and the Church may be forced to reformulate its dogmas to convey what they originally intended. The modern believer cannot be asked to accept the worldview of ancient or medieval Christianity. (pp. 158-60)

4. Dogmas need not be universal. Conceptually diverse formulations may coexist in different sections of the Church. The mere fact that a formula may be true does not mean it should be imposed as a test upon all members of the Church. (pp. 162-63)

For Dulles, all doctrinal statements are historically relative. Even in its infallible definitions, the church is subject to human and historical limitations. Infallibility, as it is currently understood, means that the entire church cannot be definitively committed to error. (p. 197) Dulles is convinced that, if formulated for the first time today, the definition of infallibility would probably sound very different. Perhaps the word would not even be used.

Walter Kasper

Walter Kasper, a colleague of Küng's at Tübingen, has often served as a theological consultant to the German bishops and has represented the Vatican in Lutheran Roman Catholic dialogues at the international level. His 1965 book, *Dogma unter dem Wort Gottes* (Dogma under the Word of God), insists that, like the church, dogmas too stand under Scripture. From this it follows, they must be interpreted by Scripture. The church's dogmatic decisions enjoy the assistance of the Holy Spirit, but there is no question of their being put on the same level as Scripture. (p. 115)

Kasper points out the difference between the Greek notion of truth and that of the Bible. For the Greeks, truth meant conformity of the intellect to its object. For the Bible, truth is "that which proves itself in history to be what it claims, that which proves itself trustworthy and con-

stant in practice, in word and work''. (p. 71) From this biblical understanding of truth, Kasper concludes that dogmas may never be regarded as absolute. They are provisional and hence imperfect, the promise of a truth that will only be made manifest at the end of history, eschatologically.

In view of the eschatological nature of dogmatic truth, infallibility can be understood as the protection whereby the church does not commit itself ''definitively'' to error and trusts infallibly that it will not be disavowed. (p. 127) As for individual dogmas, however, clarification is always possible. For example: ''It is thoroughly possible that the real meaning of the two Marian dogmas of 1854 and 1950 (the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary) will be fully clarified only in the future''. (p. 132)

Piet Schoonenberg

Dutch Jesuit Piet Schoonenberg is known principally for his pioneering work in reinterpreting the doctrine of original sin and for his more recent work in Christology. He too has written, though, on the contingency of dogmas as a necessary consequence of their historical nature, the historical stamp they bear because of their origin out of an historical situation. The historical character of dogmatic statements is not abolished by infallibility. Rather, the doctrine of infallibility itself must be interpreted in the light of this historical character.

For Schoonenberg, as for Küng, God alone is absolutely true. His guidance alone is free of errors and failings. There is a profound difference between divine infallibility and the human infallibility given to the church. The church's infallibility is that of a creature, and so of something that is at the same time fallible because it is constantly developing. Infallibility is a gift of God; therefore, it is not something over which the church has disposal. It is always limited, sharing in the victory of grace over sin and error, yet still assailed by sin and error.

Just as there is a great difference between the infallibility of God and that of the church, so also is there between the infallibility of the church and that of texts. The infallibility of a text is always a conditioned and quite limited reflection of the church's infallible view of faith. The way dogmas are expressed can be changed; in some circumstances, a translation of all dogmas can be required. When it comes to peripheral dogmas, not only their expression but their very contents as well are time-bound, so that revision may be necessary.

Like those who ascribe inerrancy to the Bible only in terms of its totality, Schoonenberg suggests that individual dogmas may be considered as relatively infallible, that is, infallible only to the extent that they contribute to an infallible whole. The inerrancy or infallibility of dogmas is precisely present in their

mutual relationship and in their gradual building up of a growing interpretation of faith. In the process of that "growing interpretation," there is a place not only for infallible statements but also for statements that err. The Holy Spirit leads us through searching and temptation, through unrefined insights, through "whole and half truths," and hence also through "whole and half errors."

What does infallibility mean?

Gregory Baum, Avery Dulles, Walter Kasper, and Piet Schoonenberg cannot be casually dismissed as peripheral to Catholic theology. They are influential and representative thinkers who command the respect of their colleagues for their integrity and scholarship. Baum speaks of a magisterium that "has made mistakes." Dulles and Kasper understand infallibility to mean that the church cannot commit itself "definitively" to error. Schoonenberg suggests that individual dogmas are conditioned, open to revision, and enjoy a "relative infallibility" in that they contribute to an infallible whole. But these dogmas may, at the same time, express only a "half truth" and, likewise, a "half error." How substantially different are these interpretations from Küng's interpretation of infallibility as indefectability or perpetuity in the truth despite individual errors?

In 1973, Küng published a survey of the debate aroused by his interpretation, *Fehlbar: Eine Bilanz* (Fallible: A Balance). In it he claimed that a fundamental consensus is emerging among Catholic theologians on at least three issues: 1) Even among his sharpest critics, there is arising a general recognition that the church's highest teaching authorities have *de facto* erred in the past. 2) A general skepticism has developed respecting the very intelligibility and usefulness of the concept of infallibility. 3) A general agreement is emerging regarding Küng's thesis that infallibility may be understood as the church abiding in truth despite all errors.

But the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith did not agree. In June, 1973, it published a declaration, *Mysterium Ecclesiae,* which, without mentioning Küng by name, explicitly rejected his interpretation of infallibility: "the faithful are in no way permitted to see in the church merely a fundamental permanence in truth which, as some assert, could be reconciled with errors contained here and there in the propositions that the church's magisterium teaches to be held irrevocably."

Mysterium Ecclesiae did not go without its critics, Karl Rahner among them. But for the first time in any official Catholic pronouncement, there was in this declaration an admission that dogmas are historically conditioned, sometimes incomplete (although not false), and affected by the changeable conceptions of a given epoch. This is an important admission. It led Rahner

himself to ask: Where does the truth of incomplete, historically conditioned dogmatic formulations leave off and where does error begin? (*Stimmen der Zeit,* 191 [1973] p. 592) Indeed, given the peculiar, symbolic nature of religious language, what is meant by "error" in a dogmatic statement? The question is more difficult than it seems at first sight.

It bears repeating that we do not have a formal definition of any council or pope as to what exactly constitutes the nature of infallibility. Vatican I defined that it exists and who has it, but did not define what is meant by it. The Council presupposed an understanding of the term. Are we to presume it simply means a guaranteed freedom from error? Then again, what is meant by "error" in a dogmatic statement, given the historical nature of all dogmas and the symbolic nature of all religious language. When is a theological statement "imperfect" or "incomplete," and when is it in error? All this leads, of course, to the question: How can Hans Küng be declared no longer a Catholic theologian for attempting to interpret a concept whose meaning has never been formally defined?

The position of Küng and systematic theologians like him evokes memories of Catholic biblical scholars who only a generation ago were under similar suspicion and censure for applying the same critical historical principles of interpretation to Scripture as these men do to dogmas. There is reason for confidence that the same historical scholarship which brought about the demise of uncritical biblicism in the Catholic Church will bring about a similar demise of dogmatism. Dogmas can and ought to be respected and honored as authoritative means of indicating and transmitting God's self-revelation, but they are not revelation itself. They are not absolute. The critical study of the New Testament and of subsequent church tradition exerts a powerfully relativizing influence upon all claims to absolute validity for any dogmatic formulation.

Despite attempts to contain the activity or negate the influence of theologians such as Küng, it can be argued compellingly that the future of Catholic thought and practice lies on their side. Certainly anyone who would deny their conclusions assumes the burden of answering the same questions and facing the same historical problems they did.

The enemy of dogmatism within the Catholic Church is not so much the spirit of the times, as time itself.

North American Responses to Liberation Theology

Ralph Moellering

Edmundton, Alberta, Canada

Liberation theology — is it ephemeral and specious or will it be of enduring value and universal relevance? In North America reactions have varied all the way from total denunciation and contemptuous repudiation to enthralled admiration and unequivocal endorsement. Between these extremes one can find everything from qualified approbation to methodological critiques to thinly disguised efforts at co-optation.

Fadism in theology became characteristic of the sixties. The prevailing neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, the Christian realism of Reinhold Niebuhr, and a Kierkegaardian existentialism comingled with Tillichian concepts were abruptly displaced by a spate of novel theologies. The doom of metaphysics was assumed and the dimension of the sacred fell into disrepute. Secularizing theologians blended their thinking with the *Zeitgeist* until the avant-garde embraced a "Gospel of Atheism." Late in the sixties and early in the seventies, however, the pendulum suddenly reversed with an alleged "recovery of transcendence", a reinterpretation of eschatological themes in the "theology of hope", and a widespread fascination with Oriental religions. Except for the emergence of Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Metz on the European horizon, few of the new ideologies retained much of a following. Fluctuation and instability have been characteristic of many of our theological seminaries and journals during the past fifteen or twenty years.

Is the much-heralded liberation theology only a meteoric phenomenon likely to be eclipsed or discarded in the near future? At present evidence is multiplying that its vitality is increasing rather than diminishing. More than a decade has elapsed since the Second General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate (CELAM II) was held in Medellin (Columbia). The documents emanating from this gathering of the hierarchy have been described as epochal landmarks — a point of departure for a new consciousness.[1] The escalating expectations for an improvement in the existing situation have not been blunted desite frustrations and disappointments. Books, pamphlets, and commentaries on liberation theology and related subjects have been published and circulated in profuse quantity. Quite understandably comparisons have been made with Black theology and the feminist movement.[2] North Americans — Roman Catholic and Protestant, liberal and conservative — have felt compelled to react in some way to the fresh

---

[1] See *Between Honesty and Hope, Documents from and about the Church in Latin America,* translated by John Drury (New York, Maryknoll Publications: 1970).

[2] E.G. Rosemary Ruether, "Outlines for a Theology of Liberation," *Dialog,* Autumn, 1972.

breezes blowing across the southern hemisphere. Meanwhile, CELAM III (held in Pueblo, Mexico from January 27 to February 13, 1979) "not only reaffirmed the prophetic, activist thrust of the 1968 bishops' conference, but in some respects advanced it."[3]

In the opinion of Robert McAfee Brown, "it is an act of North American condescension to discuss liberation theology as no more than the latest fad, and it is an act of arrogance to assume that it has nothing to teach us."[4] If this judgment is valid it is of crucial importance to be familiar with the thought patterns that comprise liberation theology, to be acutely aware of why it seems so realistic and compelling to Latin Americans, and in what ways it has become convincing and applicable to North Americans.

Gustavo Gutierrez, one of the foremost proponents of liberation theology, defines it as "critical reflection on historical praxis" and offers it as a contribution to "the life and reflection of the universal Christian community."[5] For Gutierrez and his associates all of history is a unified totality. There is no separate salvation history. Without liberating historical events, however, there can be no implementation of the kingdom of God. Abstract truth is meaningless and "unengaged truth" is a nonentity.[6]

Liberation theology insists that the Bible is on the side of the abused and in opposition to greed and exploitation.[7] Poverty is depicted as a scandalous condition, detrimental to human dignity and therefore contrary to the will of God. Those who wanted to be faithful to their covenant obligations in Israel were required to give the dispossessed the benefits to which they are entitled. Biblical theology, as expounded by the "liberationists," intimates that the primary responsibilty for uplifting the downtrodden lies with the people who have power and already enjoy material advantages. Dropping crumbs from the tables of the masters, occasional almsgiving, and even more generous acts of voluntary benevolence are not enough.

---

[3] Dean Peerman, "CELAM III: Measured Steps Forward," *Christian Century*, April 4, 1979: "Flawed by unevenness and some inconsistency, the final document of the third hemispheric conference of Latin America's Catholic bishops nonetheless is notable for its clear and unequivocal commitment to the poor and the oppressed."

[4] Robert McAfee Brown, *Theology in a New Key* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), II.

[5] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1973), pp. 14, 15.

[6] *Ibid.*, 177: "Without liberating historical events, there would be no growth of the Kingdom . . . Nothing is outside the pale of the action of Christ and the gift of the Spirit."

[7] Undeniably the Biblical data affirming God's steadfast love for the poor are overwhelming in their incisiveness and total impact. Check such references as Ps. 82:3.4.; Isa. 25:4; Ezek. 18:7.8.; Jer. 22:13-17; Amos 5:24.



The hungry have the *right* to be fed, and it is mandatory to give assistance to the poor.[8] To achieve genuine social justice, according to these Latin American theologians, it will be necessary to support revolutionary change — not merely to advocate moderate reform.

Only by standing in unshakable solidarity with the victims of oppression is it possible to interpret the Scriptures accurately and purposefully. Liberation theology is unique in beginning with "the view from below." Exiled Brazilian theologian Hugo Assmann has even referred to "the epistemological privilege of the poor" to accent the claim that the way in which the disadvantaged perceive the world is closer to reality than the way in which the wealthy are likely to understand it. Identification with the "marginalized" elements of society is indispensable for a constructive theological enterprise.

Adhering to these presuppositions, what are the consequences for the explication of theology? Initially and fundamentally one finds the gospel of Jesus Christ in flat contradiction to an unjust and alienating society. The virtues of faith, hope, and love must be concretized by direct confrontation with the demonic powers that deprive people of the basic necessities of life and dehumanize them, and by specific (carefully calculated) remedial action. Struggling against everything which causes degradation for the "wretched of the earth," Christians are summoned to inaugurate and expedite a process of extensive transformation. The goal is the "creation of a new man."

Accordingly, Christ becomes the Supreme Liberator and salvation becomes a term stretched to include both the conquest of evil (personal and collective) in this life and the attainment of felicity in an eternal realm. (Liberation theology rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition does not become exclusively this-worldly and does not eliminate the cherished doctrines of the institutional church.) The human individual is empowered to assume responsibility for his own destiny (becomes a subject rather than an object in the historical process) at the same time that he becomes aware of freedom from sin (divine forgiveness). Emancipated before God by Christ's saving acts and conscious of his own worth and protential he is enabled to plunge into social upheavals for the sake of the oppressed. By breaking out of servitude and designing a just society people forge their own destiny.

In the vocabulary of Christian liberationists (as in the theology of hope) the Exodus and the Resurrection become primary Biblical motifs. The original creation (bringing order out of chaos) is inextricably linked with the disenthrallment from bondage in Egypt. The covenant with Israel is the amplification of

[8] The Deuteronomic code clearly stipulates the inviolable rights of the poor, Deut. 15 cf. Ex. 22 and Lev. 25.

this same event. "The Exodus is paradigmatic" for the ongoing quest for freedom.[9] In the New Testament the promise is reaffirmed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hope for the future becomes a stimulating motivation for current action. The resurrection is an event which calls for the birth of a new society.[10]

Some Liberation Theologians

Rubem Alves, a Protestant from Brazil, however, asserts that hope must emerge from historical reality. Only by entering into the struggle to overcome oppression is it possible to sustain and nourish genuine hope. Alves distinguishes between *humanist messianism* — openness to the future as the human-centered search for liberation — and *messianic humanism* — based on the experience of the community of faith and belief in divine power. In the critical convergence of these two foci, one may find the full meaning of human existence and the authentic goal: "to make and to keep human life human" (a phrase borrowed from Paul Lehmann). What results is an adamant denial of "that which is" — a refusal to be limited to anachronistic precedents or to conform to conventional patterns. God is not the eternally Present One who renders superfluous the flow of history, but the Freedom which intervenes in the course of events to prevent the past from determining the future. To put it bluntly, he is the Subverter of the status quo.[11]

Other aspects of liberation theology can be found in one of its leading advocates, Hugo Assmann. This priest from Brazil is eager to unmask and repudiate distorted theologies that have been used to undergird economic inequities and enslaving political options. He argues that the only possible point of departure is the concrete situation. The historical character of theological reflection is undeniable and inevitable. Specific data — "particular realities" — must be taken into account. Action is itself the truth. Reflection on praxis can only be valid when it proceeds from involvement in what is happening. Thereupon, it becomes readily apparent that sociopolitical realities and ideological alternatives cannot be scorned.[12]

Other emphases associated with liberation themes in Latin America are affirmed by Lucio Gera, an Argentinian. He does not hesitate to maintain that the church has to decide in favor of a given system at a given time and support it.

---

[9] Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, 159.

[10] Cf. Pierro Bigo, *The Church and Third World Revolution* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977), 142-146.

[11] Alves propounded his basic position already a decade ago in *A Theology of Human Hope* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Publications, 1969).

[12] A summary of Assmann's theology may be found in Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), pp. 72, 73.

Even if it is fallible in the sphere of politics, and makes some erroneous judgments, the church cannot avoid participation. Neutrality in the class struggle is unthinkable. The role of the church, however, is not to exercise temporal power. Rather its mission is prophetic — to denounce, exhort, and teach with the power of the Word. In its close identification with the toiling masses the church will endeavor to grasp the values implicit in the people themselves. This "theology of the people," this urge toward solidarity with the poor, must be permeated with the kerygmatic value of justice.[13]

Obviously there is a close affinity between the theological accents emanating from Latin America and the theology being articulated in Africa and parts of Asia where oppression is being experienced and resisted. Blacks in Namibia and South Africa have evolved their own version of liberation theology.[14] Church leaders in the Philippines, rankled by the repressive martial law imposed upon them since 1972 by President Marcos, have urged their adherents to protest violations of their political and human rights.[15]

Marx

In their anguished pursuit of "emancipation from bondage" some Third World Christians have professedly found it advantageous to use Marxist terminology and analytical concepts. In promoting socialist experiments radical Christians have formed strategic alliances with open-minded neo-Marxists. Perhaps no other single factor arouses more incredulity and apprehension among North American observers with an ingrained and inflexible anti-communist mentality. How can long avowed enemies of the church become collaborators in the achievement of a new humanity?[16]

The North American Lutheran theologian Philip Hefner has indicated several of the important themes which Latin American lieration theologians have extracted from Marxist thought. With unanimity they appear to be enthusiastic over Karl Marx's oft-quoted eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."[17] Abstract theory is sterile and inconsequential for the liberationists. Practical reality — involvement in the historical process — is crucial.

---

[13] *Ibid.*, 67-69. A full introduction to liberation theology would include reference to other leading figures, especially Juan Luis Segundo, the Jesuit from Uruguay who argues that faith humanizes man and whose formula for the Gospel becomes "no love is lost in the world." Segundo's methodology revolves around what he calls "the hermeneutic circle": analysis of one's concrete experience, action taken in the light of that analysis, then reexamination of the Biblical heritage as illuminated by both reflection and action.

[14] Cf. Allan A. Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1977).

[15] Cf. Bishop Francisco F. Claver, S.J., *The Stones Will Cry Out* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1978).

[16] First of all "the Marxist critique of Christian faith" is taken seriously, e.g., by Jose Maria Gonzalez-Ruiz, *The New Creation: Marxist and Christian?* (Maryknoll, New York: Oribs, 1976). Secondly, Marxist insights have been used to illuminate Scriptural exegesis, e.g. by Jose Miranda, *Marx and the Bible* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1974). One commentator from the United States, Joseph Petulla, is convinced that the Marxian analysis of alienation in modern society is accurate, and that the views of Marx, Lenin, and Mao can enrich the daily life of ecclesial communities. See his *Christian Political Theology, a Marxian Guide* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1972).

[17] Included in *Marx and Engels on Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1964), 72.

Along with the Marxists, they, too, recognize conflict as intrinsic to human life. The clash in the famous dialectic of thesis-antithesis-synthesis is not to be abhorred or lamented, but perceived as inescapable. What becomes vital is to enter into the conflict on the right side — against the exploiters.[18] Most Latin American Christians who appropriate Marxist ideas, however, are unmistakably clear in their repudiation of its materialistic ideology.

Frederick Herzog would urge North Americans to emulate our neighbors to the south by using Marx to expound the revolutionary significance of the poor for our own situation. Without paying heed to the critiques of Marx we are prone to perpetuate our idolatries. We will fail to perceive and battle against "the practical atheism of the West."[19]

Criticism

Whether or not a Marxist analysis is relevant and meaningful in a North American context was sharply disputed at a hemisphere-wide ecumenical gathering in Detroit during the summer of 1975. American Blacks tended to fault both feminist theology and Latin American theology for being "primarily white," and questioned the usefulness of a Marxist approach in the U.S. where "racism is the one overarching and informing principle."[20] North American women, meanwhile, have complained that it is not enough for men in the Third World to demand power and autonomy, while the women are locked into their traditional role of dependence and powerlessness, remaining under the domination of husbands, fathers, and male institutions.[21]

John C. Bennett, for many years a colleague of Reinhold Niebuhr at Union Theological Seminary, has greeted the advent of liberation theology with enthusiastic approval. Black theology, as reflected by James Come, he finds commendatory, but with one limitation. It does not, he regrets, prepare the Black community to overcome the temptation to self-righteousness — to "discern the signs of its own sin and of divine judgment upon it." On the contrary, he finds that Latin American theologians seek to liberate the oppressors as persons and do not identify the liberation of *one* part of humanity with the coming of the kingdom of God.[22]

Among the most ardent and articulate admirers of liberation theology in North America is Robert McAfee Brown, whose overall summary and interpretation of the subject has been widely reviewed. Among the many benefits which Brown perceives in the accents of contemporary Latin American theology is its piercing indictment of our prevailing value system and its call for a radical reappraisal of our affluent life style. What makes us comfortable and wealthy, Brown is convinced, is often based upon the exploitation of others. Furthermore, he feels that his contact with "liberationists" has made him more appreciative of "neglected themes" in the Christian heritage such as the pre-Constantian

---

[18] Cf. Philip Hefner, "Theology Engagee: Liberational, Political, Critical," *Dialog,* Summer, 1974.

[19] Frederick Herzog, "Birth Pangs: Liberation Theology in North America," *Christian Century,* Dec. 15, 1976.

[20] Cf. reports by Alice Hageman, *Christian Century,* Oct. 1, 1975.

[21] Most recently, e.g., Susan Hill Lindley, "Feminist Theology in a Global Perspective," *Ibid,* April 25, 1979.

[22] John C. Bennett in a faculty lecture delivered at the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California, Jan. 14, 1974.

era, when church members were a persecuted minority; the left-wing of the sixteenth century Reformation, which tended to identify with the aspirations of the common people; and the Social Gospel movement in the early twentieth century, which displayed some affinities with the analyses and proposals of liberation theology.[23] Brown exerts considerable effort, however, in responding to some of the critiques that have been offered.[24]

As might be anticipated many conservative evangelicals, who stress personal salvation, are dubious about a theology which speaks so much about social justice. A formidable attack along this line was formulated already in 1970 by C. Peter Wagner who has served for many years as a missionary and spokesman for evangelicals in Latin America. Wagner accuses "the new radical left" of compromising or diluting Biblical verities with a "syncretism of accommodation" to mundane goals. Missionary motivation, he fears, is undercut and diminished by an excessive stress on righting wrongs in the secular world. In his reading of liberation theologians he gains the impression that revealed truth is distorted and that "the starting point of this group has been an a priori socio-economic theory, and that theology has been called in only as an afterthought, not to say rationalization" of what has been predetermined.[25] In a similar vein, the North American mouthpiece of resurgent Protestant conservatism, *Christianity Today,* has repeatedly expressed its dissent from liberation theology. Charles Seidenspinner, president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, is typical in his rebuttal of everything from black theology and Christian feminists through Latin American radicals when he insists that "the basic concern of God is the freeing of individuals from the guilt of sin and from its power. Through these freed lives God will carry forward the flow of love, sharing and concern that will best meet the other needs of men . . ."[26] Herein one finds the traditional insistence on the primacy of the spiritual. Overcoming poverty, disease, and hunger may be commendable objectives, but they are byproducts of the proclamation of the gospel. They dare not be construed as an integral part of the saving message.

More virulent, and sometimes almost hysterical, have been the reactions of right-wing Roman Catholics and ultra-conservative Protestants. North Americans with these tempermental and ideological predispositions have reiterated the harsh charges that liberation theology is heretical and dangerous. Anti-communist crusaders have been alarmed by what sounds to them like provocative revolutionary rhetoric, and they have been appalled by the intimation that Marxist categories of thought may be appropriated into Christian theology.[27]

For the most part, North American Christians even if they approve of much of the content of liberation theology, are reluctant to disavow the modified capitalistic system under which they live.

---

[23] Brown, *op. cit.,* 132-143.

[24] Brown distinguishes eight types of critiques which he labels: defensive, total rejection, oversimplified, pseudo-issue, reductionist, methodological, co-optation, and dialogical.

[25] C. Peter Wagner, *Latin American Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970).

[26] *Thrust,* Second Quarter, 1977.

[27] E.g., *The National Laymen's Digest* of Sept. 1, 1974 quoted Cardinal Duque of Bogota as saying "violent class struggle openly clashes with the absolute demand of Christian morality."

"Christians for Socialism" and similar movements in North America have been unsuccessful in gaining more than a few recruits. Moderate reform rather than drastic change is popular among liberal Protestants and Roman Catholics in the northern hemisphere. Besides, it is argued (in obvious contrast from Latin American radicals who denounce "neutrality") that no approach to economics can be sanctified as God-approved. One can identify neither capitalism nor socialism with the will of God. Lutheran sociologist Peter Berger has endeavored to buttress this contention with a devastating-critique of both capitalism and socialism as schemes for national development. With abundant illustrations and supporting data he seeks to demonstrate that an enormous toll in bitter suffering and sheer human mistery has been exacted by regimes dedicated to ideologies of both the "right" and the "left."[28]

Foremost among the Luthran theogians who have uttered caveats in reference to liberation concepts emanating from Latin America is Richard John Neuhaus, a close colleague of Berger. Deploring any effort to "take Jesus culturally captive" he wants to maintain the tension between particularity and universality, between indigenity and catholicity. Among the would-be Christian emancipators he detects what appears to him to be an inclination "to replace the risk of Christian hope with the certitude of a Marxian 'scientific' projection of the future" and to provide "an uncritical legitimation of the act of liberation at hand."[29] As Neuhaus understands the proponents of liberation theology they are to be censured for postulating "a simplistic progressivism of the onward and upward variety" akin to that feature of the Social Gospel which has been discredited and refuted. Gutierrez, he complains, lacks clarity in affirming how a "social appropriation of freedom" will nourish an essential ongoing dialectic between individual and community and how it will avoid being manipulated into the pseudo-freedom of already existing forms of capitalism and socialism. Furthermore, Neuhaus faults Gutierrez for an uncritical appropriation of thoughts derived from Fanon and Che Guevara (quoted "almost as scripture"), and for failing "to weigh means and ends in the revolutionary struggle or to develop criteria by which the justice of a cause might be judged."[30] What he interprets as "an unambiguously partisan commitment" is dismissed as unacceptable for the Christian whose ultimate and sole allegiance is to the kingdom of God.

Disapproval of liberation theology has recently been articulated by a conservative Roman Catholic, Robert Kress. His strictures are directed particularly at Segundo who, in his judgment, does not "deal adequately with the problem of conflicting partialities in the Church."

---

[28] Peter Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice,* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

[29] Richard J. Neuhaus, "Liberation Theology and the Captivities of Jesus," in *Mission Trends No. 3,* ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) 41-66. Reprinted from *Worldview,* 1973. P. 56: "[Gutierrez] comes close to providing carte blanche legitimation for joining almost any allegedly revolutionary struggle to replace almost any allegedly repressive regime."

[30] Neuhaus once attempted to explicate the possibility of a morally acceptable revolution in North America by applying the usual criteria for a just war (reasonable prospect for victory, legitimate authority, worthy motivation, principal of proportionality, etc.) to a deliberately instigated internal upheval in a book he co-authored with Peter Berger, *Movement and Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

Kress denies that it is morally justifiable to take sides with explicit finality in the presumed class struggle in South America. Appealing to the authority of the renowned theologian, Karl Rahner, he asserts that Segundo fails to appreciate that the church cannot operate with the same universal validity and certitude in the sphere of social change as in the realm of doctrine and spiritual matters. Segundo, Kress declares, exhibits a "defective ecclesiology." He demands too much of the institutional church in expecting it to endorse specific revolutionary movements, and he is unfair in blaming the church for not resolving the problems of the relationship between masses and minorities. Only if liberation theologians perceive their task as a negative one — offering correctives "to certain imbalances in the general theological enterprise" — can they be credited with a useful achievement.[31]

Endorsement

A totally different response to liberation theology is evident from something like "A Message from Concerned North Americans" addressed "to their brothers and sisters of Latin America" signed by such well-known persons as Roman Catholic historian John Tracy Ellis; U.S. Congressman and Jesuit priest Robert Drinan; Harvard theologian Harvey Cox; Walter Burghardt, editor of *Theological Studies;* and Philip Berryman, representing the American Friends Service committee. In sharp distinction from the detractors of liberation theology they hail its advent and perseverance in glowing and laudatory terms:

> We too are discovering that the Gospel takes on entirely new meaning for us when we read it through the eyes of the poor . . . Your own prophetic actions have helped us discover new relations between Christian ministry and appropriate political action . . . We respond in humility to our own need to be evangelized by you.

The signatories pledge to work in collaboration with their friends in Latin America for "the structuring of a new humanity."[32]

---

[31] Robert Kress, "Praxis and Liberation," *Communio,* Spring, 1979.

[32] In *Cross Currents,* Spring, 1978.



America's Democratic Society and the Authority of the Church

Jon Diefenthaler

Waynesboro, Virginia

It is something of a popular myth that America's democracy came into being because good Christians peopled our land. Pastors tend to suggest this from their pulpits along about the Fourth of July or Thanksgiving. But in reality, the democracy that our founding fathers envisioned was in some respects quite different from the church's traditional view of government. From the time of St. Augustine, the Christian church had assumed that governments existed primarily for the sake of *order* in society. The corrupted nature of people within this fallen world needed to be held in check. Governments were ordained by God as a sort of necessary evil. In 18th-century America, however, it was assumed that government existed primarily to insure *freedom.* "We hold these truths to be self-evident," came the words from the pen of Thomas Jefferson, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

This was a remarkably revolutionary turn in Western thinking. What followed the signing of the Declaration of Independence was an even more remarkable achievement. While a constitutional democracy was taking shape in America, virtually all of continental Europe remained under the thumb of absolute monarchs such as Louis XVI of France, Catherine the Great of Russia, Frederick II of Prussia, and Maria Theresa of Austria, all of whom were professing Christians.

The revolution in thinking about government was one into which the church in America was swept as well. Its effects upon the church were and continue to be apparent in several ways. First, what is seen in a democratic society such as ours is a church whose authority has been limited. Second, the type of authority which this society expects and encourages the church to exercise is primarily "religious." Finally, it is a democratic form of organization, with authority resting in the hands of "the people," which the church in America has predominately assumed.

Without a doubt, the position assigned to the church in America represents a significant departure from a major trend in all of Western history. This trend began in the 4th century, when the Emperor Constantine laid the groundwork for making Christianity the offical religion of the Roman Empire. It reached its zenith in the Middle Ages. As R.W. Southern has argued so convincingly in *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages,* the church became "the whole of human society subject to the will of God." It was not only "*a* state;" it was "*the* state." It was not only "*a* society;" it was "*the* society." Not only all political activity, but all learning and thought were functions of the church. A division between the secular and the sacred simply did not exist. Citizenship and church membership were one and

the same thing. Hence, to be excommunicated from the church was to forfeit one's citizenship as well.[1]

In this kind of society, the scope of the church's authority was immense. Heretics became criminals with a price on their heads. It was a tremendous price that any dissenting group or reformer had to pay. The Albigensians in southern France and the Waldensians in Italy were subjected to bitter persecution. For proclaiming his new ideas at the University of Prague, John Huss (1369-1415) was condemned at the Council of Constance in 1415 and burned at the stake. Although John Wycliffe had been allowed to die peacefully, this same Council of Constance ordered that his writings be burned and that the bones of his corpse be dug up and thrown out of their place of rest. In 1521, the Emperor Charles V signed the Edict of Worms, in which Martin Luther was officially convicted of heresy. This also meant that he had forfeited his civil rights, and his conviction placed him under the "ban" of the Empire. As is well-known, had not the Elector, Frederick the Wise of Saxony, intervened, Luther's life would have been all too brief.

While the Reformation changed the face of the church, its authority in society remained wide-ranging. Even in the "new world" of America, colonial governments continued to enforce the church's will. In Virginia, for example, the Church of England was in the driver's seat. Hence, if one was found to be a Quaker, one was subject to a fine. If a person were a Baptist who dared to preach, he was likely to be thrown into jail. And for being a Roman Catholic priest, one was banished from the commonwealth altogether.

Still, it was in America that it became increasingly difficult to maintain this arrangement. One of the key factors contributing to the limitation of the church's authority was economic. England soon recognized that if her colonies in America were to survive in the face of the twin threat of the Spanish to the south and the French to the north, the doors to immigrants of all kinds, including dissenters, would have to be thrown wide open. And from all over Europe they came — Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, German Lutherans and Reformed, Mennonites, Dunkers, Schwenckfelders, and Moravian Brethren. In the mid-1700's the English settlers on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge openly invited Germans from Pennsylvania into this area, or so it appears, in order that they together with the mountains might serve as a "buffer" against the Indian menace. Yet the more these immigrants came, the more difficult it became for any church to maintain its authority in any colony.

In addition, there was the Great Awakening. This wave of revivals that swept America beginning in the 1720's and 30's placed a fresh emphasis on religious experience rather than traditional theologies. As such, the Great Awakening was a wholesale revolt against authority. Establishment-type preachers were branded as "unconverted" ministers who were preying upon the substance of their innocent parishioners while lulling them into a false sense of spiritual security. As a result, authority in the church was assumed by the person who had had a "born-again" experience and was now in process of living out his converted life. Instead of the clergyman, it was now the layman who took the center stage, with

[1] R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 15-23.

the full authority to judge anybody's faith and life.[2] Something similar to this seems to be happening in various parts of the church today.

The Church's Restricted Authority

The most decisive step toward the limitation of the church's authority in America was taken by that group of leaders whom we remember as our founding fathers. These were the intellectual architects of our democratic society, and their company included men like Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. Since their thinking was attuned to the Enlightenment, they tended to take a dim view of the institutional church. They were well acquainted with the dark pages of European history, or so it appears. For what repelled these founding fathers was the corruption and brutality that had characterized societies dominated by the Christian church. "During almost fifteen centuries had the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial," Madison pointed out. "What have been its fruits? More or less, in all places, pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution."[3] Like Voltaire, Madison and the others found Christianity's record appalling. The church had either lived as a parasite on society, or it had actively promoted social discord by fanning the flames of religious hatred by persecuting heretics, many of whom were peaceful, productive human beings.

Equally repulsive to these men was the dogmatism of the church. Nothing seems to have incensed Jefferson more than its tendency to deny freedom of thought and expression to people. "Almighty God hath created the mind free," he argued,

> and manifested his supreme will that free it shall remain by making it altogether insusceptible of restraint . . . All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments, or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness . . ."[4]

To Jefferson, the church had continually tried to enslave the minds of people. Time and again, fallible and uninspired leaders had assumed "dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible (ones)."[5]

For this reason, too, some of these founding fathers questioned the authority of the Bible. For Thomas Paine, it contained too many dogmatic elements. Hence, in *The Age of Reason,* he branded the apostle Paul as a "manufacturer of quibbles."[6] Similarly, Jefferson proceeded to do a "scissors and paste" job on the New Testament. From it, he literally snipped only those passages in which the moral precepts of Jesus were set forth. These he compiled into a book entitled *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth.* The rest he left, as he himself put it, to

---

[2] Jerald C. Brauer, "Puritanism, Revivalism, and the Revolution," in Jerald C. Brauer, ed., *Religion and the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 1-27.

[3] James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance," in John F. Wilson, ed., *Church and State in American History* (Englewood, New Jersey: D.C. Heath, 1965), p. 70.

[4] Thomas Jefferson, "Act for Establishing Religious Freedom," in Wilson, p. 73.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason, in Thomas Paine, Representative Selections* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1944), p. 253.

"the stupidity of some and the roguery of others."[7]

Given their view of the church, the founding fathers were determined to limit its authority. In the new nation, the First Amendment to the Constitution would begin with the words, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." The "no-establishment clause" marked the decisive break with the past. For the first time, it was clearly stated that the church could no longer count on the state to enforce its will and its way. In America, neither Christianity nor any other faith would be sanctioned as the legal religion. To do otherwise, Madision would contend, would not only encourage the kind of degeneracy that had characterized the church in too many ages past, but would also inhibit the freedom the American people had pledged themselves to defend.[8]

The "free-exercise clause" to the First Amendment was another means of assuring the limitations of the church's authority. It served to check yet another form of tyranny about which the founding fathers were equally concerned. Madison labeled it "the tyranny of the majority." As the experience under the "Articles of Confederation" had proved, the freedom of any minority was effectively stifled whenever an interest group or a coalition of the same, succeeded in gaining a majority status. When the debtor farmers in a given state got control of the legislature, for instance, they could easily put the businessmen and merchant creditors at their mercy. And this is precisely what tended to happen in the 1780's.

What was to prevent it from happening also among religious groups? Madison stated the answer in *The Federalist Papers*. The more society was broken into numerous parts, interests, and classes of citizens, the less the rights of individuals or of the minority would be vulnerable to interested combinations of the majority. Similarly, the more churches there were, the less chance there would be of any one of them gaining a majority status. The way to insure this was to grant freedom to any religious group. For freedom could lead only to a proliferation of groups, none of which would ever gain sufficient strength to control the others.[9]

In a democracy such as we have in America, then, the scope of the authority wielded by the church has been limited. No longer does the church have the power of the governing authorities at its disposal to impose what it considers to be the will of God upon anyone, or to dispose of heretics. Furthermore, no single church or religion can assume a position of advantage in the public sphere. Contrary to what is often assumed, Christianity is not the "official" faith of our republic.

The Church's Contemporary Authority

The effects of this limitation of the church's authority are still felt today. When the Supreme Court of the United States has acted in reference to the First Amendment, its rulings have not always found favor with the churches and their pastors. Unfortunately, much of the reactionary rhetoric is misplaced. In the

---

[7] Thomas Jefferson, from a letter written in 1820.

[8] James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance," in Wilson, pp. 68-72.

[9] James Madison, "Number 51," in Clinton Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Mentor Books, 1961), pp. 320-325.

famous "Abington Case" of 1963, the Court was not out to take the Bible away from people. Rather, the justices outlawed its daily reading in public schools because they recognized that this book was the chief resource of a particular religion, namely Christianity. Therefore, the practice of having it read to school children constituted an "establishment" of religion.

In addition, the freedom which the First Amendment guarantees has kept the church off-balance in America. To this day, the church is not one, but several hundred different authorities. Seldom do the churches speak with one voice or reach a consensus on anything. People freely move from one church body to another. They continue to form new groups when the ones that already exist are not to their satisfaction. Their support of the church is only voluntary, highly subject to their own feelings about anything. It may be one of the reasons that there is often such a wide spectrum of belief reflected among the members of most any congregation.

The more positive side of such freedom is not to be overlooked. Today, it seems more and more acceptable to take "cheap shots" at denominational Christianity. Yet, this reality is in part a result of religious freedom, and where there is freedom of choice, churches are forced to live up to their own ideals, to let persuasion rather than coercion be the means of winning anyone's loyalty to Jesus Christ, and to let the gospel (and not ourselves) serve as the authority on which the church is built. Moreover, this same freedom has created a competitive climate in which no church can long survive by resting on its laurels. Like every other group, each congregation must keep its members interested and active. In order to survive, it must keep developing new and more effective ways to bring its message to others in its own community and the world.

There is a type of the authority which democracy expects and encourages the church to exercise. It is an authority which is "religious" in nature. This is what a young French official by the name of Alexis de Tocqueville observed about our country long ago. Sent by his government to examine the prisons of the New World in 1831, this curious visitor found time enough to compile the first comprehensive study of our social and political institutions. In his now-famous two-volume work, *Democracy in America,* Tocqueville noted, with some surprise, how powerful a force religion was in our society. In France, "the spirit of religion" and "the spirit of freedom" always seemed to be "marching in the opposite directions." But in America, they were "intimately united."[10] "There is no country in the world," he wrote, "where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America; and there can be no greater proof of its utility and of its conformity to human nature than that its influence is powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation of the earth."[11]

What Tocqueville correctly perceived was our democracy's dependence on the people's allegiance to a set of truths that were "religious" in nature. As he saw it, fixed ideas of God and human nature were indispensable to the daily life of people. Without them, their minds would be subject to nothing but doubt and confusion. Their opinions would remain ill-defended and easily abandoned.

---

[10] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* Phillips Bradley edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), vol. 1, p. 319.

[11] *Ibid.,* vol. 1, p. 314.

Their actions would be left to chance or whim, and they would be condemned to disorder and impotence. This danger was especially acute in a democratic order. For unless freedom was bridled by a set of fixed truths, the people would be frightened easily into surrendering that freedom for the sake of their own security, the security that a despot was always ready to offer. "If faith be wanting in man," Tocqueville warned, "he must be subject; and if he be free, he must believe."[12]

Essential to a democracy, therefore, is a set of commonly-accepted religious truths. For Tocqueville, one of these truths involved faith in an all-powerful God whose worship was not to be confused with homage to secondary objects.[13] Equally important was the principle of immortality. For when it was united with the notion of future rewards and punishments, this belief tended to elevate the people's tastes and standards of conduct.[14] It kept people on "the straight and narrow path." It kept the estate of matrimony "holy," the home and family primary.[15] And while it could not cure men of "the love of riches," this belief could at least persuade them "to enrich themselves by none but honest means."[16] As Tocqueville himself put it, "While the law permits the Americans to do what they please, religion prevents them from considering, and forbids them to commit, what is rash and unjust."[17]

Such insights into religion's role in America were by no means new. For what Tocqueville observed clearly matched what the founding fathers had envisioned from the beginning. While these men had a distaste for the church as an institution, they remained very sensitive to the value of religion. They knew that without it, a free and a just society would not long survive. Articulating this view most clearly, perhaps, was Benjamin Franklin. In his *Autobiography,* Franklin listed five essential beliefs that he found in every religion. They were (1) "the existence of the Deity," (2) "that he made the world and governed it by Providence," (3) "that the most acceptable service of God was doing good to men," (4) "that our souls are immortal," (5) "that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter." For this reason, said Franklin, "I respected (all religions), tho' with different degrees of respect, as I found (these essentials) more or less mix'd with other articles which . . . serv'd principally to divide us, and made us unfriendly to one another." For whenever these "essentials" were taught in the churches, they tended to "inspire, promote, or confirm morality."[18]

This is the kind of authority which a democracy needs the church to exert. "Civic righteousness" is the Lutheran category under which it falls. Yet it is a "righteousness" which the church in America has experienced difficulty in promoting. One obstacle has been the very popular notion that nothing is truly religious or moral unless it is "Christian," or "Lutheran" for that matter. It is what Sidney Mead has referred to as the "Parson Thwackum syndrome." The name is for that cleric in Fielding's *History of Tom Jones* who stated that when he mentioned "religion," he meant "the Christian

---

[12] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 23.

[13] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 24.

[14] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 156.

[15] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 315.

[16] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 27.

[17] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 316.

[18] Benjamin Franklin, *Representative Selections* (New York: American Book Company, 1936), pp. 69-70.

religion;" that when he mentioned "Christian," he meant "Protestant," and not only "the Protestant religion," but "the Church of England."[19] The Thwakums among us are many. Perhaps there is some of him in every Christian. When he rears his head, he quickly dismisses the thinking of a Franklin as watered-down humanism. A Thwakum may also confuse "civic" with "spiritual righteousness." He forgets that the founding fathers were not seeking to comment on anybody's eternal salvation, but on the nature of his life as a citizen of the community and nation. The result, of course, is that no amount of "civic righteousness" gets promoted at all.

Another danger that lurks in the wings is the church — *as the church* — identifying itself with particular *political causes*. These are not the causes which individuals in the church support. Rather, they are the causes which the church as a whole may be led to take up. To his great surprise, Tocqueville discovered that the American clergy tended to stay aloof from politics. They neither filled public appointments, nor did they share in the altercations between political parties. In those states where the law did not exclude them from political life, public opinion did. "In America," he pointed out, "religion is a distinct sphere in which the priest is sovereign, but out of which he takes care never to go."[20]

The church which identifies itself with a political cause weakens its position in a democracy such as ours. Tocqueville wisely observed that while such a church might gain some political allies, it would be open to attack from the opponents on the issue. The church's belief would be assaulted not as errors in precept, but as the opinions of a political party, and the clergy would be condemned less because of their religious role than because of their political affiliations. In short, the church would no longer be able to direct its message to anyone, save those who adopted its politics. And in a society in which political theories rise and fall in rapid succession, authority frequently passes from party to party, and laws are changed almost every day. This was especially dangerous.[21]

The warning is one that remains in effect for us in the church today. Two disparate examples come to mind. The first is a brief article in a small-town newspaper on Dr. Jerry Falwell and the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. When asked about the views of the people who follow "The Old Time Gospel Hour," Dr. Falwell conceded that "our people are strong on free enterprise, conservative in the area of finance, very patriotic and country-conscious, strong on anti-communism . . ." While "it's possible to be politically liberal and be a good Christian," he said, "I would say there are very few (such people)."[22]

The World Council of Churches "Program to Combat Racism" might serve as a more liberal case in point. Recently, *Time* magazine reported that this eight-year-old program, fathered by Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, had run into heavy opposition. Conflict arose when people discovered that significant

---

[19] Sidney E. Mead, "Christendom, Enlightenment, and the Revolution," in Jerald C. Brauer, ed., *Religion and the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 36.

[20] Tocqueville, vol. 2, p. 28.

[21] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 321-323.

[22] The Waynesboro *News Virginian*, August 31, 1978.

amounts of money were being channeled through the program into the hands of guerilla groups in Africa. While the World Council staff couched its defense in the theology of "liberation," opponents charged that such actions amounted to a political statement, and that the church was in effect paying for the bullets that were killing some of its own missionaries.[23]

Tocqueville's warning also applies to those who want the church as the church to become directly involved in the politics of the abortion issue or the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. The line between the "moral" and the "political," the "religious" and the "social," is not always easy to draw. But when the church as the church ignores it altogether, its authority in a democracy is weakened. The church not only shuts itself off from those who take a different point of view, but it makes itself in the end as debatable a political issue as any other in the public arena.

Democracy in the Church

The church in its American setting has tended to assume a democratic form of organization which gives authority to "the people." Abraham Lincoln expressed it best in his world-famous hope "that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth." The emphasis is one that represents another significant departure from the medieval pattern of thinking. In the medieval mind, all of life is interpreted as part of some kind of hierarchy with various levels and gradations in it. Everything has a definite place on the ladder. Everything fits into a "chain of command" that proceeds from the highest to the lowest. Be it in nature, society, or the family, it makes no difference. When it comes to structuring a community of any kind, authority is seen as being passed down the chain from God into the hands of certain governing officials (or clergy, if it is the church) to the people at the bottom of the hierarchy. Because of their place in the order of things, therefore, the people are not to question the authority of their superiors or attempt to override them.

With the advent of modern democracy, however, the medieval conceptual order was turned upside down. The pyramid of authority was inverted. Authority was passed not along a "chain of command," but directly into the hands of "the people," who in turn chose or elected their ruling officials and delegated certain functions to them. The change was a thoroughly revolutionary one. For instead of being lords, officials were seen as servants or deputies of "the people."

Throughout America's history, this same democratic emphasis has been evident in the life of the church. From the time of the Puritans, one of the major forms of church polity has been "congregational." Even in the Roman Catholic Church in America, the voice of "the people" cannot be muffled. Here, certainly more than elsewhere in the world, the laity have been assigned a larger role.

For any democratic system of organization (government or ecclesiastical) three things seem to be absolutely essential. The first essential is *freedom.* For "freedom" (and not simply, "order") is the "end" of a democratic ordering of authority. Freedom is its reason for being, and at the same time, freedom is the "means" which keeps a democratic order working as it should. The best

[23] *Time,* October 2, 1978, p. 46.

decisions are arrived at only when the full range of opinion and talent in society are utilized at the maximum. Conflicting opinions must be welcomed because it is only through the free exchange of opinions and ideas that the majority will be able to render the best judgment. The structure will begin to wither when freedom of thought and expression are withdrawn. It will soon pass away if the freedom to disagree is curtailed or made dependent on the outcome of an election or vote.

The second essential is a set of *clearly-established goals.* Any democratic order works best when "the people" know what they want and where they are going. The most effective leaders in our nation's history have emerged at such times. The people's clear-cut demand that the government do something about the Great Depression, for instance, helped to strengthen the leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt. By the same token, a democratic ordering of authority breaks down when there is no such consensus. This in part may be what is ailing our nation these days. It is not so much that our leaders or Congress are inept. Rather, it is that "the people" are so greatly divided on so many things. We honestly do not know yet what we want when it comes to an energy policy or inflation. And until such a time as we do, our public officials will not be able to serve us very effectively. All they can do is try to keep enough people happy in order to get re-elected the next time around. This is true of the church as well. In order to work, a democratic structure must operate with a set of clearly-established goals.

The third essential is *responsibility.* Essential to any democratic ordering of authority is a people willing to participate in the process of governing themselves. If short-cuts are preferred to informed decision, any democracy will flounder. If the people become disinterested or apathetic because they feel helpless, any democracy will be on its way to failing. If people refuse to participate in public meetings at the local level, the void will be filled by someone else at a higher level. The enormous growth of federal power in America since World War II is a case in point. It is one measure of the people's failure to assume the responsibilities that come with the rights which our government seeks to guarantee for us all. It can be no different in the church. For any democratic structure to serve us well, "we the people" must be willing to take an active part in making it work.

Those Lively Prophets — Zephaniah Ben-Cushi

James A. Rimbach

Pastor, Concordia Lutheran Church, Pullman, Washington

Zephaniah's invective against various social and religious conditions prevailing in his time would indicate that he prophesied early in the reign of Josiah, probably soon after 640 B.C.. His message would have served well either as impetus for, or as support of, the king's reform program begun about 621 B.C.. (2 Kings 22-23) We can discern from his poetry that Zephaniah was familiar with the practice and literature of the Jerusalem cult (as known to us through the Psalms), and that he was a "student" of the prophecies of his predecessors Amos and Isaiah of Jerusalem.

Today's preacher seldom peruses this book in search of striking texts, and the casual Bible reader even less. A close scrutiny, however, will yield much that is edifying and also serviceable from the pulpit: a capsule analysis of atheistic materialism (1:12, "I will punish the men . . . who say in their hearts, 'The Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill.' "); an evoking of the image of a man with sandwich-boards announcing the imminent end (1:14, "The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast"); a reflection of imagery often associated with the greek Diogenes (1:12, "I will search Jerusalem with lamps"); the abrupt deflation of the over-confident (2:15, "This is the exultant city that dwelt secure, that said to herself, 'I am and there is none else.' What a desolation she has become, a lair for wild beasts! Every one who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist."); and a summary of the classic prophetic summons (2:3, "Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the wrath of the Lord."). Zephaniah's prophecy is the well-spring of the famous medieval Latin hymn "Dies Irae," called by many the greatest of all medieval Latin compositions and until recently a standard part of the Requiem Mass. This hymn has been the main conveyer of the prophet's sentiment into our own time:

Day of wrath! that day dismaying;
As the seers of old were saying,
All the world in ashes laying.

What the fear! and what the quaking!
When the judge his way is taking,
Strictest search in all things making.

When the trump, with blast astounding,
Through the tombs of earth resounding,
Bids all stand, the throne surrounding ...

An Outline of the Book of Zephaniah

1:1	editorial superscription
1:2-18	Destruction on the seat of national and ecclesiastical authority.
2-6	a world swept clean of idolatry and syncretism
7-9	corrupt authorities and their

minions to be prepared for sacrifice
10-13 agnostic profiteers to be punished
14-16 all accounts are due soon
17-18 no escape from Yahweh's Day
2:1-15 judgment extends to neighboring nations
1-3 a call to assembly: Do something now!
4-7 the seacoast area will be utterly destroyed
8-11 Moab and Ammon to be dispossessed
12 Ethiopia decimated
13-15 Assyria to become a domain of wild animals
3:1-8 Final Indictment of Jerusalemite Society
1-4 every stratum of society culpable
5 vindication of Yahweh
6-7 failure of previous warnings
8 Yahweh's imperial assize
3:9-20 On the Restoration of Zion
9-10 refinement of the diaspora
11-13 purification of the remnant
14-20 shame changed to praise

The Cause and Occasion of the Prophecy

The general cause that evoked the denunciation of the prophet was the corruption of Yahwistic faith and practice and the pervasiveness of social injustice. Yahweh's word on this situation was that those who had introduced and practiced foreign cultic rituals would be punished. The target is quite varied: Baalism (1:4); the cult of Milcom (an Ammonite deity, 1:5); Assyrian religion (1:6, the *"hosts of heaven"*); and a general abandonment of the cult of Yahweh. (1:6) The introduction of many of these practices into the Judahite religious arena is attributed by the author of 2 Kings 21 to the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, the immediate predecessors of Josiah. These deplorable conditions were in large part connected with the geopolitical realities of the time and the influence of Assyria in Judean affairs. Indeed, one of the complaints against the palace bureaucracy is that they "array themselves in foreign attire" (1:8). Also mentioned is an example of pagan superstition, "all who leap over the threshhold" (1:9), apparently an attempt to avoid disturbing benevolent and malevolent demons thought to inhabit and guard the entrance of the house.[1]

The immediate occasion of the prophet's oracles is much less clear. Though Zephaniah makes only sparse reference to specific peoples and places, it is thought by many that his activity can be connected with a purported invasion of the Levant by Scythian hoards mentioned by Herodotus, but only by him (*History*, I, 104-5), which must fall into this general period of time. Zephaniah's threats do have a decided military cast to them and could well be understood to envision a massive and rapid invasion. But the historical material remains ambiguous, and there is the added difficulty of deducing historical information from references in Zephaniah to the Philistine cities of Gaza, Ashdod, Askelon, and Ekron, which owe their mention in the prophecy partly to their suitability for punning. Perhaps it is

[1] Zeph. 1:9 and I Sam. 5:4-5. For a full discussion see H. Donner, "Die Schwellenhupfer: Beobachtungen zu Zephaniah 1, 8f." *JSS* 15 (1970), 42-55.

enough to see as the occasion for the prophecy the general disruption of international affairs attending the decline of Assyrian power and influence in the area.[2]

Much of Zephaniah's prophecy centers on his pronouncements regarding the "Day of Yahweh." This concept has a complex history and seems to be rooted in popular theology. It combined elements coming from the traditions of the "Holy War" and the traditions of Yahweh's theophanies (divine cultic appearances). Amos and Zephaniah alike utilized the concept to declare Yahweh's judgment while at the same time challenging popular views of the nature of that judgment. (See especially Amos 5:18-20 and Zeph. 1:14-18.)

Wide Horizons — The "Oracle Against Foreign Nations"

Zephaniah's horizons included peoples other than his own, in particular Judah's neighbors and traditional enemies. Philistia (*"inhabitants of the sea-coast"*), Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, Assyria — all come under the prophet's word of judgment. This phenomenon is a standard part of the prophetic heritage: similar "Oracles against Foreign Nations" are found in Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. A comparison of the material discloses the high degree of conventionality in language and imagery which belongs to this genre, the precise background of which remains a mystery.[3] Strikingly missing, at first glance, is any mention of Egypt, but this may well be indicative of diplomatic courtesy toward a nation which, in the days of the prophet's ministry, was pursuing an international policy helpful to Judah in her efforts to reduce Assyrian interference in her affairs.

Good News For a Few

Words of destruction do not exhaust Zehpaniah's message. He foretold that a purified remnant would survive the time of testing and live out the ideal of Yahweh's people. Much of the language of the first verses of chapter one is reminiscent of the flood story in Genesis, which also was a "total destruction," yet with a surviving remnant. The hopeful elements of the prophet's preaching are predominant in chapter three, but also hinted at elsewhere. The area of the seacoast, which will be reduced to pastureland, shall yet be "pastures for the flocks of the house of Judah." (2:7) Neighboring countries will be devastated, but following this, the "survivors of my nation shall possess them." (2:9) Though, in the day of Yahweh's wrath, "all the earth shall be consumed," yet God promises to change "the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them my call on the name of the Lord." (3:9) The prophet's penchant for the "oracle of doom" is only a necessity born of his ardent desire that his hearers will reverse the pattern of recalcitrant disobedience (3:6). The character of the remnant and the tension between destruction and promise is seen in the following excerpts:

For I will leave in the midst of you
a people humble and lowly.

---

[2] For a review of the problem, with bibliography, see R.P. Vaggione, "Over All Asia? The Extent of the Scythian Domination in Herodotus," *JBL* 92 (1973), 523-30, and H. Cazelles, "Sophonie, Jeremie et les Scythes en Palestine," *RB* 74 (1967), 24-44.

[3] The words against the foreign nations are based, apparently, on breaches of the covenants governing international relations, and invoke the curses which attended the ratification of such covenants.

They shall seek refuge in the name of
Yahweh,
those who are left in Israel.
They shall do no wrong,
and utter no lies,
Nor shall there be found in their mouth
a deceitful tongue.
For they shall pasture and lie down,
and none shall make them afraid.
(3:12-13)

Therefore wait for me, says the Lord,
for the day when I arise as a witness.
For my decision is to gather nations,
to assemble kingdoms,
To pour out upon them my indignation,
all the heat of my anger;
For in the fire of my jealous wrath
all the earth shall be consumed. (3:8-9)

Lively Prophet — Lively Tradition

It is apparent to the student of the text of Zephaniah that his words have passed through many hands which have left their mark, though the exact parameters of this activity are difficult at times to distinguish with any certainty. This activity bears witness that it was thought no dishonor to annotate, explain or redirect the prophetic word. Some of these added comments can be discerned by their interruption of the poetic structure (e.g. 1:3b; 1:17c), or by their prose character (1:6; 3:5c). Others are clearly an attempt to extend the relevance of the pronouncement to a later or wider audience (e.g. 1:8a, 18b). Still others attempt to explain a difficulty,[4] or are simply an expansion by means of similar or familiar material.[5]

Contemporary preachers should seek to emulate their ancient predecessors in their efforts to call a people to account, to change, and to faith:

Come together and hold assembly,
O shameless nation,
Before you are driven away
like the drifting chaff,
Before there comes upon you
the fierce anger of the Lord,
Before there comes upon you
the day of the wrath of the Lord.
(2:1-2)

---

[4] The words "with the priests" in 1:4b explain the obscure *hakkemarim.*

[5] 1:13b from Amos 5:1.

John Bugenhagen: Confessor Behind the Scenes

Kurt K. Hendel

Assistant Professor of Historical Theology
Christ Seminary – Seminex

"There have been many heretics since Christ's death, but no greater heretic has ever lived than the one who has written this book." John Bugenhagen (1485-1558) uttered these words after a quick examination of Martin Luther's treatise of 1520, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church.* His initial reaction to Luther's evangelical theology was obviously negative, but Bugenhagen decided to study the disturbing document more extensively before making his final judgment. That decision proved to be a crucial one, for it profoundly changed his life. After a careful reading of Luther's treatise he marveled: "The whole world lies in complete blindness, but this man alone sees the truth." Luther's stinging critique of the church's sacramental system had convinced Bugenhagen that the reformer's interpretation of Scripture was true, and he never wavered from this conviction. He aligned himself with the evangelical faith in 1520, and he devoted the rest of his life to the confession, promotion, and defense of that faith.

Although he had already embarked on a distinguished career as an educator, Bugenhagen decided in 1521 to leave his native Pomerania and travel to Wittenberg. He was determined to enhance his understanding of evangelical theology at the feet of Luther. His days as a student were numbered, however, for he quickly emerged as a leader of the Reformation. Within months of his arrival he lectured at the university, and in 1523 he was chosen pastor of the city church in Wittenberg. In this position he became Luther's pastor and chief spiritual counselor. By 1525 he was clearly a member of the inner circle of Wittenberg reformers, whose advice was sought regularly on crucial matters, and whose significance for the evangelical reform movement was openly affirmed, especially by Luther. 1528 marks the beginning of his organizational travels throughout nothern Germany and Denmark to facilitate and shape the establishment of the reformation in these areas.

Bugenhagen's direct contributions to the Augsburg Confession were somewhat limited. He was not a member of the Saxon party which traveled to Augsburg in April, 1530, nor was he consulted regularly by Philip Melanchthon as the latter produced the Augustana. Bugenhagen did, however, participate in the writing of the Torgau Articles (a defense of the evangelical reforms in Saxony), and he had examined and approved the Schwabach Articles (a summary of chief evangelical doctrines). These two documents were the primary literary sources available to Melanchthon as he formulated the Augsburg Confession. The Augustana did articulate Bugenhagen's faith.

Melanchthon apparently anticipated Bugenhagen's positive response to the confession but was reluctant to send a copy of it to Wittenberg. He feared that

Bugenhagen, in his bold eagerness to promote and confess the evangelical faith, would publicize it even though the Emperor had forbidden its general distribution. Melanchthon's fears were well-founded. Bugenhagen seized the first opportunity to promote the Augustana by participating in its translation into Low German. That translation, of course, facilitated the impact of the Confession in northern Germany, where Lutheranism initially enjoyed its greatest success.

Bugenhagen was pastor of the city church in Wittenberg for thirty-four years. During his tenure he restored a vigorous program of preaching and generally occupied the pulpit on Sunday, Wednesday, and Saturday each week. Despite an obvious polemical vein in his sermons, their main purpose was the explication and proclamation of the gospel. Martin Luther, one of his parishioners, joking complained about the excessive length of some of Bugenhagen's sermons, but he praised their content. Bugenhagen made a faithful confession from the pulpit as he clarified the central Reformation message of grace and forgiveness and warned against any compromises of or aberrations from the gospel.

While his tenure as city pastor of Wittenberg was lengthy, Bugenhagen's career as teacher and educator was even longer: he labored in the classroom for more than half a century. His contemporaries recognized his educational contributions and praised his effectiveness in the classroom. Melanchthon encouarged and supported his university lectures. Luther called Bugenhagen "a very good lecturer" who "produced learned pupils." He also asserted that, next to Philip Melanchthon, Bugenhagen was "the best professor of theology in the world and in the city [Wittenberg]." The goals of his educational program and of his teaching were not only the imparting of knowledge and the enhancement of academic skills, but also the nurturing of faith and the fostering of piety. Catechetical instruction became in integral part of the Lutheran educational program as envisioned and implemented by Bugenhagen. His witness in the classroom bore positive fruit. Students went out from Lutheran schools, especially the University of Wittenberg, with a deep commitment to the evangelical faith and with an eagerness and motivation to confess that faith. The expansion of the evangelical movement throughout Europe is explained, at least partly, by the thorough education of its pastors.

The Reformation was the first major Western movement to benefit from and take advantage of the advent of the printing press. The major reformers published extensively and disseminated their ideas quickly and widely through books and pamphlets. Bugenhagen's publications include biblical commentaries, sermons, and theological treatises. The eucharist and the proper relationship between faith and good works are recurring themes in his writings.

Bugenhagen's single most significant contribution to the Lutheran Reformation was the organization of the evangelical movement in northern Germany and parts of Scandinavia. While he did not possess the creativity of Luther or the intellectual prowess of Melanchthon, Bugenhagen was the administrative genius among the Wittenberg reformers. His skills were quickly recognized and extensively employed. Between 1528 and 1544 he visited Braunschweig, Hamburg, Lubeck, Pomerania, Denmark,

Schleswig-Holstein, Hildesheim, and the territory of Braunschweig-Wolfenbuttel. Wherever he went, he brought stability to volatile situations, defended the Lutheran cause, settled disputes, resolved theological differences, established educational systems, fostered relief for the poor, devised evangelical liturgies, and helped the new Lutheran churches organize their structures and programs. All this activity witnessed to and was informed by the principles of evangelical theology.

The last decade of Bugenhagen's life was difficult. Luther's death in 1546 was a great loss to the whole evangelical movement, but it was a particular blow to his close friends, including Bugenhagen. The Smalcaldic War of 1547 resulted in physical and emotional hardships for Lutherans in general; and health problems, especially the loss of sight in one eye, afflicted Bugenhagen personally. But the bitter theological conflicts which divided the Lutherans were the most difficult cross Bugenhagen had to bear. He was deeply concerned about the welfare of the church, hoped for a resolution of the conflicts, and continued to defend what he considered to be true Lutheranism.

A particularly tragic aspect of this theological warfare was the accusation that Bugenhagen had compromised orthodox Lutheranism, a charge that was leveled against him by the Gnesio-Lutherans. Led by Matthias Flacius and Nicholas von Amsdorf, this group claimed to be the true heirs of Luther and bitterly attacked their opponents, the Philippists (after Melanchthon). They questioned Bugenhagen's orthodoxy because of his acceptance of the Leipzig Interim, a series of religious concessions to the Emperor and the Roman Church made by the Saxons after the defeat of the Lutherans in 1547. Bugenhagen was deeply disturbed and hurt by this accusation. He was convinced that concessions had been made only with regard to adiaphora and that no essentials of the faith had been compromised. While Bugenhagen may not have perceived the full implications of the Interim, one should not doubt his essential faithfulness. From 1520 on he was one of its most ardent and uncompromising defenders and confessors. Melanchthon once described Bugenhagen as a "vigorous man and a coarse Pomeranian" for urging Luther to take a hard-line stand in the Smalcald Articles. That "coarse Pomeranian," however, was intent on making a faithful confession, no matter what the cost.

Like the Lutheran representatives at Augsburg, John Bugenhagen was truly a bold confessor of the gospel. He stands as a striking example and representative of that large number of people who were not present at Augsburg but who affirmed the Augustana as their own confession and who boldly confessed their faith in the varied contexts of their lives. Their confession may not have been as dramatic as that at Augsburg in 1530, but it was just as real, faithful, and necessary.

A Book Worth Discussing: James M. Childs, Jr. *Christian Anthropology and Ethics* *

Gary M. Simpson

Alameda, California

Hoping to chart a "clear path for Christian theology into social ethics that may be taken without special pleading," Childs locates the juncture between theology and Christian anthropology/ethics at the doctrine of the *imago Dei* (image of God). Childs also hopes to locate here the continuity between the ontological nature of human beings and their eschatological destiny in the coming Kingdom of God. While his major theological debts are to Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jurgen Moltmann, his programmatic debt is certainly to his teacher, Carl Braaten.

In ch. I Childs presents a fresh approach to the *imago Dei,* necessitated by pressure from a world offering anthropological alternatives which are ontologically holistic, processive, and historical (Darwin, Whitehead, Marx, Skinner, Wooldridge). Ch. II demonstrates Childs' respect for the heritage of Christian theology, by outlining in consciously broad strokes the theological anthropologies of such representative greats as Irenaeus, Thomas Aquinas, and Luther. Using critiques by Wingren, Tillich, Thielicke, and the Niebuhrs, Childs demonstrates that, as a whole, the Christian heritage of the first eighteen centuries offered a structurally dualistic anthropology, dichotomozed between historical nature and destiny and suprahistorical nature and destiny.

Theology in the last century, summarized in ch. III, has countered this "dichotomized anthropology" with a "secular anthropology." For secular Anthropos (man/woman), history is the location for human hope and a fulfilled destiny. Contemporary representatives of this approach are Harvey Cox, Paul van Buren, and Rudolph Bultmann, but the roots to this secularized alternative are already evident in Friedrich Schleiermacher and Albrecht Ritschl. When human nature and destiny are anchored within history, human ethical development gains theological respectability. "Secularized anthropology" offers two pluses and two minuses. On the positive side, the anthropological dualisms of the Christian heritage are eliminated with the presentation of a truly historical orientation and eschatology is recovered as a central theological concept. On the negative side, there is an exclusion of all transcendence; and, correspondingly, there is an all too optimistic approach to human self-fulfillment, in which theology is reduced to ethics and in which sin and evil get short shrift.

Ch. IV presents Paul Tillich's "theonomous" correction to the autonomy of "secularized Anthropos". This theonomous correction roots anthropolocy within the ground of Transcendent Being, but in the final analysis Tillich's anthropological fulfillment

*Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978 viii and 183 pages. paper. $5.95..

fades into an ahistorical retreat to eternity.

Childs requires only one other ingredient in order to formulate his construction of Christian anthropology/ethics for the contemporary world: eschatology. This is not an eschatology located at the back of the book under "last things," but rather an eschatology which is *the* theological locus. Ch. V skillfully recites the new famous recovery of apocalyptic eschatology by exegetes Johannes Weiss, Albert Schweitzer, Klaus Koch, Paul Hanson, Ernst Käsemann, and systematicians Pannenberg and Moltmann. Here emerges an historical eschatology anchored in an historically perceived, transcendent, absolute future, which gives shape to the tasks of grounding the good and deciding the right. The key theological term is the "coming Kingdom of God," the key anthropological term "hope," and the nexus of the two, the *imago Dei.*

In ch. VI Childs constructs his understanding of the *imago Dei* from the perspective of an eschatological theology. In the Old Testament he finds an *"imago"* with the holistic characteristics of personal derivation from, immediacy and openness to, and dependence on God. He rejects any loss of the image of God after the Fall, but rather, drawing on insights of Helmut Thielicke, he argues that humans retain the image, though now in a negative, rebellious mode. The eschatological aspect of the *imago Dei* becomes clear in the New Testament. In his incarnation and resurrection Christ signals not only the embodiment of God but also the fulfilled destiny of Anthropos. The destiny of Anthropos, finding its prototype in Christ as *the* image of God, is in continuity with and fulfillment of the image of God graciously created in Anthropos' essential nature. There is historical growth within ontological continuity — from infancy to maturity or from nature to destiny. This is not an evolutionary model of growth. The direction and power for growth reside in the ontological priority of the future. "The future is prior to the past as the whole transcends the parts." In Christ is revealed human destiny, and in Christ we realize that humanity's destiny as image of God has constituted our nature all along the historical way.

Ch. VII skillfully works through four theses which summarize and further elucidate this eschatological theology. Thesis I amplifies on the being of God expressed in historical terms, on the being of Anthropos expressed in terms of hope and openness to the future, and on the ontological priority of the future. Thesis II spells out the continuity of nature and destiny, and the union of God and Anthropos. Thesis III deals with Childs' eschatological approach to the image of God and how this corresponds with the relationship of law and gospel. Thesis IV points to Christ *the* eschatological *imago Dei* as *the* ethical prototype for normative ethics.

Ch. VIII, "Grounding the Good," and ch. IX, "Deciding the Right," are the culmination of Childs' constructive theology based on the eschatological formulation of the *imago Dei.* Pannenberg's idea of prolepsis is important as that concept which allows the good provisionally to be known and sought in the present while simultaneously being grounded absolutely in the future. The idea of prolepsis does much to synthesize long-standing ethical debates such as absolutism vs. relativism, objectivity vs. subjectivism, fact vs. valus, autonomy vs. heteronomy. The sharp dichotomy be-

tween personal and social ethics is also eliminated. Childs demonstrates that "a priori prescriptive rules" and "summary rules" are inappropriate for the task of eschatological ethics. He espouses, instead, "general rules." The word "general" carries a double meaning: "general" as in universal validity and "general" as in a nonprescriptive quality which acknowledges the provisional character of every prolepsis of the absolute future. "Adjudicating axioms" help to resolve ambiguities and to decipher contextual needs within the scope of "general rules."

Childs makes several significant contributions to contemporary theological discussion. He offers a brief history to and overview of the eschatological approach to theology, and he fits the *imago Dei* within this eschatological theology. On the whole the theological foundation on which he has built his ethical program emerges "without special pleading."

Childs laudably expends considerable effort to incorporate into his eschatological program a law-gospel dialectic. This dialectic enhances the key Reformation insight of justification by grace through faith as well as critically reveals the "irradicable dichotomy" which still remains for Anthropos, i.e., what Anthropos *is* over against what Anthropos *ought to be* or *will be.*

Yet, most significant in his presentation is a commitment to history grounded in the ontological priority of the future, and expressed in the coming kingdom of God. Using history as the cornerstone for theological formulation and ethical decision-making will keep theology in intelligible dialogue with other contemporary anthropological understandings. For Childs transcendence is not to be forsaken, but rather is to be communicated in historical terms as the absolute power of the future for the fulfillment of all history.

However, while Childs' commitment to history is central, he has side-stepped the history of the law's criticism. In his paradigm the law's criticism has no ontological ground in the future. Criticism itself, therefore, has no power, at least no historical power. Childs notes that the accusation of the law uncovers the need for the gospel, but he has stripped critical accusation of a future transcendent ground. Thus he has left the law's criticism devoid of historical power to uncover the truth about Anthropological reality. The need and necessity for the gospel are weakened.

Childs' lack of an eschatological anchor for transcendent criticism affects his christology. Since Christ is the proleptic presence of the absolute good, Anthropos can have hope for, knowledge of, and a model for what is good. These provide increased enthusiasm for behavior which conforms, though only provisionally, to the absolute good. The immense significance the proleptic Christ has for epistemology and ethics should not be diminished.

Soteriologically speaking, however, Christ as the prolepsis of the coming kingdom of God has limited usefulness. In Childs' paradigm Christ effected the *absolute* future in no way. As an historical prolepsis, he could not effect the absolute future. Since the absolute future already will be open friendship toward Anthropos, the absolute future does not even need to be effected. It already is absolutely good news for Anthropos.

Only Anthropos has the need to be effected, the need to hope for and to know what is already coming from the tran-

scendent future, the need to behave appropriately in the light of that future. Without the proleptic Christ-event Anthropos would be without adequate hope, knowledge, and models concerning the coming absolute future, but not without some models. According to Childs' paradigm while the arrival of Anthropos' destiny may be hindered without the proleptic Christ-event, the arrival would not, however, be negated, and thus a negative destiny.

Childs' theological paradigm, then, has one major weakness: it lacks an ontological/historical grounding of criticism. With such a grounding the need and necessity for christic *soteriological* effectiveness would be more strikingly affirmed in his paradigm. His failure to ground the law's criticism in the eschatologically transcendent future merely mirrors all humanity's deepseated antinomianism and chronic fear of God's wrath.

While his program has this major weakness, it is not, however, without promise. An eschatological approach which provides historical connectedness is much needed by theology for its task of ongoing intelligibility. Further thought and formulation are still needed concerning the prolepsis idea, its usefulness for epistemology and ethics, and its present insufficiency for expressing the disjunctive soteriological quality of the cross for history.

Childs Replies

Gary Simpson has written a generous and well-detailed review of my book, *Christian Anthropology and Ethics*. For this I am grateful. Even what he discerns as its major weakness does not, in his judgment, render the book devoid of promise. This, too, is gracious of him.

As I understand his concern with my constructive efforts, the main problem is that the "law's criticism has no ontological ground in the future"; and this, in turn, ". . . has left the law's criticism devoid of historical power to uncover the truth about anthropological reality." This means that, "Soteriologically speaking, . . . Christ as the prolepsis of the coming kingdom of God has limited usefulness."

If I understand this criticism — and I'm not entirely sure that I do — Pastor Simpson has taken the kingdom of God as universal future of history as a statement of universalism and the prolepsis of that kingdom and of our true humanity in the Christ event as mere " coming attractions" of something that has always been a *fait accompli*. In this regard, he places my theology in a category with that which ". . . merely mirrors all humanity's deepseated antinomianism and chronic fear of God's wrath." I would regard this as an intemperate statement even if it were capable of being substantiated in the text.

Space is limited, and I cannot undertake a full elaboration of the theological

argument in the book relevant to answering this criticism. However, I can at least make a few references to key points which I think serve to turn back these accusations.

First of all, I think it worth pointing out that a key statement of the eschatological doctrine of the *imago Dei* stipulates that the kingdom of God as the arrival of the future of history and of our fulfilled humanity stands over against all history and the noblest achievements of humanity as law as well as gospel. It is the ongoing criticism of historical existence this side of the kingdom. It lays bare, moreover, the depth of our alienation from our own created destiny in the image, our utter alienation from God. It is, then, explicitly stated, that one is only delivered from this alienation through *the grace mediated in Christ by baptism.* Moreover, the Christian who is in this grace remains *simul justus et peccator.* The Christian is indeed one whose entire life is punctuated by the interplay of law and gospel. This is implicit in the normative theory of obligation which is detailed in the chapter on deciding the right. Working this law-gospel dynamic into the construction of normative theory is one of the major points. In sum, the ongoing criticism of history and historical existence by the law seems to me to stick out all over the place. Otherwise, I would be forced into the progressivist camp, which I sharply criticized at great length.

Of course, in a book on anthropology and ethics there are limits to what can be dealt with. I did not address either a full-blown soteriology and theory of atonement or the question of universalism. I would only point out that eschatological theologies do not lead ineluctably to universalism. This is clear from people like Moltmann and Pannenberg, if they are carefully read. Moreover, eschatological theologies are in much the same boat as other theologies when it comes to an attempt to fathom the atonement. However, it is worthy of note that Pannenberg, to whom I gratefully acknowledge my considerable debts, has in his christology chosen to adopt with Luther a view of the atonement as substitutionary sacrifice. Questions of theodicy or universalism or atonement have been a source of consternation and controversy in the church throughout its history. It strikes me as unseemly to attack eschatological theology on these points, as though the tradition from which one is coming is resolved in these matters and unfettered by semantic and logical aporias. However, let it be known that I regard the Christ event as *the* significant event of history and do not find eschatological theology inimical to that confession.

In any case, I truly appreciate Simpson's efforts and *Currents* for supplying this forum. It is educational to encounter the perceptions of one's readers and helpful to be made accountable.

James M. Childs, Jr.
Trinity Lutheran Seminary
Columbus, Ohio

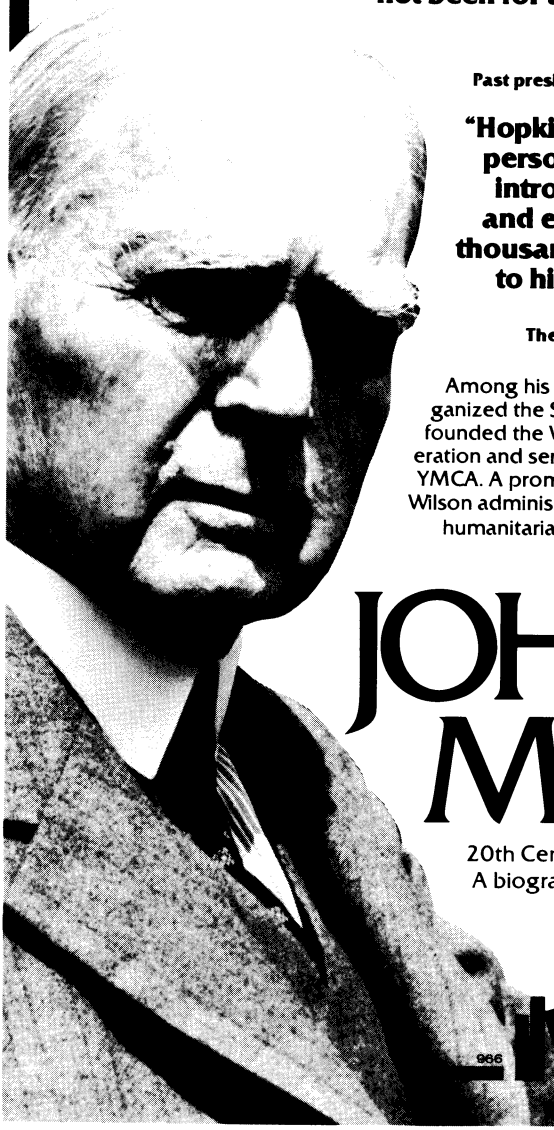
"...the ablest world Christian of his time.

...the ecumenical movement would not have been ready for Pope John XXIII if it had not been for the vision and work of John R. Mott."

– EUGENE CARSON BLAKE
Past president, World Council of Churches

"Hopkins' very detailed, very personal biography will re-introduce this ecumenical and evangelical giant... to thousands who are indebted to him but know him not."

– CREIGHTON LACY
The Divinity School, Duke University



Among his many achievements, Mott organized the Student Volunteer Movement, founded the World's Student Christian Federation and served as president of the World YMCA. A prominent public figure during the Wilson administration, Mott's diplomatic and humanitarian achievements earned him a Nobel Peace Prize in 1946.

JOHN R. MOTT

20th Century Ecumenical Statesman
A biography by C. Howard Hopkins

Cloth, $22.50

At your bookstore

WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Eerdmans Challenging The Theological Mind

PETER, STEPHEN, JAMES & JOHN
Studies in Non-Pauline Christianity
F. F. Bruce



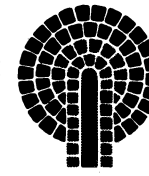
Though the Apostle Paul dominates N.T. accounts of Christianity's first century, Peter, Stephen, James and John also figured prominently in shaping the early church. In this companion work to *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, Bruce examines these influential leaders and the movements associated with them.
Published / Cloth, $7.95

THE OUTWARD BOUND
Caravaning as the Style of the Church
Vernard Eller
"An interesting combination of lively piety with extreme acuteness about our world and contemporary human beings . . . religiously deep, yet sociologically relevant."—*Paul L. Holmer, Yale Divinity School*
Published / Paper, $3.95

PREACHING WITH CONFIDENCE
A Theological Essay on the Power of the Pulpit
James Daane
This urgent summons to reaffirm the role of preaching is rooted in Daane's view of the mysterious power inherent in the proclaimed Word of God. ". . . the most exciting book about preaching that I have read."
—*David A. Redding*
Published / Paper, $3.95

THE PROMISE AND THE PRESENCE
Toward a Theology of the Kingdom of God
Isaac C. Rottenberg
"A clear and compelling statement of kingdom theology . . . lucid and balanced. Rottenberg's insights into the relation between Israel and the Church are extremely helpful."
—*James I. McCord, President, Princeton Theological Seminary*
Published / Paper, $4.95

PAUL'S IDEA OF COMMUNITY
The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting
Robert Banks



Carefully exploring Paul's views on Christian community, this stimulating study points the contemporary church toward the goals of freedom, growth and harmony.
July / Paper, $4.95

DOWN TO EARTH
Studies in Christianity and Culture
Edited by John R. W. Stott and Robert Coote
". . . an invigorating tour through terrain that has often been viewed with apprehension and suspicion. Sure to be a touchstone in missionary studies in coming years."
—*Wilbert R. Shenk, Mennonite Board of Missions*
Published / Paper, $9.95

PLANNING STRATEGIES FOR WORLD EVANGELIZATION
Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser
"A missiological *tour de force.* This remarkably clear and perceptive book could be one of the most valuable new resources for missions since the discovery of a cure for malaria."
—*C. Peter Wagner, Fuller Theological Seminary*
Published / Paper, $14.95

COMMENTARY ON ROMANS
Ernst Käsemann
". . . clearly the best commentary on Romans available today." —*James M. Robinson, Claremont Graduate School*
". . . a magisterial, if individualistic, interpretation not only of Paul's central letter but of the entire range of Pauline thought and theology."
—*Ralph P. Martin, Fuller Theological Seminary*
Published / Cloth, $22.50

THE FAMILY AND THE FELLOWSHIP

New Testament Images of the Church

Ralph P. Martin

Reviewing the origins of the N.T. church, Martin finds helpful and biblical guidelines for the church today.

Published / Paper, $4.95

UNCONDITIONAL GOOD NEWS

Toward an Understanding of Biblical Universalism

Neal Punt



Re-examining the biblical evidence on election, this thought-provoking study raises hard questions — and provides encouraging answers — about the scope of salvation.

June / Paper, $6.95

Previously Announced

ISSUES OF THEOLOGICAL CONFLICT

Richard J. Coleman

"A well argued and documented plea for a theological discussion between liberals and conservatives . . . could be the book to shake us loose from our parochial little debates and get us involved in issues that matter."—*Clark H. Pinnock, McMaster Divinity College*

June / Cloth, $12.95

ART IN ACTION

Nicholas Wolterstorff

Viewing the arts as multifunctional, Wolterstorff develops a Christian aesthetic that integrates art with daily life. ". . . remarkably clear and interesting . . . a fine introduction to some central problems in the philosophy of art."—*Monroe C. Beardsley*

Published / Paper, $9.95

THE SPREADING FLAME

F. F. Bruce

The rise and progress of Christianity, from its beginnings to the conversion of the English, is traced in this reprint edition of a classic reference volume.

Published / Paper, $7.95

THE SAYINGS OF JESUS

T. W. Manson

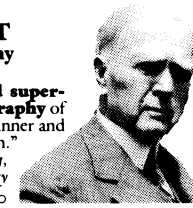
This commentary on the recorded words of the Savior, notes *The Times Literary Supplement*, is "invaluable to everyone engaged in the study of the New Testament."

Published / Paper, $7.95

JOHN R. MOTT

1865-1955: A Biography

C. Howard Hopkins



"A much needed and superbly documented biography of this Nobel Peace Prize winner and world Christian statesman."

—*W. Richey Hogg, Perkins School of Theology*

Published / Cloth, $22.50

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH (NICOT)

John A. Thompson

"Thompson picks his way with judicious circumspection through the bewildering maze of critical argument to a full appreciation of the dynamic nature of the prophet's message."—*Library Journal*

June / Cloth, $15.95

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

D. W. Cleverley Ford

Thirty-five years' experience in the parish ministry informs this lively and realistic discussion of the problems facing today's ministers.

Published / Cloth, $12.95

GOSPEL/LAW

Contrast or Continuum?

Daniel P. Fuller

The tension between grace and law is addressed in this examination of dispensationalism and covenant theology. "The fruit and demonstration of detailed and sober exegesis."

—*John Piper, Bethel College & Seminary*

August / Paper, $3.95

THE TWO HORIZONS

Anthony C. Thiselton

"A comprehensive guide to the problems of hermeneutics . . . a very able book, which reveals wide reading, incisive critical power, and a real concern to let the New Testament speak to modern man."

—*I. Howard Marshall, University of Aberdeen*

June / Cloth, $20.95

THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Ernest Würthwein

"Introduces beginners to the text critic's basic assumptions and aims. An indispensable tool for informed teaching and critical research."

—*James L. Crenshaw, Vanderbilt University*

Published / Cloth, $8.95

At your bookstore In Canada: Oxford University Press

WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.

255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. 49503

Book Reviews

THE RECOVERY OF PREACHING. By Henry H. Mitchell. New York: Harper and Row. 1977. 164 pages, notes and index. Paper. $3.95.

Henry Mitchell's *Black Preaching* was one of the best books on preaching of its decade, with its accents on reaching the listners and its translations of white pulpitese into the language of Black Americans. The new volume pursues many of the same emphases. The first four chapters are edited from the author's Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale in 1974. Many of the principles of these and the other four chapters apply to white preachers also: have a purpose, preach the gospel, keep thought and emotion together. Mitchell has taught widely in seminaries and knows his communication theory. The chief thrust of this book is the realization that the Black religious culture is deeply rooted in a delight in biblical story, the recognition of God as Father, and worship as celebration. The white reader will have to realize that the volume does not deal with a cross-section of the entire Black population, but he will also have to brace himself to face whether he contributes to Mitchell's low estimate of the pedantry, aimlessness, and de-Christianized content of much white preaching today.

Richard R. Caemmerer, Sr.
Christ Seminary — Seminex

A CHRONOLOGY OF PAUL'S LIFE. By Robert Jewett. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979. viii and 160 pages. Cloth. $11.95.

Although Jewett does not provide a new or definitive answer to the problem of Pauline chronology, anyone who reads his book will understand the question better. The monograph is essentially ninety pages of scholarly review and critique, ten pages of Jewett's own experimental hypothesis, and forty-five pages of footnotes. There are author- and passage-indices, and the work concludes with a helpful time-graph.

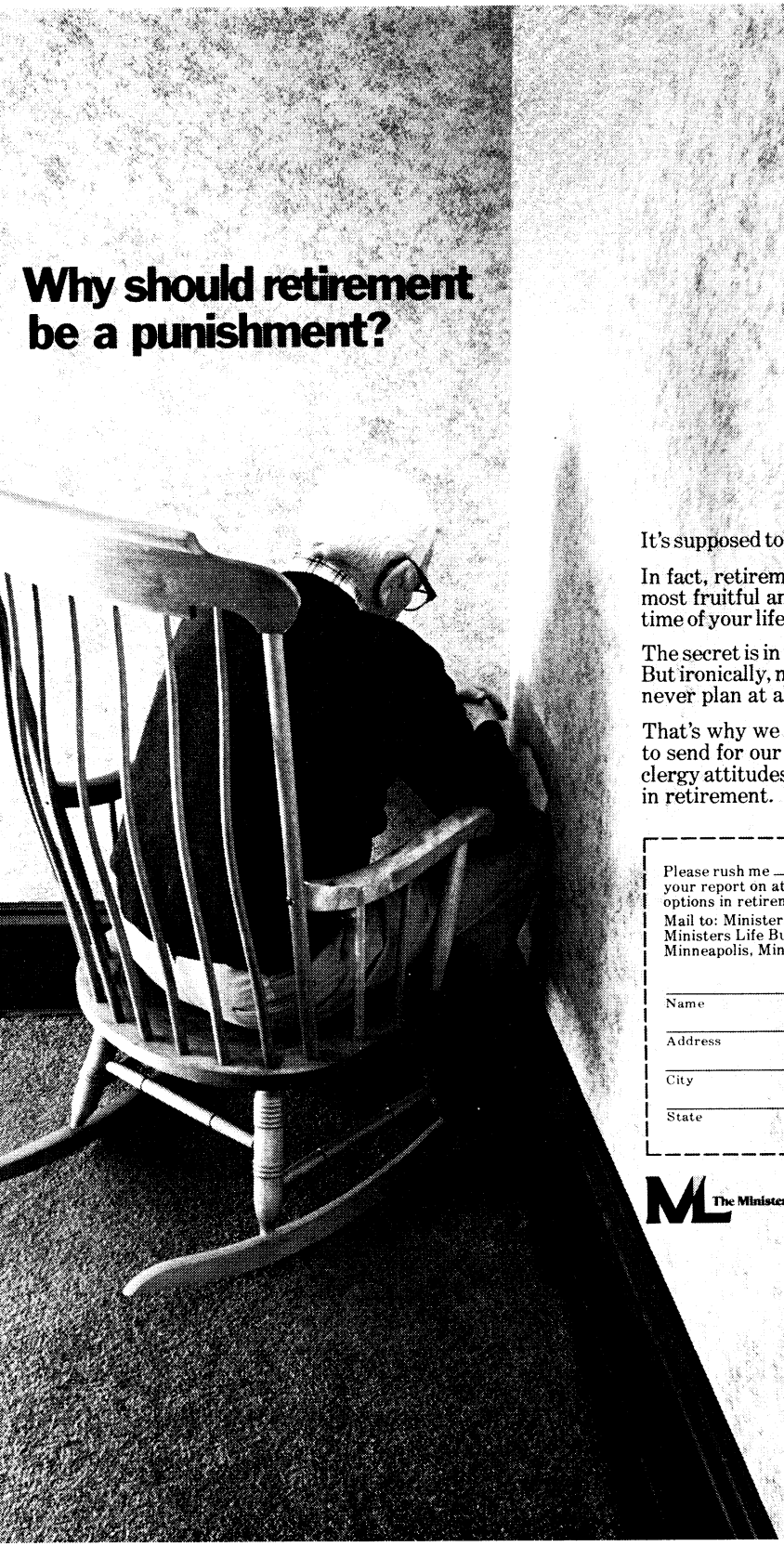
Jewett's detailed work is as impressive as his proposal is modest. In the end, Jewett simply proposes that scholars refine the "three Jerusalem visit framework" for Paul's life as developed by Ernst Barnikol and John Knox. He sets the conversion of Paul on Oct. 3 or 8, A.D. 34, with March, 62 as the probable date for his execution. He thinks that Paul visited Jerusalem in October, 37; in October, 51, for the Apostolic Conference; and finally in June, 57.

Jewett begins with the startling thesis that the inductive method to determine Pauline chronology is a deception. He suggests that one ought rather use a deductive method capable of testing for falsification. His goal is to make the data "interlock."

Much of the book examines the scholarly debate on the historical value of Luke-Acts in comparison with data from Paul's letters. Jewett's refreshing independence and his ability to use the insights of scholars ranging from F.F. Bruce to H. Conzelmann will challenge readers to reexamine premises and conclusions. Not only does Jewett reject historical research based on unsubstantiated pious claims, but he directs even harsher words toward the "obsessive," "uncompromising," or "inventive" skepticms that claims unlimited knowledge of "the limits beyond which ancient writers could not or would not go in altering details to create desired impressions." At times, Jewett gives high credibility to the chronological data in Acts, including the opinion that the "we-sections" are probably the author's personal notes, but he concludes that Paul's five visits to Jerusalem in Acts are part of a framework Luke created under the impulse of Salvation History.

Robert Holst
Christ College
Irvine, California

Why should retirement be a punishment?



It's supposed to be a reward.

In fact, retirement can be the most fruitful and gratifying time of your life. It's up to you.

The secret is in the planning. But ironically, most ministers never plan at all.

That's why we urge you to send for our free report on clergy attitudes and options in retirement.

Please rush me _____ copies of your report on attitudes and options in retirement.
Mail to: Ministers Life, Dept. J.
Ministers Life Building
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55416

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

ML The Ministers Life & Casualty Union

CTM-8

HOW TO SHARE YOUR FAITH WITHOUT BEING OFFENSIVE. By Joyce Neville. New York: Seabury, 1979. vi and 143 pages. Paper. $4.95.

One would have wished for a better title for this fine book by Joyce Neville. After all, isn't it biblical to say that whenever your faith is shared you are always going to offend? Haven't we been taught that the gospel in itself is "an offense"? Doesn't Peter tell us that our Lord is the stone that causes people to stumble?

But there is a difference between the offense the gospel may bring and the offensive way many Christians choose to do the task of evangelism. Maybe the real question addressed in Neville's book is, "How can evangelism become a loving, sharing, caring relationship with another human being?"

For this to happen, the author says, the focus of "witnessing" should not be what *has* happened, but what is happening in a person's life. What difference does Christ make now in my life? Her list of "39 things to witness about" is pedantic; but it is a starting point, setting parameters for more personal sharing. The example of "Father Hanna" (p. 22) is "evangelism" at its zenith.

The second half of Mrs. Neville's book is devoted to showing how to share one's faith in Christian support groups and practical suggestions for getting such groups off the ground. In a small group, an arena is developed where Christians can find strength and understanding to renew faith.

One would hope that the new era dawning in evangelism will continue. In this "new" era there is a growing concern to emphasize the kind of relationship established, at least as much as the kind of content communicated. "Relational" evangelism is an old idea whose time is coming again. Thank you, Mrs. Neville, for hastening the return.

Robert Scudieri
Director of Evangelism
New Jersey District, LCMS

THE BIBLE AND RECENT ARCHAEOLOGY. By Dame Kathleen Kenyon. Atlanta: John Knox, 1978. 105 pages. 104 illustrations. Paper. $6.50.

To few father-daughter combinations is it given to publish authoritative books on the same subject in succeeding generations. Dame Kathleen Kenyon consciously patterned the title of this book after the book her father, Sir Frederick Kenyon, had written in 1940, *The Bible and Archaeology.*

This slim book provides us with the posthumous publication of her 1976 Haskell lectures delivered at Oberlin College. It is a succinct, authoritative survey of the present state of Palestinian/biblical archaeology. Some 43 of 105 pages are devoted to a text treating of the archeological high points from the patriarchs down to the period of the second temple. The rest is given to a brief bibliography and index but primarily to a fine series of 104 black and white photographs and plans which illustrate the text most helpfully.

Dame Kenyon was one of a half dozen giants in the last hundred years of Palestinian archaeology. Thus this text is welcome as a record of her most recent views on many of the points so heatedly controverted today. For example, she outlines carefully the reasons for dating the scanty remains at Late Bronze Jericho to the 14th century. This continues to confound both those dating the Exodus to the 15th century as well as the protagonists of a 13th century dating. She redates the "Solomonic stables" to the Omride dynasty, but shows by the quotation marks that she declines to decide whether they are in fact stables or storehouses. She prefers to date the destruction of Stratum III at Lachish to Nebuchadnezzar, not Sennacherib.

In the plethora of archaeological surveys, none will be more authoritative, and no brief study more useful.

Carl Graesser, Jr.
Christ Seminary — Seminex

The Words of *Currents*

The writers in *Currents* try to express competent theology in twentieth century, understandable English. Since not all technical terms can — or should — be avoided, we are beginning a new feature in which we will comment on difficult words or ideas used in these pages, in order to facilitate your understanding of the articles and to expand your theological vocabulary. If theological words appear — in *Currents* or elsewhere — which you do not understand, drop us a line. We shall be happy to comment on them in future issues.

Ralph W. Klein

Albigensians. An anti-clerical sect which held that the angels were the lost sheep of the house of Israel and that Jesus' death was only apparent. They were dualistic or Manichean, believing that the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness were locked in eternal conflict. Crusades were launched against them in 1181-1182 and 1208-1229. (see p. 231)

Anthropos. The Greek word for man, used in this issue to avoid exclusivistic (sexist) language and the endless repetition of man/woman. (see p. 246)

CELAM. The popular title of the Latin American Bishops' Conference which has served as a public forum for liberation theology (Consejo Episcopal Latino Americano). The third such conference was held in Puebla, Mexico, in 1978, and was attended by Pope John Paul II. (see p. 221)

Currents in Theology and Mission. A leading Lutheran journal for laity and pastors that needs advertising by the word of its readers' mouths. Also a unique gift item for birthdays and Christmas.

Gnesio-Lutherans. The Greek word *gnesios* means "genuine." The genuine Lutherans battled the supporters of Philip Melanchthon (called Philippists) after Luther's death. (see p. 245)

Mystagogical. A mystagogue is a person who initiates into or interprets mysteries. To call the church's dogmas mystagogical, therefore, recognizes that they are not scientific, tangible statements of fact. Rather, they are gateways into the ultimate mystery of God's own presence. By this definition dogmas are subject to human and historical limitations. (see p. 217)

Post-Constantinean. Constantine I (280-337) saw a sign of the cross in the sky *(in hoc signo vinces)* and granted Christianity legal standing and imperial support in the Roman Empire (the Edict of Milan, 313). Thereafter Christianity entered a triumphalist age in which its dialogue with and toleration of others drastically decreased. (see p. 207)

Prolepsis. Anticipation. What history will finally be is seen proleptically in the resurrection of Jesus. The end of the world will be on a cosmic scale what has already happened in him. The coming kingdom, however, is so inexhaustible, that no one person can yet see everything that is revealed about us in Jesus. (see p. 247)

Protean. Proteus was an ancient sea god who would take on different shapes if captured. A person who gets pushed around by each new religious fad displays a Protean attitude. (see p. 206)

Shaman. A holy man (roughly: medicine man), to whom the unseen world of gods, demons, and ancestral spirits is thought to be responsive. In this issue shamans are cited as examples of "outsiders." John's Gospel presents the Christian as an outsider with regard to Judaism and civic life. (see p. 201)

Waldensians. After repeated persecutions, this Protestant body was granted religious liberty in 1848. They reject purgatory and masses for the dead; they are famous for their preaching and biblical studies. J. Alberto Soggin, a leading Old Testament scholar, teaches at their seminary in Rome. (see p. 231)

Zeitgeist. The spirit of the times. Examples: secularism, individualism, militarism. (see p. 221)

CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION
607 N. Grand Blvd.
St. Louis, Mo. 63103

Second Class Postage Paid at St. Louis, Missouri