THE
DUKE
DIVINITY SCHOOL
REVIEW

Winter 1980

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Help!?

Approximately 97% of your responses to the questionnaire in the Winter 1979 issue of the *Review* indicated willingness to pay a modest annual amount for receiving the *Review*. Encouraged by this response and keenly aware of the increasingly stringent financial situation of the Divinity School, we are now asking all readers who are able and willing to do so to send a modest *annual* check ($2 or $3 would be very helpful) to *The Duke Divinity School Review,* Duke University, Durham, N.C. 27706.

This request for *voluntary* contributions does not indicate any change either in our policy or in our disposition toward our alumni. The only justification for the continuing existence of this School lies in the lives of Christian service of its graduates. The School wants to continue to serve its alumni in whatever ways are most helpful and feasible. The continued publication of the *Review* is intended as one way of serving our graduates—whose interests, as disclosed in our recent questionnaire, are at least as diverse as the contents and formats of recent issues of the *Review*. We are *not* inaugurating an official subscription price for the *Review*. You will *continue* to receive the *Review* whether or not you feel able to contribute to its costs of publication.

However, Duke Divinity School, like most private and voluntarily supported institutions, is increasingly affected by inflation and the generally tightening financial situation. Under these circumstances even "small" gifts may be an important help to us, especially if we receive a widespread response. Any gifts you may make to the *Review* are a tax-deductible "charitable contribution"— as are any contributions you may make to the Duke University Loyalty Fund, which are more helpful to us if specially designated for "The Divinity School." (To avoid unnecessary secretarial expense and postage we will not be mailing you formal receipts. However, your cancelled check will serve as your tax record.)

If you know anyone, parishioners or others, who might possibly be interested in supporting Christian theological education, either through direct gifts or through wills and bequests, please contact Dr. John K. Bergland, Associate Dean for External Affairs.

Financially, we have come—fairly well thus far—through the "budget tightening" of the seventies and we are entering what may well be for us the "hard times" of the eighties.

We sincerely thank you for any help, direct or indirect, you may be able to give the Divinity School over the years ahead.

Have This Mind in You*

by Robert E. Cushman
Research Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology

Members of the Class of 1979, you, I think, have been an out-standing class in important ways. I am greatly touched by your invitation to me to be your Baccalaureate preacher on this occasion. It marks your successful completion of candidacy for the Master of Divinity degree and your launching out upon the vocation to which you have been led in Christ's name.

The sum, I think, of what I shall have to say is taken from two passages of St. Paul's letter to the Philippians. The first is the Apostle's timeless admonition to all would-be Christians: "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). The other is, at once, a description of that mind, as to its nature, and the way of its attainment: "For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, *in order* that I may gain Christ, *and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own,* . . . but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil. 3:8-9).

Everything I intend to say is implied in these lines. I mean to remind you tonight that the end of Christian life is ultimately the new manhood and womanhood in Christ Jesus. Secondly, that this new being is not a righteousness of our own. If it were, we might well despair at the start. And, in the third place, that it is the "righteousness of God," as Paul speaks of it, and as the Reformers rediscovered it in the 16th century—"the righteousness of God through faith." All other righteousness is both blind and rootless by comparison. That is the overwhelming witness of living faith in all ages. And this is what I am moved to remind you of at your commencement.

II

The really seminal passages of Paul's epistles, as some of you will recall, are autobiograpical, like the one just quoted: "For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things. . . ." It is the unavoidable embarrassment of Christian utterance that it begins as autobiography and issues in generalizations of doctrine, as if the latter were independent of the former, which is not so. Let us, then, begin autobiographically to explore the Pauline themes. I said

before, that I am touched and moved by your invitation to address you on this occasion. In part, I am moved because, like yourselves, I am keenly aware that our life embraces both a future and a past, both beginnings and endings. For the most part, and in the Providence of God, you contemplate a yet unknown future —unfolding and to be revealed—while I also contemplate a future and, now, a quite lengthy retreating past peopled, as yours will surely be, with lights and shadows along the way of common pilgrimage.

As I have pondered what to say to you, as your designated valedictorian—the one who says *valedico,* fare-well—I find that what I say must rightly come from my own retreating past but also from God's future. This divine future, is, quite paradoxically, disclosed to us in the long course of the evangelical succession—as I would call it—namely, the human history of our redemption in Jesus Christ. Moreover, the substance of that historic witness is also autobiographical—the witness of faith to God as he is in Christ. Accordingly, in this view, God's future is constantly becoming present in appropriating faith of human beings and, in our perspective, is also retreating into the past. And this retreating but glorious past is the evangelical succession.

This then is the paradox, for our human perspective, that God's future, as we call it, is not disjoined from God's past, that is the long past, the succession, in which God has been and is revealed to the eyes of faith and of which there is the inspired succession of witnesses. Therefore, in acknowledging God's continuing self-witness in the midst of our *human history,* we may *also* claim the assurance of *God's future for us, pro nobis.* Only for our humanity does the future seem divided from the past, or our past from our future. The apparent division between the two is the sign and final differentia of our mortality. In and by faith, however, God's future, as we call it, is as open to us as his immanence has been manifest in our past and in the past of the evangelical succession through time. Hence, many of you will not be surprised that I speak to you out of this two-fold perspective, my personal history, and the history of our redemption in Christ. You will recognize, perhaps, that it is from such a platform that a Christian may speak with any confidence. So it is, at least, for me.

III

Now, if I were to speak merely out of my personal history, then, as I peruse the course of our human life and of my own, I might well resort to the lament which Robert Browning placed in the

mouth of Andrea Del Sarto, the so-called "faultless painter" of the Renaissance in Italy:

> O, the little more, and how much it is;
> And the little less, and what worlds away!

This is the poignant outcry, not of the slothful, to be sure, but of any who have caught a vision of the Eternal in its temporal manifestations and have attempted its embodiment—whether in art, or in morals, or in the Christian life itself—but who find, in the end, that they are convicted of failure by their own default. And this, surely, is the *honest* witness of the Christian man or woman along the way and at the end of life's course. So, if I speak of this high calling, the Christian life, out of my own personal history merely, I must surely own default:

> O the little more, and how much it is;
> And the little less, and what worlds away!

This becomes my confession, and there is no reprieve and no help unless I am referred elsewhere—to the evangelical succession and, especially, to the testimony of the Apostle regarding any aspiring ministry in Christ's name. He testifies:

> Such is the confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code, but in the Spirit.... (II Cor. 3:4-6)

No Christian, nor any Christian theologian, has ever improved upon this counsel of the Apostle Paul. It is a description in fact of the only adequate source and empowerment of the Christian life. None have refuted it, but many have and do ignore it. To acknowledge it is to take a stand in the evangelical succession, the living Church of Christ in all ages. And so to do is to become vitally related, indeed, symbiotic with "the Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." Without this *symbiosis* we neither resound nor rise to the tasks of the Kingdom, nor are we sufficient for them. This is why Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is within you," or it is not. So Paul says: "Not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills"; that is, it simply commands without empowering, "but the Spirit gives life."

According to the Christian witness then, it is this "newness of life" through God's Spirit that alone supplies what is wanting with regard to the lament of Andrea Del Sarto:

> O, the little more, and how much it is;
> And the little less, and what worlds away!

As I look down the retreating years—and more of mine are now spent than yet remain—not only must I say plainly with the

Apostle, "not that I have already attained" but that there is no attainment in prospect, either for me or for any, save in that "righteousness" which is through faith in Christ. This is seen as the work of Grace in the New Testament. Without Grace the "counsels of perfection," as they are called in Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount,* are not merely, as Reinhold Niebuhr used to say "impossible possibilities," they are plumb impossible. But, as John Welsey taught: Because God works in us, we can and, indeed, must work on pain of forfeiting that Grace that we already have. On such grounds only can St. Paul forget "the things that are behind" and "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

IV

What is it, then, to stand in the evangelical succession and, so, to be partakers of "the righteousness of God," not a righteousness of our own? In the Johannine writings of the New Testament, we may find one kind of answer signalized in the recurring phrase, "to be of God" rather than "to be of the world." For the Evangelist the "righteousness of God" is a new state of being-in-life. Thus, "He who is of God hears the words of God. . . ." (Jn. 8:47). "Little children," he writes, "you are of God" (I Jn. 4:4f.). By contrast, it is added: "They are of the world, therefore what they say is of the world" . . . and "the truth is not in them" (I Jn. 2:4). So the abiding problem of the Christian man or woman is to be in the world but not of the world as is reflected in the "high-priestly prayer" of Jesus in the 17th chapter of John's Gospel.

But, now, I must warn you that much contemporary Christian piety as preached or understood today has little to say about our *being of God.* Much less does it enforce it as a sure mark and sign of true Christian life. The current vogue is mainly otherwise, and scarcely do we look for the "man of God" either abroad or in our midst; nor do I recall that the "woman of God" is a desideratum high on the current feminist agenda. Even the Roman Church has lately somewhat dismantled the annual calendar of the saints in accord with liturgical renovation. But, when we think of it, the word "saint" was commonplace with the Apostle Paul to denote the normality of "newness of life" presupposed of the same folk of the early church whose sufficiency was conceded to be, not of themselves, but of God.

In that classical passage of First Kings 13—that of our Old Testament Lesson—the "man of God" is graphically portrayed and in contrast with King Jeroboam, the man of the world. The

man of God is signalized in this, that he is wholly, not conditionally, answerable to and responsible for declaration of God's Word. God's Word points in a direction opposite to that in which the man of the world, Jeroboam, is presently turned. In a word, the man of God is first of all and primarily an *enactor* of the First Commandment. His only reward for his fidelity to the Word of God is precisely and simply his identification with God's Kingdom, which has the real future with it. The man of God does not serve God for a price! In the Old Testament he appears in a whole line of *dramatis personae*—in the person of Elijah or Amos, or in that of Job or in the Servant Poems of Second Isaiah. All of them are the saints of God because they heed the unconditional imperative: "You shall neither eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way that you come."

For the man of God, ministry is not offered with reassuring compensations—not fraternization with men, nor with well-worn and familiar ways to travel by. To be a bearer of the Word of God is a huge venture of faith into a far country, like Abraham's, who "went forth not knowing whither he went." Thus, in a modern idiom, the man of God and the woman of God identify with *God's future* rather than with their own more or less definable, comfortable, and *calculable present.* So, also, thereby they relate to God's eternity. To do so, as the whole Bible understands it, is to break out of the everlasting dilemma, the fatal either-or, of human being as such, namely: either to bet all on one's calculable present or to invest in God's future, that is, his abiding will *for me, pro me.* That Jesus regarded this irreconcilable alternative as the core temptation or trial incurred by our humanity is found everywhere in his utterances and especially in his laments: "many are called but few are chosen"; "the way is strait and the gate narrow, and few there are that find it"; or in Jesus' lament over Jerusalem: "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes" (Lk. 19:42). How has that prophecy been fulfilled through near two thousand years of Jewish history?

Such is the awesome predicament of man in the mind of our Lord. It is hard-going with the would-be man or woman of God. Yet Jesus did not shirk but espoused the hardness as man's vocation. The Cross is his reply to the unresolved human dilemma; it is his answer to his own rigor, his words: "We are unworthy servants; since only what we ought to do have we done" (Lk. 17:10). Luther spoke of our Lord as "the man of God's own choosing." He really meant the man of God's own righteousness. And, so, it was necessary for Paul to testify: "God was in Christ reconciling

the world to himself." And also it was necessary to understand that we are justified not by our works but by identification with Christ in *his* perfect obedience, i.e., we are justified by faith.

But faith, as you have come to understand, is not just belief. Where faith is regnant, it is transformation of mind and of our very existence. "O, you of little faith," is Jesus' recurrent lament over his disciples. To "do the truth," as we are enjoined by John's Gospel, is the natural outflow of having been transformed into its manifest image in Christ. A radical change is presupposed, a new birth! Therewith, the image of God is restored in us by entire identification with Jesus Christ. Paul understands it as "newness of life"—a whole new mentality. That is why the Apostle admonishes us, as also the church at Philippi: "Have that mind in you which you *do* have if you are, indeed, in Jesus Christ!" For this renovated life Paul said he suffered the loss of all things and counted them as trash that, as he puts it, "I may gain Christ and be found in him." "How?" we ask. He replies: "not having a righteousness of my own, but that which is through faith, the righteousness of God through faith."

Who, then, is the man and the woman of God in this Christian understanding? Who are the "saints" to whom the Apostle Paul writes and so describes their calling? With the Apostle, the man and woman of God have been completely redefined. They are redefined in Paul's own autobiographical confession: ". . . *not* having a *righteousness of my own,* but that which is through faith, the righteousness *of God* that is premised on faith."

It is with this understanding of the righteousness of God through faith that I would wish to re-interpret the lament which Robert Browning puts into the mouth of Andrea Del Sarto:

> "O the little more, and how much it is;
> And the *little less*, and what *worlds away!*"

The righteousness of God, according to our Lord, is not available to those of "little faith," but, where there is faith, it can move mountains. Of this, Paul's gospel is a resounding echo.

But, you ask again—and along with the Apostle's Judaising contemporaries by whom the evangelical succession is ever and again confronted—"Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?" To this Paul replies twofold: (1) "By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the Law." (2) If we ask, "how is this so?" Then Paul's answer to the Galatians must suffice. Faith, he says, if it is real faith, will necessarily always be working itself out by way of love (Gal. 5:6). "For," says he, "the whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal. 5:14).

V

Members of the Class of 1979, it is one of these things that I am moved to remind you as you venture forth upon a ministry in Christ's name. If you are faithful, it will be hard-going; if you are not, it will be impossible! Faith is the *differentia*—"O, the little more, and how much it is!" Or "the little less, and what worlds away!" That is the witness of the evangelical succession through all ages. But, in Christian experience, the "man of God" is not on his own, like the one who confronted Jeroboam, the man of the world, at Bethel. That man of God failed, killed by a lion. He was deceived by another prophet, that is, a colleague. Beware of colleagues, especially professionals; beware of the scribes, in your time, and keep close to the evangelical succession. That is, keep nurturing your soul on Scripture and Tradition. This is my *valedico;* and so I wish you fare-well, but always in Christ, for that is the precondition of faring well.

> "Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, . . . equip you with everything good that you may do his will, *working in you* what is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever." AMEN.

Providence and Persuasion*

by D. W. D. Shaw
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There is no opportunity without risk. The opportunity you have given me to-day is one I appreciate sincerely and enthusiastically. But it is surely accompanied by the risk that as something of a stranger in these parts I shall be so unfamiliar with what is going on in your thinking—I am learning a little about your basketball—that I shall be starting from the wrong blocks, and either leave you behind or bore you out of your minds. It is a risk I have to take.

In the theological thinking of our time, opportunities abounding there certainly are. No solid consensus holds us in its throttling grip. Adventurous thinking is the order of the day, and so we have theologies of every name and number, from political and liberation through feminist and dionysiac and play, to linguistic analysis and all the "neo's": neo-Thomist, neo-metaphysical, neo-fundamentalist. You name it. We've got it. I personally do not take a skeptical view of this situation. It strikes me to provide the greatest possible stimulus to imagination, and perhaps that is one of the categories that theology over the centuries has most badly needed. Opportunity, yes, but risk, too, or rather many risks. Of these, I mention only one: the risk that we get so carried away with some particular emphasis, or some new movement that we conveniently ignore or forget about some aspects of faith that have been important in the past but seem to be disposable now. I would not want to defend the thesis that "old doctrines", like old soldiers, "never die". What I mean is that some aspect of belief that has traditionally been regarded as basic is simply allowed to die the death of a thousand silences, for no better reason than that it doesn't 'jell', doesn't fit with modern and exciting re-interpretations. It hasn't been replaced by something else or re-interpreted itself. It just drops out. It is my contention that one such aspect—not yet totally forgotten but swiftly being elbowed out—is the notion of Providence.

What, after all, has happened to it? At one time, it was recognised as one of the linchpins of Christian faith—'that God wills in eternity whatever comes to pass in time'. Once recognised as a *primarium caput fidei et religionis,* Charles Hodge, that doyen of 19th-century Protestantism, could say: "This doctrine of Provi-

* Lecture presented at Duke Divinity School on Feb. 21, 1979.

dence is the foundation of all practical religion, and the denial of it is practically atheism, for we are without God in our world'. Where would you find the equivalent of that resounding affirmation in the theological literature of the last decade and more? I like to compare the Bible and the Joseph story with Voltaire and Candide, and in particular their respective punch lines. When Joseph finally reveals his identity to the brothers who had left him for dead and on whom he played his own tricks, he explains: 'So it was not you that sent me here but God', a standard biblical statement of Providence. When Candide finally gets to the end of his tether with old Pangloss, and his 'all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds', he resigns himself to the humbly agnostic maxim: 'all you can do is cultivate your garden'. Of these two conclusions, the modern theologian seems to have no difficulty in preferring Candide to Joseph.

What seems to me to have happened is that the notion of Providence is in danger of being wrecked on the rock of human freedom. Providence pre-supposes both divine purposes (God has an all-inclusive purpose), and power to pursue these purposes, to bring them about. Yet we have become so jealous of our freedom (and, in our better moments, our responsibility) that the very idea of God's achieving purposes despite us, can only be seen as a threat, a denial of our own freedom. Providence seems to imply either puppetry—with ourselves as puppets and God holding all the strings—or pantheism, in which we only appear to have a measure of freedom, the subject of our free actions being God. In either case, our freedom is denied, either explicitly (puppetry, determinism *tout court*) or implicitly (pantheism, denial of independent reality vis-à-vis God). These are for us not live options, and we reject them—rightly—but with them Providence too goes out the window.

Yet for the Christian to allow the doctrine of Providence to die a natural death, is in effect to allow a giant question mark to be placed against everything Christian faith stands for—the finality of the Gospel, the reality of redemption, promise, hope, the dynamics of faith. Either something like a doctrine which announces that God is decisively related to what goes on in the world now— or chaos, or some other non-divine controlling agency (including humanity). The task, then is to find a way of understanding Providence which does not imply either puppetry or pantheism, and this means finding a way of understanding God's power which does not swallow up or deny human freedom.

What kind of power is this alleged to be? Understandably, almost inevitably, despite fairly broad hints in the New Testament to the contrary, the models used for understanding the divine power have most frequently been drawn from the political sphere. The picture encouraged was that of the king, emperor, absolute monarch, whose will is done by enforcement—through a system of rewards and punishments, or by sheer imposition. This picture was re-inforced when an evangelical understanding of predestination, with its astonishing and legitimate sense of reassurance for the faithful, was allowed to be extended, logically enough perhaps, into a doctrine of double predestination whereby not only are the elect predestined from all eternity to life with God in heaven, but the rest are predestined from all eternity to 'everlasting fire'. Such doubts as such a picture might cast on the character of God and any incompatibility it might suggest with the God who in the Johannine Epistles could be described as 'Love' were met by appeals to his majesty, or righteousness or holiness such as to render any questioning an affront and an impiety.

These were powerful appeals. For many Christian believers, they worked, especially when combined with the affirmation of mystery, which discouraged too much probing or questioning. The fact remains, however, that this notion of the divine power with its associations of quasi-physical compulsion and punishment, set up a contest between the wrath of God and his mercy, and in that competition, for the vast majority of mankind, the stakes were heavily loaded in favour of wrath: just punishment to preserve the majesty of God—and, according to Hugo St. Victor at least, to add to the delights of the "saved", who looked on.

I'm not going to attempt here and now to trace the history of the growth of objections to this notion of God's power. The coming of liberalism in theology must have had something to do with it. The recovery of the dominant motif of the love of God (however this might be interpreted) and its implications for the understanding of the divine power became apparent. Real freedom was actually allowed to the creature, real power vis-à-vis God. God's power began to be seen not so much by analogy with political or military power but rather with the power of dependability, or moral example, or self-giving. Even when the re-action against liberalism and its beguiling optimism came in Europe and America after the First World War, the liberal alternative was not wholly lost sight of. Even such a dedicated non-liberal as K. Barth could ground his doctrine of Creation in the love of God. And when he came to expound the divine attributes he chose to do so in terms of the 'perfections' of God's love and freedom.

Yet to see and assert that God's power has more to do with love and freedom than with emperors and dictators and their club-, sword-, bomb-, torture-, earthquake-wielding capacity is one thing. To form a conception of how this could possibly work was another. It is not self-explanatory. Things still happen which can only be described, for their viciousness and senselessness, as evil. This is a fact of every-day experience. With the older view of divine power it may have been implausible to relate such happenings to the punishment or mysterious divine decree of God. But it was not impossible nor altogether inconsistent with other things that were believed. It is much harder to relate them plausibly to God's power conceived in terms of love. Thus any help that can be gleaned from any source is surely to be welcomed here.

More precisely, perhaps some help is to be had from philosophy, the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead and his successors in a philosophy of organism or process. I do not wish to claim that the whole system can be easily converted into an exposition of Christian faith. I simply want to examine one concept that has been thrown up by the 'process' approach and see if it can offer any enlightenment to Christian faith for its self-understanding, its claim that God is at work in the world bringing his purpose to fruition. This concept is the concept of 'persuasion'.

Let me admit right away that the word 'persuasion' is ambiguous, wearing some very nasty clothes. Indeed it could be argued that the primary association of 'persuasion' is for many of us so unpleasant as to disqualify it at once for our purpose: the totalitarian torturer extracting confessions from his victims, the propaganda which vetoes critical reasoning to impose ideologically correct views and attitudes, Mark Anthony's speech after the death of Julius Caesar, the mines of gold invested daily in advertising, the 'hidden persuaders' of our society. In a word (or rather two words): psychological manipulation. The presence of such associations creates an immediate barrier to our even considering the term 'persuasion' in a more helpful sense.

Curiously enough, it is to Plato that Whitehead traces his 'good' sense of the term 'persuasion', but it is also Plato, who long, long ago exposed in devastating fashion the 'bad' sense. One of the dialogues (Gorgias) is devoted to a diatribe against 'Rhetoric', a base practice, not an art but a habitude of producing a kind of gratitude or pleasure, leading to belief, not knowledge, its substance being summed up in the name of 'flattery', the counterpart of cookery in the soul! Now rhetoric is the ability to 'persuade with speeches', persuasion is its crown. 'Priceless is the word that can convince the judges in court, or the senators in council, or the

citizens in the assembly. If you have the power of persuasion, you will have the physician your slave, and the money-maker to whom you talk will be found to gather treasures, not for himself, but for you who are able to speak and persuade multitudes'. A power, in other words, to enslave rather than liberate, to brain-wash rather than instruct.

So far, this is clearly not promising as the start of an exploration into the possible application of the power of persuasion to the power of God. But this is not the only sense in which Plato uses the word 'persuasion'. There is another usage, and this is the one which Whitehead latched on to. In the *Timaeus* the origin of the cosmos is described—and fascinating if strange reading much of it makes now—but the following passage appears: "For indeed the generation of this our world came about from a combination of necessity with understanding, but understanding overruled necessity by persuading her to conduct the most part of the effects to the best issue; thus, then, and on this wise was this universe compacted in the beginning *by the victory of reasonable persuasion over necessity. . . .*"

In interpreting these unusual phrases, I rely on A. E. Taylor (not because he taught at Edinburgh but because of the authority of his magisterial commentary). He explains that 'necessity' here *(anagke)* is neither the irrational nor that which does not conform to law. (It is the underworkman of Mind *[nous]* in the creation of a good world.) Rather 'necessity' refers to given facts, brute facts the reason for which we cannot see but which nevertheless are responsive to intelligent purpose: *nous* persuades *anagke*. The fact that *nous* is successful in persuading *anagke* 'in the majority of cases' is 'inferred from the growing discovery of rational connexion, as sciences advances. Where at first we began by seeing only "conjunction", to use Hume's famous antithesis, and from nothing else'. Perhaps then, Plato's haunting phrase, 'the victory of reasonable persuasion over necessity', can legitimately be understood as the drawing out of intelligent purpose from bare fact, the creation of the world not by force or fiat but by response to intelligent purpose. Here, then, 'persuasion' is not a device or trick of rhetoric, as it was in the former illustration from Plato. Here it is eminently and essentially reasonable, that by which reason (mind, understanding) by itself commends itself to and uses as an accessory that which appears to be without purpose (e.g., all in nature for which a purpose cannot be discerned) but is nevertheless responsive to it.

Obscure this may be, belonging to a metaphysical framework which has long been abandoned, yet it has all come to the surface

again in the 20th century with the thought of A. N. Whitehead. No one I know of was more opposed to or offended by the model of divine power referred to earlier as that of emperor/dictator. It was an affront to everything he understood by God. (Incidentally, I'm sure there is a far larger chunk of specifically Christian intuition than appears on the surface). In an attempt to find an alternative, he latched on to Plato's term 'persuasion', developing it in his own way such that his one-time assistant, Charles Hartshorne, could call his achievement, 'one of the greatest of all metaphysical discoveries, largely to be credited to Whitehead himself'.

His most extended treatment of the notion is to be found in his late work *Adventures of Ideas,* in particular in the Chapter entitled "From Force to Persuasion". Here he deals with 'persuasion' as power not so much from the perspective of divine power as in terms of 'what makes people change?'. Here he discusses the development of civilization and focusses on the importance of what he calls 'persuasive agencies' over against 'force'. By force, he means war, slavery, governmental compulsion; by 'persuasive agencies' he means such things as family affections, intellectual curiosity and what he calls 'commerce' (which for him is not just trade and the management of currency but all that promotes the meeting of different groups with different modes of thought). He is prepared to offer broad, bold generalisations from the history of civilization, and in his conclusions indicates his debt to Plato:

> The creation of the world—said Plato—is the victory of persuasion over force. The worth of men consists in their liability to persuasion. They can persuade and be persuaded by the disclosure of alternatives, the better and the worse. Civilization is the maintenance of social order, by its own inherent persuasiveness as embodying the nobler alternative. The recourse to force, however unavoidable, is a disclosure of the failure of a civilization, either in the general society or in a remnant of individuals. Thus in a live civilization there is always an element of unrest. For sensitiveness to ideas means curiosity, adventure, change. Civilized order survives on its merits, and is transformed by its power of recognising its imperfections. . . . Insofar as the area of reasonable persuasion widens, an environment has been provided within which the higher mental activities and the subtler feelings can find their use and enjoyment.

His underlying motive here is indicated by his contention that 'widespread reliance on persuasion produces its reward in the shape of an upward evolution'. His conclusion is that four factors have been decisive in the fate of social groups: 1) the need for some transcendent aim; 2) the iron compulsion of nature that the necessities of food, clothing, shelter be provided; 3) the compulsory dominion of men over men (people over people)—good if it secures coordination of behaviour for social welfare, but fatal if

extended beyond what is necessary for this co-ordination; and 4) the way of persuasion.

'Amidst all the activities of mankind there are three which chiefly have promoted this last factor in human life'. These are the kinds I have already mentioned: 'Family affections aroused in sex relations and in the nurture of children, intellectual curiosity . . . and the practice of commerce'. 'But,' he cites now, 'beyond these special activities a greater bond of sympathy has arisen in virtue of which nature harbours ideal ends, and produces individuals capable of conscious discrimination of such ends. This reverence is the respect of man for man. It thereby secures that liberty of thought and action required for the upward adventure of life on this Earth'.

These extracts must already have revealed much to you about Whitehead: his speculative boldness, his liberalism and optimism, his confidence in nature, man and the power of ideas. 'Persuasion' here is always an alternative to 'force'. It is the agency whereby ideas are transmitted by reasonable presentation to reasonable reception. There is no hint of recognition of the pejorative sense we saw in Plato, the 'crown of rhetoric'. Here, it is reasonable through and through.

Later on in *Adventures of Ideas* 'persuasion' as power in the development of civilization is extended to power with God. Plato's contribution had been to conceive of the divine element in the world as a persuasive agency and not as a co-ercive agency. The agency whereby ideals are effective in the world and forms of order evolve. Christianity, however, is the revelation in act of what Plato divined in theory. I quote:

> The essence of Christianity is the appeal to the life of Christ as a revelation of the nature of God and his agency in the world. The record is fragmentary, inconsistent and uncertain. . . . [Yet] there can be no doubt as to what elements in the records have evoked a response from all that is best in human nature. The Mother, the child, and the bare manger: the lowly man, homeless and self-forgetful, with his message of peace, love and sympathy; the suffering, the agony, the tender words as life ebbed, the final despair: and the whole with authority of supreme victory.

Some of you may find that sentimental, New Testament scholars will find it hopelessly simplistic: but you must admit it is beautifully put. And it does make the claim that Christianity has discovered in fact and not just in theory, that the agency of God in the world is not that of co-ercion but of persuasion.

In his Gifford Lectures, published as *Process and Reality*, Whitehead does not deal explicitly with the concept of 'persuasion'. But it or something like it is surely there all the same. Introducing his final chapter, "God and the World", he contrasts three notions of

God with a fourth. The three are God in the image of an emperor (the divine Caesars), God as the personification of moral energy (the Hebrew prophets), and God as an ultimate philosophical principle (Aristotle). As for the fourth:

> There is, however, in the Galilean origin of Christianity yet another suggestion which does not fit very well with any of the three main strands of thought. It does not emphasise the ruling Caesar or the ruthless moralist or the unmoved mover. It dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love; and it finds purpose in the present immediacy of a kingdom not of this world. Love neither rules, nor is it unmoved; also, it is a little oblivious to morals. It does not look to the future; for it finds its own reward in the immediate present.

Early Church historians might well want to query the accuracy of Whitehead's 'another suggestion'. Theologians of hope and liberation would certainly have real questions as to his implied interpretation of the immediacy of 'kingdom of God'. But there can be little doubt that what he here refers to simply as 'love' is what he was later to develop more precisely as 'persuasion'. In this sense, too, we can understand his references in the same chapter to conceiving the growth of God's nature as that of 'a tender care that nothing be lost'. Or again:

> God's role is not the combat of productive force with productive force, of destructive force with destructive force; it lies in the patient operation of the overpowering rationality of his conceptual harmonisation. He does not create the world, he saves it: or, more accurately, he is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty and goodness.

I have already quoted too much Whitehead, but perhaps you will allow one further quotation from the same source, when he speaks of the 'love of God for the world'. It is:

> the particular providence for particular occasions. What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world. In this sense, God is the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands.

For Whitehead, then, 'reasonable persuasion' is the power effective to cultivate and raise civilizations, and is this same power by which God influences the world without overriding the freedom of the world's human and non-human creatures. He influences us because relating himself to everything that happens and experiencing, receiving into himself, everything that happens, he continually, unceasingly attracts, inspires. We are influenced by him because we can respond to him, 'prehend' him (not necessarily consciously, more likely unconsciously). Charles Hartshorne puts it thus:

God's influence is supreme because he is the supreme actuality, supremely beautiful and attractive. . . . There is no power anywhere, on earth or in heaven, except the direct or indirect workings of attractiveness ['persuasion']. We have power over other men's minds through the value they find in our thoughts and feelings. . . . the direct influence of God is analogous only to the direct power of thought over thought and of feeling over feeling, and this is the power of inspiration and suggestion. It could not possibly suppress all freedom in the recipient, since a minimum of response on his part is presupposed. It is not that God 'makes' us to be what we are—these are mere words with vague or inconsistent meanings—it is rather that we make ourselves, utilising his beauty as inspiration.

Hartshorne follows Whitehead closely, but not slavishly (indeed a great deal of current 'process' writing is concerned with their differences), and has more to say on the working of God's power on the world. God is indeed 'the worship he inspires', an intrinsic beauty of attractiveness ever present to all occasions. God is responsible for cosmic order, not in the sense that one system of order is 'set,' as it were, in the beginning, but rather that order in the cosmos is constantly maintained and re-newed. In detail, he presents to each creature his own idea of what the role of that creature should be. More than that, God makes permanent use of whatever happens in the world—by experiencing it, receiving it 'into himself, and making it available for a richer, more complex, more intense synthesis'. The concrete example he gives concerns the influence of God on men's minds. A mind is changed by what it knows, by the objects of its awareness (and Hartshorne's claim is that he is just that); then to change our minds or alter us he only has to alter himself, thereby altering our awareness. As the object of our awareness changes, we change in response, not automatically, but in free response. If freedom is involved, then so, of course, is risk—risk that a response less than the ideal will be made. But such is God's constancy (never to stop offering himself as object of our awarness) and such is the range of possibilities God offers us in each occasion, there is no risk that he will abandon us, and so bring the process in which both he and we are involved, to a halt.

Let me try to sum up now briefly the salient features of this power of 'persuasion' I have been trying to outline:

1. It is the opposite of force. It works through the free response of creatures who are attracted (not necessarily consciously) by the way God presents himself, with his ideal aim for each occasion, to them.

2. It involves opportunities and risks, but not guarantees. God takes the risk, by allowing the creature a measure of freedom, that the ideal aim will not be actualised; in other words he takes the

risk that his immediate purpose will be frustrated. 'Immediate' purpose, but not long-term purpose, because he is able to adapt himself to every situation to present opportunities to the creature of responding anew. To put it differently God so orders the cosmos that there is something like a built-in directionality which appeals, attracts, 'lures', 'persuades', which allows mistakes to be made, even evil (the condition of freedom), but yet never is withdrawn or lets the situation or process get finally out of hand.

3. The goal towards which this power of persuasion is directed is not some final achievement after which one could put a full stop. It is rather the bringing into harmony, the achievement of beauty, of the increasingly complex elements of the cosmos ever engaged in the on-going creative process. The making of harmony out of diverse, even disparate occasions, intensity of feeling making the most of available opportunities, the introduction of novelty to ensure the creative advance, and the enrichment of the divine life by God's experiencing and in himself preserving everything that happens, including the series of events that is me— these are the terms in which the goal of persuasive power is to be conceived.

4. The power of persuasion is social power. It pre-supposes mutuality of response between two or more agents. One-sided fiat, decree, command automatically enforced—these are ruled out. Mutuality is of the essence.

5. The power of persuasion is not limited to human agents capable of making conscious responses. It extends to all entities, animate and inanimate. This point is, at first hearing, odd. How can an inanimate entity be meaningfully said to be capable of a 'free response'? It does not mean that something—like this desk—makes a free response to the divine initiative. Rather, what is claimed is that the atoms which make up this desk *do* respond to stimuli, and this response is neither totally determined nor totally random. The number of possibilities open to each atom is not limitless—obviously, but neither is it reduced to one (determinism). This is important, because if God's persuasive power does extend to everything that is, we can meaningfully affirm that his purpose does also: that it is not confined to humanity.

6. The appeal of divine persuasion is not to fear, hope of reward, obedience as such: It is to sensitiveness—both to the existing facts and to the ideal possibility within the whole range of possibilities; in the case of human agents, it is to imagination, to seek out the best possibility, including new possibilities not actualized before; to reliance on the dependability, and the free-

dom-allowing constancy of God; it is, in a word, to contributing responsively to the process of creation in which God and we and the whole cosmos are engaged.

Now to return—after an over-lengthy absence, you may well think—to the doctrine of Providence. What sort of picture emerges if we apply the notion of God's power as the power of 'persuasion' here? Clearly, it would mean abandoning for good the notion of a divine super-plan governing every detail of life and existence. 'Persuasion' leaves too much room for creaturely freedom and spontaneity for that. But does any-one really want to preserve the idea of a such a divine plan any-way? Would not the evil we can, or could if we wanted to, see so evident in our world (if not in ourselves) be overwhelming evidence against such a plan? Or else a decisive indictment against the character of God, if he did plan it all?

To do away with the idea of a divine plan does not, however, mean doing away with purpose. On the contrary, the divine per-suasion presupposes it. Philosophical speculation and analysis such as Whitehead and Hartshorne engage in can give some delineation of this purpose. As I have indicated, it is conceived in terms of bringing into harmony the increasingly complex ele-ments of the cosmos engaged in the on-going creative process. Yet there is surely no reason why Christian faith could not take this framework and, in the context of the experience of the Christian community, fill it out with dynamic content. More bluntly, and biblically, God's love, love for his creation, love in which he wants his creatures to share; love not as a sentimental make-believe or some noble ideal, but love as it has been defined, let loose in the world, in a life lived, incarnated in Jesus Christ. And if this is the purpose—that Christ shall be all in all—then surely 'persuasion' is a much more fitting, appropriate and credi-ble agent than force.

Nor does the abandonment of the idea of a detailed plan being followed out in every particular imply that God's power to pursue his purpose is illusory. It has been objected that this notion of persuasive power is all right as far as God is concerned but too weak as far as the world and the creatures are concerned. Lewis Ford has answered this objection by pointing out that for White-head at least, 'the love in the world passes into the love in heaven and floods back into the world, God is the fellow sufferer who understands'. A more explicitly Christian expression of this is surely to recognize that the divine power is, strangely, nowhere more evident than on the Cross, as the suffering love of God in Christ for his creatures. A decisive difference in the situation has

in Christian perspective been brought about by God. The assurance that belief in Providence has and ought to supply and which is advanced rather than retarded by thinking of God's power as persuasive, not co-ercive, receives its classical biblical expression not in the Joseph story but in St. Paul (for obvious reasons I eschew the A. V. translation): 'For I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life—nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'.

Is such an approach to Providence, which understands the way God works his will as the way of persuasion—is such an approach adequate to the starker realities in the midst of which it is our lot to live? Has it any empirical cash value in terms of actions and attitudes? Has it any relevance to the social, economic and political problems which are realistically involved in any genuine fight for justice, and its handmaid, equality? Is it not, rather, all too speculative? These are not rhetorical questions, and I for one am sensitive to them. Has such thought as I have tried to outline any realistic contribution to make to the human scene beyond possible intellectual satisfaction? I can only answer for myself: I believe it does, as far as my faith is concerned, faithfully re-inforce my belief in the divine Providence in such a way as to encourage me (i.e., give me courage) to face up to it and, if I can say so without impiety, 'take it seriously'. There is no moment when God is not concerned with me, relating himself to me, encouraging me, persuading me by the opportunities he offers.

More generally, if the ultimate power touching the lives of the human community and the whole community of nature is indeed that of reasonable persuasion—with sensitivity, compassion, receptivity, adaptability, constancy major virtues—then it cannot but have a decisive bearing on our assessment of immediate personal and social ends *and* means (in government, for instance, or education or justice). This is not to claim, à la Tolstoy, that force can be dispensed with or indeed, where justice ('love' at a distance, as it has been called) is concerned, a fight. It cannot be dispensed with, not in our world. But it need not be worshipped, or sought after as the key to power. The power of persuasion, as ultimate, can and does stand over it, relativising it, exposing it as second-best. Unlike force, it is entirely consistent with the acknowledgement and worship of God as love. And, if we care to, we may let it enable us to confess with greater resolution, with Augustine and the tradition: 'Thou hast made us for thyself *(ad te)* and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee'.

Kierkegaard on the Theological Ethics of Love

by Gary Starr Bowen
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When *Works of Love* was published in 1847, the human prime mover of Kierkegaard's creative surge, Regina Olsen, was now married. She did not bear the name of Kierkegaard; she had become instead Regina Schlegel. For the suffering, melancholic author, if his love was not to become the property of the absurd, it had to be transformed from the giddiness of pure passion to something which could bear the prospect of permanent separation. When he had written *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling* there was at least some conceivability that he who in faith had undergone the "double movement of infinity" would be rewarded by the return of the beloved, if not in erotic love, then perhaps in some mutual pact of committed platonic love. (Kierkegaard would not have called it "platonic"!)

It is characteristically "Kierkegaardian" that he was not content merely to make sense of his own experience as he struggled to remain true to his concept of eternal love. Rather on the grounds of his own struggle, his own battle with despair, and his own consciousness of the power of faith, he had the courage to describe for the world the essence of what it is to love. This theme had been present since his earliest writings following the break with Regina. But then he had couched his assertions in the oblique philosophy of a pseudonym. Now he wrote directly, and autographed his subjective truth even though it was apparent (to the *Corsair* at least) that the grounds of his ethics was not philosophy after all, but rather his own experience.

For this audacious subjectivity Kierkegaard is called an "existentialist." But for this same subjectivity—that faith, not history or philosophy, can be the only basis for living and loving as a Christian—he would have been more aptly termed an "apostle."

In these few pages I shall attempt a sketchy characterization of what Kierkegaard says about love. This characterization will be based primarily upon categories found in *Works of Love,* with some illustrations from *Fear and Trembling* and *Philosophical Fragments.* Properly, *Works of Love* is not about love, but rather about love's *works.* As Kierkegaard says, "That which in its vast abundance is essentially inexhaustible . . . essentially cannot be described."[1] Nevertheless it may be indescribably possible to inadequately describe what Søren Kierkegaard says about the indescribable!

I. *God:*   ". . . God will therefore appear in the form of a servant."

In *Philosophical Fragments* K. speaks indirectly about God, leading the reader to an understanding of a God who goes beyond the "Socratic" relationship between men. This is to say that God, the Teacher, imparts the truth to men by revealing himself to them. God can only do this by becoming man's equal, by suffering all that men experience as one among them. In the description of "the king who loved a maiden" (32 ff.) K. relates the intense passion of the king who experienced a "kingly grief" that the maiden would not be able to understand him and his love because she was so remotely removed from his power and splendor. Here the "omnipotence of love" is described as such that it is not content with omnipotence over the universe, but "is constrained by love" to become man's Saviour, because of which man, not being able to understand love as God understands love, may take offence and not benefit. Because of this offence, love suffers, and "the love which gives all is itself in want."

"The king who loved the maiden" is, of course, the story of the Incarnation of God in Christ, not only revealing himself as the Teacher, the Truth, but also as the ground of faith and love. Although K. does not state it explicitly, it is apparent that God's love in the Incarnation is the paradigm for Christian loving. It is the revelation of a God who in essence is love, and who is able to require a "like-for-like" response of love from men. Central for K. in the Incarnation is the principle that "love does not alter the beloved, it alters itself." This is the kind of love that God showed to the world, and the kind of love that God requires of man toward his neighbor. God's omnipotence is overshadowed by his desire to love. In the same way man's selfishness, pride, education, culture, and will-to-power must be subjected to the "royal law" that man must love his neighbor.

Because of this Absolute Paradox, that God has become man, the individual stands in a new relationship to God, and the "absolute unlikeness" of man to God is abolished by the "absolute likeness" of God to man. Therefore, the individual owes everything to God in his relations with others.[2] The individual, that is, who has the audacity and the courage to profess *faith.*

God, then, becomes the third party to every relationship of man. Love, then, becomes not a relationship between two, but between three:

> However beautiful the love-relationship has been between two or more people, however complete all their enjoyment and all their bliss in mutual devotion and affection have been for them, even if all men have praised this relationship—if God and the relationship to God have been left out, then

Christianly understood, this has not been love but a mutual and enchanting illusion of love.[3]

"The eternal" is the category by which God's presence and God's demand in human love are illustrated. "Love," K. says, "must form a heart in the eternal sense."[4] The eternal is bound to the temporal by love, which has both temporal and eternal expression and validity. As such, man is never permitted to take love lightly, for it has an eternal dimension which cannot be escaped or diminished by temporal, worldly limitations. The eternal is the category by which K. focusses the commandment to love upon man's earthly relationship. In any relationship of love, Love (i.e., *God himself*) is the aforementioned "third term" and eternal Reality. "Love," therefore, Kierkegaard is bold enough to say, "is God."[5]

II. *Faith:* "The highest passion is faith."

Upon K.'s breaking of his engagement with Regina, he had written in *Repetition* about the "double movement of infinity" whereby a man must let go of worldly assurances and hopes in order to gain the radically different assurance of faith. It is evident that K.'s ideas about faith were from his earliest writings intimately related to his ideas about love. It was his earthly love for Regina that must be relinquished in order to gain the love of the eternal. This theme is further developed in *Fear and Trembling*. It is Abraham's obedience to the will of God and his higher love for God which forces a "teleological suspension of the ethical" in giving up (being willing to sacrifice) Isaac. K. asserts that the "knight of faith" must subject human love to divine love. This is the "paradox" which gives Isaac back to Abraham, which no thought can master, because "faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off."[6]

Fear and Trembling illustrates this interrelationship of faith and love by a similar poetic exegesis of the story of Tobias and Sarah in the *Book of Tobit*. An infinite faith and courage was required of Sarah in order to consummate her love with Tobias, knowing that the act of her love might well be the occasion by which Tobias would die, due to the jealous spirit which possessed her and had killed seven previous lovers. But the faith which enabled the two to consummate their marriage despite the impending death and sorrow became the dynamic which restored love to them both. For K. the will to love as a Christian must be preceded by the will to believe as a Christian. Repeatedly, he asserts that having been given the "condition" for faith, one must "believe in love," which is an act of will. "Faith [itself] is not an act of will; for all human volition has its capacity within the scope of an underlying condition."[7] But *belief* is

an act of will, insofar as it is not a form of knowledge, yet relates to specific objective assertions. "When faith resolves to believe it runs the risk of committing itself to an error, but it nevertheless believes. There is no other road to faith."[8] Hence, having been given by grace the condition for *faith,* the individual must risk *belief* in certain things related to faith, even though such belief is grounded not upon knowledge but rather upon will. Resting faithfully within this paradox of faith and reason the individual is urged to believe in love, even though there is no *objective* assurance either of the eternal love of God, nor of the temporal love of the beloved. The courage to love in risk, undergirded by faith, is for K. epitomized in the story of Tobias and Sarah.

For K. love seems to have a faith of its own. In exegeting the assertion of St. Paul that "love believes all things" (I Cor. 13:7), K. defines the hopefulness of Christianity against skepticism and empiricism. Love based on knowledge is infinitely detached, and therefore not love. "The individual first of all begins his life with *ergo,* with faith . . . believing on the basis of knowledge (a clear contradiction) [men] are assured against error—which would be faith with reservations (a new contradiction)."[9] In this relation to faith, love sustains the paradox whereby it "believes all things and yet is never deceived." "To believe the good is indeed no error; one rather errs therefore by not doing it . . . But to believe everything and thereby, as it were, to throw oneself away, fair game for all deception and all deceivers, and yet precisely in this way to assure oneself infinitely against every deception: this is remarkable!"[10] More terrible is believing nothing at all, for the only real deception is the abandonment of love. This paradox is related to K.'s "double movement of infinity," which he had made clear in *Repetition* but in *Works of Love* developed in a more Christian and practical form.

III. *Erotic Love and Friendship:* "For no one has escaped from love or ever will so long as there be beauty and eyes to see with."

K. states in *Philosophical Fragments* that "man lives an undisturbed and self-centred life, until there awakens in him the paradox of self-love, in the form of love for another, the object of his longing."[11] For K., self-love and erotic love/friendship are really the same thing, and self-love is really the "ground," or perhaps more appropriately, the beginning, of Christian love.

> Self-love lies as the ground for all love or else is the ground in which all love perishes; therefore if we conceive a religion of love, the religion need make but one assertion . . . the condition that man loves himself.[12]

But for self-love to be transformed into Christian love, it "must will its own downfall," another paradox in which the lover "scarcely recognizes himself." In this transformation, self-love is "taken captive" and becomes "love of self," which is quite different in that it acknowledges man's identity as a "self" *in relation to God.*

Due to the temporal nature of erotic love and friendship, they are to be described at best, aesthetically. Hence, "the praise of erotic love and friendship belong to paganism, as does the poet." K. makes the distinction between the sense in which paganism and the poet define love, and the sense of the eternal by which Christianity (i.e., the New Testament) demands it: ". . . in the whole of the New Testament there is not found a word about love in the sense in which the poet sings of it and paganism defined it."[13] Christianity is set over against the aesthetic in that the former makes strenuous and unconditional demands upon that which the poets of paganism have praised as erotic love and friendship. K.'s use of "the poet" in relation to erotic love and friendship is also to be compared to the activity of the priest of Christendom who performs marriages of persons who "swear by their love, not by the eternal." Love in this inadequately grounded ceremony is based, usually, upon "spontaneous" passion which is not yet the love of the New Testament, and is really only *self-love in disguise.*

The main reason that self-love in its guise of erotic love and friendship is not the love of the eternal is that it does not have the ability to abolish itself if demanded to do so by the object of its love. Although it can make great sacrifices *for* the beloved, it cannot will its *own* demise. And because this love has not a solid relationship with the eternal, it can *change.* The main criterion for adequate love of self is its *primary devotion to God. "A person may only love himself [truly] if he loves God, and he may only love another [truly] if he truly loves himself.*"[14] It follows from this that "a man dare not belong to another human being in such a way that he is everything to the other."[15] K.'s repeated insistence upon this ethic may be in part a significant clue to his rationale for breaking his engagement with Regina. It is *also* an existentially grounded contribution to a theology of *Christian marriage.*

IV. *Love of Neighbor:* "Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love eternally secure."

Kierkegaard held in *Fear and Trembling* that there is such a thing as an absolute duty toward God. In contrast to the Kantian notion that one's duty to one's neighbor becomes a duty to God by being "referred" to God, K. maintained that, if this were so, there

was really no duty to God, and "duty to God" had become a tautology for "duty."[16] But when the individual stands in an absolute relation to God, then *duty to God is supra-ethical*, and may in fact entail the opposite action towards one's neighbor from that dictated by the "universal" and formal considerations of ethics. However, this absolute duty to God does not abolish the duty to one's neighbor; on the contrary, *since* the individual stands in absolute relation to God and has an absolute duty to God, he now has an *absolute duty to* his *neighbor*. K. obviously thought that Kant had the cart before the horse, and that Hegel had continued in this inversion of priorities.

The spontaneous, romantic, aesthetic, erotic love so often described in poetry, drama, and praised in modern culture can only become true, eternal love by being *transformed through faith* into that love which is contained in the "royal law," that man is to love his neighbor. Love in this sense is not a given, a gift, a happy fortune but purely and simply *obedience* to the commandment of God. This command is radical, in that it does not even ask the question of man's ability to love his neighbor without making distinctions. It is rather *God's responsibility to provide* the ability, while it is *man's responsibility to do* the work of love, to perform the duty which is demanded in the absolute relation of the individual to the Absolute. If a man is not willing to *respond* to this duty, then he is a victim of self-love which destroys true love, and he is —recognized or not—in despair.

If anyone should ask, "Who is my neighbor?" the answer is given simply in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which K. exegetes thus: "By recognizing your duty you easily discover who your neighbor is . . . He toward whom I have a duty is my neighbor, and when I fulfill my duty I prove that I am a neighbor."[17] The neighbor is he who dwells nearer than anyone else, because he is the true duplication of one's own self when one understands the self in relation to God. Loving the neighbor means forsaking self-love completely.

The commandment to love is so offensive to man that on the surface it appears to be a contradiction, a paradox. For this reason, K. exclaims that such a commandment could not have originated in any human heart, but bears out the witness of the apostle Paul that "all things are made new" (II Cor. 5:17). This obligation to love is an "alternation by the eternal."

But the test of *time* is that which shows erotic love and friendship to be merely happy passions. Unless love is grounded in the eternal, unless it has become love of neighbor, unless it has become duty, it is limited temporally and it can therefore change.

Only when both human parties in a relationship acknowledge their *interdependence upon God* has human love become like sterling silver, not subject to testing because it is known to last. Neither is such a love allowed to be exclusive, for then it reverts to self-love. The love which is acknowledged as duty by definition *includes* loving those *outside* the relationship, and so is open to others at the same time as it is a manifestation of the inwardness of faith. To be sure, a man does not love his wife or his friend in the same way as he loves his neighbor, but this is not an *essential* difference:

> The person who does not pay attention to the fact that his wife is for *him* the *neighbor* and only *then* his *wife*, never comes to love his neighbor, no matter how many people he loves, for he has made exception of his wife. This exception he will love all too intensely throughout his whole life or all too passionately, and then all too cooly.[18]

The commandment to love covers both the neighbor seen and *unseen*. K. makes many references to love for the poor which goes farther in terms of human compassion and "mercifulness" than material charity. He also shows national pride to be merely self-love expanded into a group self-love. Although he states that it is not really necessary for the neighbor to be present in order for the Christian to love him, "the most dangerous of all escapes as far as love is concerned is wanting to love only the unseen."[19] Love for those we *see,* whom our lives touch, is the most demanding task. It demands "the closed eye of forbearance and gentleness, the closed eye which does not see defects and imperfections."[20] Love is able to love *without altering* the beloved, continues to love when the beloved is *changed* for the worse, even when the beloved hates the lover. It is *ready with forgiveness* before the beloved is ready to ask it, consummates a *reconciliation even though* the beloved may continue to be temporally *estranged.* (This is K.'s final solution in his relationship with Regina.) The paradigm for this eternal love is Christ's love for Peter in and during his denial, his inconsistency, his sin. Love, K. emphasizes, "covers a multitude of sins." Its eternal dimension cannot be sabotaged or limited.

Kiekegaard sums up his "Christian reflections" with reference to the apostle John. Although he puts words into the apostle's mouth, he points poetically to the very essence of the Christian gospel, in which the law of love is the only genuine ethic:

> It is as if the apostle said, "Dear me, what is all this which would hinder you from loving; what is all this which you can win by self-love; the commandment is that you shall love, but *when you understand life and yourself,* then *it is as if you should not need to be commanded,* because to love human beings is still the only thing worth living for; without this love you really do not live; to love human beings is also the only salutary consolation for both time and eternity, and to love human beings is the only true sign that you are *a Christian.*"[21]

Evaluation: Søren Kierkegaard, the Poet and the Apostle

In Kierkegaard's earlier works (e.g., *Fear and Trembling*) "the poet" is Kierkegaard's alter ego, who at least in the view of the pseudonymic author, cannot quite make the leap of faith. The poet is the master of the aesthetic, the pundit of the glittering vices of paganism. In *Works of Love* the poet is also identified with the priest who performs marriages, but who cannot bear the idea that true marriage can last *only if,* in the eternal sense, love becomes *duty.* In this work, Kierkegaard seems to have existentially "gone beyond" the poet in describing the ethics of Christianity. In the chapter entitled, "The Duty of Love in Praising Love," he refers to the *evangelistic task* of the "apostle": "Praising love has the purpose of winning men to it." On the grounds of more evidence than this paper allows, it might be argued that by the time Kierkegaard wrote *Works of Love* his maturity demanded a new alter ego, no longer the poet, but now the apostle.

This evangelistic sense is, however, far removed from any "quick and easy" conception of evangelism. The offense of Christianity must in no case be removed, and the *scandalon of "strenuous" Christian love* must be acknowledged as present whenever the *gospel* is preached. This emphasis is in sharp contrast to the easy, cultural assimilation of counterfeit love into the praxis of "Christendom" in his day. And the hard doctrine that Christian love, modeled upon the like-for-like paradigm of the Incarnation, must entertain no essential distinction between love for neighbor and love for the beloved, is still a prophetic witness in the twentieth century.

In light of the above, it is ironic that Kierkegaard most likely received some of his greatest edification about Christian love, as it is presented in *Works of Love,* not from "the apostle," but from "the poet"! We know from K.'s journals that he read Shakespeare constantly. Shakespeare's sonnets of course, are prime examples of romantic self-love, in Kierkegaard's terms. But many of Shakespeare's plays have themes of love which go far beyond the aesthetics of paganism. In *The Tempest,* for example, Prospero, the wronged Duke of Milan, after exercising great powers of sorcery in summoning his enemies to his island of exile, forgives them, dismisses his spirit-slaves, and in the Epilogue throws his fate back into the hands of those who had done him wrong. This might be described when "Christianized" as a "double movement of infinity," "renunciation," or "eternal reconciliation." More descriptively, one can find in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* many of the dynamics whereby erotic love and friendship are changed to "the duty to

love one's neighbor." The plot is too complex to describe here, but a reading of this play in comparison with *Works of Love* cannot help but illustrate the many similar themes common to Shakespeare and Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's interpolation of Plato, Shakespeare, and other diverse "pagan" authors shows the remarkable genius of his theological acumen, the more so because he remains adamant about the "absolute" nature and demand of Christianity.

There is an inherent dialectical movement apparently presented in *Works of Love* which may be briefly described here. The individual loves *himself,* and that is the primary assumption of Christianity. Eventually that thesis is contradicted by a *spontaneous* love *for another,* for which the individual might even be willing to sacrifice himself. But this thesis is contradicted when it appears that the spontaneous love is really only love for oneself, self-love in disguise, since this eros/philia is dependent upon what the beloved *does for the self.* Only when the love for oneself is totally relinquished, and wills to abolish itself (i.e., *give up* the love for the beloved if so demanded by love) is a synthesis possible. The synthesis occurs when the love for the other stands in relation to the individual's *absolute relation to God,* and love becomes the "you shall" of the "royal law." Then the love is not dependent upon the requital of love, it *merely loves,* not demanding changes in the beloved. When the love becomes duty, there is no distinction placed between the beloved of eros and the neighbor, for the beloved is *primarily neighbor.* Finally, a further synthesis occurs when this duty of the commandment to love has been incorporated into the lifestyle of the lover undergirded by faith, and the love becomes *eternal,* not subject to change in this world or ever. This dialectic presupposes *faith* and *will* at every stage, and should the individual shirk ever in the decision-making process, he falls back into despair. But if he perseveres, he wins the eternal.

This dialectic of K. is radically different from the dialectic of Hegel, for there is *no necessity* involved in the process. As Martin Heineken has described Kierkegaard's view of ethics, "life is not a series of inevitable transitions but of discrete leaps of decision."[22]

In conclusion one cannot help but wonder whether the mature Kierkegaard would have regretted his decision to break his engagement with the woman he loved. Practically speaking, he had made his bed and must lie in it, and that existential necessity summoned all sorts of creative rationale for the rectitude of his decision and the hope for his future as a man alone in a very cruel world. One may surmise that at the time of his engagement to Regina he was conscious that they both loved each other *too* much

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in a worldly sense for the relationship to be truly dedicated to God, inclusive of others, etc. This dilemma is not uncommon among persons of "calling." As K. said, it is a terrible thing when lovers misunderstand one another, and have different understandings of what love is. No doubt Regina found it difficult to adopt K.'s understanding of what love *should be,* and since K. was himself so caught up in passion for her, he decided to break the engagement, hoping against hope that somehow there still could be a reconciliation in the temporal sense. Soon, however, it appeared that Regina's love was not as "eternal" as K's, for she married another, leaving K. with the concept of dread. But when *Works of Love* was published, Kierkegaard had apparently come to understand that the beginning of Christian love was self-love and that through faith it had the possibility of moving toward the love of the eternal. The faith which was essential as a catalyst in this movement was what Kierkegaard lacked when he broke his relationship with Regina, or more probably, he had not the will and the courage to exercise the faith. It seems to me that the mature Kierkegaard would not have *actually* performed the movement of infinite resignation which bereft him of Regina. He would have had the faith of the knight of faith that his *willingness* to give her up was sufficient, and he would have trusted in God for ability as a lover to "help the beloved to love God" so that eventually Regina might well have come to share his understanding of love.

ENDNOTES

1. *Works of Love,* Foreword.

2. *Philosophical Fragments,* p. 127.

3. *Works of Love,* p. 113.

4. *Ibid.,* p. 30.

5. *Ibid., p. 124.*

6. *Fear and Trembling,* p. 64.

7. *Philosophical Fragments,* p. 77.

8. *Ibid.,* p. 103.

9. *Works of Love,* p. 219.

10. *Ibid.,* p. 221.

11. *Philosophical Fragments,* p. 48.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Works of Love,* p. 59.

14. *Ibid.,* p. 113, emphasis mine.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Fear and Trembling,* p. 79.

17. *Woks of Love,* p. 38.

18. *Ibid.,* p. 142, emphasis mine.

19. *Ibid.,* p. 159.

20. Ibid.

21. *Ibid.,* p. 344, emphasis mine.

22. Martin Heineken, *A Handbook of Christian Theologians,* p. 129.

Children: The Blessed Burden*

by William H. Willimon
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A few days ago, a student came by to tell me that she would be taking a leave of absence because she was going to have a baby. Having rejoiced with her upon the occasion of her marriage, and having a high regard for her personal attributes, I now rejoiced with her at the gift of a child.

"I'm glad to hear you say that," she said, "since I was beginning to wonder if this were a gift or not."

When I asked her what she meant, she replied that a number of others had reacted to the news of her pregnancy with something less than joy. Some women seminarians had expressed disappointment that "a person with your talents is having to discontinue your career" as if she had betrayed them; a faculty member had urged her to arrange for child care as soon as possible so that she could quickly return to her studies "with a minimum of inconvenience"; and her apartment manager had notified her that she and her husband would be evicted when the baby arrived: "No pets or kids."

Though I ought to know better by now, I could not help being shocked that this future mother, at the announcement of the advent of a new person into the world, should encounter this response, especially from those who are engaged in the task of loving persons (to say nothing of the task of clear theological thinking).

Perhaps the experience of others has been different, but I have personally noted, as I have done pre-marital counseling in the past few years, a growing number of couples who consider parenthood a thoroughly optional aspect of marriage—an option which many can do without. When I ask them about their plans for children, I have received ambivalent responses, such as "we really haven't gotten into that question yet" or "definitely not anytime soon—we'll have to wait and see how our jobs turn out." There was also the twenty-five year old man who told me, after two years of marriage, that he was getting a vasectomy because, "Kids just don't fit into our career plans," to say nothing of the young couples who become parents but who within a matter of months, quickly dispose of their pre-school children in Day Care Centers or other child-care arrangements so they can continue to

* Portions of this article will appear in the Spring 1980 issue of *Religion in Life.*

pursue their careers with a single-mindedness which is unhindered by children.

A 1974 issue of *Esquire* asked, "Why do Americans suddenly hate kids?" Noting that the fertility rate was the lowest in our nation's history, that well over one million Americans are seeking voluntary sterilization each year, that the number of children for each married woman between the ages of 25-29 had declined from 2.3 children in 1967 to 1.8 children in 1973; an *Esquire* article by Gary Wills asked, "Are Young Americans *Afraid* to Have Kids?" Wills observed:

> . . . our culture is, especially in its younger married sector, afraid of and for children. The matter goes beyond mere statistics on declining births. Even those who have children do it tentatively now, as with a lab experiment that may blow up. They would be fools not to. . . . It would be wrong to dismiss the dips and rises of the birthrate as cyclic adjustments, rather than as part of a growing spiritual drama and dilemma.[1]

In 1971 Ellen Peck wrote *The Baby Trap*[2] and founded the National Organization for Non-Parents, an organization which continues to point out all of the economic, marital, and career risks of parenting.

These tendencies toward non-parenting are continuing into the 1980's. Between 1960 and 1976, the percentage of Americans under five years decreased from 11.3 percent of the total population to 7.1 percent. There were over one million less births in 1976 than in 1960. More Americans than ever are envisioning marital futures without children.

What disturbs me most in these apparent trends, particularly in this U.N. "Year of the Child," is the implicit assumption that procreation and parenting are thoroughly optional, even quite unnecessary appendages to marriage. From the beginning it was not so.

II

In the Service of Holy Matrimony of the old 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, when Cranmer listed the three functions for which marriage was "instituted of God in paradise in the time of man's innocency," the first reason was "the procreation of children to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and praise of God," followed by "to avoid fornication" and then "mutual society, help, and comfort." As a liturgiologist, I find it interesting that the new *Proposed Book of Common Prayer* now reorders the reasons for marriage:

> The union of husband and wife in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.[3]

Note that "the procreation of children" has, in this new service, taken a conspicuous back seat to "mutual joy" and "help and comfort," a commentary on contemporary views on marriage and parenting.

Along with Cranmer's Service of Holy Matrimony, as well as the Western Church's theological tradition, I would strongly argue, in the face of what I detect to be a devaluation of parenthood and a reordering of the priorities for marriage, that *procreation is the major purpose of marriage.* For marriage in general, this should be obvious. For *Christian* marriage, this is fundamental.

We are speaking here of the norm for marriage when we say that the "normal" Christian marriage includes openness to the possibility of the gift of children. This does not deny that there would be legitimate deviations from the norm. Like any norm, it tells us what is basic, the standard by which everything is judged. The normal linking of the possibility of parenthood with marriage can be defended from a purely biological standpoint, arguing the necessity of marriage, or something very much like marriage, as an ideal setting for the conception, birth and long-term nuture which the propagation of the race requires. While we human beings have a destiny which is something more than mere biological necessity, it is interesting how few ethicists today seem willing to take questions of biological function with any seriousness at all.

Or the point could be argued from a sociological point of view: the preservation and adaptation of a society is dependent upon men and women who give their highest priorities to the parenting of new members of the society. In *Marriage and Morals,* that grand old Socialist, Bertrand Russell, even went so far as to say:

> In a rational ethic, marriage would not count as such in the absence of children. A sterile marriage should be easily dissoluble, for it is through it alone that sexual relations become of importance to society, and worthy to be taken cognizance of by a legal institution.[4]

Russell had the good sense to see that marriage and parenting are social acts of the highest order. It is indeed curious to find among many who consider themselves to be social activists, indifference to the fundamental social questions which are raised by our current devaluation of the vocation of parent. It is not too much for a society to expect that normally, a seriousness about marriage will also involve a seriousness about parenthood.

Aside from the more mundane biological and sociological questions, for Christians, some of the most troubling questions surrounding this issue are theological. To assert that the norm for marriage is an openness to the possibility of children is to find

oneself in the midst of questions which have been thrust upon us since the advent of conception control. While previous generations had the option to limit their fertility, we are the first to possess so many easy ways not to bear children.

Roman Catholic moral theologians take a natural law stance on the question of conception control, noting various dangers of "unnatural" contraceptives, condemning most programs for planned parenthood and planned non-parenthood. Within this Roman Catholic tradition, norms are asserted (*e.g.*, marriage is for the procreation of children) and then casuists apply the norms to specific situations. Thus, among Roman Catholics and Anglicans, couples are allowed to project non-parenthood for what the moral theologians have called "serious reasons." The questions then revolve around such factors as: How serious are the reasons which are being given? Is this deviation from the norm warranted?

Generally, we Protestants have, of late, chosen to reject the official Roman Catholic naturalistic position in favor of what might be termed a more personalistic stance, rejecting the Roman position as too mechanistic in its application and too insensitive to the needs and responsibilities of individual couples to make careful, intentional decisions in regard to the bearing of children into the world. But the questions for us now are: Have we Protestants taken biological function, social responsibility, and theological stance seriously enough? Have we, in our reaction against what we perceive to be the rigidity of the Roman Catholic position on birth control, jettisoned some fundamental values?

A doctrinaire pro-parenthood or non-parenthood stance would be equally misguided. While the Old Testament does contain the Genesis command to "be fruitful and multiply" (which can only be taken as a general, eternal principle by denying its probable historical context), in the New Testament there is no necessity, no general command to procreate. Human beings have a dignity and worth whether they marry or not. Marriage has a dignity and necessity irrespective of whether marriage includes parenthood or not. To affirm that the theological norm for marriage is the openness to the possibility of children is not to deny that there may be legitimate deviations from the norm. There are marriages which are involuntarily childless, due to some physical or emotional problem which prevents childbearing. We must in no way imply that these childless marriages are less than marriage. I am even quite willing, on the basis of the church's tradition, to admit the possibility of marriages which voluntarily do not have children, making a conscious decision not to have children because of some reason which is judged to be of sufficient consequence as to

make the bearing of children into the world an undesirable or irresponsible, or even unfaithful act. We might make a further distinction between the temporary unwillingness to have children and the permanent unwillingness to have children. Young couples, for instance, may decide not to have a child until they are more mature or more secure financially, deciding, on the basis of their perception of a child's needs, to postpone the bearing of a child until they are better able to meet those needs.

A couple's decision permanently to refuse to bear children is undoubtedly a more serious situation than the decision temporarily to refuse to bear children. But the decision to refuse the office of parenthood, whether it be temporary or permanent refusal, is a decision which may have far-reaching consequences for that marriage and for society as a whole. It may also in some instances be an example of some rather unhealthy trends within our society. Could the decision, among a growing number of couples, to postpone or permanently to refuse the gift of a child be an addition to the growing body of evidence which convicts our current society of a hedonistic, narcissistic, self-centeredness—a self-centeredness which looks upon children simply as a worrisome bother which is best avoided?

III

To assert that Christian marriage normally involves the willingness to accept the office of parenthood is to link the marital relationship, as well as sex which is part of that relationship, to responsibility for the new life that is brought forth in that relationship. One reason that the church has traditionally maintained that sex is best when enjoyed within the context of a lifelong, permanent, exclusive, commitment to another person is that future parental responsibilities are best fulfilled within such a context. Conversely, one reason that the church has traditionally maintained that parenthood should be an intention of every marriage is that marriage is blessed by the responsibility, demands, sacrifice, joy, wisdom, and growth which children can bring to a marriage.

But it is unpopular to use words like "office," "sacrifice," and "responsibility" to describe marriage today. Most talk which I hear today about marriage is preoccupied with "relationships," "freedom," "self-fulfillment" and "joy." The long-standing Christian virtues of sacrifice, of vocation as a duty and gift, of self-giving love rather than self-seeking love are bound to have rough

going in a society which seeks (if Christopher Lasch is right) narcissistic self-gratification, which wants to be pleased rather than called, which so zealously guards its personal "freedom" that it carefully avoids messy entanglements with other human beings. Children, who are notoriously demanding, threatening, expensive (*Esquire's* 1974, pre-inflation, conception-through-college estimates were, $188,941 for boys, $200,691 for girls), time-consuming, and attached to their parents are best avoided by those who are suspicious of words like "sacrifice" and "responsibility."

Of course, marriage itself may well be avoided for precisely the same reasons. So a responsible pastor might respond to a couple who, on the eve of their marriage, say, "We want marriage but we don't want the responsibility of children": "I appreciate your honesty about your irresponsibility." The central problem for the couple would thereby be focused not so much on their misgivings about parenthood as on their misunderstandings of marriage.

The old Catholic moral theologians had it right. While they were willing to accept a temporary unwillingness to have children, they were suspicious of a permanent unwillingness to have children as a thinly veiled selfishness which spelled trouble for the marriage and for the individuals. While they were willing to recognize certain "serious reasons" as legitimate for such permanent refusal of parenthood, the moral theologians rejected all "frivolous reasons." A couple's desire for comfort, fear of responsibility, desire for a higher standard of living, or even goals of career advancement were deemed to be fundamentally frivolous.

Speaking of career advancement, I find it disheartening that many American women seem to be uncritically buying into the same profession-career infatuation which has always infected us American men. Willingness to forego family and parenthood, to offer up these vocations upon the altar of the almighty career, may be the unavoidable peril of living in a capitalist-consumeristic-materialistic society. But surely the Gospel says there is a higher definition of our worth than our careers. Am I longing for the "good old days" when we men could count on *women* to keep our preoccupation with occupation in proper perspective? (I am thinking now of the young woman who told me, as she waited on me at my neighborhood hardware store, that she and her husband had decided that "children are out of the question" because "we have our careers to think about.") Perhaps the time has now come when women *and* men need to remind one another of the relative importance and unimportance of our various vocations, again claiming parenthood as the vocation which deserves the best we have to give. Is there no end to our "frivolity"?

Even so noble a reason as overpopulation may be more frivolous than it first appears. In some parts of the world, overpopulation is a pressing reason to limit family size. This is not the case in our country. Our pressing problem may well be overconsumption, or a seemingly never-ending rise in individual expectations for all the material comforts of "the good life," but our problem is not overpopulation. Besides, if we have learned one thing in the past few years of efforts to reduce the world's birth rate, it is that birth control and contraception are only one part of the solution. Problems with economics, health care, and the status of women are much nearer to the heart of the problem. An American couple who appealed to the population problem as a serious reason for the permanent refusal to bear children would need to demonstrate that their entire life style was a response to the problem. Moreover, we are talking here, not in the context of the question of under what circumstances it is right to decide to bear ten children, but under what circumstances it is right for a couple to decide to bear *no* children.

I have reached the point where I would actually be grateful to hear even so questionable an appeal as overpopulation in justification for the permanent refusal to have children. More often what I hear is an appeal to individualistic concerns over career or economic status or personal freedom. Such "frivolity" based upon self-centered expediency is hardly "morality." It is rather a self-centered "conjugal hedonism" within the context of a marriage which seeks pleasure without responsibility, remaining intentionally closed in upon itself and permanently non-productive.

Birth control technology has enabled us to pursue "conjugal hedonism" with an efficiency which was unknown to previous generations. This is the inevitable result of the Baconian revolution by which greater knowledge is acquired in order to acquire ever greater *control.* One of the most threatening (and valuable) aspects of childbearing in our age is that it is a helpful reminder that our generation's goals are limited, that there are more surprises yet to be revealed to the human race, that even our most noble ideas and very best reasons will be judged by ones who are yet to come, that we are never fully in control of the future. As Karl Barth said, children are "an offer of divine goodness made by the One who even in this last time does not will that it should all be up to us."[5]

Many today say they refuse this "offer of divine goodness" because of their uncertainties about the future, or doubts about their own abilities, or insecurities arising out of the present state of their marriage. Let's be honest about the wretchedness of the

present age. We do live in an age which, to recall the title of E. R. Dodds' book on the first Christian centuries, is an Age of Anxiety.[6] The seemingly rampant self-centeredness and selfishness of our times may be in part a kind of ascetic self-denial brought on by the anxiety and self-doubts of our age. We Christians have known this feeling before, as Dodds reminds us. Whenever society came apart at its seams, ascetic theologies, false messiahs, and strange religions flourished. As the old Empire dissolved and anarchy threatened, Tertullian complained, even in his early time, of the overpopulation, overcrowding, and the overproductivity of humanity:

> . . . the earth shows us that is is becoming daily better cultivated and more fully peopled than in olden times. There are few places now that are not accessible; few unknown; few, unopened to commerce. Beautiful farms now cover what once were trackless wastes, the forests have given way before the plough, cattle have driven off the beasts of the jungle, the sands of the desert bear fruit and crops, the rocks have been ploughed under, the marshes have been drained of their water, and, where once there was but a settler's cabin, great cities are now to be seen. . . .
>
> The strongest witness is the vast population of the earth to which we are a burden and she scarcely can provide for our needs; as our demands grow greater, our complaints against nature's inadequacy are heard by all.[7]

In a time such as Tertullian's, many Christians said this was no time to bring children into the world. Manichaeans called babies the "offspring of human darkness," Gnostics fought sex, questioned marriage, and forbade children. Tertullian wondered what was the gain in merely packing hell with more souls and the venerable Chyrsostom urged the sincere Christian to "beget a new self in himself" rather than beget children. Monks debated self-castration and Origen did more than debate it.

In times, Tertullian's or ours, when everyone senses that everything has gone wrong, desire must be cut back and human expectations must be cut back because our future itself seems cut back. Dare we bear new life into such a bleak prospectus? Thus we waver between crude, eat-drink-and-be-merry self-indulgence and ascetic, restrained, confined self-denial. Both are unhappy stances for parenting. Auden spoke for many people when he wrote, on the occasion of his godson's baptism:

> Who am I to vouch for any Christian
> baby, far less offer ghastly platitudes
> to a young man? In yester times it
> was different: the old could still be helpful
> When they could nicely envisage the future
> As a named and settled landscape their children
> would make the same sense as they did
> laughing and weeping at the same stories

... Imageable
no longer, a featureless anonymous
threat from behind, to - morrow has us
gallowed shitless.[8]

Who would be so irresponsible as to bring children into this kind of world or at least under this perception of our tomorrow? Perhaps voluntary childlessness is admirable self-denial rather than selfishness. Perhaps the responsible ones are those who voluntarily deny themselves the gift of children, basing their denial on the uncertainties, doubts, and insecurities of the present age.

But how do we know that, in so doing, we may not actually be allowing a calculating need for personal security to take precedence over confidence and faith in God? We are being naive to think that previous generations were immune from the same insecurities and uncertainties about the future. As Tertullian shows, previous generations did not blissfully populate the future under the delusion that the future was assured. Parenthood is a risk, an incalculable venture and *always has been.* That's the inherent nature of any long-term commitment: parenthood, marriage, or any other human covenant which is worth making. To plead reluctance on the basis of uncertainty over the future, one's own future or the world's future, may betray a lack of faith which is not only a commentary on the mores of the present age but also a judgment upon the inadequacy of the church's proclamation of the Gospel and a call to the church to witness, to those who are paralyzed by doubt and uncertainty, that commitments, even commitments to persons so unpredictable and demanding as children, can be made and, by God's grace, kept. More than likely, we have a problem of evangelism here rather than a problem of ethics. A problem of *faith.*

Many couples' current reluctance to bear children may attempt to present itself as an act of responsibility (e.g., to the world's population problem) when in actuality it is only an untrusting anxiety which results in an overwhelming need for security. Of course, it is difficult to know what are the true motives behind our decisions. But, as Helmut Thielicke noted, the decision not to bear children, whether it be a temporary or a permanent decision, confronts us directly with questions of responsibility, self-interest, and self-control. The dangers, uncertainties and the heavy demands of parenthood furnish us with an inexhaustible stock of reasons which can be used in defense of the decision not to bear new life.[9] Our increased ability to limit new life by technical means with little personal risk increases our readiness to use this

stock of reasons. Are our reasons arising out of responsibility to God and our fellow human beings or are they arising out of our seemingly never-ending desire to evade responsibility for anyone besides ourselves?

IV

However, our increased ability to control conception and birth does give couples the possibility of a new insight into children as a blessing. Parenthood now, for most of us, demands a clear "Yes," just as every gift of God demands a response if its gifted nature is to be fully realized by the recipient. As Barth says, birth control may bring us to the

> . . . conscious and resolute refusal in faith of the possibility of refusing, *i.e.,* the joyful willingness to have children and therefore to become parents.[10]

The "Yes" to children will spring from faith, not necessarily faith in the future or faith in one's own abilities, but rather from faith in a God who holds the future and strengthens our abilities to be faithful stewards of his gifts, including God's gift of children.

In a world plagued by self-doubt and uncertainty coupled with the selfishness and irresponsibility which may arise from doubts and uncertainties, the bearing of children as a bold, conscious faithful response to God's offer of new life may become an evangelistic, even missional activity, a bold vulnerability which springs from faith. The question is recurrently being phrased, "Can I, with the world in the shape it is in, responsibly bring children into this kind of world?" The question ought to be (for those who see children as a gift and the world as their responsibility), "Can I, with the world in the shape it is in, responsibly *refuse* to bring children into this kind of world?

For so long now we have stressed the positive values of birth control as contributing to the joy of sex and marriage. Sex without fear of unwanted pregnancy can indeed be a positive benefit of our new contraceptive technology. But now may be the time to remind ourselves that *children can also be contributors to the mutual joy of sex and marriage.* Sex tends to lose its essential nature when practiced outside of a willingness to be responsible, a willingness to expand upon the meaning and the experience of sex by being open to the creativity of our sexual unions, a willingness to expand the male-female encounter beyond the confines of the one-to-one relationship.

In spite of our inherent narcissism and attempts to evade responsibility, I think most of us know that the joy of sex is most joyful when linked to the joy of responsibility, the joy of duty.

When Philip Roth's *Professor of Desire* impregnates his lover, and the lover decides to have an abortion, this leads him to reflect on the human joy of doing one's duty in regard to children.

> On her own she decided to have that abortion. So I would not be burdened by a duty? So I could choose her just for herself? But is the notion of duty so utterly horrendous? Why didn't she tell me she was pregnant? Is there not a point on life's way when one yields to duty, *welcomes* duty as once one yielded to pleasure, to passion, to adventure—a time when duty is the pleasure, rather than pleasure the duty?[11]

Even those who temporarily refuse to bear children should be reminded that thereby they are denying themselves the experience of the full, normative, most basic function of sex; a denial which may limit their joy and meaning of marriage since it decides to close off the major possibilities for extension, creativity, duty, and sharing of the love of that marriage. Such decisions can be made, but surely they should be made with fear and trembling after careful, prayerful consideration and with a genuine sense of regret, regret at having been forced, by whatever commitments or exigencies one may cite, to refuse one of God's most mysterious and gracious gifts. For is it not a part of love, at least love that calls itself Christian, that it forever longs to extend itself, reproduce itself, materialize itself, incarnate itself into the world? The doctrine of the Incarnation is an affirmation that God could completely love the world only by bearing a child forth into the world. Such incarnating love becomes a paradigm for human love.

Can I say it better than did a colleague of mine recently? Upon hearing that he and his wife were expecting their first baby, I congratulated him by saying something like, "Well, you two are in for some major changes, I suppose."

"Changes?" he replied. "You couldn't dream of how many changes we're having to make. My whole life is being rearranged by a person I haven't even met yet!"

Then, in a more reflective mood, he said, "You know, *I never really knew how selfish I was.* Not materially selfish, just self-centered, self-directed. I had everything all planned out, running my life just fine, my wife and I proceeding down our separate tracks. Then this baby. There's no telling what we will be learning next."

There is no telling. For nothing so disrupts our tidy futures, nothing so clearly mirrors our human best and our demonic worst, nothing so demands from us or gives to us as does the blessed burden of a child. Like all God's gifts, the blessing of children is also a burden. But like all God's vocations, children are

burdens which can be blessings. And there are more blessings in store for us, along with a number of surprises, when we dare to remain open and faithful in all God's gifts—especially the gift of children.

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Parenting: A Theological Analogy

By CHARLES K. ROBINSON
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There is no ordinary human personal relationship that usually affects the shaping of human life as much as the parent-child relationship. If indeed the heart of the Biblical faith is true, that God wills to relate to us in a personal way, there may be some potential theological edification in reflecting on some aspects of human parenting at its ideal best. So here goes an imaginative description of an ideal based on an experience that is, admittedly, less than ideal.

The ultimate (creaturely) origin of the coming-into-existence of the child is not in the first act of creation as such, but rather in the *mutually shared Love* of the parents. From this mutual love the parents desire to *Create* a new recipient of love who will know love and return love.

The parents cannot create a new mature person immediately and directly. In committing themselves to parenting they commit themselves to a *long-range* and *risk-laden responsibility* for what they cannot "program" or manipulate: the becoming-in-freedom of the child toward higher and higher levels of humanness through a unique personal history of decision-making, especially in situations of crisis.

The parents endeavor to produce environmental circumstances intended to promote as far as possible not only the satisfaction of immediate needs but also, and more importantly, the long-range personal maturation of the child. The parents were free not to create. But once they have committed themselves in love to this long-range undertaking, they will be subject to limitations, dependent upon existent conditions, faced with inalterable necessities and consequences, and confronted with partially unpredictable changes. In short, they have committed themselves to a long-range enterprise over which they *cannot* exercise *total control* and in which circumstances and outcomes will often be contrary to what they would desire.

Moreover, even if the parents could exercise total control they would not do so. For the personal maturation of the child requires an increasing "space for freedom." If the child is to grow inwardly as well as outwardly the parents must more and more "distance themselves" from the maturing child so that the child can, and indeed must, learn for himself and decide for herself.

The parents do not want the child to *suffer* as such. But they know that personal *maturation* of responsible freedom cannot take

place unless inexperienced freedom is confronted with the pressures, challenges and learning-potential of suffering. Maturationally significant sufferings include having to do for oneself when one would rather be done for and being challenged by crisis-for-decision.

The parents cannot protect the child from any and every suffering. The parents will protect the child—when they can—from suffering which appears to have no maturational potential or too small a potential to justify the cost or the risk. On the other hand, the parents will allow suffering to come which they could have prevented and will also themselves inflict suffering when, in their risk-taking wisdom, it appears that the potential maturational outcome will justify the cost of the suffering as a *means* to that end.

Among the things which the child learns early are these: The parents sometimes allow suffering which they could have prevented. The parents sometimes inflict suffering. The ways of the parents are often a *mystery,* especially in their strange relationship to the child's suffering.

And among the ways in which the parents will inevitably appear at times in the child's *perception* and *feeling* are these: They don't understand me. They don't know how I feel. (Sometimes even, "They must enjoy hurting me.") They don't care about me. They are angry with me. (Sometimes even, "They hate me.") They won't give me what I need. They demand things that don't make sense and things I can't do. They play favorites. They treat the other children better than they do me. They are unfair. They wanted to see me get into this mess; that's why they wouldn't help me. They like to threaten me. They're against me—not for me. They are gone away—absent just when I need them most. I am utterly alone—forsaken. Since the ways of parents are beyond all human understanding, it's a shameful humiliation that I am so abjectly dependent on them. But one of these days I won't be dependent any more—when I get big or when I just run away.

The sufferings involved in these feelings and perceptions are ordinarily the deepest agonies which the young child experiences. And the young child's developing personal history of *response* to these agonies is the most crucial issue at stake in the early years—and indeed will significantly affect the entire future of this now-young person's life on earth.

(To remind the reader that we are trying to consider some aspects of an ideal parenting-relation, let me say this: In some cases the "appearance" of the parent in the child's perceptions and feelings as described above would in tragic fact correspond with the reality.)

The appearance of the parents in the child's feeling and perception as described above is in fact, at every point, the very opposite of the *reality,* although it is inevitable that at times the parents must appear this way to the child. But this is not the whole story of the child's experience of the parents—nor even the dominant theme.

The parents *Love* the child with a compassionately caring love which takes on the enormous responsibility of endeavoring to "exalt" the child: to "lift up" into full humane personhood a little creature who at first knows neither the right hand from the left nor that there is a "thou" who cares. They love each uniquely individual child as much as they love any other child in the entire family. And they love every child in the family as much as they love any one child. The parents empathetically suffer in, with and through all the sufferings of the child and indeed suffer more, at a higher level of suffering, than the child can suffer. The love of the parents is self-sacrificing and would continue so, if need be, to the point of dying for the sake of the child. There are no conditions which the child must fulfill in order to receive their love. And there is nothing whatsoever that the child could ever do that would bring their love to an end.

The parents *Reveal* themselves to the child in an ongoing history of self-disclosures as appropriate to the developing needs and capacities of the child. At each stage of the child's personal maturation the parents' loving and risk-bearing wisdom must delicately balance between "too little" and "too much."

The primordially "original" revelation—usually though not necessarily through the mother—occurs very early. In a mystery beyond all human understanding the parent "somehow" emerges from the slightly organized confusion of the newborn's experience: the *veil* is *taken away* and personalizing *presence* is there as the "Thou" who mysteriously mediates the miraculous power to the infant to become and to be aware of being "I."

Soon—indeed soon—the little one who is "I" will also learn that there is a manipulable world of "its" and will begin to experience "I" as "the self-evident center of the world"—a world in which "thous" can be used as "its" to satisfy the center of the world. And soon—indeed soon—the "thous" will reveal their own "it-ness," corrupting the child's innocence (innocent in the most radical sense: innocent of experience). The child will begin to learn and appropriate a communal destiny shaped by those who, wittingly or unwittingly, will show him or her how one as the center-of-the-world can employ the possibilities of one's freedom in ways which do not treat every other center-of-the-world as having equal right

to be a center-of-the-world. The *origins of sin* lie shrouded in the mystery of the inevitably tragic dialogue between the innocently *self-aware freedom* of the recently born child who is now the center-of-the-world and the guilt-laden *communal destiny* of the world into which the child is born.

But there did come first the *original revelation* of the "image of God," conferring the power to become personal. In the absolute novelty of an ecstatic Moment, soon to be forgotten but pregnant with meaning in the mystery and promise of a higher Revelation yet to come, the presence simply appeared: *"Thou lovest me; thus I am."*

The parents are *Grace-ful* to the child, freely giving to the child life itself, both as existence and as power to become. They endeavor to *empower* the child's developing freedom, while also endeavoring to make the child sensitive to *obligations* of the needs of others. They do indeed desire, with a hope that is sometimes anguished, that the child will "grow up" to be a good, compassionate, helping humane being. Yet there is nothing the child could ever do or not do that could cut the child off from their willingness to forgive and to try to make a new start. In giving to and for the child they endeavor *preveniently* to prepare the way for future free responses of which the child is not yet capable. And more and more as the child matures the parents in their giving will also be able to *cooperate* directly with the responses and initiatives of the child's own developing freedom—toward the goals of yet further maturation.

The parents are *Provident* for the child, acting on behalf of the child, endeavoring to guide in general—and sometimes quite particular—ways the direction of the child's destiny into the future. Their continuing providence manifests a wisdom which knows how to change tactics, and sometimes even strategy, in response to the child's developing freedom. In freely taking on the responsibility of parenting they have made a covenanting *promise* to the child before the child was born or conceived: we shall do our best under whatever circumstances to bring you from nothingness to the *fulfillment* of a unique interpersonal life.

The young child cannot be fully aware of the desire for self-disclosure, loving care, grace-ful giving and provident guidance of the parents. But day by day "evidence" of the overarching reality appears. Contrary "evidence" also appears: My parents cannot prevent some of my suffering. My parents let me suffer sometimes when they could have prevented it. My own and only parents sometimes themselves inflict suffering upon me. The ways of parents are a mystery beyond understanding. Yet they also seem . . .

In reality the parents are worthy of love and worthy of trust. But the "evidence" *is* ambiguous.

* * * * *

Apart from sinfulness, the triune God is, I think, like these "ideal parents"—only incomparably more so. And God presumably has to deal with some further complications arising from the fact that God's children number in the billions. With some billion *free* centers-of-the-world *affecting one another* in an *orderly* universe, God's "problems" may be of a somewhat greater magnitude than the problems confronting human parents.

But there is a rumor afloat, in some obscure places, that the Creator does not create a "problem" without knowing the "solution." A rumor that—being GOD, and therefore somewhat different from us—God does not undertake what God cannot bring to consummating fulfillment. It's just a rumor, I know. And I know how unreliable rumors often are. But—I know it's funny—I believe it. Don't ask me *why* I believe it. (Or I might tell you.) Don't ask me *how* it can come to pass. (For I don't know.)

But who knows?! It just might happen to be true that the ultimate power in all that is *is*, after all, a power which is made perfect in weakness. A power which stoops in order to conquer. A power which has triumphed and will triumph in the humble form of a Servant. The persuasive power of a relentlessly unending love which, though never coercing, will never finally let any one go.

If so, then I guess that someway-sometime-somewhere it would come to be true—in a Consummation which would justify and make-worth-it all the immeasurable cost of agony to creatures and to God—that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Parent.

AMEN.

Being Human and Being a Theologian*

by Gerhard Sauter

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Some years ago I participated in consultations of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland on the subject of "doing theology today." We talked about theological traditions and about the contemporary social and political context of theology and church and we inquired how the situation in which we live determines our theological knowledge. There was talk about the revolutionary change of the world and about the "new man," formed or to be formed by new changeable, technically or socially influenced conditions. Especially one impression from these discussions stuck in my mind, which had nothing directly to do with the discussed subjects; but I learned to see that it is a key question. A Swiss psychiatrist, who had been invited as a specialist in anthropological research, asked me after every lecture (Europeans, Americans and Africans were speaking): "Could you understand what had been said? I could not. I have been concerned with theology to the extent that I can understand some terms, questions and theses. I also understand that they try here to put together these theological terms with conceptions of our present world. But I am not able to perceive the structure of theological knowledge and theological thinking. What do those theologians *say,* anyway? Don't they just talk about themselves? Don't they merely present themselves? Do they not show us, with their intelligent perceptions, with their historical knowledge, with their knowledge about the problems of our times, just one thing: *How they themselves react to* that which they call *the modern world?* What is the difference between theology and the self-presentation of the human being which is mainly concerned with coping with the world around us and which uses words like 'faith,' 'love,' 'hope,' 'liberation,' 'God' and 'Jesus Christ' for it?"

That was the question of a psychiatrist and physician. He was certainly not an enemy of theology. He did not at all believe that faith is just a psychological fiction and religion just mere ideology. He also agreed that theologians, unlike other scientists, could not merely observe and objectify. Whoever wants to be a true theologian is involved personally in that which he or she talks about. He or she cannot isolate himself or herself from that which needs

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to be proclaimed. But what exactly is the relationship between being human and doing theology? Do theologians expound *something other than themselves* when they claim to talk about God?

It should be noted that this question has nothing to do with the obvious fact that we theologians are all human beings, which to a high extent affects our thinking and doing. We have feelings, hopes and concerns, aggressions and proclivities; everyone of us has his or her experiences and is dependent on the world around us. Everyone can also obtain—for example by means of a good course of studies—new, perhaps better insights and new experiences. All that determines our perceptions and thinking. We cannot cleanly separate theology from all of that. If we were able to do that, we would not be real human beings any more. We should not try to *separate* our being human from our doing theology. But we have to try to *distinguish* between them. If we do not succeed in that, then theology would be a *mere expression of being human*. It would have nothing to do any more with the question of truth and untruth and would then cease to be a cognitive endeavor. What then is theology? What does it mean: being human and doing theology?

In German theology this question was asked in a different way but in a similar direction in the year 1933. The answer to this question affected the path of German theology and theological education for a long time afterwards. I want to describe this in order to state more clearly our question. In 1933 Karl Barth put it at the beginning of the so-called "church conflict" in the form of a programmatic sentence: "Theological existence today!" This title of a little pamphlet of Barth's in 1933 became the title of a theological journal, which is still published.

When Karl Barth, in the early summer of 1933, proclaimed in Bonn the slogan "Theological existence today!" he wanted to address all responsible Christians, but especially the clergy. "Our theological existence," he declared to them, "is our existence in the church, that is to say as called preachers and teachers of the church." Theological existence for Barth means the profession which emerges out of the exclusive attachment to the word of God and which can only subsist in this connection. It means knowing to whom we belong and whom alone we have to listen to.

Barth's call came out of fear of eventual loss of this theological existence. Barth found a sort of absent-mindedness among many of his theological colleagues as a consequence of their diffused interest in various day-to-day matters. Constantly they were preoccupied with reacting to changes in piety and morals, with searching their relations, with reflecting on the situation of the

church, with doing justice to its involvement in the intellectual situation of the time, with perceiving the changes and trying to get involved in those that seemed promising for the future. Because of their attempts to speak into the situation, they lost track of the center of faith. To get down to the center, not just to take sides in the present situation: this is the way Karl Barth formulated the decisive question of theological existence, which sees itself in the face of God and which has to realize this fact, which is incomparable with all other conceivable situations.

Today there are many symptoms which could demand a similar call. Theological work and the practice in our churches are often overloaded with psychological and sociological considerations. The many attempts to impress on the world the importance of Christianity have blurred the outlines of the church. Some focus on the socio-political situation, while others introduce ideas about reality which prevent living experiences of faith. A complete catalogue of errors would illuminate a cardinal problem: *the need for orientation,* which belongs to being human, has become an acute crisis. Church and theology receive a multitude of radar-screen impressions from a bewildering variety of directions and often seem to be merely reacting, instead of leading the way. Ministers can easily become disoriented because of the diffuse multitude of conflicting signals which they can hardly categorise, let alone sift.

On the other hand, the call back to the center of the matter and reflection on theological existence appear as *concentration* on the *essentials of being human.* The human being is to be brought back to a place where he or she can gain a perspective on the perception of the world and history. He or she is supposed to observe the proportions which show what is essential and meaningful. This task of concentration is pointed to by the term "existence," which Barth derived from a fashionable language trend of his time. "Existence" means the process of life, which cannot be prepared for by any theoretical effort, which cannot be captured by a distant overview of the situation, but which happens at the moment when everything unimportant is disregarded. At the same time existence is the risky enterprise of being human, in the midst of the many voices of the time, so that it fulfills the many historical tasks. In this sense Barth asked with the formula "Theological existence today!" the question, whether being a Christian means to be up-to-date and fulfill the demands of the time, while resisting the lack of concentration that comes about when human beings merely react to the multitude of challenges, without really being able to meet them in the knowledge of the total Otherness of the word and will of God.

Without wanting to modify anything that has been said so far, I would nevertheless like to consider more closely the notion of existence and I would like to turn our attention to an anthropological signpost which I believe to be questionable. This is a critical question in regard to Barth's formula. Barth demands that we totally expose the ground of Christian existence. In response to this demand the process of existence may become (contrary to his own intention) *a demonstrative gesture which draws all attention to itself* instead of pointing to that to which it wants to point. The notion of existence becomes the signpost of a problem of orientation and of its solution by means of concentration and true self-reflection. Theological existence thus becomes expressive *self-presentation.*

I want to consider more closely two examples for this self-expressiveness, for this understanding of theological existence as special, demonstrative behavior. They seem to me to be typical for some tendencies in German theology and in the church, despite the effects of the theology of Karl Barth, whom they oppose in part. They have in common that they perceive theological existence as *a life style*, which is to be an alternative to the dangers which threaten being human today. I have also found vestiges of this view in the United States.

The first example of understanding theological existence as a demonstrative gesture of self-presentation is the *call for concentration.* It starts from the, indeed, apt observation that our being human today is endangered by diffusions of various sorts. We do not any more know the center of being human. Our doing and thinking does not live any more in the distinction between the important and the unimportant. We consume a multitude of offers that promise a better and more meaningful life, and we lose ourselves in testing the different offers, instead of really living from the center of our own existence. We seek our salvation in diffusion. We look for relaxation in a restless journey to ever new impressions, and then we have to realize that we did not recollect ourselves and find ourselves, but that we have split ourselves even more.

Many of our theologians discover in themselves the diagnosis of this same widely spread disease of our times. They lack the authority for their professional work which would allow them to select that which is essential for their doing and thinking and which would allow them to know without many doubts that which is life-fulfilling. But wherever there is a diagnosis, there often enough is also a therapeutic recipe. The pattern of behavior which many theologians follow in their studies is: *concentration as self-reflection.* Concentrating means then: to concentrate on one-

self, to listen to oneself, to shut oneself off and to select from one's many possibilities those which are reflected in the inner self. I have the impression that this form of concentration dominates most of that which today in theology and church is called "experience." Experience in this case is nothing else but the reflection on the center of all awarenesses, where I find myself and from where I can speak. Experience is nothing but the expression of the fact that I have searched and found myself. And existing theologically then means nothing more than training for self-reflection.

But is this really a concentration? Is concentration achieved when one cuts out, selects and pushes away that which might be disturbing? Concentration and concentrating oneself means: winning a *relation to the center,* overviewing a space of clear relationship with the center. Certainly concentration opposes diffusion, it refuses to dwell at all conceivable places. But this cannot be cured by trying to dwell at some arbitrary place, settling down like a spider there where one's own set of relationships with the world can be most easily webbed. No, concentration means primarily: finding the *true center,* and from this center one gains the *perspective,* which gives validity to all things, whether they are far from or close to that center. Concentration in other words is undistorted *perception,* not a reduction of impressions to a degree that they can be coped with without much pain. Concentration shows proportions, it shows realities in their *relative relations.* It is not a refusal of perception by means of confinement to some few, favorite viewpoints.

What is the center from which theological knowledge is possible? We find an answer to this question in the Gospel of John, where Jesus recalls the strange story of the time of wilderness-wandering when the people of God were threatened by serpents and only those were saved who *looked away from themselves* and fixed their eyes on the bronze serpent, the sign of salvation in the hand of Moses (Num. 21:8 f.). With this image of salvation Jesus points to his cross, which is at the same time his elevation to life for all (John 3:14 f.). The center of theological perception is this unity of life and death in the crucified one, not only *the suffering but also the glorified Christ,* sitting at the side of the Father. To look towards him means: becoming able to look away from oneself, not being spellbound any more by the dangers which we—as the travelling people of God—encounter or have created. In other words: *being alive to Christ in self-oblivion.* Without self-oblivion no theological concentration!

I do not think I have to protect this self-oblivion from the misunderstanding that I here recommend a suppression of the I, a supplanting of the self in favor of imaginary "objective" perception or in favor of a "collective" consciousness. But it is decisive to realize just how our existence is at stake and that—according to another word of Jesus—the one who thinks to have found his or her self has actually lost the true fulfillment of self because one thought one was able to gain life out of one's self. It seems to me that we have to learn what this means for the perception of theological existence. The letter to the Colossians (3:1-3) gives us a hint: "Since you are now revived with Christ—that is, you have entered life—seek that which is above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of the Father. Turn your senses to that which is above, not that which is on earth. Because *you have died, and your lives are hidden with Christ in God.*"

That is a description of authentic Christian theological existence, its realization and the mode of being human that is involved in such an existence. We need to grasp the language of these verses, which are loaded with metaphors: The "above" in contrast to the "on the earth" is not describing an overworld in the sense of a purely transcendent reality, beyond our day-to-day reality. The stress is on the *hiddenness* of the new life in the community of the glorified Christ. Being hidden is not a designation of localities in terms of this-worldly/other-worldly, but a designation of reality. Being hidden designates the manner of *God's presence,* God's life, God's acting. Theology is talking about our *perception of this hidden presence;* theological existence is *participation in this hidden presence.* A demonstrative attitude is then ruled out if such behavior is the expression of self-assertion, even in a blurred manner: perhaps with the good intention of showing that God is totally different from our world, that faith is higher than all reason, that theology is incomparable with all other cognitive endeavors. In all of these points theological knowledge can and easily may get lost in favor of a self-presentation of religious existences, which merely intend to express their own behavior in relation to their environment in its various forms.

I shall now endeavor to draw the anthropological consequence of this kind of theological perception. Knowledge of faith is the *perception of the world in light of the hidden presence of God,* and that means: of the world in its true proportions, in its relations to God's presence. In order to be able to learn to realize this, we have to distinguish between acts of meditation and the process of theological perception. Meditation, contemplation, reflection *correlate to* the rhythm of perception, to the task of ordering, sifting and

testing of impressions. This form of concentration is necessary. But theological perception is a *liberated* perspective, *oblivious of itself*. It is more than focusing the view, concentrating on one single point in order not to have to overwork itself! Theological perception is an unobtrusive invitation for *communal* perception, because that which has to be perceived is not the private idea of something that must be reflected in the eyes of others, but rather the world in the light of the hidden presence of God—the reality which is focused on by all communally.

The second example of the misunderstanding of theological existence as a demonstrative gesture of the expressive self-presentation of the theologian is the *provocation toward "creative" behavior*. It wants to liberate the human being from the confinements of being human which are produced by the pressures to achieve something, existing in modern society. In Western civilization (it is a separate question how far this civilization actually extends!) human beings are absorbed by the world of technology and bureaucracy, by an impressive and oppressive administration of life and its turning of reality into a made and manageable product. We are under pressure to produce, bring about, form and register something. Only that which we thus set forth is reality for us and others.

It certainly cannot be denied that because of all this our being human is distorted, and the protests against this are justifiable. But the attitude taken by many theologians in face of this is little more than the expressionistic escape into a counterculture, into a world where unruled activity and free associations are dominating. *Being a Christian then means: existing spontaneously.* On this view church practice has become a sort of playground for seemingly creative—actually simply anarchical—behavior. I speak now about the situation in Germany and its consequences for theology, but I think there are also signs of similar developments in the United States. Many theologians think of themselves as alternative models in face of the achievement society with its criteria of measurable effectivity. They do not want to be mere managers who keep the church organization functioning. In Christian education and confirmation classes, they do not want to impose upon their pupils—who groan under the pressure of school anyway—more knowledge to be appropriated. They want their church services (paradoxically, carefully prepared with a variety of technical tricks) to become happenings, where something new and "unpredictable" will occur: a "creative process" which is not disturbed by explanations (and which also avoids sending the church "visitor" back home concerned with questions and responsibilities).

I need not continue this enumeration. But I do want to clarify the point that in this understanding and practice of theological existence—in the language of church dogmatics—the doctrines of creation, eschatology and pneumatology are at stake. Christian hope, which knows about the creative contradiction of God against the world, is misunderstood as the opportunity of making God's contradiction "our own thing," so that we presume to negate everything that exists as the distorted world. Creation is dictated by an idea of creativity which finally deems only chaos as creative, bringing every order into contradiction with life. And this is the consequence of an idea of Spirit which forgets that the spirit that only negates is called—according to Goethe—with good reason, the devil, enemy of God. Certainly God breaks the forms behind which human beings hide from God. But Spirit is not the principle of formlessness, but rather the formation of God's reality in our world.

What do these dogmatic assertions mean for our inquiry about theological existence? For that, *the sermon* is a test, so to speak, because in the sermon every assertion is necessarily and inevitably related to the human existence of the preacher. This is shown by the human expressiveness in every sermon: experiences of the preacher, intellectual and rhetorical idiosyncrasies, gestures, in short: all aspects of one's ability of communication. Moreover, and especially, the theological structure of a sermon shows one's individual humanness, expressed not only in certain sentences but also in that which the sermon articulates as a whole.

Basically, many sermons speak today about only one thing: that the preacher stands at a *front-line,* the front-line between yesterday and tomorrow, between the usual and the unusual. Only there—thus it is said, either directly or indirectly—God is to be found, where a borderline between the old and the new becomes visible, so that we can cross over in the direction of a radically new beginning. The preacher has to mark this frontier. He or she is a "frontiersman" who, moreover, has to disclose this front-line. And this takes place by proclaiming God's word as contradiction to all other viewpoints and day-to-day knowledge. The preacher first has to convince the congregation that it has the wrong ideas, the wrong religious attitudes, the wrong political opinions, the bourgeois habits, which have alienated it from the truth. Certainly, all this can and has to be said in due time and in appropriate context. But such marking of frontiers cannot be the character of a *sermon,* because then it first would have to create a wasteland, and only through a complete deforestation would it gain the space where God could again find a place in the world,

whose alienation from God was just so loudly proclaimed. No wonder that such a preacher will grow weary and resign in time. This tiredness is a widespread phenomenon of a way of preaching which feels it must arouse and stir every Sunday. A theologian who acts like this, wholly apart from that which is said substantially, has eventually to judge everything that he or she actually brings about in this way as wrong, because everything which may be achieved must be seen as belonging to "the world," which has to be changed! In terms of psychology this leads to a process of destruction of all that-which-is, including one's own ego. But since such theologians, too, must go on living, they can merely communicate their own destructive "creativity."

The contrast to this sermon structure and the related way of behavior is the endeavor to *identify* God's presence with a piece of well-known reality. This approach affirms the listeners in regard to that which they have already experienced as meaningful and demonstrative. But this strenuous building up of interpretation, too, depends much too often on those who, openly or secretly, want to express their belief that *without their technique* of seeing God and the world as a whole and of describing relationships between them *God would remain excluded* from the world of our experiences. But is this seemingly positive attitude not just another form of the viewpoint which we found to underlie the destructive and self-destructive theological attitude? God's presence seems here—as there—dependent upon those who represent God, who thereby indirectly proclaim the absence of God. The ungodliness of the world is also implied when theologians, by the way they express themselves, make their statements depend on their own personal *credibility*. This concentrating of theology on the credibility of the theologian, on human capacities and behavior—today not usually any more one's morality, but more often one's ability to live meaningfully and give meaning—this glorification of personal credibility is nothing else than the perversion of theology into a life-style. In common with the critical attitude toward other human beings and their presuppositions, this life-style shares the assumption that the environment is removed from the presence of God and has to be brought into God's presence by the special activity of the theologian.

But what should prevent us from considering the human beings whom we encounter as those who are standing already under the promise of the new humanity, as those who live now (without always knowing it clearly) under the sign of salvation and *in whom God meets us*? Theological knowledge means: not just accepting this blindly, but discovering whether or not it is that way.

But we can—right here!—only perceive that which has happened *before* our critical inquiry.

What we theologians need to do is to discern the prior truth of God's active presence and thereby to realize ourselves as limited human beings, recipient of God's grace and liberated from our selfishness. That means opening up human life for God's activity, not distorting that reality which God has already erected amongst us.

The old church at the marketplace in Wittenberg, where Martin Lúther preached, shows an altar painting of the reformer in the pulpit and the congregation listening to him. But between the congregation and the preacher is the cross of Jesus Christ, and Luther points to this Deus crucifixus, so that his listeners look at Christ and not to the pulpit. What they see is at first sight a suffering, dying human being, for ever silenced. But in this death the living God is present, who does not give up the Son, the man who hoped alone for God. God does not permit other human beings to tear apart the unity between God and this man. This is the work of God, which should be looked at, which out of the powerlessness of Jesus pronounces the certainty of victory over death and all misery. The cross of Jesus Christ is obviously the sharpest contradiction of any human self-presentation in the interest of individual predelictions, even in the form of symbolizing human suffering as a pronouncement on one side of human existence—namely for the longing not to remain in a hopeless state. The premise and task of each theological pronouncement is not to read that into the cross of Jesus Christ, but to perceive in the death of Jesus the living God. Existing theologically means: to be drawn into this event, to experience the history of the life of Jesus in the unity of life and death, and thus—in certain perceptions about our world—to realize that the history of God with humankind goes on: as a continuous history of the passion of Jesus Christ in the expectation of overcoming misery and death. In order to participate in this history, one needs—to repeat it again—the gift of self-oblivion, which liberates us so that we can, by means of our existence, *point* to the God, who is hidden in our time and world. It liberates us for becoming attentive to God and drawing attention to God, without ourselves becoming the center of attention.

Book Reviews

Daniel and Revelation: A Study of Two Extraordinary Visions. James M. Efird. Judson Press. 1978. 144 pp. $4.95 paper.

Professor James Michael Efird, "Mickey" Efird to most of us here at Duke, has recently written a delightful little book that is just right to use as a textbook for teaching about apocalyptic literature within the local church. Although the book has been designed to meet the needs of laypersons, the direct and simple style may be of help to a number of pastors who are looking for a quick review of some of the material that they should have covered in seminary. If by chance anyone got through seminary without reading any books on Revelation or Daniel, the present volume with its "Suggestions for Further Study" at the end can provide a helpful starting point for some belated study.

The book begins with a brief Introduction, followed by a discussion of "The Characteristics of Apocalyptic Literature." Efird's commentary on Daniel is a brief fifty-six pages. After discussing the background of Daniel, he intersperses portions of the text (RSV) and explanatory notes until he leads the reader through the entire book. At the end of most chapters he has provided "Questions for Further Consideration," which deal with significant ideas in the text or its contemporary relevance. The Book of Revelation is dealt with in an analogous manner, although in that case he has outlined the book and divided it into ten sections for the purpose of discussion.

It would be difficult to overstate the urgent need for ministers to help members of their congregations understand the nature of apocalyptic literature. The fact that the need is particularly great in this part of the country was impressed on me by a discussion with John Strugnell, who taught Old Testament in the Divinity School a number of years ago. Coming from an English university setting, he found many of the ways of the "Bible Belt" quaint. After tuning in to a sample of our ubiquitous, uneducated radio preachers as they peddled their ersatz knowledge of each detail of the second coming on the basis of "Bible Prophecies," Strugnell concluded that we should insist that every student who planned to minister in this region take a course in Daniel and Revelation. Efird's text carries that concern one step further by providing ministers with a useful tool to assist in educating their congregations with regard to the significance of both books.

The need for an intelligent understanding of Daniel and Revelation was obvious during Strugnell's tenure at Duke over twelve years ago, but the urgency has increased since then. Efird's little volume made me acutely aware of that. In reading his book, I noted that he was concerned to explain that the seven churches mentioned in Rev. 2-3 were real churches and not "dispensations" or "ages" (p. 83), that the locust-like creatures in Rev. 9 were not "helicopters!" (p. 101), and that the beast marked 666 was not a prediction of the European common market (p. 112). Since interpretations of that sort are too absurd to justify a scholarly refutation, I was tempted to chide Efird for dealing with such silliness, but then I discovered the source and realized the seriousness of the problem. All of those interpretations are found in the writ-

ings of Hal Lindsey, who bases much of his anti-Russia, anti-Yellow Peril, anti-Arab, anti-Africa, anti-European, anti-Established Church warnings on nonsensical misunderstandings of Daniel and Revelation. We don't ordinarily discuss Lindsey in this *Review* because his work is not regarded as serious scholarship; but the fact that he has reportedly sold over ten million copies of one book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, illustrates a general willingness to believe every sort of foolish interpretation of apocalyptic literature.

Lindsey wrote "'the future' is big business" (*The Late Great Planet Earth*, Zondervan, 1970, p. 16). Lest I take him out of context, I should note that he made that statement in regard to clairvoyants, faith healers, seers, and charlatans. That is one statement in his book which is true. As we approach the end of the second millennium (A.D. 2000) and as Americans become increasingly aware that they can no longer control world events, the apocalyptic fervor will undoubtedly increase. As more and more Christians begin to feel frightened, overtaxed, embattled and helpless, they will discover an attraction to join the ranks of those who desire the destruction of all the powers of this age together with a final rapture of their own blessed little group. That view is attractive. It is downright seductive, but it is not true, not Biblical, and certainly not Christian. I wish that someone would write a nice short little book that would explain the nature of apocalpytic language in a straightforward manner so that intelligent congregations could study it and avoid wasting their energies on heretical nonsense. Ah, I do believe that Mickey Efird has already written that book. May you sell 10,000,000 copies.

—Orval Wintermute

Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture. Brevard S. Childs. Fortress. 1979. 688 pp. $28.50.

The author of this impressive volume is Professor of Old Testament at Yale Divinity School and has been a major figure in American biblical scholarship for more than a decade. He is best known for helping to formulate a perspective for interpretation which has reached its culmination in the present long-awaited publication.

The necessity for this perspective is demonstrated, he suggests, by the fact that contemporary scholarship has often reached an impasse in its analysis of particular texts, of entire books, and of entire canonical sections such as the Pentateuch (p. 16; see pp. 40-41 for a brief discussion of the gains and losses which he proposes that modern scholarship has effected). For example, there are often disagreements about the form of a given pericope; about its authorship, date, and situation; about the relationship of a pericope to its larger literary context; about its message, how it may address the believing community in the present, and so on. Childs makes it clear (p. 73) that it is not modern, scientific exegetical method which he faults, but that it has often been focused upon unproductive, modern concerns to the neglect of the text's own agenda. Failure to realize this distinction may lead one to assume that Childs is an opponent of scientific exegesis, an impression which he creates by using such terms as "dry rot" (p. 15), "sterile impasse," and the need "to enter into a post-critical era" (p. 16).

However, in Childs' view the impasses may be broken (perhaps "transcended" would be a more accurate term) by a new context for interpretation: attention to the canonical shape of the text. This approach is commonly called "canonical criticism," a term which the author finds troublesome (p. 82): it is not another method of interpretation so much as it is a focus upon a

dynamic of growth that is peculiar to Israel's religious literature. There must be more attention to the Bible on its own terms, as the scripture of a community: it must be studied "in terms compatible with the collection and transmission of the literature as such" (p. 16).

Part of the problem with the commonly-used term "canonical criticism," as I see it, is that it may confuse Childs' point in the present volume with that of a previous publication *(Biblical Theology in Crisis)*. In the previous volume, he stressed the need for biblical theology to be done in the context of the full canonical witness on a particular subject: "to sketch the *full range* of the Biblical witness within the canonical context" (p. 132), as opposed to glossing-over tensions within the canon in a search for *the* biblical position or as opposed to assigning a hierarchy of values in a canon-within-the-canon approach. (Those in need of reviewing this debate might consult James Sanders' reviews of Childs [full canonical context] and of G. Ernest Wright [canon-within-the-canon] found, respectively, in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 26 [1971], pp. 299-304 and in *Interpretation*, 24 [1970], pp. 359-368.) Hence, following Childs' lead in the earlier volume, it became fashionable to speak of the need to do biblical *criticism* within a full *canonical* context, and this was sometimes called, rather loosely, "canonical criticism." Childs' focus, in the present volume, is related though quite different.

For Childs, canon did not result when a literary corpus was closed by dogmatic decision (e.g., at Jamnia), but was, *throughout* its developmental history, an authoritative literature in the process of growth through interaction with the believing community. That it was perceived in this fashion was itself a decisive factor in subsequent selecting, collecting, and ordering of its contents (pp. 58-59, 77). Yet, particulars of this process are often impossible for us to

recover and this has further contributed to the impasse in biblical studies (p. 67).

This means that canonical "criticism" should focus upon the final form of the text (p. 73). (In the present volume, discussion is limited to individual biblical books and canonical sections, rather than the larger shaping of the Old Testament or of the entire Bible.) This is a deliberate move away from the traditional interests of biblical scholarship. One is no longer concerned with the question of a particular narrative's historicity ("did the flood really happen?"), or concerned to recover the oldest form of a tradition on the assumption that earlier is more authoritative ("the authentic words of Jesus") or concerned with kerygmatic exegesis (G. von Rad, *et al.*) which attempts to isolate a specific message to a given historical situation ("the kerygma of the Yahwist"). Why focus upon the *final* form and give it authority in the present? Because "it alone bears witness to the full history of revelation" (p. 76).

As an illustration of his approach, consider the following condensation of the discussion of Isaiah. From the standpoint of the interests of historical criticism, the message of Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth century, b.c. (a large part of chapters 1-39) must be sharply delineated from that of the so-called Second Isaiah in the sixth century (chapters 40-55). The former delivers an unrelenting word of judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem; the latter a lyrical word of hope to the exiles in Babylonia, a word which seems not to have materialized (hence the despondency of the so-called Third Isaiah in chapters 56-66). However, the Book of Isaiah, in its present canonical shape, comes to us, as it were, from Isaiah of Jerusalem. This fact is not to be regarded as an historical indication of true authorship (as "conservatives" might suppose) or as a mere historical fiction (as "liberals" might suppose), but rather is the result of a highly reflective theological shaping. As

a consequence, the promises of the Second Isaiah are stripped of their historical, contextual specificity and are redirected to all of Israel throughout her future. Israel is forever under judgment *and* promise. And as for the laments of the Third Isaiah, they now function to indicate "how little the exilic *(sic!)* community partook of the promised reality" (p. 327). And lest we suspect that such canonical interpretation is only a modern projection, mistakenly based upon an ancient, unreflecting linkage of unrelated bodies of writing, Childs argues that the First Isaiah has been extensively edited as a preface to the Second Isaiah (including the insertion of large amounts of late materials), whereas conversely the Second Isaiah has been shaped in order to integrate it into a larger unity with the First Isaiah (pp. 330-333).

But where is the "authoritative" edition of the canonical text to be found, given the diversity of manuscripts from Qumran, the ancient versions, and variations in medieval Hebrew manuscripts? (Such variations include differing orders of verses, chapters, and books; inclusion or exclusion of apocryphal books; absence or presence of sentences, phrases, or words; and so on.) Childs argues that the authoritative scriptures are contained in the standardized (consonantal) text of the first century, A.D. (p. 100), so that "the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible is the *vehicle* both for recovering and for understanding the canonical text of the Old Testament" (p. 97). (Note: Childs occasionally uses the term "Masoretic" anachronistically, when he means proto-Masoretic, e.g., on p. 101.)

Why should this one form of the text be singled out, given the fact that various factions of the believing community recognized other forms as authoritative? Because "only this one historic community (rabbinic Judaism) has continued through history as the living vehicle of the whole canon of Hebrew scriptures," whereas other factions

(e.g., the Greek-speaking community in Egypt which used the Septuagint, or the community at Qumran which used a multiplicity of text-types) died out (p. 97). Even though the Greek text did continue as the canon of some groups (including Christians), it eventually obtained stability only in dependence upon the Hebrew text.

The purpose of textual criticism then, in Childs' approach, is not to recover the earliest form of the Biblical text under the dominant assumption that it would somehow be more accurate, but to recover the canonical (finalized, standardized consonantal) text (p. 103).

After a brief and rather compact discussion of the concerns of previous "introductions" to the Old Testament, including matters of canon and text (pp. 1-106), Childs begins his plea for analysis from a canonical perspective. This takes the form of discussion of larger canonical sections (e.g., Pentateuch, Former Prophets), then a seriatim consideration of individual books. The latter are approached under such headings as "Historical Critical Problems," "Canonical Shape," and "Theological and Hermeneutical Implications." Each section contains a detailed bibliography, including a section on the history of exegesis. There is a brief section on the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian Bible (pp. 659-671), and a detailed index of authors. Errors are very few, e.g., citation of a non-existent Eccl. 8:22ff. (p. 584).

Those who intend to purchase this volume, particularly as a textbook, should pay strict attention to its title. It is not an introduction to the Old Testament as such, but only *as Scripture*. It will not suffice as an "introduction" for beginners (undergraduates or even seminarians), given its focus and a terseness which will not yield understanding to those who do not already understand some issues (e.g., pp. 40, 57, 75, 77). Despite the jacket-description that it is "the first full-scale

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introduction written by an American and published in this country which is the equal of such volumes as the Introductions of Eissfeldt and Fohrer," this is not true in terms of the comprehensiveness of discussion. For example, Sellin-Fohrer and Eissfeldt begin with a long discussion of literary types before turning to the Pentateuch proper. Childs does not deal with such matters at all. Whereas they will discuss criteria for source-separation at great length and then turn to individual discussion of the various strata, Childs has only 1½ pages on the Yahwist and ½ page on the Elohist. My point here is not that Childs should have given more detail to such things (indeed, he should not have, since they are well treated in other Introductions), but that the potential user should be precisely aware of the scope of Childs' endeavor. If one already owns a volume such as Eissfeldt, then Childs is a superb up-date, with the bonus of his particular canonical stance; if one does not own (or have students who are familiar with) that more comprehensive Introduction, then Childs' volume simply is not the place to begin.

While this volume contains the basic discussion of the process of canonical shaping and is the first seriatim discussion of the books of the Old Testament from that perspective, there are some things about it which have an "old hat" ring. Primarily Childs and a few other scholars have, through a decade of previous publications, so influenced the way that some scholars now approach this material that his ubiquitous claim to be introducing a "new" and "fresh" approach will not seem true. While we cannot criticize Childs for having "scooped" Childs in this regard, it is true that other scholars have, on a lesser scale, independently taken the same perspective.

While the canonical shaping of some books may be perceived from conspicuous evidence and may yield strik-

ingly new possibilities for interpretation (e.g., Isaiah and Amos), in other cases the signs of such shaping are not always self-evident (p. 73). In the case of the Book of Ruth, a "minor feature" of canonical shaping might be the introductory statement, "In the days when the judges ruled. . ." (1:1), which offers a "canonical check against reading the book as a concealed political tract directed against Ezra and Nehemiah" (p. 556). A "canonical check" that may indeed be, but did it result from a deliberate shaping of the material as scripture? Is it therefore not a part of the earliest form of the story? And would one argue, similarly, that "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim" (Dan. 1:1) is a "canonical check" against reading that book as a tract directed against the Seleucids?

When signs of internal canonical shaping become difficult if not impossible to find, Childs will turn to the implications of the larger "canonical setting," pointing out, e.g., that Ruth's "literary context is provided by the book of Judges . . . (it) is to be interpreted in the context of the larger corpus of scripture" (p. 566). Or again, to see the Song of Songs as a celebration of human love *per se* "fails utterly to reckon with the canonical context" (presumably "setting" is meant, since "Nowhere is human love in itself celebrated in wisdom literature. . ." p. 575).

Childs will even argue that the absence of overt canonical shaping may be the result of a deliberate decision: "Amos' prophecy against Israel was left largely untouched by the canonical editors in order that his attack on the Israel of his age could provide a normative criticism of distorted religion for the subsequent community of faith" (p. 409). Childs' apparent determination to press his perspective relentlessly is most evident in his treatment of Daniel. He asks, appropriately, "How was it possible that a writing which apparently predicted the end of the world with the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes could

have been canonized in a period after the Greek danger had passed?" (p. 613). Childs can only suggest that the "canonical editors" must have understood the unnamed antagonist of God's people not to be Antiochus (who fortunately had not been named in the text), but to be someone still in the future, as the "wise" (Dan. 12:10) would understand. However, there does not seem to be any evidence for this in the text itself, despite Childs' claim that the book "has been sharply altered by those who edited it" (p. 619). To point out that later books reinterpreted the fourth beast to be Rome and not Greece (II Esdras 12:10ff.) seems to me to be entirely beside the point (p. 619), unless such reinterpretation is itself a part of the canon (II Esdras is not, for Childs) and were deliberately placed following Daniel as a canonical corrective. Perhaps a better case for such canonical reinterpretation lies in his citation of Matt. 24 and Mark 13, which likewise identify Daniel's fourth kingdom with Rome. However, a new problem then emerges: it is in the LXX order of books that Daniel stands immediately before the New Testament, and not in Childs' "authoritative" Masoretic text! The "authoritative" process of canonical "setting" has not meshed with the hypothetical mentality that led to the canonization of Daniel! (For Childs' views on the relative unimportance of canonical order, see pp. 666-667.) In any case, canonical "shaping" as Childs here envisions it seems to have gone beyond internal shaping or even canonical "setting" to a subsequent readership mentality, which allows later portions of the canon to direct how we read earlier ones! Ultimately, then, the final canonical shape of a given book might not be necessarily as authoritative as Childs has led us to believe?

The concluding section of the discussion of each biblical book ("Theological and Hermeneutical Implications") is a welcome departure from previous technical introductions and one entirely in keeping (indeed, mandated) by the volume's title. Rarely will competent biblical scholars undertake such a task, and the difficulties of those who would read the Bible as scripture have been compounded in the past by many homileticians who undertook this task without being exegetically equipped to do so. Childs' "implications" are always well worth reading, but often surprisingly brief (seldom more than 1-2 pages). Occasionally aspects of them are little different than a non-"canonical" (pre-Childs) reading would have produced, e.g., that Amos' message to Israel at a specific time and place has been made "to serve continually against persistent and recurring abuses of religion which threaten true faith" (p. 409), which is exactly how modern readers, regardless of their exegetical ability or of the canonical shape of Amos, would tend to read it. (It is helpful to realize, however, that one's hermeneutic already has a canonical precedent. For discussion of this idea, see J. A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics," section 5 ["Canonical Hermeneutics"], in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* Supplementary Volume.)

In a few cases, however, Childs' "implications" may reflect his own hermeneutic rather than one derived from the canonical shape, e.g., when he suggests that Ruth and Boaz "emerge as models of the faithful religious life of Israel," a message which he says is "not provided by direct commentary . . . but is offered by the movement of the whole story" (p. 567). Adequate models they may or may not be, but it is not at all clear to me that the story has been shaped to present that as a goal nor does Childs' previous discussion reveal how this is so.

These various queries or criticisms are minor when compared with the volume's merits: comprehensiveness, originality, reliability of scholarship, and unity of perspective. It is indeed, as James Sanders has described it on the book's jacket, "a remarkable *tour de force.*" Childs' grasp of the current state of biblical scholarship is admirable,

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even phenomenal, at points. His idea of "canonical shaping" cannot be ignored even by those who would study the Old Testament merely as the history of the Israelite religion. It is less likely, however, that his proposal that "authority" (whatever one means by that nebulous term) resides only in the final form of the text will be so widely received.

—Lloyd R. Bailey

Israelite Religion in Sociological Perspective: The Work of Antonin Causse. S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. .Studies in Oriental Religions, Vol. 4. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden. 1978. 155 pp.

Antonin Causse (1877-1947), born in southern France of Huguenot rural parents, showed early aptitude, and was sent away at the age of twelve for education to prepare for the Protestant ministry. In 1900 he emerged from the school of theology at Montauban with the degree of Bachelor in Theology, with a thesis on the Socialism of the Prophets. Then he spent two years in Germany to learn from the great German scholars of the day, such as Harnack, Gressmann, and Gunkel, without taking a degree.

Returning to his native land, he accepted a call to the pastorate of a church in the small village of Segonzac, where he remained for seventeen years, serving as a good pastor, especially to the sick and needy. Yet he did not neglect his studies, taking time out to earn a Licentiate in Theology in 1908, and the doctorate in theology from Geneva in 1913. His doctoral thesis, the title of which would read, if translated into English, "The Prophets of Israel and the Religions of the Orient: Essay on the Origins of Universalistic Monotheism," was published and made a strong impression on French Biblical scholars.

As a result, Causse was called in 1919 to be Professor of Old Testament and History of Religions in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Stras-

bourg, which was then being reconstituted as a part of the French university system after World War I. Here he had a brilliant career of teaching and writing until his death in 1947. The essence of his contribution to scholarship may be described as the sociological approach to the study of Israelite religion. He could not forget his own origin among the common people and his long and sympathetic ministry to them in his rural parish. He could not coldly deal with the Bible as a literary document, as did some of the great German scholars, without reference to the life and struggles of the people.

Causse produced something like a dozen books and half a hundred articles. These made a strong impression in France, and even in other European countries to a lesser extent. But in the English-speaking world he was largely neglected. No English translations of any of his works were made. In fact, according to Kimbrough, no translations of any of Causse's works have appeared in any language.

His greatest work appeared in 1937. The title, if translated into English, would read: "From Ethnic Group to Religious Community: The Sociological Problem of the Religion of Israel." Other important titles, if translated into English would be: "The Poor of Israel," 1922; "Israel and the Vision of Humanity," 1924; "The Most Ancient Songs of the Bible," 1926; "The Dispersed of Israel: The Origin of the Diaspora and Its Role in the Formation of Judaism," 1929.

The late W. F. Albright disagreed with Causse on a number of points, yet stated that Causse's *magnum opus,* "From Ethnic Group to Religious Community" *(Du groupe ethnique à communauté religieuse)* should be read by all Old Testament scholars.

In Chapter Five, Kimbrough has attempted to detail Causse's contribution to Old Testament studies under seven heads. These may be summarized, though inadequately, thus:

(1) Old Testament religion is not merely a static group of ideas about God, humanity, and nature, but it is also characterized by a development of thought on the basis of experience.

(2) The growth from ethnic group to religious community involved both political and religious elements, as well as various polarities such as nomadism and sedentary life, prophetism and political expediency, collectivism and individualism.

(3) The development of Israel's mentality embodies the association of religious ideas with historical events and personalities.

(4) An understanding of Old Testament religious history requires the delineation of political, economic, social, and religious struggles and tensions.

(5) A proper portrayal of Old Testament history must reveal the inward ideals of the people and the sum total of the external forces brought to bear on Israel as a nation among nations.

(6) Old Testament literature, thought, and history are to be studied in the light of their interrelationships and their connections with culture and society.

(7) Durkheim, Lévy-Bruhl, Weber, and others were great sociologists, but not Old Testament scholars. Causse was the first competent Old Testament scholar to attempt to apply the insights of modern sociology to the cultural history of Israel.

In a class in Old Testament prophecy about the year 1960, I mentioned Causse as a sort of "forgotten man" in English-speaking Old Testament circles, expressing the wish that more about him and his contribution would become available in English. Kimbrough was in that class. He took up the challenge and has devoted a considerable part of his own scholarly work and travels in this country and abroad to understanding and elucidating the contribution of Causse to Old Testament scholarship.

The book here under review is a summation of this effort. It is a book not easily reviewed or digested. Nor is it easily to be faulted; for it fills a gap so much needed that one can only be grateful for the effort that the author has made. For Kimbrough it became a labor of love, yet he did not lose his critical faculty. He not only brings out Causse's many good points and original insights, but also deals realistically with his limitations and oversights. In Chapter Four ("Analysis and Evaluation of Causse's Sociological Method") we learn, e.g., that Causse was not so dependent on Wellhausen and Max Weber as some have claimed. On the other hand, he may have been too dependent on the French sociologists Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl, especially the latter, in some cases where Lévy-Bruhl later revised his own opinions. And of course some of Causse's views are now simply antiquated. Nevertheless, thinks Kimbrough, students of the Old Testament who ignore Causse do so at their own peril, and a good case has been made for this point of view.

—W. F. Stinespring

The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text. Second Edition. C. K. Barrett. Westminster. 1978. 638 pp. $25.00.

History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel. Second Edition, revised and enlarged. J. Louis Martyn. Abingdon. 1979. 176 pp. $8.95.

Barrett's revision of his widely-used commentary has now been published. It looks like a much thicker book, and indeed it is, but not as much thicker as at first appears. The original edition contained 531 pages, as against 638 in this one. The size and format of the printed pages are about the same, although the height of the book in its second edition is slightly reduced, contributing to its much stouter appear-

ance. The entries in the tables of contents, both in the introduction and in the commentary itself, are exactly the same; accordingly, the divisions of the book, and of the Gospel, are also the same. The introductory list of abbreviations, which is in effect a selected bibliography, is per force much longer than in the first edition: 21 grammars and dictionaries as against 18; 20 commentaries on John as against 13; 24 other books and studies on John as against 6; 50 other books on the New Testament and related subjects as against 18; 16 periodicals as against 8. The numbers perhaps say something about the direction as well as the extent of expansion of New Testament scholarship over the past quarter of a century.

While the commentary has not been completely rewritten, there have been numerous additions and emendations, not only in the introduction, where Barrett takes account of major works published over the past quarter of a century, but also scattered throughout the commentary. The great value of the original edition, consisting in the full but concise and accessible notes on the Greek text itself, has been preserved. One might deplore the relative lack of sustained and continuous theological comment, but that characteristic has to do with the plan of the commentary imposed by the series for which it was originally intended, and by which, Barrett now candidly admits ("Preface," vii), it was rejected. (Let all authors who have ever received rejection slips note and take heart!) Other commentaries now available to the English reader amply supply this need (e.g., Bultmann, Raymond Brown, Lindars).

Readers looking for evidence that Barrett has changed his mind on important issues will be disappointed. He writes (viii):

> "Though I have tried to read some at least of the latest books and to learn from them, this Commentary, even in its new state, will seem to many to be old-fashioned. To some of the most modern opinions I do not subscribe. I do not believe that Qumran holds the key to John; I do not believe that it is a Palestinian work, aimed at diaspora Judaism; I do not believe that it is possible to isolate sources, unless perhaps we should describe Mark as a source; I do not believe that John intended to supply us with historically verifiable information regarding the life and teaching of Jesus, and that historical traditions of worth can be disentangled from his interpretative comments. I believe that John does more to interpret the Nag Hammadi texts than they do to interpret John."

As implied above, Barrett continues to believe that John knew at least Mark among the Synoptics.

Among recent works Barrett finds J. Louis Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* particularly worthwhile and insightful: "the best attempt to provide a specific *Sitz im Leben* for the gospel" (p. 93, n.1); "His book has the great merit of going on from literary and historical observations to consider the theological task that John carried out" (p. 138). Quite coincidentally, Martyn's work has also appeared in a second, revised edition at almost the same time as Barrett's (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979). The original edition, published (by Harper & Row) in 1968, had gone out of print.

The revision is not a far-reaching one, although Martyn has taken good advantage of the opportunity to relate his own work to more recent research and discussion. Most of this goes on in footnotes. The principal alteration of the main text has to do with Martyn's abandonment of the suggestion that John 5:1-7:52 constitutes a distinct literary cycle. He nevertheless continues to believe that the two-level drama (time of Jesus, time of the Johannine church),

which he has identified as characteristic of John, is to be found in 5:1-18 and in dramatic elements of chapter 7 (p. 68, n.92).

Martyn's basic thesis that the setting of the Fourth Gospel was a synagogue controversy in which Christ-confessing Jews were expelled because of their inability to recite the Twelfth Benediction, the one against heretics *(minim)*, stands unaltered. His work remains, in my judgment, a most remarkable model of how New Testament data can be correlated with contemporary (in this case Jewish) sources in an imaginative and yet highly disciplined way to illuminate the historical milieu of a gospel and advance the task of exegesis. Certainly Martyn's book has done as much to alter and inform thinking about the Fourth Gospel as any comparable work.

There are some minor flaws in the new edition, e.g. in indexing, and Abingdon has not produced a book as handsome as the original. But the price of $8.95 (against $7.00 for the first edition) represents a genuine saving relative to the rise of book prices in the past decade. Moreover, the inside rear flap of the dust jacket is adorned with a photograph of the distinguished author in a typically relaxed pose, presumably at his Connecticut retreat, an embellishment that more than compensates aesthetically for losses, dictated by economic considerations!

—D. Moody Smith

A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada. Robert T. Handy. Oxford. 1977. 471 pp. $19.95.

Surprisingly, this is the first book by an American church historian to explore the rise and growth of organized Christianity in North America from an inclusive perspective. Previous writers have concentrated their attention upon either the United States or Canada, with the result that the reader in either country failed to get a comprehensive overview of the Christian movement. Thanks to Professor Handy of Union Theological Seminary (New York), we now have available a magnificent account of Christianity as it emerged throughout North America. This welcome achievement reveals the fact that both striking similarities and marked contrasts are reflected in the political, cultural, and ecclesiastical developments of the two neighboring countries.

Although both France and England planted permanent colonies in North America at about the same time, New France grew very slowly. As late as 1755, its residents numbered only 55,000. Yet by that date the colonies to the south had a population of almost 1,500,000, predominantly English. By the opening of the twentieth century, Canada's population totaled about 5,300,000 as against 76,000,000 in the United States. Not until 1867 did Canada achieve the status of a confederation, whereas the States had formed a Union by 1789. The Dominion of Canada was linked to the British Empire, but the United States was entirely autonomous.

The churches in both countries were initially transplants from the Old World, and consequently religious tensions were injected into the American scene from the outset of colonization. As Roman Catholicism dominated the faith of New France, so Protestantism dominated the religious perspective of the British colonies. In both countries, however, the growth of religious pluralism eventually led to the acceptance of the principle of religious liberty.

In their race for overseas possessions, France and England ultimately clashed in a bloody struggle in the New World. That life-and-death encounter took place during the eighteenth century, with Great Britain as the victor. Thus by the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), France lost to the British Hudson's Bay, Newfoundland, and much of Acadia (later renamed Nova Scotia). It was the Treaty of Paris (1763), however, that

marked France's fatal disaster, for by it France ceded to Britain all of Acadia, Cape Breton, Quebec (the French heartland), and virtually all of Louisiana east of the Mississippi River.

Obviously, this drastic political realignment invited the incursion of Protestant forces into Canada and handicapped Catholic efforts there. During the era of the American Revolution, some 30,000 British Loyalists fled to Canada, where they strengthened the Church of England. Meanwhile, other Protestant bodies increased their missionary activities, especially in the maritime provinces. Thus by 1881 four of the largest Protestant families (Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Baptist) comprised more than fifty per cent of the population.

Yet despite the expansion of Canadian Protestantism, Roman Catholics remained the largest single communion, which in 1891 embraced about forty-one per cent of the population, or slightly more than 2,000,000 adherents.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, liberal Protestants in both countries became increasingly active in two dynamic movements: the social gospel, and ecumenical Christianity. Interest in the social gospel led the leading denominations to adopt social creeds, and devotion to ecumenism produced various agencies of interchurch cooperation, such as the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ (1908). The greatest ecumenical achievement during the first quarter of the twentieth century was the formation of the United Church of Canada (1925), which brought together Methodists, a majority of the Presbyterians, and Congregationalists.

Clearly, this is Professor Handy's *magnum opus,* and it promises to be a widely used work over many years. The annotated bibliography is excellent, the index is ample, and the four maps are useful. Happily, the typeface is easy to read, even through aging eyes. Both author and publisher merit hearty congratulations.

—H. Shelton Smith

The Marriage Premise. Nena O'Neill. A Bantam edition, M. Evans and Co. 1978. 205 pp. $2.75.

Nena O'Neill is an anthropologist whose career has focused principally upon research in modern marriage. She and her husband George, also an anthropologist, have co-authored several books, one of which, *Open Marriage: A New Lifestyle for Couples* (1973), was on the best sellers' list for several years and, in my observation, had profound appeal to college students. In fact, in my article, "The Future of Monogamous Marriage: From a Christian Perspective," which appeared in *The Duke Divinity School Review,* Fall, 1978, I gave high praise to the O'Neills' support of monogamous marriage during this transitional era when it is receiving skeptical criticism by some marriage authorities and when at the popular level many young people are experimenting with alternative forms. Especially praiseworthy is the O'Neills' concept of "synergy" which, as I emphasized, could be regarded as the biblical egalitarian vision proclaimed in a secular idiom.

The widespread popular appeal and influence of *Open Marriage,* however, have revealed disturbing interpretations, and I am persuaded that *The Marriage Premise* is a sequel with the primary aim of correcting what the author calls "*mis*interpretations." In a footnote of considerable length— placed in the "Notes and References" section (pp. 202-4)—she points to "widespread misinterpretations" of *Open Marriage* and deplores that "open marriage" has "become a term, not for the new relationship of equality we had described, but for everything from a sexually open marriage to almost everything else,—for the majority it meant whatever they imagined it to be." (I wish these remarks had been placed in the Preface rather than given footnote status at the end of the book, where they will probably not be read by many readers.)

Nevertheless, the contrast of *The Marriage Premise* with *Open Marriage* is considerable and, in my view, significant. My basic conclusion is that all the readers of *Open Marriage* should read this "sequel." The aim of this review is to represent briefly several of these contrasts. Hopefully, this will be helpful to ministers and teachers who have confronted young adults, single or married, who in turn have been unduly influenced by certain extreme points in *Open Marriage*. Such persons would be well advised to read *The Marriage Premise*. In fact, a skillfully guided study course on these two books, in both churches and colleges, would present stimulating and rewarding opportunities for teachers of young adults, whether or not *Open Marriage* had previously been read.

In *Open Marriage* a sharp dichotomy between "closed marriage" or "the old contract demands" and "open marriage" or "the open contract offers" is portrayed graphically at considerable length in the first chapters and constitutes a recurring theme throughout. This dichotomy is notably absent in *The Marriage Premise*, where the author expresses an impressive appreciation of some basic virtues in traditional marriage. In the Preface she proclaims, "In the process of shedding some ideas and myths we (it is not clear to whóm "we" refers) have found that some time-honored premises are more invaluable than ever before." She does, however, follow with this explicit confession: "This book has been, for me, a re-examination and reaffirmation of certain constants in marriage." And she closes the second chapter, entitled "Change," with these words: "As the old order gives way to the new, we are coming to realize that many of the old foundations of marriage are still firm, and that we can build on them." Especially appealing on this point is her chapter (4) on her parents' marriage in the celebration of their "Golden Wedding." Here is a typical statement: "I thanked them now

for what I had once fought against, rebelled against—their way of life, which had seemed so solid and dependable that it was stultifying, so uneventful that it was boring, their adherence to their strict standards. And yet it was just that enduring solidarity they represented that had influenced me the most—It was just that dependability, that capacity for sticking it out that had carried me through many problems and crises." It would be a misrepresentation on my part to imply that the dichotomy in *Open Marriage* completely identified "closed marriage" with traditional marriage and that the author since has experienced a rebirth of appreciation. But I do contend that this dichotomy as presented opened the door to a denigration in the popular reading of certain traditional values and thus led to a serious "misinterpretation."

A second basic contrast, simply pointed to, is the preoccupation in *Open Marriage* with the married couple and the virtual neglect of wider family considerations—extended and societal—vs. the considerable importance given to these considerations in *The Marriage Premise*. See especially chapter 8.

A third and final contrast deals with marriage fidelity. It was *Open Marriage*'s treatment of this subject that opened the floodgate of debate and, more seriously, a "misinterpretation" of the authors' intention by a significant segment of the readers. It was indicated above that Ms. O'Neill explicitly (in a footnote, remember) deplores that "open marriage" has been equated in the popular mind with sexual freedom in marriage, among other "misinterpretations." The O'Neills' treatment of fidelity in *Open Marriage* (see Ch. 15, "Trust," and especially Ch. 16, "Love and Sex Without Jealousy") clearly establishes a quality of relationship between the married partners, called "synergy," which ideally, should extend beyond the couple.

"In an open marriage, in which each partner is secure in his own identity and

trusts in the other, new possibilities for additional relationships exist, and open (as opposed to limited) love can expand to include others. . . . These outside relationships may, of course, include sex. . . . We are not recommending outside sex, but we are not saying that it should be avoided, either. . . . Open marriage is called open for that very reason: the options are there for you to take or leave according to your individual decision" (p. 257).

The question is inevitable: Is the popular usage of open marriage a "misinterpretation"? Indeed, in the very allowance of extramarital sex within a marital relation which assumed the realization of synergy, did they not open the floodgate to all-too-human justification for sexual licence? Of course, from the Christian perspective of the "one-flesh" doctrine other serious questions are provoked.

The point here, however, is that this "misinterpretation" caused the O'Neills to do some rethinking on the subject of sexual fidelity. This is clearly evident in *The Marriage Premise*. It is significant to note that the allowance of extramarital sex upon condition of the realization of synergy is mentioned *nowhere*. Indeed, sexual fidelity, per se, is impressively affirmed (see especially Ch. 15). She claims that her counselling with couples reveals an increasing understanding and practice that sexual fidelity "is to our advantage . . . sexual fidelity is not just a vow in marriage or a moral or religious belief, but a need associated with our deepest emotions and our quest for emotional security." Some couples accept, tolerate or even are permissive about extra affairs and sex, "but those couples are very rare. George and I have found very few in our research for whom this is a long-term viable life-style. . . . basically, for most people, a partner's infidelity elicits deep and upsetting emotions. The assurance of sexual fidelity is still an important and necessary attribute of most marriages and infidelity an extremely threatening situation."

It is apparent to the reader of this review that Ms. O'Neill does not write from a Christian perspective. While one might infer from reading *The Marriage Premise* that she is not even a religious person she explicitly acknowledged in an appreciative manner that religion was a strong factor in the success of her parents' marriage. And it is interesting to note that at the beginning of her chapter on "Time of Our Lives" (9) she begins: "Marriage is a commitment to time together, all kinds of time. When we marry, we do so with the words 'till death do us part'—an assumption of forever."

The point is that while writing as an anthropologist and from a secular perspective her treatment of marriage, on the whole, is remarkably consonant with basic Christian ethical premises. Here and there, from a Christian perspective, the sensitive minister or teacher would challenge certain statements, but the primary reaction, I firmly believe, would be one of appreciation. Young people today are being subjected to and powerfully influenced by secular writers in this field. We must face this reality and search for secular, as well as constructive Christian, sources for recommended reading and for study courses. *The Marriage Premise* should be a high priority for either purpose.

—James H. Phillips

THE
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Foreword

In the spring of 1979 the Women's Center of the Divinity School sponsored a Forum on Feminism in the Church. Our intentions were threefold: to bring women scholars from various areas of theological education to discuss ways in which feminism has shed light on their particular fields of study; to engage faculty and students in dialogues concerning the effects of these perspectives on our theological education; and to move toward a deeper understanding of who we are as women and of our unique contributions to the Church's ministry.

We present here 3 of the 5 lectures delivered at that Forum. Dr. Dorothy Irvin gives archaeological evidence for the ordained ministry of women in the early church. Dr. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza derives from the Biblical evidence a picture of an egalitarian early Christian movement. Finally, Dr. Letty Russell discusses hermeneutics: it is a communal effort, to be done in partnership, and it is an eschatological effort, to be done by looking to God's goal and purpose for life and creation. We hope, with publication of these three lectures to engage you further in this dialogue of partnership.

We are also publishing here a term paper written last December by our sister in Christ, Thaniel Elizabeth Armistead, for Dr. Charles Robinson in CT 229, Tragedy and Christian Faith. Thaniel died soon thereafter. The Memorial Service held for her in the Divinity School was truly a victory celebration to the glory of God. In that service Dr. Jill Raitt read Thaniel's own "last will and testament of faith" to the assembled Body of Christ. We are happy in the knowledge that before this issue of the *Review* comes off the press Thaniel's words will have reached an even wider audience through publication of her paper in the May 7 issue of *The Christian Century,* whose permission for reproduction here is gratefully acknowledged. As Thaniel dwells with the Lord whom she served, the presence of her memory lingers in our grateful hearts. And as her words reach out to others in this life her Christian ministry of witness continues. *Sursam corda!*

—Dale Elizabeth Dealtrey
Women's Co-ordinator, 1979–80

The Ministry of Women in the Early Church: The Archaeological Evidence

by DOROTHY IRVIN

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There are basically two types of sources for the study of the ordination of women in the early church. The first, most commonly used, is written material—texts. The second is archaeological material, such as inscriptions, frescoes, and mosaics. Each type of material has advantages and disadvantages. Texts, being more verbose, appear to give us more information than pictures and short tombstone or votive inscriptions. But the latter do have one significant advantage over the manuscripts, and that is that they reflect the actual practice of the early Christian community. Unlike the Talmud, the New Testament, or the writings of the early Christian theologians, they do not contain instruction, they are not arguments for or against, they contain no ideology, do not justify or condemn any particular practice, do not give reasons, or call on God to insure conformity. They simply tell what was being done. A further value is that they are not subject to alteration in the course of being handed on (as are the texts).[1] It is the witness of these sources which will be examined here.

Inscriptions attesting to the titles of women as leaders in church or synagogue begin in the last pre-Christian centuries. Whether the inscriptions originate in a Jewish or Christian community is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to decide as the transition was not in itself abrupt, or hostile. The term "synagogue" in this period can refer equally well to a Jewish or Christian gathering; it is not subject to later distinctions.

It is generally acknowledged that women did not have the same access to study and to synagogue leadership as did men. Synagogue leaders were known by the titles in Greek of *presbyteros*, *pater synagōgēs,* or *archisynagōgos.* A number of inscriptions from East to West refer to women who bore these titles.

Archisynagōgos

A tomb inscription in Smyrna, dating from the third century or later, tells us who built a certain tomb and who may be buried there. "Rufina, the Jewish woman, *archisynagōgos,* built this tomb for her freed slaves and the slaves raised in her household. No one else may bury there . . ." The inscription goes on to tell what

the fine is for any unauthorized person who buries there, and to say that a copy of this inscription has been deposed in the public records office.[2]

A stele from the sixth century was found at Myndos in the Agean, in the excavated ruins of a building which started out as a synagogue and later became a church. The inscription had been set up, just like plaques in churches today, to record the names of those who contributed to the construction or expansion or repair of the building. The Myndos stele attests the donation of "Theopempta, *archisynagōgos,* and her son Eusebius." The name Theopempta is a woman's name, and the pronoun "her" likewise shows that it is a woman who bears here the title of "leader of the synagogue."[3]

Historians commenting on finding the titles of synagogue leader or *presbytera* given to women explain that the title cannot really refer to the women whose name it appears with, since women were not permitted to occupy such positions of leadership.[4] Such a circular argument would be inadmissible in discussions of other questions, but seems to have been generally accepted here. This is an important argument to consider, since it will reappear when the specifically Christian title of bishop is seen to be applied to women.

The main point in favor of this contention is that Roman women did sometimes take the title of their husbands' civic office. The title, however, was not merely honorary, since their power to make decisions and use his seal during his absence or other emergency was acknowledged.

Against this explanation as the only possible meaning for the inscriptions described above the following points are important:

1) Since these inscriptions date from a period before the use of family surnames as we know them today, men mentioned in the inscriptions are identified as "son of" and women by, in addition to a first name, the name of a male relative, for example "daughter of," "wife of," or sometimes "mother of." It is not a matter of indifference which it is. An unmarried woman is identified as "daughter of." A married woman, for a number of economic and social reasons, belongs nearly always to the household of her husband rather than father, and her "surname" is given as "wife of." A widow is no longer "wife of." She may be identified as "mother of" or may have some other descriptive phrase after her first name to set her apart from others having the same first name. Glancing back quickly at the inscriptions listed above, we see that the form of the women's names is not the form of the "surname" for a married women; on the contrary, the form of the

name is such that we can see that they do not have a living husband. This is supported by another bit of internal evidence, as follows.

2) A woman, in the Graeco-Roman world, would not ordinarily have had, at her own disposal, the means to make a donation to the expansion of a synagogue, or to build a tomb for her slaves. She would not have owned slaves. Women ordinarily did not inherit, as family property was passed on from father to son. This does not mean that women *could* not inherit, only that they ordinarily did not. A man could, in his will, leave money and property to his wife or daughter, if he wished, and in such a case, a woman did have at her own disposal property to administer or donate. Other early Jewish and Christian inscriptions give additional examples of women who had money at their own disposal to donate to their synagogue.[5] In an inscription from Phocaea in Ionia, Tation built a synagogue *ek tōn idiōn,* "out of her own money," and the grateful community rewarded her with a crown of gold and the right of *proedria,* that is, the right of sitting up front in a place of honor during services.

Turning over a sum of money for such a large construction project as a synagogue or family tomb was a legal act of considerable financial significance, and the inscription furnishes an attestation of what was going on. In cases in which a woman had her own money to administer, she was acting as a legal person when she turned it over to another proprietor (such as the synagogue), or when she built with it. Any title attached to her name in such a context is *her* title because it serves to identify *her* as the one who is performing a legal act. This is why a copy of Rufina's tomb inscription has been put on record in the public archives. Rufina the *archisynagōgos* is the one who is authorized to bury in the tomb.

We will see further examples of how this legal principle operated in early Christian inscriptions. Let us also keep in mind that religious leadership for women is sometimes connected with their financial support of a religious community, as in the case of the *archisynagōgos* Theopempta and her contribution to her synagogue, Tation with her right of *proedria,* or the women owners and donors of the early Christian house churches.

Pater synagōgēs:

Veturia Paucla, according to her Roman tombstone, died at the age of 86 and a half. She had been a proselyte for 16 years, continues the inscription, and under the name of Sara was the "mater" of two synagogues, that of *Campus* (Field of Mars) and that of *Volumnius.*[6]

Presbytera

Two Greek-language tombstones cited by Frey run as follows: "The tomb of Veronica (or approximately that name) the presbyter (feminine gentitive) and daughter of Joses."[7] "The tomb of Faustina the presbyter (feminine gentive). Shalom."[8]

The foregoing are among the clearest of the inscriptions attesting to women as bearing these titles in Judaism, Jewish Christianity, or early Christianity. There are other examples, less explicit and sometimes much more interesting.

Before going on to other materials, a final question might be asked: If these women bear their titles in their own right, how are the wives of men with such titles referred to when they (the wives) are buried? Here we must glance back at the discussion of the "surnames" commonly used for women; married women are identified by the name of the husband, the *sumbios* of, the *gunē* of, the *coniux* of. An example of a husband with title is the Jaffa tomb inscription of "Rebecca, wife of Rufinus, the messenger." Here the title is attached to the name of the husband, not given to the wife as an "honorary" title. This is very clear in the original Greek because "messenger" is in the masculine genitive, and agrees with Rufinus.[9]

These epigraphical traditions in the Mediterranean world remain standard for centuries. A late example (Plate I, p. 80) is the easily seen mosaic of "Theodora Episcopa" above the east doorway of the Zeno chapel in the Basilica of St. Praxedis in Rome. The mosaic portrays four female heads; the three on the right are the Virgin Mary between St. Pudentiana and St. Praxedis, daughters of a Roman family who endowed the first church on this site. The figure on the left, wearing the square halo, is a person whom we might not otherwise know, so she has been identified by a mosaic title. The name running down the side is "Theodora" with the last two letters broken away at some time in the past. The title across the top is *episcopa,* the grammatically feminine form of bishop. She has been honored with a square halo, showing that she was still alive at the time the mosaic was made. Although the inscription consists only of her name and title, her appearance with the two saints named above, as well as the fact that there is not much variation in the function of such synagogue and church inscriptions throughout the ancient world for many centuries, make it clear that she is shown here as one whose contributions went to repair or expand the church which had originally been founded by St. Praxedis. This is borne out in all probability by the Liber Pontificalis, which attributes the reconstruction of this church to

PLATE I. Mosaic of Episcopa Theodora in the Basilica of St. Praxedis, Rome (ninth century)

Pope Paschal I, the son of Episcopa Theodora, in the ninth century.[10]

As in the case of the inscriptions naming a woman as *archisynagōgos,* the Christian title *episcopa* has been explained as meaning "bishop's wife." The reason for this is not that we know that these early Christian women had husbands who were bishops, for there is not nearly so much supporting interpretive material attached to the brief inscriptional references, but that historians do not wish to think that women in the early church held this office. In the case of the Episcopa Theodora, this explanation is even less convincing than usual, for the coif of her habit makes it clear that she is not married.

Theodora is not the only *episcopa* known from the inscriptions. Joan Morris gives several examples, including (in case anyone should have a doubt about what sex the bishop was) the tomb inscription of an "(hono)rabilis femina episcopa," an "(hono)rable woman bishop."[11]

To pass from women as bearing the titles of ordained ministers to women performing the duties of ordained ministers, let us take up the question of the Eucharist, around which post-Tridentine theology has centered as being the defining feature of the priesthood.

The catacombs of Rome furnish much interesting material on this point, but only part of it will be examined here. The eucharistic frescoes of the late first and second centuries will be considered, but not the "agape" frescoes of the fourth century, as the theological place of the latter does not seem easy to ascertain; in addition they are different from the early ones, and not relevant here.

That the scenes identified as eucharistic by the discoverer, Josef Wilpert,[12] at the turn of the century, are truly eucharistic, has never, as far as I know, been in doubt. Their distinguishing feature is the seven baskets lined up to the right and to the left of the central scene. These bread baskets, reminding us of the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, are the eucharistic symbol of the early church.

And of the women in the Priscilla fresco "Fractio Panis" (Plate II, p. 82) who recline with right hands outstretched over the eucharistic elements, no one has yet suggested that their husbands are the true celebrants.

The controversy here—and there has been very little—has centered about whether the figures represent women. In this red-background fresco, similar to those in Pompeii of the same period, it is beyond cavil that most of the figures are female. One wears a

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PLATE II. "Fractio Panis" fresco in the catacombs of St. Priscilla, Rome (end of first century)

veil, and they are all characterized by upswept hair, slender neck with sloping shoulders, and a hint of earrings. The arrangement of the hair, in fact, in comparison with datable coins depicting emperors' wives, has been an important factor in dating this fresco to the end of the first century AD, that is, to a time when the New Testament had not yet been completed. This particular scene is of immense value as an extremely early testimony to the eucharist, or rather, to one type of eucharist. This piece of catacomb religious art does not show us the community *agapē*, but rather another usage, the eucharistic vigil. It is depicted in the catacombs because that is where this vigil was held on the anniversery of the death of a Christian. It seems to have included passing the night in the burial place, and celebrating the eucharist there in memory of the deceased. It was a eucharist only, not a full meal, and that is why there is no other food on the table.

Wilpert named this fresco the "Fractio Panis" because it seemed clear that the figure at the left end of the elbow cushion who is shown sitting up rather than reclining like the other six people, has both hands outstretched and has been painted at the very moment of the breaking of the bread, while several others have the right hand outstretched over the eucharistic elements on the table in what should probably be understood as the significant gesture of concelebration.

This end figure, then, has been understood to be the principal celebrant, and Wilpert believed that it had a beard.[13] This is a difficult point to be sure of, as can be imagined after reading Wilpert's description of his work in cleaning the encrusted mud and even stalactites from the surface of these ancient and fragile paintings. There is no beard there now. The arrangement of the hair seems to be the same as that of the other definitely female figures, but it is the skirt length that is determinative. Skirt length for men at this period, as can be seen by comparison with other catacomb and Pompeiian frescoes, was, for a working man, knee length or slightly shorter—top of kneecap—while "white collar" length was below the knee, to the top of the calf. Women's skirts were ankle length; on a standing figure they came to within an inch or two of the ground. The skirt of the left end person can be clearly seen, in the best photographs, to cover the calf, whose outline through the cloth is indicated, and to gather in a fold around the ankle.[14] Thus the artist intended to paint here a woman.

No figure in this scene is clearly masculine, yet most are unmistakably feminine. Do we have here a mixed group? I believe not. There are, as mentioned above, several similar eucharistic scenes from this early period. In the other scenes the participants, always

seven in number, are all men. These eucharistic scenes show us that all-night cemetery vigils were held by small groups in which all the members were of the same sex (undoubtedly the friends of the deceased of the same sex) and that they should all be of the same sex is easy to understand in view of what we know about the early Christian concern with moral standards, and particularly the seemly conduct of their religious gatherings in the eyes of unbelievers. Thus in the "Fractio Panis" fresco, all the participants, including the principal and other celebrants, must be women.

The final objection made against the use of archaeological (and textual) material which witnesses to the ordained ministry of women in the early church is that all these women must be heretical because the Montanists are known to have ordained women. This is a logical fallacy. But aside from that, I have not been able to find archaeological material that shows evidence of stemming from heretical groups, although of course those of us who many centuries later study this question are in the superior position of knowing which groups were heretical—something that contemporaries could not always be quite so sure of. Still, on the question of the ordination of women, it has not been suggested that Episcopa Theodora, mother of Pope Paschal I in the ninth century, was a heretic of any sort, and the "Fractio Panis" fresco is quite orthodox, that catacomb still being a place of pilgrimage today. For the inscriptions, one would have to decide, on other grounds, on the orthodoxy of each one individually; I think it unlikely that every one, or even a substantial proportion of them, could be discounted on that basis.

This paper has not handled the sources usually appealed to in discussing the question of the ministry of women in the early church. There has been no reference to the activities of the women who followed Jesus, the women who announced the resurrection, to the apostle Junia in Romans 16:7[15] or to the women mentioned in Acts and the epistles as having worked so hard to spread Christianity. There has been no mention of deaconesses in East or West. Of the archaeological material available and relevant to the question, only a fraction has been presented. There has also been no reference here to the patristic texts commonly reviewed in this discussion,[16] or to the canons of early Councils which, taken in conjunction with the archaeological material, shed much light on the ordained ministry of women in the early church.

For later periods, the findings of J. Schäfer concerning the canonesses, women clerics attached to European cathedrals in the middle ages, have not been utilized here or elsewhere. Other important information for the middle ages is given by J. Morris in her careful

study of the manuscripts and other material relating to abbesses and to Pope Joan. I. Raming's thorough work on the history of canon law prohibition of the ordination of women, like the two previous works, helps to document women's gradual exclusion from ordained ministry, and like the other works, has not been accorded the attention that such careful study of original sources for this question should have.

It is to be hoped that in the continuing discussion of the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate, "Tradition" will be given the weight so often claimed for it within Catholicism.

ENDNOTES

1. Manuscript changes which diminished women's participation in church life are noted by Raming, (in English) 9, and Morris, "Pope Joan."

2. Frey, II, no. 741. S. Reinach, "Inscription grecque de Smyrne. La juive Rufina." *Revue des études juives* 7, 1883, 161-166.

3. Frey, II, no. 756. T. Reinach, "La pierre de Myndos," *Revue des études juives* 42, 1901, 1-6.

4. For example, Frey and E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi.* 3 vols. Leipzig, 1901. Reprinted Hildesheim, New York: George Olms Verlag, 1970. II, 511-12. III, 88. Followed by L. Swidler, *Women in Judaism: The Status of Women in Formative Judaism,* Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1976. 92-93.

5. Frey II, no. 740. Also nos. 762 and 763, ek tēs idíās proichós, "out of her own dowry." No. 766, ek tōn idiōn kai tōn sunkatathemenōn chrēmasin, "out of their own means and out of the contributions." Lk 8:3 ek tōn huparchontōn autais, "out of their (f.) own means."

6. Frey I, no. 523. Apparently a variant of this title is no. 606, "alexan(d)ra pateressa."

7. Frey I, no. 581.

8. Frey I, no. 597.

9. Frey II, no. 949.

10. Guidebook to the Basilica of St. Praxedis. If we ask why Pope Paschal I picked this church to restore, it seems to make good sense for him to help his mother restore the church where she was bishop, St. Praxedis being a titular church.

11. Morris, 6-7.

12. Wilpert, Plates, Part 1, pl. 15, 1, 2. 41, 1.

13. Although I have compared as many photographs as I can find, both early and recent, black-and-white and colored, I cannot see a beard. On the contrary, the chin area, if anything, is lighter in color than its surroundings, as if it had been scraped. Joan Morris, who has seen the original, describes the head as having the appearance of having been "sandpapered down."

14. I have experimented to see whether a skirt of below-the-knee or top-of-calf length falls in a fold around the ankles when the person sits down. Of course not. Joan Morris said (p. 8) on the basis of skirt length that this person was a woman.

15. Brooten, "Junia."

16. A recent survey is the not very careful one of R. Gryson, *Le ministère des femmes dans l'ancien église.* Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1972. In English, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church,* Washington: Liturgical Press, 1976.

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The Biblical Roots for the Discipleship of Equals*

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In his book *Roots* Alex Haley traces the history of his own people from its slave days to his grandparents and parents. He ends the book by saying: "I feel that they (his ancestors) do watch and guide, and I also feel that they join me in the hope that this story of our people can help to alleviate the legacies of the fact that preponderantly the histories have been written by the winners." Similarly, feminist writers have pointed ouṭ that history is rightly called "his story" recorded and interpreted from the perspective of cultural and religious male dominance or from a patriarchal point of view. Feminist writers have therefore declared Biblical history to be totally partriarchal and sexist. It ignores women's experience, speaks of God as "he," shows women in subordinate position to men and justifies male supremacy and domination. Therefore, they argue, women should move beyond the boundaries of sexist religion and reject its patriarchal Biblical revelation. However, such a radical separatist stance overlooks the fact that the Bible still has a great religious authority for many women and for Western culture and society. Any social or cultural revolution has therefore to deal with the Biblical story. History is never discarded. It either tyrannizes us as a fate or it is transformed into a new liberating future.

As in the last century so also today the Bible is used against the movement for the equality of women in society and the churches. Whenever women protest against the political discrimination and civil degradation of women; or whenever we argue against the

Since feminist discussions evoke not only intellectual but even more often emotional responses, it is necessary to define the language which is used here. I understand "patriarchalism" in the sense of a social system maintaining male dominance and privilege based on female submission and marginality. The word "sexism" was coined by analogy to "racism." It denotes all those attitudes and actions which relegate women to a secondary and inferior status. "Feminism" is a liberation movement that seeks to abolish all structures of exploitation and stereotypes based on sex and gender. For a more extensive documentation cf. my articles: "Feminist Theology as a Critical Theology of Liberation," *Theological Studies* 36 (*1975*) 605-626; "The Twelve" and "Apostleship of Woman in Early Christianity," in A. & L. Swidler, *Women Priests* (New York: 1976) 114-122, 135-140; "Women in the Pre-Pauline and Pauline Churches," *USQR* 33 (1978) 153-166; "Word, Spirit, and Power: Women in Early Christian Communities," in McLaughlin/R.R. Ruether (eds.), *Women of the Spirit* (Simon and Schuster, 1979).

inequality in the churches, we are referred to the Bible, where—
we are told—the subordination of women was divinely revealed
and ordained: woman was created after man, she brought death
and sin into the world, she is not the image of God, and therefore
she has to be submissive and to work her salvation by bearing
children, but not by teaching and having authority over men.
Some "liberals" reject outright patriarchal oppression and sub-
mission of women but uphold an "equal but different" or "two
human nature" concept, maintaining that the Bible teaches the
creational functional difference between women and men with-
out denying their human equality. The patriarchal aspects of the
Biblical story are invoked by anti-ERA groups, by various funda-
mentalists, and by the cultural Total Woman's Movement, which
not only claims that the subordination of women to men is re-
vealed in the Bible but also affirms that women can achieve hap-
piness only if they live according to this understanding of the
Biblical teachings of womanhood.

Religious and cultural opposition against women's equality in
society and religion appeals, however, to outdated unscientific
understandings of the Bible. Three misconceptions of the Bible
are operative in such polemic. *First,* it may be assumed that every
word in the Bible is directly inspired and the explicit word of God.
As Holy Scripture the Bible functions as an oracle which provides
timeless, revealed truth and answers to *our* questions and prob-
lems. Because Divine Revelation is deposited in Holy Scripture,
women should not demand equality. A *second* approach would not
accept this first more fundamentalist understanding of the Bible,
but nevertheless maintains that the Bible includes proof-texts for
timeless moral principles of Christian behavior and lifestyle. Thus,
for example, since Paul was against homosexuals, it is morally
inappropriate to grant them civil rights. A *third* understanding
does not deny that the Bible is God's word in human culturally
conditioned language addressed to specific cultural-historical sit-
uations, but it maintains that the Bible is an historically accurate
account of what actually has happened. This perspective is based
not so much on an outdated understanding of Biblical Revelation
as on an unscientific definition of history and historiography.

However, Biblical scholars have amply demonstrated that the
Biblical authors—like other ancient authors—did not intend to
write reports of historical facticity or history in the modern sense
of "what actually happened." The New Testament writers were
concerned to point out the meaning and importance of what they
believed Jesus and his movement were all about. They did not
write as antiquarians but as pastoral theologians. They wrote for

the Christian communities of their own time, and they addressed the theological questions and parochical problems of their contemporaries. They selected from the rich flow of traditions about Jesus those stories and sayings that appeared to be significant for their own faith and community. How they did this can be seen for instance from the way that Mt and Lk incorporated into their own Gospel-stories the Gospel account of Mk. Since the NT authors, like those of the Hebrew Bible, selected traditional materials, stories and sayings for their own theological purpose, we must assume that many stories and words of Jesus and of the earliest communities have been lost.

I. The Patriarchal Cultural Impact on the Biblical Writers

Since there is no question that the NT writers and communities lived within a patriarchal culture and society, they must have attempted very early to make the Christian message acceptable to people in the Greco-Roman world and to defend it against attacks from the outside. For instance, Paul already argues that in the Christian worship assembly everything should happen in decency and order so that outsiders would not reject the Christians as crazy enthusiasts. The Post-pauline writings formulate the rules for the Christian household and admonish slaves and wives to be submissive to their masters and husbands because they wanted to prove that the Christians were not enemies of the Roman political order but that they supported it.

Like other religions from the East, especially Judaism and the cult of Isis, the Christians had to face the accusation that they upset the traditional order of the household and thus the Roman social order. Whenever the Isis-cult, the Jews or the Christians made converts, especially among slaves and rich women, they were accused of reversing or corrupting Greco-Roman social conventions and household structures. Such a conversion accepted socially powerless people as equal members within the new community. Therefore, the model of the patriarchal household soon had to become also the model for the structuring and organization of the church. The Pastoral epistles not only demand that women should not have authority over men but also postulate that the bishop should have proven himself capable of ruling his own household which included women, children and slaves. Therefore, the injuctions for women to behave decently and to be submissive to their husbands were formulated as a political argument to show that the Christian community did not undermine the Patriarchal-social Greco-Roman order. For example, Acts reports that Paul and Silas were accused before the magistrates of

Philippi because they had created a great disturbance in the city and because they had advocated "customs . . . illegal for us Romans to adopt and follow" (Acts 16:21). It is interesting to note that this accusation is made by the owners of a slave-girl who "was possessed by an oracular spirit, who brought large profits to her owners by telling fortunes," and whom Paul had healed (16:16). Moreover, the passage indicates that the Christian missionaries had addressed foremost the women of the town and had converted the rich merchant Lydia of Thyatira and her whole household. We can also learn from the study of the Christian apologists of the 2nd century that the Christians were ridiculed as belonging to an effeminate religion and as basing their faith on the witness of hysterical women.

If we take into account the social-political circumstances of the time and the apologetic interests of the NT authors, we can see that the injunctions for women to be submissive, decent, and silent are not primarily due to a misogynist attitude of the authors or to timeless divine sexist Revelation, but rather that they reflect the political-societal order of the time. Moreover, since it is obvious that the NT authors were not interested in publicly extolling women's and slaves' equal participation within the community, we can assume that they transmit only a fraction of the possibly rich traditions on the role of women in the early Christian Movement. Most of the genuine Christian her-story is therefore probably lost and has to be sifted out from the patriarchal records of the NT authors themselves. It is therefore remarkable that *not one story or statement is transmitted in which Jesus demands the cultural adaptation of women,* although the Gospels are written at a time when other NT writers clearly attempt to adapt the role of women within the Christian community to that of their patriarchal society.

II. Androcentric Cultural Interpretation of the Bible

However, we must also note that a patriarchal cultural framework not only influenced the traditioning and writing of the early Christian stories and injunctions but still determines scholarly and popular interpretations of the NT today. Insofar as historiography in general and Biblical interpretation in particular presents a selective view of the past, its scope is not only limited by the extant sources but is also shaped by the interests and perspectives of the present. As contemporary societal-cultural perspectives shift, historians' perceptions and selections of what was important in the past and is worthwhile studying today also shift. Historians are not able to abstract from their presuppositions, ideologies and the interests of the power-structures determining the questions

and models with which they assemble the accessible information. The reconstruction and understanding of the past is never determined solely by so-called historical facts but always also by the presuppositions and interests of historians whose methodological approaches are decisively influenced by personal experiences and social mythologies.

Feminist scholars have rightly pointed out that historians study historical sources in general and Biblical texts in particular from a patriarchal perspective. Our Western conceptual framework and historical paradigm is determined by the understanding that humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous self-determining person. He is the subject, the absolute. She is the other. This conceptual framework functions as a social mythology that determines women's and men's socialization and self-perceptions. It marginalizes women and justifies the present structures of power that make women to be the weaker, "second" sex. Insofar as Biblical scholars single out the "role of women" as a special problem, they reflect their own cultural, androcentric perspective according to which male existence is the standard expression of human existence and Christian history. In such an androcentric paradigm only the role of women becomes a special historical problem while the androcentric presuppositions of such an historiography remain unexamined.

Since academic and popular interpretations of the Bible share in the androcentric paradigm of Western culture, they perceive the history of the early church according to the model of male dominance that marginalizes women. This becomes evident when we analyze the presuppositions underlying the study of women in early Christianity.

First: Such studies generally presuppose that men have initiated the early Christian missionary movement and that only men had leadership in it. The discussions of discipleship, apostleship, church order, worship or missionary activity tacitly assume that these leadership functions were exercised by males only. In analyzing I Cor 11:2-16 and 14:33b-36, exegetes neglect to place these texts into their historical situation and their immediate context. Instead, they assume that only these texts speak about women, whereas the rest of chapters 11-14 deals with male prophets and enthusiasts. In a similar fashion they characterize the information which the "people of Chloe" gave to Paul as gossip. The "people of Chloe" are not considered as her followers or associates but as her slaves, although we find a similar genitive construction in the immediate context, where Paul speaks of the

different parties that claim different apostles as their spiritual leaders (ICor 1:1ff). Another example of such an androcentric interpretation is the understanding that Rom 16:7 refers to two male apostles, although Junia or Julia was a common female name of the time and patristic exegesis acknowledged that the passage refers to a woman apostle. Because of the unquestioned presupposition that the early church was a "man's church" such androcentric studies understand the women mentioned in the Pauline letters as helpers of the apostles who supported especially Paul in his missionary work. This andronocentric model has no room for the alternative possibility that women are missionaries and leaders of churches *before* Paul and on the same level with Paul. It could well be that Paul had no other option than to work with women whose leadership was already well established in the pre-Pauline and Pauline churches.

Second: In such an androcentric model masculine terminology is understood in a twofold way: as generic and as gender specific. On the one hand, most exegetes would agree that standard masculine terms such as "elect," "saints," "brothers" or "sons" do not designate males over against females but apply to all members of the Christian community. Masculine language in these instances is not used in a gender specific but in a generic, inclusive way. On the other hand, when discussing leadership titles such as "apostles," "prophets" or "teachers," exegetes assume that these titles apply to men only, although we have instances in the NT literature where such masculine titles are applied to a women. For instance, Rom 16:1f. characterizes Phoebe by the masculine form of the title *diakonos,* and Tit 2:3 calls the "old woman" *kalodidaskalous.* Therefore, we can assume that NT androcentric language on the whole is inclusive of women until proven otherwise.

Third: Androcentric interpretations still assume that the available information on women in early Christianity reflects the actual situation and roles women had in the nascent church, although NT scholarship generally recognizes that the NT authors do not give us accurate historical information about the life of Jesus or about the earliest communities. Source-and-redaction-critical studies have demonstrated that the NT writers did not incorporate all available information into their works, but that they selected the materials according to their own theological purposes. A few examples for such an androcentric traditioning process should suffice. Paul's letters refer to women as comissionaries in the early Christian movement, whereas Acts mentions only the contributions of wealthy women as patronesses and does not picture women as missionaries. Although all four Gospels

know of Mary Magdalene as the first witness to the resurrection, Paul does not list any woman among the resurrection witnesses. The Fourth Gospel claims that a woman had an important role in the beginnings of the Samaritan mission (Jn 4:4-42), whereas Acts mentions Philip as the first missionary in Samaria (Acts 8:4-13). Since the NT authors write from an androcentric point of view and select their information accordingly, we can conjecture that they transmit only a small fraction of the information on women available to them. Therefore, the spare NT references to women does not at all adequately reflect women's actual roles and contributions to the history of early Christianity. They allow us, however, a glimpse of the possibly rich traditions which we have lost.

III. The Early Christian Movement—a Countercultural-Religious Movement

One could argue that such an androcentric interpretation of the Bible is methodologically appropriate because early Christianity mirrored its patriarchal culture and thus was in its very beginnings androcentric. However, the Bible transmits not only stories and injunctions that reflect its patriarchal cultural structures but also texts that are critical of such patriarchal-androcentric structures. Studies of the Jesus-movement in the Greco-Roman world have shown that Jesus and the earliest communities were sociologically speaking a culturally and religiously deviant group—in this respect similar to other sectarian groups of the time. As a small counter-cultural religious group and thereby as alienated from its society and religion, the earliest Christian movement was by definition egalitarian and interpersonal.

The circle of followers around Jesus did not belong to the establishment of its society or religion. It was a group of outsiders who did not accept the patriarchal values and hierarchical institutions of their society, but often stood in opposition to them. Jesus and his disciples did not live an ascetic life-style as did John the Baptist and his group. They rejected the purity laws of Jewish religion and attracted the outcasts of their society as well as those who for various reasons were ostracized from their religious community. In distinction from the community at Qumran or the Pharisees, the Jesus-movement in Palestine was not an exclusive but rather an inclusive group. Jesus did not call into his discipleship the righteous, pious or highly influential persons of the community but invited those who did not belong—tax collectors, sinners, cripples, and women. He promised God's kingdom not to the rich, the established and the pious, but to the poor, the destitute and the prostitutes. This inclusive character of Jesus's mes-

sage and movement made it possible for women to become Jesus' disciples. All four Gospels note that women were found in the fellowship of Jesus and that they were the most faithful and courageous of all his disciples (cf. Mk 14:60,15:40f par.).

According to all four Gospel stories, women were the primary apostolic witnesses for the fundamental events of early Christian faith. They were eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry, suffering, death and burial. They were told the Easter message first, and then sent to the male disciples to proclaim the resurrection. The fact that women were the primary witnesses and warrantors of Christian faith proves true even where we apply to the Gospel texts the criteria developed by historical critical scholarship to demonstrate the historical authenticity of Biblical information. This fact could not have been imagined in Judaism or invented by the early church. The opposite is true. All four Gospels attempt to downplay the fact that women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. Since the Gospels do not leave these women anonymous but identify them by name, they must have played an important role in the Jesus-movement in Palestine. Outstanding among them appears to have been Mary of Magdala whose name all four Gospels transmit and who only by later Church tradition was identified with the sinner who washed Jesus' feet. In the 2nd and 3rd century Christian groups appeal to her as warrantor of divine revelation and apostolic tradition, as other groups appeal to Peter, Thomas or Andreas as their apostolic authority.

The inclusive egalitarian character of the Jesus-movement made it possible later to invite Gentiles of all nations into the Christian community which transcended Jewish as well as Hellenisitc cultural and religious boundaries. In this new community status distinctions were abolished and neither fixed structures nor institutionalized leadership was present. These Christians understood themselves as the eschatological community and the representatives of the "new creation." They all had received the Holy Spirit to proclaim the great deeds of God in Jesus Christ. This witness of the Christians, according to most of the New Testament writings, had to be proved and verified through the "walking in the Spirit" or through the praxis of agape-love. "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:25f) were not "feminine" values but the "fruits" of the new life in the Spirit.

The inclusive egalitarian community of disciples understood itself in kinship terms. It is the new *communitas,* the new family that radically changes the personal ties to the original family and questions assigned family roles. One's primary logalty is no longer

to the family, for the community has taken its place as the locus of primary allegiance. This aspect of the egalitarian Christian *communitas* has far reaching consequences for the understanding of women's role. Women, as men, are no longer defined by their family roles but by their new allegiance to the community. Prisca is usually mentioned before her husband Aquila because she is not defined by her relationship to him but by her own missionary activity. Junia, together with Andronicus, is referred to in Rom 16:7 not because of her status as "wife" but because the couple was "outstanding among the apostles." Indeed, most women mentioned in the Pauline letters are not identified by their family roles. We do not know for instance the marital status of women like Phoebe, Mary, Euodia or Tryphena. That discipleship replaces old family ties and roles is most evident in the Synoptic tradition. When Jesus' family comes to see him, according to Mk 3:31-34, Jesus points to those gathered around him as his new family. "Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister and mother" (3:25). The earliest traditions, therefore, demand that the disciples of Jesus give up everything, that they neglect traditional family ties and even "hate" their own relatives.

It is debated whether the radicalism of the Jesus-movement in Palestine was assimilated by the earliest urban Hellenistic congregations into a family-style love-patriarchalism in which the societal distinctions survived in a softer, milder form. Yet it is doubtful whether the patriarchal household codes of the Pauline literature can be adduced to establish such a "love-patriarchalism" for the initial stage of the early Christian missionary movement in the Hellenistic urban centers. Egalitarian models of community organization are found in collegia or cult-association of the time which often accorded slaves and women equal standing. The various references of the Pauline letters to leading women in early Christian communities suggest that the patriarchal demands for sub-ordination were not yet operative in the urban Hellenistic congregations before Paul, but were probably developed later to push women back into traditional cultural feminine roles.

Paul's letters indicate that women were among the most prominent missionaries and leaders of these Hellenistic urban communities. The Pauline literature mentions that women such as Prisca, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphose, Persis, Euodia and Syntyche were missionary co-workers and co-laborers before and with Paul, but gives no indication that these women were dependent on Paul or subordinated to him. The Pauline letters apply the missionary leadership titles "co-workers," "brother/sister," "diakonos" and "apostle" to women as well as to men. Such women as Prisca,

Nympha and Lydia played important roles in founding, sustaining, promoting and leading house-churches. Since the house-churches were the place where the Christian community gathered, celebrated the Lord's supper, and preached the "good news," no reason exists to assume that women did not also preside at these worship gatherings of the community. Paul takes it for granted that women were publicly praying and speaking as prophets or glossolalists in such worship assemblies. According to Rom 16:1f Phoebe was such an official minister and leader of the church at Cenchreae and had great authority in the early Christian movement.

If the leadership functions and titles of women in the earliest Hellenistic missionary communities are compared with the ministry of the later deaconesses then it is evident that their authority and function was not restricted to the ministry to women and was not yet based on ascetic considerations. From I Cor 9:5 it can be concluded that the missionary couples Prisca and Aquila, and Andronicus and Junia, were not exceptions among the early Christian missionaries but that they and many other early Christian missionaries travelled as husband-wife teams. When Paul stresses celibacy as the best pre-condition for missionary work, he expresses his own opinion, but does not concur with the practice of the early missionary community.

Such a leadership of women in the pre-Pauline and Pauline missionary churches was legitimized by the vision of community expressed in Gal 3:28. In the Christian community all distinctions of race, religion, class, and gender are abolished. All members are equal and one in Christ. Gal 3:28 is probably a traditional baptismal formula which Paul quoted in this letter in order to support his view that there is no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile in the Christian community. This pre-Pauline baptismal formula expressed the self-understanding of the newly initiated Christians over against the societal-religious differences accepted in the Greco-Roman culture of the time. It was a rhetorical commonplace that the Hellenistic man was grateful that he was born a human being and not a beast, a Greek and not a Barbarian, a man and not a woman. This pattern seems to have been adopted by Judaism and found its way into the synagogue liturgy. Three times daily the Jew thanked God that he did not create him a Gentile, a slave or a woman. In contrast to this cultural-religious pattern shared by Hellenists and Jews alike, the Christians affirmed at their baptism that all cultural-religious differences were abolished among them.

It is important to note that this baptismal formula does not yet reflect the notion of unification based on androcentric pespective found in later gnostic writings. According to various gnostic texts, to become a disciple means for a woman to become "male" and "like man" because the male principle stands for the heavenly, divine realm while the female principle is inferior and secondary. On the contrary, Gal 3:38 does not extoll maleness as the standard and form of the new life but rather glorifies Jesus Christ, in whose body—the church—male and female gender roles are transcended. Since the pair "Jew and Greek," as well as "free and slave," indicates the abolition of cultural-religious differences within the Christian community (cf. I Cor 12:12ff), we can safely assume that the same applies also to the third pair "male and female". The legal-societal and cultural-religious distinctions between Jews and Greeks and slaves and free were transcended in the Christian community. Jews and Greeks and slaves and free retained their legal and social standing outside the church. Nonetheless, they had equal standing in the church. In a similar fashion the biological sexual-legal differences between men and women remained, but gender roles and their cultural-religious significance were no longer valid for the Christian community. This egalitarian Christian self-understanding did away with all distinctions and privileges of religion, class and caste and thereby allowed not only Gentiles and slaves but also women to exercise leadership in the early Christian movement. Since even wealthy women are marginal people in a patriarchal culture, the egalitarian Christian countercultural-religious movement must have attracted many women insofar as it took for granted their capacity for leadership and authority within the Christian community.

The vision of Gal 3:28 is still not a reality in the churches today. However, if we understand that political apologetics and not deliberate misogynism led to the adaptation of the Christian community to its patriarchal Greco-Roman society and therefore to the gradual patriarchalization of the church, then we can see how important it is for Christian renewal to achieve equal rights in our society. The achievement of equal rights for women and the realization of feminist values is therefore not just a question of social policy, but also a deeply Christian issue, if we want to recover our Christian feminist theological roots. At the same time the rediscovery of an egalitarian communal vision in the Christian foundational story and its embattled traditions will empower us to struggle for societal, political and ecclesial equality today.

Beginning From the Other End

by Letty M. Russell

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The Bible has authority in my life because it makes sense of my experience and speaks to me about the meaning and purpose of my humanity in Jesus Christ. In spite of its ancient and patriarchal world views, in spite of its inconsistencies and mixed messages, the story of God's love affair with the world leads me to a vision of New Creation that impels my life.

Today I want to discuss the issues of biblical authority and interpretation from my perspective as a woman who is a Christian and a feminist. I do this, not to convince you of my own particular religious or feminist position, but as an invitation to you to figure out for yourselves in what way the Bible does or does not have authority in your life.

Let us look first at how the Bible and tradition have authority in my life as a *Liberating Word*. Then we will turn to the *changes in consciousness* in our society that press us to interpret the biblical message beginning from the other end of God's New Creation.

I. THE LIBERATING WORD

The Word of God is liberating when by the power of the Holy Spirit it comes alive again in our hearts and actions. But often the Word of God has been spoken through the words of men and interpreted in a male-centered or androcentric way. For this reason the Word of God, heard in Scripture and tradition, needs to be liberated. Just as non-Western cultures must seek to liberate the white, Western interpretations of Scripture and Theology so that they are heard anew in different cultures and subcultures, women must seek to liberate the interpretation of God's Word from male bias.[1]

A. *Biblical Authority in My Life*

I am one of those for whom the Bible continues to be a liberating word as I hear it together with others and struggle to live out its story. For me the Bible is *Scripture* because it is also *Script*. It is an authoritative witness to what God has done and is doing in and through the lives of people and their history. It is authoritative because those who have chosen to participate in God's actions on behalf of humanity find that it becomes their own lived out story or script.

My particular story is one which was shaped by seventeen years with a poor, racially mixed community of struggle and witness in the East Harlem Protestant Parish in New York City. In such a context it was clear that the Bible did not have all the answers. In fact much of what it said seemed inadequate for the problems we faced; for instance, sayings about slavery (I Cor. 7:21) or relations of church and government (Mk. 12:14), or on divorce (Mt. 19:3).

Yet the Bible continued to speak to us in worship and house Bible study groups, in ministries of education and action. The stories of the Bible were told, compiled and preserved in the first place because they spoke to the real needs of communities out of which they grew. Their ability to speak to basic questions of life gave them authority as an authentic word from God and about God that could help shape lives.[2] They continued to speak to our small interracial community in East Harlem, not with answers to issues of poverty, injustice and racism, but with hope in the midst of oppression. The Bible, which often records the way God speaks to people in the midst of suffering, despair, exile and poverty, came alive among a people who continued to ". . . walk through the valley of the shadow of death. . . ." (Ps. 23:4).

For nine years I wrote an illustrated Bible Study lectionary which we used in worship and education programs for all ages.[3] The surprising thing was not that people who could hardly read became involved in biblical interpretation and preaching, but that somehow the texts we really lived with and struggled with seemed to speak in ever new ways on our road toward freedom. In my work overseas and in the United States, in colleges, seminaries, church bureaucracies, and women's organizations I have had no reason to change my mind about the authority of the Bible. In East Harlem the story of God's concern for humanity showed us that "nobodies" in the eyes of society could be *"somebodies."* I still believe this, believe that in God's sight *I am not marginal,* but like my Black and Hispanic sisters and brothers in East Harlem I am created by God and called to become what God intends me to be.

B. *Tradition in My Life*

As I worked in East Harlem and later in teaching theology I found over and over that the motif of freedom or liberation was important to myself and others who had been marginalized by society. But in seeking to free the biblical message and the teaching of the church from their one-sided white, Western, male interpretations I discovered that a key problem faced by all those engaged in liberation struggles, be they Latin American, Black,

Asian, Native American or women, is how to deal creatively and faithfully with tradition.

For instance, feminist theologies, in their attempts to reflect on sexist oppression, are often so preoccupied with sexism of the Bible, theology and the church, that they regard most tradition as a "millstone" around their necks to be cast off. The creation of *antitradition* out of myths, analysis of human sciences, or collective experience serves as a much needed corrective of tradition, but it neglects the importance of *reinterpretation* of tradition as a basis for the search for new identity and future. If we are to do theology as a continuing process of action-reflection on the meaning of God in our own experience, we need to be careful and critical in relating that process to the Christian tradition that represents the accumulated action-reflection of the "communion of saints."

Tradition has become a problem, not only for women and all groups with "invisible histories," but also for modern, historicized society. As we come to see history as both changing and changeable we tend to view tradition as something to be examined and evaluated rather than as the assumed basis of life. Since the Second World War Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars have largely stopped arguing about the differences between Scripture and Church tradition and have recognized them both as forms of carrying on the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The focus has shifted in theological discussions to distinguishing between different meanings of tradition and how they function in human experience and theology.

The first meaning, often indicated by the word, *Tradition with a capital "T"*, refers to the biblical understanding of the dynamic and continuing process of God handing over Jesus Christ into the hands of all generations and nations. In the biblical view, Tradition is not a static deposit, but a dynamic action of relationship or handing over as described in Mt. 17:22 and Rom. 8:31.

The second meaning is indicated by the word, *traditions with an "s."* These are many and various religious traditions that have grown up over a period of time within our culture, sub-culture and confessional communities. These traditions are an important part of our own identity and the identity of groups, but they are not of ultimate significance in relation to how we might want to live out our faith. They tend to divide us when they are taken so seriously that we declare other traditions and persons "heretical." We need to be critical of our traditions and look for those that need to be changed, as well as those that can form a usable past for us.

The third meaning is indicated by the word, *tradition with a small "t."* This is a basic anthropological or human category: the structural element of human historical existence in which the still moving and evolving past calls for commitment in shaping human community. To be human is to engage in this conscious or unconscious traditioning process of sorting out signals from the past and using them to guide us into the future. It is of no use to say we will ignore tradition. In all three senses it is part of the fabric of our lives if we are Christians, and it is certainly affecting our lives in the last two senses no matter what our religious position.

For me the importance of tradition is found, not in its pervasive presence or in our rejection of many oppressive traditions, but in the significance of the first meaning of *Tradition as the dynamic relationship of God with us* in handing over Jesus Christ into the hands of all generations and nations. It is this relationship with Christ that provides a key for me to the authority of both Scripture and Church tradition. In the light of this key I ask how to relate in trust and faithfulness to God and others as we seek to decide what to do as believers in Jesus Christ and members of the community of people who long for and live out God's hoped for promise of new wholeness and human community.

II. CHANGING CONSCIOUSNESS

In Western society today there is a revolution of changing consciousness underway. It is this change of consciousness that challenges the way in which we live and the way we speak of the hope that is within us. Even as each of us searches our own heart and history to discover that which speaks with authority and compelling force in our actions and gives meaning to our lives, the world in which we live is changing in its own attitudes and perspectives. It is to this changing consciousness that I would like to turn so that we can examine its effect on the way we understand the task of theology and of biblical interpretation.

A. *A Revolution in Which Everyone Wins*

In his book *The Feminine Factor,* Eric Mount suggests that the women's liberation movement may lead to the liberation of men as well. Paraphrasing the peace slogan, "What if they gave a war and nobody came?" he asks, "What if they gave a revolution and everybody won?"[4] There is such a possibility present in the changing consciousness of women and men about their life styles and roles in society. And if it happened that people learned to live more humanly and cooperatively, surely that would be a "revolu-

tion of freedom" in which people could dwell together in a new house of freedom.

The struggle of the women's liberation movement to overcome systemic oppression that makes one half of society inferior at birth, is a struggle against dualism and alienation between and within persons and institutions. The struggle is basically for a *new human being:* one that is whole; that moves beyond social stereotypes of masculine and feminine, dominant and subordinate to an understanding of human sexuality which recognizes the variety of sexual characteristics in each person.

Many people are pointing to this particular revolution of freedom as one that is important for all humanity. For instance, Janet Chafetz in her book, *Masculine/Feminine or Human?*, says that the future of the species depends on population control, preventing ecological deterioration and avoiding war. To accomplish this, age-old notions of masculine and feminine must be fundamentally altered. Major social institutions reflect and support sex role stereotypes and profit from them:

> . . . . to the extent that such stereotypes significantly change, our institutions will be altered in profound ways. In short, such changes, if they occur, will constitute a veritable 'revolution.'[5]

Human beings are historical and changing. They become in many respects what they understand themselves to be. What we see among us is a new person, a new human being struggling to be born. This is causing a revolution, not only in our own homes, churches or businesses, but also in the way human sciences are written and taught, the way the arts are pursued and the way theology and ethics are developed.[6]

These dangerous generalizations about change are not simply "rhetoric." They represent the genuine aspirations, the "ferment of freedom," in the lives and hearts of large numbers of women and not a few men. The manifestations may be different in the "West" than in some other parts of the globe, but the growing awareness of false dominance is apparent. In situations of political oppression, extreme racism or poverty, women and men make survival their first agenda, but they look to a world where, in Dorothee Soelle's paraphrase of the Magnificat:

> The rule of peoples over peoples will come to an end. Objects will become subjects who win their own and better right. . . .[7]

Whether this new wave of consciousness is strong enough to carry men and women to a new and deeper awareness of their relationship with themselves, one another and the world remains to be seen. Women are still seeking out the meaning of their own

self-identity as women, but many are aware that this must be accompanied with the risk of new mutuality with men if the process is to continue. There has emerged a new *paradigm of consciousness* which very slowly begins to work a revolution in the meaning of partnership in our society.

B. *Theology and Changing Consciousness*

According to Max Warren, "Partnership is an idea whose time has not yet fully come . . . but at least the birth-pains have begun."[8] There is a new recognition that survival of the world depends on pushing for new forms or fragmentary anticipations of shared community. As an important part of this trend, a new paradigm of consciousness about who we are as female and male in partnership is surely going to have an effect on theological reflection. Searching for ways in which society should be ordered to overcome previous patterns of dominance is going to raise questions about much of the patriarchal biblical and church traditions on which Christian theology has been built. It will also raise questions about styles of theology that fail to include a wide variety of persons, both male and female, as partners in discussion. It will become less and less possible to continue exclusive practices in which dominant white, Western males set the "standards" for all other theologies.

Such a revolution of thinking is one is which the ones customarily on the receiving end (non-male, non-white, non-straight, non-Western) begin to make their own contributions out of their own contexts. This calls for nothing short of what Juan Luis Segundo describes as *The Liberation of Theology.*[9] The beginning of such a revolution is the awareness that God, salvation, judgment, sin, the powers of this world, etc., are not perceived in the same way by those who have different experiences of that reality. Doctrinal answers handed down by one group are no longer normative descriptions of life and behavior for everyone. Rather they represent accumulated wisdom out of *particular cultural contexts.* No one person writing theology out of a particular set of life experiences can interpret the meaning of the gospel for all others. Even our earliest accounts of the earthly Jesus come to us out of different faith communities in four different Gospels.

The gospel message itself is conveyed to us as stories of God's active love at work in Jesus Christ. This message is heard as Good News by those who experience it in their own lives as deliverance. This hearing is situation-variable, for the liberating message is heard when it speaks to what particular groups of people seek to be free from and for. Jesus did not tell the blind they could walk,

or the lame that they could see, or the rich they could eat. He came to human beings where they were and sat where they sat, and out of that spoke to their inmost being. Through the power of the Spirit this is still possible in sharing the message today.

As we seek to speak and act God's Work we are each of us accountable not only to God and to the People of God in all centuries and in all places, but also to those with whom we share a particular situation. With a shift in consciousness this is no longer simply the academic community or the parish church. Often it is a *community of struggle* out of which the action-reflection process of doing theologically whatever we do as Christians arises. The ecology of such theology is broadened to include the changing consciousness of a particular community of struggle that is seeking to find out what it would mean to live as partners in God's creation.

Not only does the liberation of theology involve understanding the contextual nature of all theology and rooting one's reflection in communities searching for new and liberating ways of partnership, it also calls for new models of *doing theology in partnership* so that the perspectives of one group help to challenge and raise questions for another as we seek to know the way God is at work in our lives. Questions raised by men and women growing up in a changed society can stand as critical corrections for those with more knowledge of the tradition, but little experience of the new consciousness. This can only take place, however, when each group or person is sufficiently sure of the respect and trust of the other that the dialogue goes on as a two-way process of mutuality.

Lastly, in the midst of changing consciousness and a rapidly changing world in which the future is now, the emphasis of such theology must be on the future of God that is breaking into our lives now. This *eschatological emphasis* would look to God's goal and purpose for life and creation as the basis for contradicting present reality when it is seen to be dehumanizing. In the name of the "new thing" God has been doing, is doing and will do among women and men of all nations a new partnership in theology may emerge in which a much more inclusive group of persons in many walks of life and cultures shares in telling their part in God's history of the future and hope.

C. *Beginning from the Other End*

When the emphasis of theology shifts toward the future and away from the past, the way in which we seek to interpret the Bible and to understand its authority in our lives also shifts. Not Old Creation but New Creation becomes the interpretive key for our explorations of the meaning of justice, freedom and wholeness. We

do our biblical interpretation or hermeneutics out of the perspective of the other end of history, the anticipation of God's New Creation begun in Jesus Christ.

Interpreting the Bible from a critical perspective of God's promised future leads us to begin from the other end and to engage in what might be called eschatological hermeneutics, a process of questioning our actions and our society in the light of the biblical message of New Creation. We begin with *questions* that arise out of our life and out of the experience of those who cry out for deliverance; not simply with those of the "non-believer" but with those of the "non-person."[10] These questions are addressed critically to the tradition of the Christian faith and to the Bible as the chief witness to God's promise in Jesus Christ. The *biblical message,* in turn, helps us to interpret itself, for a central motif of the Bible, according to Walter Harrelson, is that of "promise on the way to fulfillment."[11] In the light of the moving horizon of God's promise for New Creation one interprets the texts, knowing that full eschatological verification of one's interpretation can come only in the fulfillment of the New Creation.

The coming One is already present with us as we live out his story. It is *living out that story* in order to give an account of the hope that is in us that helps us to discover the meaning of that story even as we continue our life in the Old Creation (I Peter 3:15-16). Having lived out the story and our questions addressed to it, we may discover clues out of tradition that may guide us as we seek to live now, as if we were part of God's New Creation. The *clues about God's action* are likely to be consistent with the way God has acted in the past in handing over Jesus Christ into the hands of all generations and nations (Rom. 8:31-32). The clues about the traditioning process in our own lives as the still living and evolving past by which we shape the future, are likely to point us to new questions about areas in our own lives that matter for us as persons addressed by God to live out God's will on earth. Each new question sends us back to a critical analysis of our life and social reality and back to the eschatological message of the Bible, for the hermeneutic itself is an ongoing process and our answers are always provisional.

Many of you may be saying to youselves, "Why bother?" Why bother with new interpretations of old androcentric texts? Or why bother with interpretations that lead toward the risky and difficult task of living without easy or clear answers. Many of us may well find that our religious or cultural traditon and experiences lead us to look elsewhere for meaning and direction in our lives.

Yet for some of us the Liberating Word of God continues to speak in and through our lives today. From a Christian point of

view, the biblical story is a communal witness to this Work made flesh in a certain time and place in history. It invites us to join that story with God. Christian women are part of that history and have no intention of being "included out." In fact they want to bother, and I want to bother, because the promise for new humanity is a word of hope that makes it possible to shape our lives and world according to God's intention for New Creation. We have no guarantee in this faith, simply an expectation of faithfulness and love in the midst of life.

> For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,
> plans for shalom and not for evil,
> to give you a future and a hope. (Jer. 29:11)

ENDNOTES

1. Letty M. Russell, "Introduction: The Liberating Word," *The Liberating Word,* ed. by L. Russell (Westminster, 1976), pp. 14-15.

2. Sharon H. Ringe, "Biblical Authority and Interpretation," *The Liberating Word,* p. 27.

3. *Daily Bible Readings,* East Harlem Protestant Parish, Illustrations by Joseph Papin (1960-68).

4. (John Knox Press, 1973), p. 178.

5. (F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc. 1974), p. 200. Cf. also Glen Bucher, *Straight/White Male* (Fortress, 1976).

6. Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Beacon, 1976), p. 56. Cf. also Gail Sheehy, *Passages* (Bantam Books, 1976).

7. "Meditation on Luke 1:46-55," from *Women in a Strange Land,* ed. by Fischer, Brenneman and Bennett (Fortress, 1975).

8. Max Warren, *Partnership: The Study of an Idea* (London: SCM, 1965), p. 11.

9. (Orbis Books, 1976).

10. Robert McAfee Brown, *Theology in a New Key* (Westminster, 1978), pp. 63-64.

11. Conversation with Walter Harrelson, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California, July 1977.

12. For further discussion see Ch. 8, *The Future of Partnership,* by Letty M. Russell (Westminster, 1979).

Tragedy and Christian Faith:
A Last Will and Testament*

by THANIEL ARMISTEAD
with her Lord in heaven

Tragedy and Christian Faith has been a very meaningful course to me. The concept of tragedy with all that it involves and implies, and the idea of the Christian transtragic vision, have helped me to understand certain changes in my own faith over the past six years.

I have cystic fibrosis, a hereditary, eventually fatal disease, mainly affecting the lungs. It places progressively greater restrictions on one's lifestyle and causes more and more discomfort as the lungs become scarred and consistently congested. (At age twenty-two, I have thirty-nine percent lung capacity.) CF victims usually look and SOUND sick, are weak from lack of oxygen, are prone to depression, anorexia and headaches, and are somewhat withdrawn and socially ill at ease. The disease causes suffering on many levels of privation.

As a young child, I had no sense of tragedy. Suffering was just a given in my life—it never occurred to me to question it. I was utterly absorbed in my immediate environment or occupation most of the time and my pleasant experiences were far more interesting and important to me than the bad ones, which were always outweighed by my parents' comforting, anyway.

From the third through the sixth grades, I was ill enough that I could not go to school. I read a great deal, including many adult novels and works of history, anthropology, etc. that were way beyond my age level. It did not take me long to realize that human life is largely determined by factors beyond our control, complicated, ambiguous, precarious, without justice, often lacking in love (= SINFUL), and thus invariably full of suffering, much of it undeserved, unrelievable, and apparently "dysteleological" and meaningless. World and national events and the lives of those around me backed up these observations. I sensed a certain mysteriousness in all this, particularly in "twists of Fate" (like the plot turns in Romeo and Juliet), the utter irrationality of extreme evil (such as the Holocaust), and the fact that good sometimes comes out of evil or at least that some people's love and courage transcend it.

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I denied the universality of tragedy, however, or rather that it need affect one to any *great extent.* Tragedy was not "normal"— the "silent majority" were happy and free from all large troubles. Irredeemably bad things only happened to the "unlucky." *Most* problems could be overcome, *most* suffering done away with, if we learned the right techniques, cooperated together, and made the necessary effort. This point of view was fostered by the television programs I watched and the juvenile literature I read, which always had a happy ending. (Television and children's books have become much more realistic, almost morbid, within the last nine or ten years.) As long as I was able to perceive most people (including myself) as making it, I did not question the purpose of life—quite obviously, it was to be happy. One had to pity those who suffered permanently and/or overwhelmingly and help them to whatever degree possible, but not let oneself be troubled by them otherwise. I could think in this selfish way because *I did not know I had CF.* My parents had not told me yet, since they were afraid I would lose the will to live, from despair. (Many do, especially in the early teens.) They encouraged me to believe that if I followed doctors' orders I would eventually be well and able to live as my peers did—for by this time (age 13) I had compared myself to others and knew that I was suffering in ways they were not.

I had developed a moral view based on the Golden Rule and it was a source of hope to me. Whenever I did something for someone, I felt I was making the world a bit more the way I wanted it to be for myself, too. The year I entered eighth grade, the officials at my junior high decided to allow a retarded girl who had made great progress in special class to eat lunch in the cafeteria with the normal kids. Immediately a clique of mean girls took her up and pretended to be her friend, baiting and teasing her to flirt with a lout. As they had hoped and expected, it created a scene, for the lout was provoked into hitting her, yelling "Ugly retard!" She fought him, cried and screamed, and had to be carried out. I had tried to prevent it and been thwarted. I experienced a great sense of powerlessness to help in the face of evil, and a murderous rage toward those girls. Worst of all, during the scene, I had looked around the cafeteria and all but a very few looked merely interested, as though it were a pleasant diversion. I was so ill from disgust with the human race that I was out of school the rest of the year. When I went back in the ninth grade, I was very cynical, bitter and withdrawn and lived only to derive what pleasures I could. At the time of the incident, I had been very sensitive. The overwhelming consciousness of that girl's hurt and humiliation piled on top of my own miseries and recent news events was too

much—it paralyzed me, eroding my moral commitment rather than enhancing it.

The next year, I accidently found out about my disease. To have my only hope, that of an eventually happy, healthy life with an interesting and important career and husband and children, taken away drove me into a black despair. I had come to cling to it more and more desperately, because I was in extremely bad shape at that time; struggling for every breath, fighting gravity to stay upright and moving, trying to stay alert and concentrate on my school work with a constant pounding headache, nausea, and a mind fuzzy and sluggish from lack of oxygen. This, plus a more-than-usual amount of adolescent insecurity, had been more than I could cope with anyway. Now that *I* was one of the "unlucky" ones, I felt fiercely, hotly, ragingly, that the overall negative character of human existence was not balanced off by life's good experiences, unless *all* shared in them—indeed, part of the nega-tiveness consisted in the fact that they do not.

Reflecting on my experiences as related thus far, I think that a sensitivity to tragedy develops more or less involuntarily, but that a person can dull it or blunt it and keep it from affecting himself much by selfishness and consciously denying that it is as universal or unsolvable as he perceives it to be. To break down such re-sistance and open him to the fullness of a tragic sense of life and moral view based on it, his face must be rubbed in it, figuratively speaking—extreme, overwhelming suffering must strike him or someone he loves or identifies with very much.

I had been raised to be a religious skeptic and called myself an atheist. Sometimes certain manifestations of Fate seemed to in-dicate that there was a personal God, but I was now afraid to find out for sure. Judging from the pervasiveness of evil, as Sartre said, "If God exists, He is the Devil." In my despair, I felt trapped alone in a howling darkness. I hated "God" and anyone who seemed better off than me and/or unaware of the tragic nature of life. Only rage and a terrible itch to have an answer, if there was one, maintained my will to live. Now that I no longer had any comforting illusions to shield me, it became imperative to under-stand *why* or at least get a hearing—like Job, I felt that God (if He existed) did not hear my cry of "Unfair!" I knew myself to be a sinner, one powerless to live up to my own standards of love. The grief and humiliation from this were like salt in my wounds.

One night in November, 1973, I started reading C. S. Lewis' *Miracles*. Halfway through the book, all my pet arguments for atheism had been shot down and I was in great terror that God might be real. Then I read a section which explained who Jesus

was (the Son of God, God incarnate), what the Crucifixion had accomplished in overcoming sin, death and evil once and for all.* John 3:16, the only Bible verse I knew, suddenly became perfectly clear to me. I recall thinking that if this were true, it was the most important thing that ever happened, and that this meant that the explanation and cure, the heart of the mystery, all lay *in* suffering, this Man's suffering, and that *all* suffering thereby had meaning. God must know and care, after all, because He was in it with us. Suddenly there was a Presence in the room, a Person so alive He almost made the air tingle, a Person who was utterly Good. He told me that what I had read was true, and that He loved me. The Person seemed to *be* Love and that Love (Himself) was focused on me. I felt my ego being crushed by this sweet heavy powerful Presence. I knew that if I gave in (for He was demanding me), I would be absorbed; the *I* I *was* would die, because it could never be the same again. I tried to resist but it was useless, so I surrendered myself, praying a humble prayer of confession of sin (for in this Person's presence I *knew* what love was, and how far short of it I had fallen in all ways). Immediately the darkness, hatred and despair in which I had been living were lifted away, leaving the Presence in my mind with me, almost like a traveling companion. And so I became a new creation in Christ Jesus.

The revelatory experience I have just described, at least my understanding of it, was certainly transtragic. However, the teaching and Christian fellowship I had over the next two years turned me away from that understanding. Under a friend's influence, I joined a fundamentalist Baptist Church which preached a strongly moralistic dualistic brand of Christianity. Faith became almost a work; it was not a resting in God or even a belief, as much as some great impossible mystical feat by which one might "have victory," which seemed to mean not feeling tempted while being in a situation of temptation and not feeling miserable while suffering. I was soon extremely frustrated, burdened by guilt, and even more estranged from the world than I had been before, because they placed so much emphasis on the division of the "saved" from the damned, as if the damned were another sort of creature than *US*, entirely. This constituted a denial of reality as I saw it and a refusal to respond with moral sensitivity. God seemed no different than He had been previously nor did He tell me what they told me, so I finally decided my feelings were right, and they, wrong.

Next I got into the charismatic movement and fellowshipped mostly with a group of Catholics. Theodicy troubled them much

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*Interestingly, *Miracles* does not contain any such section. I have reread it several times since then and am sure. Yet I know what I saw; draw your own conclusions.

more than it had my Baptists, because they had a Franciscan view of creation, a strong sense of the horror of evil, and a close relationship with God, who had revealed Himself to them as all-powerful and all-loving. They exercised gifts of healing and prayed for miracles and got them, but not consistently . . . I also hung around with traditional Protestant Pentecostals, too, and heard teaching to the effect that God will *always* and immediately defeat evil, *if one prays with enough faith.* I ate this up and "stood on the promise" for my healing, not taking any medication for four months, and nearly died before I gave up. (I permanently lost about twenty percent of my lung capacity from the illness that ended that effort to deny the tragic nature of life and God's stance in regard to it.)

During my first semester at Duke, I took a Religion seminar on Death and Dying. It made my own mortality more real to me, and hence heightened my fear and misery. At that time I was extremely shy and hated myself (on many accounts). I still did not know how to let God help me, but was again desperately trying to manipulate Him, or learn "techniques" which would make me a "competent" Christian (one who "witnesses" easily, knows and is one hundred percent sure of his doctrine, and is constantly happy, worshipful and loving toward God). I still believed that the only way to please Him was to never allow bad things to *seem* bad to one—in essence, *not to feel.* This idea let me admit that evil exists while it absolved God of the responsibility for the suffering that results from evil (by placing the responsibility on me) and at the same time offered me a way out of my suffering—if I could only do it. I gave up on this idea after trying Campus Crusade; if they did not have the "method," then it did not exist.

Sophomore year, I became a Religion major, taking only Judaic Studies courses. I came to love Judaism and the Jewish people, and since they have had (for the most part) a tragic understanding of life for a long time, I felt more at home in Judaism than in what I had come to regard as orthodox Christianity. Judaism seemed to be for all intents and purposes, a Christless Christianity, and Christ had little meaning or reality for me by this time. My professors shot down traditional Christian claims that Jesus was the Christ at every opportunity and carved up the Bible so mercilessly with radical criticism that I had nothing left to stand on, except loyalty to a commitment I had made years before based on a possibly delusory experience. Fall semester, junior year, I took a course called Jewish Responses to Christianity and I was brought face to face with the historical guilt of the Christian Church in regard to its treatment of Jews and partial respon-

sibility for the Crusades, pogroms, and Holocaust. Then my always-marginal physical condition worsened so badly that I was hospitalized for the first time since I was three. My roommate on the pediatric ward in DUMC was another girl with CF who lived a *much* more miserable and limited life. She looked like death and everyone knew she could not live more than a year or so. There were deaths on the ward while I was there. I was no longer sure of afterlife. I looked around me and saw so much unrelieved suffering. If God could allow these things without even revealing Himself to the sufferers, that they might have the comfort of His loving presence, then how could one be sure He cared at all about us and had made us to enjoy Him forever? Or if He cared about some but not others, was His love worth enjoying? His presence was with me, but it was darkness, brooding and silent; I no longer felt like I knew Him at all.

Around Thanksgiving, I decided to cease being a Christian. I found that I could not, even when the beliefs were no longer there, because I had changed too much inside to ever go back to being what I had once been. Christ was the center of my moral vision. Without Him, nothing held together. "God must still want me to be a Christian, only what is a Christian?" I asked Dr. Kalman Bland, one of my Judaic Studies professors. He said a Christian is one whose life is centered in Christ, who believes Jesus was the Christ, that he made vicarious atonement and that *in some sense the world is already redeemed through him.* I remembered Bonhoeffer's idea that faith and obedience are corollaries. To willfully affirm these ideas (even though they did not seem true then) and recommit myself to God would be an act of obedience . . . I did so, went to bed, still speechless with distress, and woke up later, again *knowing* my God is the loving Father of the Lord Jesus Christ—He had restored my faith.

I see now that God had arranged the whole course of events from my conversion up to this point of crisis, to teach me to trust Him, to appreciate and understand better what He has done, is doing, and will do, and to be more sensitive to others' sufferings. This particular crisis was one of temptation, though I did not think of it that way, before Tragedy and Christian Faith.

Certain ideas from CT 229 and CH 13, particularly Pauline universalism and Christ as the most human Man who overcame all temptation, and Juliana of Norwich's vision that, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well," have refreshed, corroborated and deepened my original transtragic understanding of Christianity. Thus in my six years as a Christian, I have come 360° and am again faithful to the gospel I first received.

Book Reviews

Coming Home—To China. Creighton Lacy. Westminster. 1978. 156 pp. $4.95 (paperbound).

When President Nixon made his remarkable visit to mainland China and began the negotiations leading toward full recognition of Red China I was appalled to discover how ignorant almost all Americans were of that large and important country. Not only had the U.S. officially pretended that the People's Republic of China did not exist, but our schools and universities, all media, churches and other usual channels of information seemed to have cooperated in a conspiracy of silence about the world's most populous nation. Now some eight years later Professor Creighton Lacy's *Coming Home—To China* should help open up China to many and provide interesting and informative reading to many more who are catching up on their knowledge of China.

Creighton Lacy was born in Kuling, Kiangsi Province, in the old China of second generation Methodist missionary parents. He came to the U.S. in 1937 for his A.B. at Swarthmore and B.D. at Yale Divinity School. He was married in 1944, and after serving Methodist churches in Connecticut, he and his wife went to China as Methodist missionaries. In less than two years the communists were in control and the Lacys had to leave China. They returned to Yale where "Corky" completed a Ph.D. in ethics and they came to Duke Divinity School in 1953. In March–April of 1977, thirty years after leaving China the second time, Creighton returned for an eighteen day "Friendship Tour" with a group sponsored by the Southern Regional Office of the United States–China People's Friendship Association. This book is the interesting, informative and very readable report of that brief, but jam-packed visit to his native land.

Though this book is written for a wide audience it contains no unnecessary padding of scholarly or background detail. Using as a literary foil his search for his roots as a youth in old China, his narrative is both personal and impressionistic so that the reader feels that he is sharing in Lacy's pilgrimage. After a short chapter on his initial impressions on entering modern China, followed by a bit of reminiscing about his family roots in Shanghai and his nostalgic search for a few glimpses of those roots, he turns to the tour itself. In successive chapters he offers his impressions of the current political scene in China, the revolution in education and the complexities of social change as they affect women, health care, and the farm and factory worker—all interpreted by the group's Chinese hosts as fulfilling Mao's slogan, "Serve the people."

After some reflections on the present (non)state of religion in China he offers helpful clarification of some popular misconceptions about China on the part of Westerners, concluding with an upbeat statement on "Continuity and Change" emphasizing stability and progress in the new China.

Communist China has been and will continue to be controversial with at least two sides on most issues. Lacy is unswervingly democratic and anti-totalitarian in his perspective, but also willing and able to face honestly and intelligently the vexing but crucial

problems in which we all are caught up in this age of post-colonialism with the emergence of new nations and forces. Thus he asserts that "most missionaries dedicated their lives to the alleviation of oppression, poverty, ignorance, disease, and for that very reason should rejoice in the accomplishments of the People's Republic today."

Professor Lacy's excellent academic background along with over thirty years of teaching about Asia and the world Christian missionary enterprise, enhanced by extensive travel and living in South and East Asia lend authority to his observations and interpretations. He has included a selected reading list in this sharing of his returning home and the book should prove most valuable to any individual or group starting its own internal pilgrimage to modern China.

David G. Bradley

Women and World Religions. Denise Lardner Carmody. Abingdon. 1979. 172 pp. $5.95 (paperbound).

In seven short chapters Carmody surveys the entire field of world religions with emphasis on the role of women. Beginning with "archaic religion," in successive chapters she moves through the religions of India, East Asian religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, concluding with some brief "theological reflections." She employs "Mystery" as her alternative to the term "God" and holds that "authentic religion, by each of (the world's religious) traditions' central confessions, holds most blessed honesty and love, which are hardly sex-specified."

For such a brief book with a specific subject the author does a good job of steering the reader into and through the major religious traditions. One exception is her chapter on the Indian tradition where her treatment of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions is run together in a most confusing manner.

Here, as with all the religions, she fails to clarify or explicate the central themes and views of each on the nature of humanity, the natural world, the supernatural, or the way of salvation each offers its followers. That is to say, it never comes clear as to what self-understanding is for women in each case, nor why the over two billion women in the world acquiesce to the male dominance which I agree is characteristic of every single religion, thus laying no clear foundation for her final theological reflections.

Her explicit and implied position that in pre-historic times, and also underlying the historic roots of each religion, there existed a period of matriarchy or of androgynous equality is a most dubious position, though very important to her overall thesis. Thus Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow, *inter alia,* in *Women in Cultures of the World,* state (p. 2) that "modern anthropology now regards matriarchy to be pure conjecture, lacking any support from ethnographic or historical data." Yet Carmody offers no evidence for her frequent claims except to say, *e.g.,* on Chinese religion, "interestingly, there is evidence that these beliefs were shaped by a matriarchal social structure." (p. 66) Not only does she cite no source or evidence for this sort of claim but she also confuses matriarchal and matrilineal societies, even in her index. It is unfortunate that Carmody's editors have allowed her to produce a book with no footnotes, even though she quotes much from scriptures and many other sources and also summarizes articles and scholarly positions with hardly a word of thanks, or in the case of scriptures, any indication of the translator of the various passages. This egregious fault, along with awkward writing which seems to confuse lively style with the need to communicate, means that I cannot endorse this volume as a college text even though an adequate book on this subject is greatly needed.

She ends on a sanguine note about the future "convinced that the religions' past *(sic)* can teach us well. . . . The task, then, is to winnow our traditions—to separate the wheat and burn the chaff." Her analysis is that in each beginning the tradition was androgynous and free from sex bias, but somehow each has gone astray and fallen prey to male dominance. But to desire that we return to such roots based on "pure conjecture" is theologically to call for a return to the Eden of Genesis 2 or to the mythical golden age of Taoism when all nature existed in harmony, in each case before the "fall' from matriarchal or androgynous "honesty and love." But either history or herstory precludes such a fanciful result. In Eden or any other golden age there was no deaf Beethoven riddled with congenital syphilis composing his ninth symphony, no Joan of Arc, or Shakespeare, or Susan B. Anthony or Denise Carmody. There also would be no need of religion calling mankind from warfare, hatred and the oppression of men, women or children. That is to say, one of the hard questions which this book fails to grapple with is what role the world's religions should and can play in making available for a better world the energy, honesty and love of more than half the world's population to which men in all religious traditions systematically have denied their female counterparts the power, space and freedom to live their lives in the fulness of the "mystery" Carmody would substitute for "God."

—David G. Bradley

Revelation. J.P.M. Sweet. Westminster. 1979. Westminster / Pelican Commentaries. 361 pp. $8.95.

The present volume is another in the increasing number of books and commentaries dealing with the book of Revelation. As most of the readers of this *Review* are aware, some of these books are useful but many are not. This volume can be listed among the "useful" group.

The format is basically that of any good commentary. There is a fairly detailed introduction which discusses *apocalyptic*, gives a synopsis of the book of Revelation, and describes the critical arguments about authorship, date, and the like. The vast majority of the book is given over to an interpretative commentary on the text of Revelation.

Most of what Sweet says about Revelation is not all that different from the majority of the better commentaries on this mysterious New Testament writing (i.e. Beckwith, Charles, Caird, Beasley-Murray). Since three of those mentioned are out of print presently, this is a good alternative. The level of the writing, however, seems to be directed toward the more sophisticated student, and therefore this book is not really recommended for laity. It should serve pastors fairly well for private study.

The strength of this study is reflected in Sweet's emphasis on the use of the Old Testament by the author of Revelation. Sweet is particularly interested in showing how Ezekiel was known to and used by the writer of Revelation and he is careful in the commentary to point out any allusion to Old Testament texts as these may be reflected in Revelation itself. This feature is one of the strong points of the book.

The present reviewer commends this book for careful consideration, for Sweet seems to be on the proper path toward understanding the literary genre of apocalyptic and interpreting it correctly. He still holds to some of the older interpretations which may well be wrong, i.e. the use of the number 6 as an apocalyptic number; the use of the term "Antichrist" even though that word does not appear in the book of Revelation itself; and the emphasis on the idea that the Parousia

was quite near. He also plays down the idea of actual persecution by the Roman state, emphasizing instead the background of ". . . Jewish-Christian relations, and compromise with pagan society" (p. 28) as the situation out of which the writing grew.
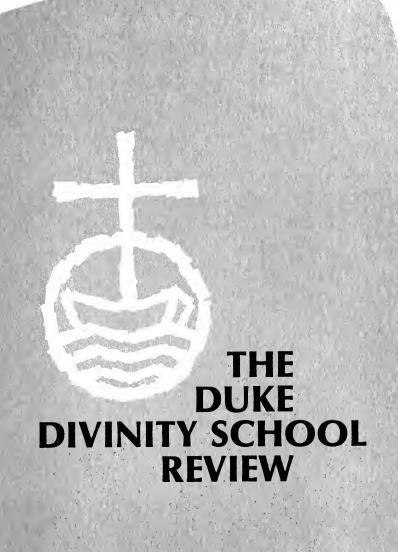
While no two interpreters of Revelation (or any symbolic writing) will ever agree on how to interpret each and every symbol, there does seem to be a need at certain points in this work for more careful consideration to be given to apocalyptic imagery and its meaning. Overall, however, this book is recommended positively for careful consideration.

—James M. Efird

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CONTENTS

History and Reason in Albert Schweitzer's World-View

by John L. Thompson
Special Student

Has any individual in this century been the subject of such praise and controversy—and in such diverse endeavors—as Albert Schweitzer? Probably not. Schweitzer's work spanned the better part of this century and encompassed three careers: musician, physician, and philosopher/theologian. Virtually every book or article written about Schweitzer, including those which are critical of his philosophy or theology, bears some sort of lengthy encomium, and one can no longer praise the man or his work without sounding thoroughly trite.

Ironically, Albert Schweitzer will be best remembered among theologians for his exhaustive survey of the life-of-Jesus research from Reimarus to Wrede—translated as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.[1] Ironic, because although it continues to be hailed as a milestone in NT studies and life-of-Jesus research, few today accept Schweitzer's own reconstruction of the life of Jesus, or many other of his distinctive NT findings.[2] Ironic, because in spite of his attempts in the *Quest* to combat historical skepticism, his own work only contributed to the move toward skepticism among his contemporaries and successors. Not only did many conclude upon reading the *Quest* that it was impossible to write a "biographical" life of Jesus (as Schweitzer intended to prove) but, despite Schweitzer's conviction that "thoroughgoing eschatology" was the key to understanding Jesus' strange actions, many went on to reject Schweitzer's explanation and to conclude that it was impossible to sort out the historical Jesus from the Church's proclamation at all.

The present study of Schweitzer cannot hope to exhaust the breadth of his historical and theological studies, together with their philosophical underpinnings, but it will attempt to draw conclusions on the point, namely, Schweitzer's use of history. It was Schweitzer's concern throughout his life to deal holistically with man, for man is feeling and will, as well as intellect. The specific question, then, is how did Schweitzer understand the relationship between history and the present? What role does history play in his overall thought?

Pursuant to the question of history and historiography, however, is a broader question, that of the character of human reason. "I acknowledge myself to be one who places all his confidence in rational thinking," wrote Schweitzer in his autobiography.[3] But

what he meant by "rational thinking" is not at all self-evident. Thus the second major question of this essay concerns Schweitzer's understanding of the potential, limits, and proper use of reason. What is the role of reason in structuring a "reasonable" world-view?

These two questions—which are, simply put, studies of Schweitzer *qua* historian and Schweitzer *qua* philosopher—form the structure for the first two parts of the essay, following which a third section will discuss the interaction and synthesis of these themes in his concept of ethical mysticism. A final section will offer an overall critique and some progammatic questions for further reflection.

I. Schweitzer's Approach to History

As a historian, Albert Schweitzer's energy was not directed solely toward the historical Jesus and the history of life-of-Jesus research. He also wrote major works dealing with the Apostle Paul and with the history of Pauline research, a significant study of J. S. Bach, and, under the title of *The Philosophy of Civilization*, Schweitzer published what is in some respects a survey of the history of philosophy. However, since treatment of the historical data of Jesus of Nazareth is both central to Christian theology and a revealing test of one's historical presuppositions, this section of the essay will focus on Schweitzer's orchestration of history in the *Quest*.

The quickest way to expose Schweitzer's approach to history is to take note of where he faults his predecessors in life-of-Jesus research. Though he analyzes the writings of over sixty-five authors, for his critique these writers fall broadly into three groups: the supernaturalists, the rationalists, and the skeptics. The *supernaturalists*— i.e., those who argued the historicity of the miraculous events recorded in the Gospels as literally presented—receive scant sympathy from Schweitzer, who generally regards such efforts as a sacrifice of the intellect in vain defense of an unscientific and outdated world-view.[4] Even those theologians who attempted to take a mediating position are swept aside. Thus Schweitzer ignores August Tholuck's valid criticism of D. F. Strauss' anti-supernatural presuppositions,[5] and he openly pities the "resignation" of Lücke, who chose to suspend judgment on the question of the miraculous. "The poorest naturalistic explanation is at least better than . . . resignation."[6]

The *rationalists*, in Schweitzer's analysis, were those who sought to depict Jesus as "the great enlightener," whose aim is was

> to lead His people from the nonspiritual teaching of the Jewish religion to the rational belief, which is above and beyond all dogma, in a God of love and an

ethical Kingdom of God to be established on earth. They make it their special endeavor to explain all the miracles of Jesus as natural events misunderstood by the multitude, and thus they try to put an end to all belief in the miraculous.[7]

Contrary to a common misconception, Schweitzer did not criticize the authors of the rationalistic lives of Jesus for their rationalistic outlook. Indeed, Schweitzer considered part of his own task to breathe new life into rationalism.[8] The problem was not that these writers were rationalists but that they were trying to make Jesus one! But the notion that Jesus was a rationalist is a fundamental misreading of history. One must further note that Schweitzer did not fault the rationalists for attempting to reconstruct the life of Jesus; he believed, rather, only that they had attempted to explain too much. It is true Schweitzer held that "we have not the materials for a complete Life of Jesus," but that does not mean we cannot reconstruct "a picture of his public ministry."[9]

When Schweitzer takes to task the school of "thoroughgoing *skepticism*," he is primarily addressing the work of only one man, Wilhelm Wrede. Schweitzer affirms Wrede's basic findings as paralleling his own: first, theology can no longer read between the lines to find historical explanations; second, there is no trace in Mark of a psychological "development" in Jesus, or Jesus' pedagogic endeavor to bring the people to a "spiritualized" understanding of the Messianic ideal; third, one may not tendentiously distinguish a "historical kernel" within a narrative; fourth, continuity between *pericopae* may not be presupposed; and finally, eschatology is the long-overlooked key to understanding the Gospel history.[10] Schweitzer and Wrede part company, however, over the so-called "messianic secret" in Mark. Whereas Schweitzer maintains that the secret is real history—i.e., Jesus was conscious of being the Messiah but concealed this awareness—Wrede held that the secret was Mark's invention, that the idea that Jesus was Messiah arose in the early Church and was projected back upon Jesus in the form of a secret.[11] Though Schweitzer's rebuttal of Wrede's position is fairly detailed, the logic of his argument is that skepticism cannot plausibly account for the emergence of the early Church's belief in the messiahship of Jesus and its expectation of the Parousia, nor can skepticism provide a motive for such redaction.[12]

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In light of his critique of the supernaturalist, rationalist, and skeptical approaches to the historical Jesus, Schweitzer's own methodological assumptions may be summarized under three heads.[13]

Regarding the *sources* for the history of Jesus, Schweitzer approaches with a qualified confidence in their historical reliability. His acceptance is not, of course, undiscerning; he believes that Matthew and Mark, as the two oldest Gospels, "follow a faithful tradition which is reliable even in details," but this affirmation applies only to their presentation of Jesus' public activity and death.[14] John, however, is virtually discarded as a reliable source.[15] Thus, Schweitzer maintains that it is possible to reconstruct a history of Jesus. To be sure, the Evangelists did not have a clear idea of the course of events, nor was the early Church particularly interested in history *per se*.[16] For Schweitzer, however, these observations only buttress the reliability of Matthew and Mark; because the Gospels were written by "simple Christians without literary gift," we may suppose that they were less likely to embellish the text.[17] And, partly because it was so preoccupied with the future, primitive theology had no need to falsify the past.[18] Schweitzer maintains that the early Christians would not be so naive as to put into Jesus' mouth a prophecy which was not fulfilled (viz Matt 10:23) unless the prophecy were authentic.[19] As a consequence of his essential trust in the sources, then, Schweitzer argues that even those events which are portrayed in mythical *form* (e.g. the feeding narratives) have their *origin* in historical fact.[20]

Regarding the *supernatural elements* which surround the history of Jesus, Schweitzer employs basically positivistic presuppositions. That is to say, he maintains the impossibility of writing history if one is open to accepting supernatural explanations. Thus he expresses regret over J. G. Herder's failure to grasp that "the adoption of the historical standpoint involves the necessity of doing away with miracle."[21] Schweitzer considers it a settled matter that "the exclusion of miracle from our view of history has been universally recognized as a principle of criticism, so that miracle no longer concerns the historian either positively or negatively."[22] Hence it comes as no surprise that even the Resurrection receives little serious consideration in the *Quest*. It is clear that Schweitzer holds a literal resurrection (however construed) to be impossible; the Resurrection, like the Transfiguration, was at most "psychologically" grounded in an ecstatic experience.[23]

Regarding the *method* of historical investigation, Schweitzer admits that for the problem of the life of Jesus, there is really "no analogue in the field of history," or has any "historical school . . . ever laid down canons of the investigation of this problem."[24] Consequently the only method Schweitzer deems possible is "to experiment continously, starting from definite assumptions."[25] Some of his assumptions have been stated above; to them must be added one more, the ignorance of which was the downfall of the rationalist

lives: Jesus was a product of his time.[26] It was this assumption—so radical for the nineteenth century, yet virtually a commonplace today—that led Schweitzer to the solution of his experiment. Throughout the *Quest*, Schweitzer stresses that the goal of historical experimentation is to discover the "inner connection" of the events recorded in Matthew and Mark. "On which . . . presupposition," asks Schweitzer, "do we find it easiest to understand the connexion of events in the life of Jesus, His fate, and the emergence of the expectation of the Parousia in the community of His disciples?"[27] The discovery of this "missing link" could be attained only through "the making and testing of hypotheses" and through the use of historical intuition, imagination, and instinct.[28]

* * *

What concrete historical findings did Schweitzer obtain through the employment of his methodological assumptions? Starting from the assumption that Jesus shared the outlook of his contemporaries, Schweitzer came to the conclusion that the apparent "strangeness" of many of Jesus' acts as well as his "messianic secret" could be consistently explained with minimum violence to the text[29] if one understands Jesus' conduct to have been determined not by the "natural course of events," but by his acute awareness of an impending apocalyptic inbreaking in which he would play the central role.[30]

According to Schweitzer's reconstruction,[31] then, Jesus' personality and acts were informed by his expectation of the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God wherein he would be revealed as Messiah. His preaching of the Kingdom was directed to the elect, whom he called to adopt a special ethic of righteousness for the interim between the present moment and the end. However, when Jesus prays in Matt 6:13, "Lead us not into *peirasmon*," he refers not to the "temptation" of sin but to the pre-messianic "tribulation." In Matthew 10 Jesus sends the disciples out two by two (presumably as a response to some inner prompting), warning them to expect the tribulation and predicting that before they return, the Son of Man (= himself) will have come. The non-fulfillment of this prophecy causes Jesus to withdraw from public ministry, and eventually he comes to the conclusion that in order for the Kingdom to come, he, the Messiah-to-be, must die an atoning death. He journeys to Jerusalem seeking death; and he dies, fully expecting to be resurrected and revealed as the Son of Man. When the disciples find Jesus' grave empty, they experience visions of him as risen, and they begin to proclaim that he is in heaven with the Father and will soon

return to usher in the Kingdom.

Such, *in nuce*, is Schweitzer's reconstruction of the historical Jesus. Schweitzer himself described his findings as "negative."[32] By this description, however, he did not mean that the Jesus of history is *undiscoverable* by our time; rather he was saying that the historical Jesus is *unacceptable* to our time. The "real" Jesus, the Jesus of history, is not a "sympathetic" figure; he is not "universally intelligible" as was once thought but is "to our time a stranger and an enigma."[33] Even as we are, Jesus too was bound to his own day and culture; he was the product of a world-view which we must judge both outmoded and mistaken. Mistaken—Jesus did not return, he did not inaugurate the eschaton, and he died the deluded death of fanatic. And one of the ironic implications of Schweitzer's conclusions in that the great ethical teachings of Jesus—for which Schweitzer himself had the greatest admiration—are literally an "accident" of history, sprung from a hope which died unfulfilled.

* * *

What is curious above all else, then, is why the *Quest* did not end in this minor key. Schweitzer's careful scholarship had ostensibly put the Jesus of history in his final resting place; why then does Schweitzer, in the final four pages of his work, resurrect the Jesus whom he had so successfully buried? Of course, the climax of the book does not take the reader completely unawares, for Schweitzer made at least one reference to the "eternal" Jesus earlier in the *Quest*.[34] Nor was Schweitzer able to portray Jesus as a "product of his time" with complete consistency, for allusions to Jesus' apparent uniqueness are found in more than one place.[35]

For the moment it must suffice merely to take note of the persistence of Jesus' influence in Schweitzer's life and thought; the significance of Jesus for history and the meaning of history for Schweitzer will be discussed in detail following an exposition of Schweitzer's understanding of the role of reason in structuring a world-view.

II. *Schweitzer's View of Reason and the World*

"Two perceptions cast their shadows over my existence," wrote Schweitzer in the epilogue to his autobiography. "One consists in my realization that the world is inexplicably mysterious and full of suffering; the other in the fact that I have been born into a period of spiritual decadence in mankind."[36] On the same page he continued: "With the spirit of the age I am in complete disagreement,

because it it filled with disdain for thinking." These statements bear witness to the poignancy of Schweitzer's reflections on his own experience of life, out of which he formulated his world-view. Here, these various elements which together comprise Schweitzer's world-view—the need for rational thinking, the resistance of the world to rational analysis, the solution of "inwardness," and the centrality of ethical action—will be discussed in their logical progression.

* * *

Schweitzer's first criterion for an adequate world-view was that it be a product of thought. "Nothing but what is born of thought and addresses itself to thought can be a spiritual power affecting the whole of mankind."[37] In adopting thought as his starting-point, Schweitzer sees himself as an heir of the Enlightenment,[38] and at several points in *The Philosophy of Civilization* he expresses his admiration for the rational thought of the eighteenth century—especially in regard to ethical views—and states his intention to "start again where that century came to a stop."[39] Yet he does not accept rationalism uncritically; the rationalism of the eighteenth century lost its credibility precisely because it failed to be *elemental.*[40] That is, it became sidetracked with the investigation of abstract and insoluble problems which in any case do not bear on what Schweitzer held to be mankind's "essential problems." Accordingly, he rejected as a "fatal error" any assumption that the road to a serviceable world-view could lead through metaphysics.[41] Thus he criticizes Descartes for the abstraction of the *Cogito,* which led philosophy away from the real world.[42] And, similarly, Kant is indicted for his preoccupation with "facade problems" (e.g., the reality of the world and the problem of knowledge) which led him to vitiate the simple, direct appeal of ethics by trying to ground them in "profound" rather than "elemental" considerations.[43]

The task of reason, then, is not to provide mankind merely with logical statements which do not relate to our life in the world; reason must assist us in our search for "the world- and life-affirmation, and the ethical system which we need for that serviceable activity which gives our life a meaning."[44] Clearly, Schweitzer's conception of reason is not restricted to the usual connotations of logic.

> [Reason] is not dry intellectualism which would suppress all the manifold movements of our inner life, but the totality of all the functions of our spirit in their living action and interaction. In it our intellect and our will hold that mysterious intercourse which determines the character of our spiritual being.

The ideas about the world which it produces contain all that we can feel or imagine about our destiny and that of mankind, and give our whole being its direction and value.[45]

Eighteenth-century rationalism is thus criticized on at least two counts: first, its concept of reason is too narrow; and second, it fails to comprehend the real character of the world. In this second criticism, Schweitzer calls rational thought to a confession of the world as it really is: "full of suffering." Although Schweitzer held that a world-view must finally be world-affirming and optimistic, he rejected the naive, uncritical affirmation of the world by his contemporaries as being grounded in superficial thinking. He refused to accept any solution to the problem of relating the world to the self which contrived to make the world comprehensible by ignoring the reality of evil. "We must make up our minds to renounce completely the optimistic-ethical interpretation of the world. If we take the world as it is, it is impossible to attribute to it a meaning in which the aims and objects of mankind and of individual men have a meaning also."[46] This point is emphasized throughout Schweitzer's writings: the religion or philosophy which attempts to achieve harmony with the world will inevitably be pessimistic and world-negating, for the happenings of the world daily crush the significance of human life.[47] If the world has an intrinsic meaning or purpose—which Schweitzer doubts—we cannot know what it is. "The rational thought of today, therefore, does not pursue the phantom of getting to know the world. It leaves knowledge of the world on one side as something for us unattainable."[48]

Yet Schweitzer himself was not brought to world-despair, indeed, he considered himself "the first among Western thinkers . . . to be absolutely sceptical about our knowledge of the world without at the same time renouncing belief in world- and life-affirmation and ethics."[49] Underlying Schweitzer's statement is a crucial step in his reasoning: rational thought cannot find meaning in life and the world because these are patently non-rational entities.[50] Hence it must look for meaning elsewhere: in the "elemental" human experience of the will-to-live.

The philosophy that abandons the old Rationalism must begin by meditating on itself. Thus, if we ask, "What is the immediate fact of my consciousness? What do I self-consciously know of myself, making abstractions of all else, from childhood to old age? To what do I always return?" we find the simple fact of consciousness is this, *I will to live*. Through every stage of life, this is the one thing I know about myself. I do not say, "I am life": for life continues to be a mystery too great to understand. I only know that I cling to it.[51]

The conscious experience of one's own will-to-live leads natural-

ly, argues Schweitzer, to the further recognition that other creatures—both human and non-human—similarly possess a will-to-live. This recognition of the solidarity of all life, "as it grows more profound . . . teaches us sympathy with *all* life."[52] In this way we arrive at ethics—specifically, we arrive at an ethic of reverence for life, which Schweitzer calls "man's first spiritual act." Man's second spiritual act follows upon realizing that his life is dependent on "events quite beyond his control. Therefore he becomes resigned."[53] This resignation, however, is not sadness but a recognition that despite what may happen to one, despite the failure of reason to find purpose in the events of the world, one may yet find an "inward freedom from the fortunes which shape the outside of his existence,"[54] a detachment from the world which is yet involved in the world.

Schweitzer by no means seeks to disguise the fact that he has passed into the realm of mysticism, albeit an ethical, not a merely introspective mysticism. His concern, however, it not to show that mysticism is merely a legitimate option, but that it is necessary. To understand his argument for the necessity of mysticism, then, two points concerning the ethic of reverence for life as it is derived from the experience of will-to-live must be noted. First, Schweitzer maintains that the experience in which his ethic is grounded is *universal*. All persons experience the will-to-live; though one's will-to-live may be diminished or lost, the pity with which we respond to another's suicide testifies to our own will-to-live and our own reverence for life.[55] Second, the sequence of thinking which starts with an awareness of the will-to-live and arrives at an ethic of reverence for life is *logical*, the product of consistently "rational" thought. "We may say that anyone who truly explores the depths of thought must arrive at this point . . . Rational processes, properly pursued, must lead to the true ethic."[56] Again, for Schweitzer the "proper pursuit" involves meditation upon the mystery of one's own life (the will-to-live) and upon the "links" which connect one with the life of all living beings (the "universal" will-to-live).[57] Schweitzer concludes:

> It is not through knowledge, but through experience of the world that we are brought into relation with it. All thinking which penetrates to the depths ends in ethical mysticism. What is rational is continued into what is nonrational. The ethical mysticism of Reverence for Life is rationalism thought to a conclusion.[58]

It is clear, then, that Schweitzer's ethical philosophy does not reconcile the world and the self in any sort of harmony. The charge that he is "dualistic" in this sense Schweitzer does not dispute, for he holds that the abyss between the world and the self, between knowing and willing, between world-view and life-view,[59] cannot be

bridged—despite rational thought's constant attempts—"with forced logic and imaginative ideas."[60] Every such attempt must end in pessimistic world-negation, in quietist mysticism, or in an unfounded optimism.[61]

> The solution is, not to try to get rid of dualism from the world, but to realize that it can no longer do us any harm. This is possible, if we leave behind us all the artifices and unveracities of thought and bow to the fact that, as we cannot harmonize our life-view and our world-view, we must make up our minds to put the former above the latter. The volition which is given in our will-to-live reaches beyond our knowledge of the world. What is decisive for our life-view is not knowledge of the world but the certainty of the volition which is given in our will-to-live. . . . World-view is a product of life-view, not vice versa.[62]

One's life-view, then, is essentially self-grounding in one's will-to-live, and this life-view—*not* one's world-view—determines one's attitudes and actions towards oneself and the world.[63] Elsewhere, Schweitzer describes his solution as "profound naivete": "Having sought counsel in all the spheres of knowledge . . . [we] come to see that we cannot explain anything but have to follow convictions whose *inherent value* appeals to us in an irresistible way."[64]

* * *

The purpose of this section of the essay has been to explore Schweitzer's understanding of the role of reason in structuring a world-view;[65] before moving on, it will be helpful to sum up our findings. First of all, one observes that "reason" is not Schweitzer's preferred term because of its narrow connotations. When he describes his world-view as "rational" he has in mind not "ordinary logical thought" but a nonetheless disciplined, reflective approach which he often refers to as "self-consistent thought," "simple" or "elemental" thinking, or a "new rationalism."[66] When one thinks in this elemental (or holistic) fashion about man, argues Schweitzer, it is evident that more fundamental than one's exercise of thought about the world is one's experience (whether conscious or unconscious) of the will-to-live and of the impulse to ethical activity (i.e., reverence for life) which is a product of the will-to-live. Thus Schweitzer states that "truths which are not provable in knowledge are given to us in our will-to-live. . . . To analyze Reason fully would be to analyze the will-to-live."[67]

Reason, then, as will-to-live, does not lead us to knowledge of the world; instead it leads us directly (albeit mystically) to the ethic of reverence for life. Ethics—as it is practiced, not as an abstract theory—is finally the agent of meaning in life for Schweitzer: "Ethics alone can put me in true relationship with the universe by my serving it, cooperating with it; not by understanding it."[68]

III. The Historiography of Ethical Mysticism

Albert Schweitzer was more than a historian and a philosopher—he was also a theologian. Though the preceding discussion of Schweitzer's ethical philosophy contains no reference to "God," in his own works Schweitzer does not draw any clear lines between theology and ethics, or theology and philosophy. Indeed, Schweitzer's terminological repertoire is considerable; throughout his writings one encounters not only "God," but also such diverse entities as the "Creative Will," the "Universal Spirit," the "Spirit of the Universe," the "Spirit of God," the "Spirit of Jesus," the "spirit of Christ," the "universal life," "Being," the "creative Power," the "ethical Personality," the "world soul," and so on, though, to be sure, these terms are not found in equal distribution or frequency.

However, if a single term were to be identified as embodying the concept which is of central significance for all of Schweitzer's thought, that term would be *will*. To understand Schweitzer's concept of will is at once to possess the key to his work in ethics, philosophy, theology, anthropology—and, curiously—in history and historiography. We have seen above how "will" (as will-to-live) informs one's life-view, how "will" (as linked to the universal will-to-live) shapes one's ethics, and how "will" (as realized ethical behavior) effects an individual's "true relationship with the universe." What begins to emerge is that "will," for Schweitzer, is both an epistemological and an ontological first principle; i.e., through the exercise of the will we come to know ourselves, for the will (which includes but exceeds thought and feeling) is the essence of our being.

The questions which will occupy the balance of this section will trace the way in which the concept of "will"— so central to Schweitzer's philosophy—influenced Schweitzer's work as a theologian and historian. First, Schweitzer maintained, against the Eastern religions, that Christianity is the deepest expression of the religious mind.[69] How does he substantiate this claim? Second, Christianity is a historical religion. What is the meaning or significance of its history—specifically, its origin in the historical Jesus—for today?

* * *

In comparing and evaluating religions in his book *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, Schweitzer approaches his subject much as he approaches his search for a world-view in *The Philosophy of Civilization*—by evaluating his subject against the overall criterion of "serviceability." The subjects of the two works (religion and world-view) are, for Schweitzer, nearly synonymous. Hence, to

categorize the latter work as the setting-forth of Schweitzer's ideal and the former work as an evaluation of religions against that ideal would not be an oversimplification.[70]

In asserting the superiority of Christianity, then, Schweitzer is not so much interested in "saving the Hindu" as he is in saving Western civilization from ruin, though one may presume that this will, in the long run, benefit the East as well. Thus the criteria for a "serviceable religion" are almost idential to those for a serviceable world-view[71]: (a) religious truth must be "something that stands to reason," it must demonstrate its "inherent truth"[72]; (b) religious truth must ultimately be optimistic[73]; and (c) religion must be ethical, it must produce "permanent and profound incentives to the inward perfecting of personality and to ethical activity."[74] To these three religious criteria which so distinctly echo the criteria in his *Philosophy*, Schweitzer adds a fourth: religious truth must be universal; redemption, whatever its form, must not be restricted to an elite.[75]

Schweitzer's results are predictable: those religions which seek to live in harmony with the world as logically understood (e.g., Brahmanism and Buddhism) achieve a non-ethical spirituality based on pessimistic world-negation; religions which espouse a profound, active ethic based on Nature (e.g., the Chinese philosophies of Confucius and Meh Tsz) ultimately deny their own ground, for Nature does not teach an ethic (as later Chinese piety admitted).[76] Hinduism, despite the attempt in its most "thoughtful" forms to conceive of a personal, living, ethical God, is faulted by Schweitzer for its compromises with pantheism; in the last analysis, Hinduism "blurs the difference between good and evil" and loses its ethical force.[77]

The superiority of Christianity, argues Schweitzer, lies in its ability to keep certain elements in tension. Specifically, Christianity combines optimism and pessimism, world-affirmation and world-negation, ethical activity and inwardness; yet it remains finally an optimistic, world-affirming ethical religion.[78] Or, more precisely:

> The ethic of Jesus is practical . . . [because its] eschatological denial of the world does not go as far as the Indian. It does not reject existence as such in favour of non-existence, like the Indian, but only the natural, imperfect, painful world in prospect of the world of the Kingdom of God. Its view is that man must prove and demonstrate his calling to take part in the perfecting of existence by living an active moral life in the natural world. The ethic of Jesus has a affinity with the ethical philosophy of world-acceptance in so far as its ideal is one of activity.[80]

There remains, however, the question of "standing to reason." Schweitzer admits that all of the non-Christian religions he discusses

are more consistently logical than Christianity, for they all arise out of contemplation of the world. Yet (as noted above) the criterion of "reasonableness" for Schweitzer is never a matter of conformity to abstract logic, nor can a "reasonable" world-view be the product of *world* analysis; "reasonableness" is measured solely by conformity to the impulses of one's will-to-live. "Although we know the charm of the logical religion, we stand by Christianity with all its simplicity and all its antinomies. It is indeed true and valuable, for it answers to the deepest stirrings of our inner will to live."[81] Thus, concludes Schweitzer, on the basis of his criteria Christianity alone is capable of providing a serviceable basis for the ethical transformation of the individual and society which is the prerequisite for civilization's survival and renewal.

Long before Schweitzer has announced his conclusion, however, the reader begins to suspect that the marked extent to which the religion founded by Jesus conforms to Schweitzer's ethical philosophy is less than an objective reading of the Gospel history. Has not Schweitzer done a good bit of trimming in order to fit Jesus and his teachings into Schweitzer's own preconceived ethic?[82] This suspicion leads us to our second question, that of the *meaning* of the historical Jesus according to Schweitzer.

* * *

Jesus has simply taken me prisoner since my childhood. . . .
My going to Africa was an act of obedience to Jesus.[83]

As noted above in the discussion of Schweitzer's approach to history, the *Quest* closes on an enigmatic note, claiming simultaneously that the Jesus of history is irrelevant for our time and that there is another Jesus—the spiritual Jesus—who exercises power in the present.[84] How does Schweitzer get from the historical Jesus to the spiritual Jesus without compromising the integrity of rational thinking?

The answer is found, as hinted earlier, in Schweitzer's concept of the will. In the final chapter of the second edition of the *Quest* (1913)—an edition never fully translated into English—Schweitzer makes plain the relationship between the will and history:

In every world-view historically conditioned elements are intertwined with timeless elements. The crucial factor is the *will* which penetrates and molds the conceptual materials out of which the world-view is made. Since these materials are subject to change, there is no world-view, regardless of how great and profound it may be, which does not contain some historically conditioned elements. But the will itself is timeless: it reveals the unfathomable and

> irreducible essence of a person and it also exercises a decisive influence on the ultimate development of the world-view held by that person. It makes no difference, however great a change may occur in conceptual materials or in the world-views to which they belong: the distance separating any two world-views will be only so great as the distance separating the direction of the wills that determine these world-views.[85]

Thus, though Schweitzer elsewhere admits that it would have been ideal if Jesus had embodied religious truth in timeless form,[86] here he argues that for all practical purposes we have exactly that. "The true understanding of Jesus is the understanding of will acting on will."[87] The "unfathomable and irreducible essence" of Jesus is found not in first-century apocalyptic eschatology—these are but "conceptual materials"—but in Jesus' *will*, which, Schweitzer seems to say, is "timeless." But what does it mean for Jesus' will to be timeless? In order to define more precisely the relation between the historical and timeless elements in Jesus, we must sort out what Schweitzer sought to preserve of the historical Jesus from what he sought to delete, and we must identify, if possible, Schweitzer's basis for such discrimination.

The elements of the man Jesus which were so compelling to Schweitzer were roughly the same elements which fascinated Schweitzer's rationalist and liberal Protestant predecessors. Consequently, Schweitzer is drawn to the Beatitudes and to the Sermon on the Mount more often than any other texts because of their ethical focus—and apparently in spite of his own conclusion that Jesus did not intend the Beatitudes to be taken as ethical exhortations but (along with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount) as teachings ancillary to his severe predestinarianism.[88] At all points for Schweitzer, Jesus' ethical fervor is key, and Schweitzer's most frequent description of Jesus' teachings is that they constitute a "religion of love" or an "ethic of love."

It is most remarkable, though, that despite Schweitzer's numerous references to Jesus' "religion of love," Schweitzer nowhere roots his own development of ethics in the concrete teachings of Jesus; at best he merely restates his catchphrase: "We come to know God and belong to Him through love."[89] Indeed, Schweitzer ethics: he removes the predestinarian and nationalistic limitations and replaces them with his own universalism, he re-evaluates Jesus' negation of work and property, he absolutizes what was for Jesus an ethic of the interim, and he discards Jesus' notion that God is the primary agent in establishing the Kingdom—"Mankind today must either realise the Kingdom of God or perish"[90]

Schweitzer's own agenda may also be seen in his ambivalent attitude toward Jesus' eschatology. Schweitzer affirms Jesus' escha-

tology as the catalyst which engenders Jesus' unique blend of world-affirmation in the midst of world-negation; the enduring value of Jesus' teaching is due to their origin outside of "the contemporary world with its historical and social circumstances," i.e., in an eschatological, "timeless" framework.[91] Yet Schweitzer more frequently condemns eschatology, tracing its demise to Jesus' own eschatological actions,[92] then goes beyond this analysis to declare that the task of theology is to eliminate the last vestige of eschatology from Christianity.[93] Once again Schweitzer's rationale is ethical: eschatology fosters within man a passive view of his ethical potential. "Hope for the future [cannot] be the pivot of our life or determine its direction."[94] What matters is the *present*, for it alone is the ethical realm. Schweitzer thus declares that the essence of eschatology *for us* is "an intense yearning for the moral perfection of the world."[95] Even for Jesus, eschatology is not a foremost concern—or is it?

> The subject of all His preaching is love, and, more generally, the preparation of the heart for the Kingdom. The Messianic dogma remains in the background. If He did not happen to mention it now and then, one could forget that *it is presupposed all through.*[96]

In seeking to understand Schweitzer's approach to the historical Jesus, then, one must recognize that he pursues two programs with nearly equal intensity. On the one hand, Schweitzer seeks to *preserve* the historical particularity of Jesus, so that his own ethical mysticism (which Schweitzer believes Jesus shared) may continue to be grounded in the actual content of Jesus' concrete historicity. One the other hand, Schweitzer seeks to *minimize* Jesus' historical particularity by substituting the eternal and spiritual Jesus, because Jesus' actual historical particularity contradicts vital aspects of ethical mysticism and reverence for life as Schweitzer wishes to formulate them. Schweitzer's tendentious historiography—as well as his attempts to maximize Jesus' appeal to the twentieth century —eventually dissolves the historical Jesus into an abstract moral will.

> There are many . . . aspects of His thought which must be acknowledged to be strange and offensive. But these are always historically conditioned elements, part of the conceptual material which simply fades from view as soon as the will of Jesus manifests itself to us. . . . If we focus our attention upon all that is self-authenticating in His person and in His Sermon on the Mount, then all which is strange and offensive can be dealt with at our leisure. . . . In reality the true Jesus is easier to proclaim than the modernized Jesus, if only one lets that which is elemental in Him speak out.[97]

Schweitzer maintains his ambivalence almost to the end, confessing

that Jesus is "uniquely endowed with the Spirit of God," "the supreme spiritual and religious authority," and "a unique revealer of spiritual truth."[98] Yet all these affirmations are qualified by Schweitzer's acknowledge that Jesus is in reality not an authority for us "in the sphere of knowledge, but only in the realm of the will."[99]

Before one may draw final conclusions about the significance and meaning of the historical Jesus for Schweitzer, however, two further areas must be explored: Schweitzer's concept of "accommodation" in his use of history and language, and his underlying concept of God.

* * *

Schweitzer is fully aware that there is a distinct discord between Jesus' teaching as portrayed by the text of the Gospels and the modern view of the world which Schweitzer advocates. Indeed, the major portion of Schweitzer's *Quest* functions as an exposé of his predecessors who did violence to the orginal texts in endeavoring to harmonize Jesus with their own world-view. It is doubly unexpected, then, to discover that not only does Schweitzer fail to practice what he has preached, but he does so deliberately. "We can only harmonize these two things [sc. Jesus' teachings and our own world-view] by an act, for which we claim the right of necessity."[100] There is much in Schweitzer to suggest that, despite his commitment to a "scientific" theology and world-view, he bore less sympathy for objective findings than for the "necessary" timeless and spiritual truths which lay beneath. In a sense, truth "accommodates" itself to history and thus lies beyond the events themselves. Accordingly it is possible for one's understanding of Jesus to be "historically wrong" but "religiously right."[101]

Schweitzer also holds that "accommodation" is a valid approach to the use of religious language. That is, even as spiritual truth is deeper than the events of history, so also is it deeper than the forms of language which we use to describe truth. Thus, in the context of a discussion of his own inability to declare himself as either a theist or a pantheist, Schweitzer could write to a friend, "If I speak the traditional language of religion, I use the word 'God' in its historical definiteness and indefiniteness. . . for I am anxious to impart to others my inwardly experienced thought in all its original vividness and in its relationship to traditional religion."[102] Language is a secondary consideration to the primary, elemental *experience* of the will-to-live—an experience to which the conventional labels cannot do justice. States Schweitzer: "That is why I never speak in philosophy of 'God' but only of the 'universal will-to-live'. . . . I prefer to

content myself with a description of the experience of reflection, leaving pantheism and theism as an unsolved conflict in my soul."[103]

Schweitzer's conflict remains unsolved throughout his works. In discussing his concept of God, Schweitzer maintains that his ethical mysticism is not pantheistic, "in that it does not find the God of Love in Nature, but knows about Him only from the fact that He announced Himself in us as Will-to-Love."[104] Similarly, Schweitzer states, "God . . . is more than merely the spiritual force underlying this world."[105] But Schweitzer also writes of "the Creative Will which is in and through all,"[106] and admits that "my philosophy has developed into an ethical pantheism, the inevitable synthesis of theism and pantheism."[107] For Schweitzer there are two realms in which we encounter God: in Nature, where God is recognized only as "impersonal creative Power"; and in ourselves, where God is manifested as "ethical Personality."[108] Often Schweitzer denies that these two realms can be brought together in thought, but at one point he suggests that theism *emerges* from pantheism "as the ethically determined out of what is natural and undetermined."[109]

Nowhere, though, is Schweitzer willing to expound his notion of God systematically—primarily because of his reluctance to express anything beyond what he has experienced in his own reflection (see above).[110] Again, labels are for Schweitzer but poor substitutes for one's own experience of the will-to-live; even "God" is an inappropriate description, one which Schweitzer could appropriate only mystically, on the basis of the analogy between "God" and Schweitzer's experience of reverence for life. But beyond his assertion of the universal will-to-live he prefers not venture. If there is a final word on Schweitzer's concept of God, it would be his own: *Ich bin ein Agnostiker im Nachfolge Christi*—"I am an agnostic in the imitation of Christ."[111]

* * *

In summary, what concrete conclusions may be drawn about Schweitzer's understanding of history in general and of the significance of the historical Jesus in particular? "History in general," for Schweitzer, proves to be of tertiary relevance for religion and philosophy, taking a backseat to experience and reason (which, as Schweitzer defines them, are virtually synonymous). The key to consistent and serviceable world-view does *not* lie in history.

> It is not true to say that we possess the idea of the moral perfection of the world and the ideas we have of what must be done in our time because we have obtained them through historical revelation. *These ideas lie within us*; they are given with the ethical will.[112]

Though it is true, argues Schweitzer, that Christianity is superior to other religions, this superiority is not a function of Christianity's persuasive historical origin, but of its "depth of thought" which is expressed in ethical behavior. The issue for Schweitzer is always *ethical*. Accordingly, the present is his only interest—to look to either the future or the past is dangerous, for both distract us from the ethical task at hand. Hence, in its contest with other religions, Christianity "must not only appeal to the historical revelation but also to that inward one which corresponds with, and continually *confirms*, the historical revelation."[113]

History, then, is at best a servant of ethics and the present. Its virtue lies in providing an additional means whereby we can be confronted with the ethical demands of the universal will which, as we discover through deeper meditation, also exists within us as the will-to-live. History, however, is only a vehicle—not the only vehicle, nor necessarily the most efficient means—for a more timeless truth which transcends it. "We give history its due and then make ourselves free from its conceptual materials. But we bow before the mighty will that stands behind it, and we seek to serve this will in our time."[114]

Therefore the most that can be objectively said for the historical Jesus is that he is the example *par excellence* of embodying the timeless Will which is the object of Schweitzer's mysticism. As implied above, Schweitzer does not derive his concept of universal Will from Jesus but from reflection on experience; once having derived the concept, however, Schweitzer freely projects it upon the Jesus of history. Jesus, of course, is not himself the universal Will, only one who grasped this Will with a unique fervency, despite his flawed world-view. Jesus possesses authority over us, then, because of his unsurpassed example, and our fellowship with him—like our apperception of the universal Will—is necessarily mystical.

> No personality of the past can be transported to the present by means of historical reflection or affirmation about His authoritative significance. We enter into relationship with Him only by being brought together in the recognition of a common will, and by experiencing a clarification, enrichment and quickening of our will through His.[115]

Thus the real significance of the historical Jesus "can neither be shaken nor confirmed by any historical discovery," Schweitzer concludes, because our ethicomystical apprehension of Jesus' true significance transcends the limitations of his time—and ours.[116]

IV. Theological Prospects: A Programmatic Critique

In the preceding discussion of Albert Schweitzer's use of history and reason in his overall development of a world-view, attention has been devoted mainly to exposition of these specific themes, with certain weaknesses noted in passing. Here these problematic areas, as well as Schweitzer's enduring contributions to philosophical theology, will be more directly examined. This is not a comprehensive critique; rather, by means of a series of numbered paragraphs, I wish to point out, in programmatic fashion, significant areas where Schweitzer's approach either hinders or advances the "thinking together" of history and reason as they bear on Christian theology.

* * *

1. The chief concern of biblical scholars in commenting on Schweitzer's work has been to point out his tendentious exegesis of the NT. This criticism also bears on our view of his work as a historian, insofar as it simultaneously highlights his selectivity in handling historical data. Schweitzer's identification of the "religion of love" as the essence of Jesus' message and mission is probably the broadest example of his "de-historicizing" of history, revealing as it does Schweitzer's own philosophical discomfort with Jesus' eschatological message of judgment which is at least as prominent in the texts as his "religion of love." Other questions of his exegesis and interpretation could be disputed, but the point to be made is that if history is to be taken seriously as a contributor to theology, then theology must refrain from dictating to the original sources lest the net result be historical fiction.

2. Schweitzer too was a product of his age, at least in his employment of positivistic presuppositions. There are positive and negative sides to his positivism. I would judge as a positive aspect of his "scientific" approach his starting-point of essential trust in his sources. In view of the relatively short lapse between the NT events and the recording of those events, starting from as essential (not blind) confidence in the reliability of the texts would seem to increase the *possibility* for finding genuine historical coherence among Christian origins, whereas skepticism seems to foreclose the "historical" option. Similarly, I would judge as negative that aspect of Schweitzer's effort to approach history "scientifically" which rules out from the start *any* authenticity to what contempo-

rary thought regards as "supernatural." Certainly, to presuppose dogmatically that every miracle story is literal, historical fact bears an undeniable potential for the destruction of historiography's very basis; viz, that events of history bear some sort of continuity with their antecedents and results. Yet even Schweitzer admitted that historical determinism is insufficient to account for the radical novelty which confronts us in Jesus of Nazareth. Only since the advent of the New Quest has there been a serious search for the *via media*.[117]

3. Closely related is the issue of "historical" and "timeless" elements in history. Schweitzer claims that history cannot sort these out,[118] and his apparent solution is to "transcend" history through ethical mysticism. Yet in fact Schweitzer does attempt to sort these elements out, using as his rational basis the notion that the "will" represents an individual's timeless essence. But can the will be separated from the object of the will? Specifically, can Jesus so easily be extracted from his apocalyptic world-view? The implications of this possibility are serious, for the notion of a de-eschatologized NT seems to destroy two vital poles of traditional Christian particularity: the concept of the purpose and progress of history towards a consummation, a *telos;* and the central place of Jesus as the determinative agent in this consummation. Schweitzer's conscious intention was to de-eschatologize Christianity so that the present might blossom as its own *telos*, with the result that eschatology would be "spiritually" expressed through ethical behavior. Thus his own answer is clear, but the question remains: Can one "reasonably" allow any elements of a given historical configuration to function as "necessary" truths?[119]

4. One must conclude (Schweitzer's denial notwithstanding[120]) that Schweitzer finally dissolves Jesus' historical particularity into mere symbolism. Despite Schweitzer's constant reference to the "spirit of Jesus" and the "impact of Jesus' personality," it is difficult to accord these references any more than symbolic status, examples of Schweitzer's eagerness to impart his experience to others by using traditional religious language. Certainly Schweitzer did not intend "spirit" to denote a distinct center of consciousness (i.e., *persona* in the Trinitarian sense); perhaps "mind" would be the less misleading translation of *Geist* for Schweitzer.[121] In any case, Schweitzer's Jesus is but a cipher for Schweitzer's own experience of the will-to-live and reverence for life, and over this Jesus these is no historical control.[122] Schweitzer's spiritualization of Jesus constitutes a "theologial repudiation of historical research"[123]

which, from the historian's perspective, tells us far more about Schweitzer's methodology than the Jesus of history. To judge that Schweitzer's romantic attachment to the personality of Jesus was independent of all rational inquiry is, I think, fair. Schweitzer's detailed rebuttal of Wrede's skepticism may represent far less Schweitzer's historical conclusions than his desire to find Jesus—not the evangelist or an unknown redactor—in the text.[124]

5. Schweitzer's philosophical starting-point—that the primary datum of the consciousness is an awareness of the will-to-live— surely deserves more attention than it has hitherto received. In his critique of the *Cogito*, Schweitzer takes Descartes' formula one step further by observing that thought always has a content: one must think *something*.[125] In positing the essential content of thought as awareness of the will-to-live, Schweitzer turns the *Cogito* away from abstraction and towards a holistic grasp of the self which thinks *and* which wills to go on thinking. What seems to be lacking, though, is a necessary connection with anything beyond the self; the sympathetic move towards another human being is grounded in *analogy* ("I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills-to -live"[126]) but not implicitly within the experience of the will-to-live itself. Similarly, though the will-to-live is a universal experience, it is not necessarily a religious experience. Unlike Otto's "creature feeling," Schweitzer's will-to-live does not immediately refer one to an Other outside the self. Insofar as Schweitzer characterized himself as an agnostic, he gave recognition to a basic limitation of the will-to-live as a means of insight into the human experience of the divine.[127]

6. It is unfortunate that Schweitzer nowhere expounds his concept of "will" systematically, though one suspects also that a good deal of the force of his concept lies in preserving its ambiguity. One of the aspects of Schweitzer's concept of "will"—the will as a *noetic* principle, which he cites in connection with John 7:17—raises two provocative questions. One is epistemological: Does one's moral will influence one's ability to perceive, or is cognition always antecedent to the will? Schweitzer maintains that only in ethical activity does one's true relationship to the universe become clear, though his generalization is predicted upon his conviction that the universe cannot be known in any other way. One could derive from this the whole issue of the nature of personal knowledge, the role of the known in structuring the act of knowing, etc., but this would be foreign to Schweitzer's intent. What is

more germane, however, is a second question: Wherein lies the essense of knowing, in cognition or will (= doing)? Wherein is the essence of Christianity, in orthodoxy or in orthopraxis? Immediately the parable of the two sons (Matt 21:38-31) comes to mind—which of the sons did the father's will? The parallel to Schweitzer's life of "agnostic" obedience to Jesus' call is obvious, and most "orthodox" Christians (including the present writer) are driven to say, with one of Schweitzer's severest critics, "Would that the known and personal Jesus shone as manifest in my works as the unknowable and impersonal Jesus shines in his!"[127]

7. Schweitzer also derives from his concept of "will" a more or less *ontological* principle; i.e., the will is the constitutive essence of a person. Corollary to this principle is Schweitzer's notion that a person's will survives throughout time. Accordingly, Schweitzer can write that "the will of Jesus manifests itself to us."[128] But again (as with Schweitzer's use of "spirit," above) it appears that the "ontological" force of the concept is founded upon its semantic ambiguity. Is not Schweitzer merely stating that the example of a great figure of the past is fully capable of moving us to action in the present?[129] Yet such "inspiration" is less a testimony to the person's concrete, enduring will than it is to our own subjectivity.[130] Schweitzer's concern to re-present the impact of Jesus' personality is identical to the focus of the "new hermeneutic,"[131] and, like all existentialistic interpretation, is prone to emphasize the subjectivity of the hearer at the expense of what is heard.

8. Schweitzer attempted to establish a conception of "reason" which would view men holistically rather than isolating a single aspect of the self (viz, thought) and making it the final criterion for the validity of a world-view. Starting from the will-to-live is indeed a more holistic approach, as noted above, yet Schweitzer's approach led him directly to an irresolvable split between the world and the self—Schweitzer's "harmless dualism." As he formulates it, dualism is a mixed blessing. Insofar as it constitutes a recognition on the part of philosophy that the world is not merely a neutral arena but an arena which is "full of suffering," it represents an advance over "non-elemental" thinking which constructs elaborate systems yet fails to take evil into account. But is there no way to deal with this dualism save through ethical mysticism? Schweitzer's mystical solution lends itself too readily to a "blind subjectivism" or an "untenable solipsism," as a recent critic has observed.[132] Furthermore, it is not strictly true for Schweitzer

that he finds no ethical content in the world.[133] One must observe that the self, with its will-to-live, is also part of the *world's* phenomena; this observation makes a beginning, at least, toward moving beyond Schweitzer's dualism and agnosticism about the world on a non-mystical basis.

9. The most crucial observation one can make about Schweitzer's approach to philosophy is that Schweitzer is absolutely uninterested in philosophy—or, for that matter, theology, religion, or history—as an end in itself. From his earliest youth, Schweitzer was deeply affected by the problem of suffering in the world among both humans and animals, and he never could content himself with "intellectual" solutions to theodicy.[134] As a consequence, he never allowed his thought to range beyond the "elemental." Valid thinking about life must deal with the "real" issues which confront the human soul and must never be divorced from the sphere of ethical activity. Truly, the best and worst in Schweitzer's thought and scholarship spring from this common source! Schweitzer pursued theoretical knowledge, then, only because it was a means unto the alleviation of human suffering (i.e., through the welding of world and life-affirmation to ethical behavior). Schweitzer has been accused of being *too* elemental, of striving for naivete [135]; yet despite his flaws (especially as a historian), one must conclude that there is much in Schweitzer's philosophical naivete which can act as a corrective for our time as well.

ENDNOTES

1. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan, 1948) from the first German edition, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1906). Hereafter cited in the text and notes as *Quest*.

2. James M. Robinson, "Introduction" (1968) to *Quest*, xix, xx, xxiv.

3. Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought: An Autobiography*, trans. C. T. Campion (New York: Henry Holt, 1933, 1949) 222.

4. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 98ff.

5. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 100.

6. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 105 n. 1.

7. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 46.

8. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 222. See also Schweitzer's *The Philosophy of Civilization*, trans. C. T. Campion, first American ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1950) 54: "All real progress in the world is in the last analysis produced by rationalism." [Note that *The Philosophy of Civilization* (hereafter, *Philosophy*) consists of two parts, each originally published separately: *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization* and *Civilization and Ethics*.]

9. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 6

10. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 332-34.

11. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 337.

12. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 257, 314, 342-44.

13. Note that this summary deals only with Schweitzer's method of approach to the data of history; his conclusions about the meaning of history will be discussed in the essay's third section, below.

14. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 49; see also *Quest*, 308, 394. Schweitzer notes that whereas the authority of Matthew and Mark was often cast into doubt by their "strange content" (i.e., their eschatology), he himself attributes greater authority to these works precisely because of their eschatology (*Life and Thought*, 47).

15. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 6, 66.

16. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 395, 343f.

17. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 6.

18. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 343f.

19. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 7.

20. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 57, 84.

21. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 36.

22. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 110f. Similarly, it is "self-evident" to us that the Chalcedonian Christ is a far cry from the historical Jesus (*Quest*, 3).

23. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 111, 345, 386. At p. 111 Schweitzer sarcastically states that those who attempt to preserve the miracles of the childhood stories or resurrection narratives end up with miracles that have "no relation to those in the text, but are merely spiritless, miserable little toy-dogs of criticism, flea-bitten by rationalism, too insignficant to do historical science any harm. . . ."

24. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 6.

25. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 6.

26. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 23, 248; see also *Life and Thought*, 48f; and Schweitzer's essay, "The Conception of the Kingdom of God in the Transformation of Eschatology" [epilogue to E. N. Mozley, *The Theology of Albert Schweitzer for Christian Inquirers* (New York: Macmillan, 1951)] 113f.

27. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 257; see also 7, 38, 88, 162, 395. Schweitzer describes the search for the inner connection of events in a different context (viz, Mark's introduction of miraculous elements into his narrative) as the task of "explaining how such 'myths' could be accepted by a chronicler who stood so relatively near the events as our Mark does" (*Quest*, 380 n. 1). Here the inner connection would be the disciples' state of confusion regarding Jesus' self-understanding.

28. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 7, 25.

29. Several adjustments in the text are, in fact, made; e.g., Schweitzer places the Transfiguration before Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (*Quest*, 385f). Of exegetical interest also is Schweitzer's statement that "without Matt. 10 and 11 everything [in Mark's gospel] remains enigmatic."

30. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 351; see also 248, 252, 353, 358, 392.

31. Schweitzer neatly summarizes his own reconstruction in *Life and Thought*, 36-41, a summary which helpfully fleshes out this brief paragraph. See also *Quest*, 352-97.

32. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 398.

33. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 399.

34. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 321.

35. In Jesus "something new and creative enters into an uncreative age, and . . . this Personality cannot be resolved into a complex of contemporary ideas" (*Quest*, 256). Schweitzer admits that Jesus' view of his own person was "absolutely original" (367 n.1); thus his consciousness of his identity as the Son of Man "is not to be

further explained, whether there had been any kind of preparation for it in contemporary theology or not" (367). See also 287.

36. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 219.

37. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 53.

38. It is reported by John A. Mackay that in a conversation with Karl Barth, Schweitzer stated: "You and I, Barth, started from the same problem, the disintegration of modern thought; but, whereas you went back to the Reformation, I went back to the Enlightenment" [*A Preface to Christian Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1941) 13].

39. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 80; at p. 54 he states that "even if the tree's [i.e. rationalism's] earliest fruit did not ripen perfectly, the tree itself remains, nevertheless, the tree of life for the life of our spirit." See also xii, 82; and *Life and Thought*, 222.

40. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 72f; see also *Life and Thought*, 224ff.

41. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 73.

42. Albert Schweitzer, "The Ethics of Reverence for Life," in Henry Clark, *The Ethical Mysticism of Albert Schweitzer: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Schweitzer's Philosophy of Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962) 183, 187; essay reprinted from *Christendom* 1, no. 2 (Winter, 1936): 225-239. See also *Philosophy*, 209, 309; and *Life and Thought*, 157

43. Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life," 180; *Philosophy*, 184.

44. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 73.

45. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 54. Jackson Lee Ice [*Schweitzer: Prophet of Radical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 74] likens Schweitzer's understanding of reason to Paul Tillich's concept of "receiving" (versus "controlling") reason.

46. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 76.

47. Albert Schweitzer, *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, trans. Johanna Powers (New York: Macmillan, 1923) 59, 72ff. See also *Life and Thought*, 201, 229; *Philosophy*, 187f, 225; and "Reverence for Life," 181.

48. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 78.

49. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 76.

50. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 235; cf. *Philosophy*, 79.

51. Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life," 182-183; see also *Life and Thought*, 157; and *Philosophy*, 309.

52. Schweitzer, "Reverence for life," 194, 185. Though the will-to-live is basic to all persons, this does not mean it *necessarily* leads to sympathy; the tendencies of one's will-to-live may be impeded by thoughtlessness; *Life and Thought*, 231.

53. Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life," 184.

54. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 230.

55. Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life," 184.

56. Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life," 186.

57. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 231; "Reverence for Life," 186; *Philosophy*, 79.

58. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 201.

59. In this context, "life-view" (*Lebensanschauung*) refers to one's perceptions concerning the life which one possesses; i.e., *my own* awareness of purpose, value, etc. "World-view" (*Weltanschauung*), on the other hand, here refers to the totality of one's perceptions of purpose, or lack of it, in the events of the world. Whereas one's world-view arises from knowledge of the world, one's life-view arises inwardly, from the will-to-live. See *Religions of the World*, 77; and n. 63, below.

60. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 77.

61. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 40, 52.

62. Schweitzer, *Philosophy*, 78.

63. "It is not any kind of insight into the essential nature of the world which

determines my relation to my own existence and to the existence which I encounter in the world, but rather only and solely my own will-to-live which has developed the power of reflection about itself and the world," *Philosophy*, xv.

64. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 74, 79; emphasis added.

65. Note that Schweitzer is capable of using "world-view" in two ways: in a somewhat pejorative sense, in opposition to "life-view" (n. 59, above); and in the broader sense, as he uses it here, where one's world-view is that which is built upon (and essentially congruent to) one's life view.

66. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 222-25; *Philosophy*, xv, 79f; *Religions of the World*, 74.

67. Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life," 182.

68. Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life," 189. Not surprisingly, the ethical mysticism of "reverence for life" fulfills the criteria for a serviceable world-view which Schweitzer outlines in the final chapter of *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization*: (a) it is a product of thought; (b) it is world-affirming and optimistic, yet realistically so, for it is aware that "the world is inexplicably mysterious and full of suffering" and it has, correspondingly, passed through a stage of resignation; and (c) it is ethical (*Philosophy*, 53-59). As the above title might suggest, these criteria were not chosen arbitrarily but were directed toward restoring civiliation from the decay into which it had fallen—of which World War I was, for Schweitzer, only a symptom (*Philosophy*, 1).

69. This is how Schweitzer defines the issues at the outset of his *Religions of the World*, 18.

70. Note that both parts of Schweitzer's *Philosophy* and his *Religions of the World* were published in the same year, 1923.

71. See n. 68, above.

72. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 18.

73. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 27.

74. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 37.

75. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 49f.

76. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 39-41, 52f, 55-58.

77. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 68-70.

78. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 75.

79. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 55.

80. Schweitzer, "Transformation of Eschatology," 108; see also *Religions of the World*, 76.

81. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 53; also 83f.

82. So implies Ice, 141: "[Schweitzer] does not measure his ethic by that of Jesus, but vice versa; he judges the Christian ethic by the principle of reasoned reflection and the epiphany of Reverence for Life, retaining and expanding what symbolizes the absolute ethic of love and leaving aside what is unessential."

83. Albert Schweitzer [title of article unknown] *Deutsches Pfarrblatt* 35 (December 30, 1931): 824, cited in Clark, *Ethical Mysticism*, 77.

84. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 401.

85. Albert Schweitzer, "Concluding Statement from *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*," trans. Henry Clark [appendix to Clark, *Ethical Mysticism*, 195-205] 196; hereafter cited as *Geschichte*. Only the final chapter of the second edition is here translated by Clark.

86. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 53; and "Transformation of Eschatology," 112.

87. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 56; see also *Geschichte*, 201.

88. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 354-55; cf. *Life and Thought*, 54, and *Geschichte*, 202.

89. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 54.

90. Schweitzer, "Transformation of Eschatology," 115f; see also *Geschichte*, 201-203.

91. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 402.

92. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 285.

93. Schweitzer, "Transformation of Eschatology," passim; see also *Life and Thought*, 58f.

94. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 80.

95. Schweitzer, *Geschichte*, 198; similarly (195f): "The characteristic thing about Jesus is the way in which He looks beyond the perfection and blessedness of the individual to the perfection and blessedness of the world and of an elect humanity."

96. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 54 (emphasis added).

97. Schweitzer, *Geschichte*, 202.

98. Schweitzer, "Transformation of Eschatology," 112, 113, 114.

99. Schweitzer, *Geschichte*, 197.

100. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 53.

101. Schweitzer, "Transformation of Eschatology," 110.

102. Schweitzer to Oskar Kraus (January 2, 1924), in Oskar Kraus, *Albert Schweitzer: His Work and His Philosophy* (London: A. & C. Black, 1944) 42. See also Ice, 68.

103. Schweitzer to Kraus (January 2, 1924), 42.

104. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 239; cf. previous page.

105. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 61.

106. Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life," 194.

107. Schweitzer, cited by Kraus, 72.

108. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 61.

109. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought*, 239; note that Ice, 97, argues that Schweitzer's thought tends toward pantheism.

110. Experience, for Schweitzer, is thus the ultimate ground: "For me the certainty of the existence of an ethical world-will is an absolute and indubitable fact based on my experience of its workings in my own soul" (quote by Kraus, 72f).

111. Quoted and translated by Ice, 46.

112. Schweitzer, *Geschichte*, 203 (emphasis added).

113. Schweitzer, *Religions of the World*, 83 (emphasis added).

114. Schweitzer, *Geschichte*, 203.

115. Schweitzer, *Geschichte*, 203f.

116. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 399.

117. See, e.g., Carl Braaten's discussion of the problem of analogy in *History and Hermeneutics* (New Directions in Theology Today; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966) 45f. Note also James Dunn's reluctance *as a historian* to reject accounts of the supernatural out-of-hand as legendary accretions" or "apologetic constructions" [*Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975)].

118. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 401.

119. One is struck here especially by Wolfhart Pannenberg's idea that because God's revelation is concretized in the history of the man Jesus, certain elements of Jesus' apocalyptic world-view are binding also on us [*Jesus—God and Man*, second ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 242f]. Even if reason is capable of demonstrating God's "necessity," reason must acknowledge history as the realm wherein the character of that "abstract necessity" is disclosed.

120. Schweitzer, *Geschichte*, 204.

121. Schweitzer thus uses "spirit" in the same sense as the word is used in such expressions as "the 'spirit' of the age" or "the 'spirit' of Protestantism."

122. Once Schweitzer has admitted his own concept of ethical mysticism as the determinative principle, his description of the historical Jesus is especially prone to contradict itself. Thus we find at one point that Jesus was not a rationalist but an enthusiast (*Quest*, 34); later it seems that Jesus was essentially a rationalist after all (*Geschichte*, 203). Similarly, at various points we see that Jesus did/did not spiritualize the Jewish concept of the Kingdom of God (cf. "Transformation of Eschatology," 114; and *Life and Thought*, 37, 54).

123. Robinson, xxv.

124. Nor did Schweitzer's selectivity in his writing of history manifest itself only at the expense of the historical Jesus. Leo Schrade argues persuasively that Schweitzer also pressed the historical Bach into service as a proclaimer of ethical mysticism ["Schweitzer's Aesthetics: An Interpretation of Bach," in A. A. Roback, ed., *The Albert Schweitzer Jubilee Book* (Cambridge, MA: Sci-Art Publishers, n.d.) 194-95].

125. Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life," 183.

126. Schweitzer, *Life and Thought,* 157.

127. J. Middleton Murry, *The Challenge of Schweitzer* (London: Jason Press, 1948), 133.

128. Schweitzer, *Geschichte,* 202.

129. Note in this context Märtin Kahler's dictum that "the truly historic element in any great figure is the discernible personal influence he exercises upon later generations" [*The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ,* trans. Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964) 63].

130. Ice observes at this point that the figure of Jesus may not be as essential to Schweitzer's ethical mysticism as a first glance might indicate: "Several curious facts are worthy of note: Who was it Schweitzer said stood by his side as he labored building his jungle hospital? Jesus? No, it was *Goethe.* Who was it that came to his mind when the epiphany of Reverence for Life struck him? Jesus? No, it was *Buddha.* Whose picture did he have hanging above his bed in Lambaréné? Jesus? No, it was *Darwin's.* Also, I am sure Schweitzer would be most unhappy if I omitted from his list the name of *Bach,* who had a great influence upon his life and who dominated so much of his energy, talent, and imagination" (205 n. 64).

131. Robinson, xxiii-xxvi.

132. Ice, 90.

133. Here as well Schweitzer contradicts himself on different occasions. Most consistently he maintains that Nature teaches us no ethic (e.g., see *Religions of the World,* 57f), but in "Reverence for Life" (193) he adduces examples to show that animals do exhibit a certain "ethical behavior" among their kind.

134. Kraus (50-59) has a provocative chapter on this subject, entitled in part, "[Schweitzer's] Missionary Work in Africa as a Vicarious Atonement."

135. Kraus, 43f.

The Clergy and the Problem of Professional Impotency

Richard A. Goodling

Part I: Introduction

Cultural analysts have from time to time used various terms to characterize a particular era, generation, or decade; such terms as "the silent generation," "the beat generation," "the age of anxiety," come to mind. Wesley Farber, in a recent book, *The Ways of the Will*, referred to our time as "the age of the disordered will." In the introduction to *Love and Will*, Rollo May asks the question, "What underlies this disordered world?" His answer is: "a state of feelinglessness, the despairing possibility that nothing matters, a condition very close to apathy." Apathy or affectlessness, he believes, is a characteristic mood or our day. In his earlier book, *Man's Search for Himself*, May pointed out that the chief problem of people in the decade of the fifties was emptiness.

> The *feeling* of emptiness of vacuity . . . generally comes from people's feeling that they are *powerless* to do anything effective about their lives or the world they live in. Inner-vacuousness is the long-term, accumulated result of a person's particular conviction about himself, namely his conviction that he cannot act as an entity in directing his own life or change other people's attitudes toward him, or effectually influence the world around him. Thus he gets the deep sense of despair and futility which so many people in our day have. And soon, since what he wants and what he feels can make no real difference he gives up wanting and feeling. (pages 24-25).

This paper is based on the assumption that the concept of impotency or powerlessness strikes a responsive note among contemporary clergy as they seek to understand the nature of the pervasive unease within their professional life. Part of this unease, it is suggested, may be more clearly understood in terms of a felt sense of professional inadequacy and ineffectiveness, in short, the frustrating and demoralizing experience of being powerless or impotent.

Perhaps the term "powerlessness" would be more acceptable if not more appropriate to describe one of the pervading feelings of many clergy today: the felt loss of professional power, the sense of being ineffectual professionally. The term "impotent" is chosen not only because it has the power to engage, but, I believe captures dramatically the meaning which a complex set of experiences has for clergymen as professionals.

Part II: Psychoanalytic Digression

Some of the richness of the term impotence as a dynamic concept when applied to experiences of the professional ministry may be illuminated by a brief consideration of psychoanalytic theory. Freud, in the title of a paper in 1912, referred to impotence as "The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life." He wrote, "If a practicing psychoanalyst asks himself what disorder he is most often called upon to remedy, he is obliged to reply—apart from anxiety in its many forms—psychical impotence." (p. 203, vol. 4, *Collected Papers*)

The term "impotence" in a narrow sense refers, according to Freud, to the inability or failure of individuals ". . . to execute the sexual act, although both before and after the attempt they show themselves intact and competent to do so, and although a strong mental inclination to carry out the act is present." In elaborating upon the problem of impotence, Freud referred to the psycho-anaesthetic individual who does not fail in the sexual act but who performs it without special pleasure, the individual who is able to go through the motions without finding enjoyment or pleasure. In his analytic work, Freud discovered that "the man gets his first inkling in the direction of understanding his condition by discovering that he fails in this way with certain women, whereas it never happens with others." The impotent male discovers that there is a relationship between his success or failure and the personalities of women. To put it more directly, there are impotent males and castrating females.

The points to be emphasized in this brief excursion into psycho-analytic thought on sexual impotence are: (1) the potential for the sexual act exists; (2) the male fails in the sexual act in some relationships and not in others, i.e., some women have or are ascribed "castrating" power; and (3) the sexual attempt either ends in defeat, failure, humiliation when sexual inadequacy is revealed to the partner or the sexual attempt becomes a perfunctory performance without pleasure or satisfaction: the male may be able to hide his failure to participate fully and with pleasure from his mate but not from himself.

But our concern is with impotence in a professional rather than a sexual context. Let us set aside, therefore, the strictly sexual implications of impotency and consider impotency in professional terms: the sense of professional powerlessness. The concept of impotency will be expanded to refer to the failure to live up to one's potential, the failure to be effective in some, although not necessarily in all professional relationships, with the accompanying

sense of failure, defeat, disillusionment, demoralization or apathy. The desire to act is present, the potential to act is present, but the performance is inadequate or ineffective and results in frustration, defeat, and demoralization.

Part III: Signs of Professional Impotency

Clergy powerlessness is reflected in at least three different ways: a decline in power attributed to the clergy, a decline in felt sense of power among the clergy, and the Christian bias against power.

Decline in the power attributed to the clergy. Among clergy there exists the uneasy feeling that as a profession, ministry has suffered and continues to suffer a loss of prestige, that the contribution of ministry to society is less and less valued, that the persuasive power and influence of the ministry is in decline. The ministry is identified with what some insist is an outdated, moss-backed, establishment-captive organization. The Invocation-Benediction ritual at public events does little to affirm the value of the ministry. Culturally, a society seems to be emerging in which religious belief and practice are leisure time activities, to be related to on a take-it-or-leaving-it basis. The religious renewal thought to have been reflected in increased church membership following World War II does not seem to have provided the Church with greater power, influence, or effectiveness in coping with today's complex issues. Indeed, church attendance in the decade of the 60's was in a state of decline. A Gallup Poll of a cross section of adult Americans revealed that whereas 69% felt that religion was increasing its influence on American life in 1957, only 14% felt the same way in 1969. The authority of the minister seems to have continued during the 70's to have eroded: clergy, it would appear in some quarters, need not be taken too seriously. The threat of ex-communication seems to have lost some of its impact upon laity. Stick-and-carrot efforts to get and hold ordained and laity alike seem to be less and less effective.

Decline in felt sense of power among the clergy. There is a growing impression that a clergyman feels less and less influential, less and less able to effect change, less and less free to speak out forcefully. With the problems of society becoming more and more sharply defined—black power, the urban crisis, poverty, war, pollution, marital and family conflict—there seems to be a growing sense among clergy that their authority and competency are not equal to the tasks. In light of a heightened idealism, in response to more sharply defined social problems, clergymen experience a deep

sense of frustration. What Fielding says about the Church in relation to racial segregation parallels what might be said about the Church in the face of a wide array of social problems:

> Local churches seem sometimes to be more segregated both racially and socially than industrial units and other instruments of contemporary society in which people of different color, language, and class manage to get along tolerably well together. Why then . . . try to administer an institution whose members constitute an obstacle to wider brotherhood. (p. 3, *Education for Ministry*, "The Fielding Report," Fall, 1966)

A survey of 1,600 clergymen of nine Protestant denominations in California by Harold E. Quinley reminds us of what happens when clergymen do risk taking a stand: of clergymen who advocated withdrawal from Vietnam, 28% lost members over the question; 24% lost financial contributions; 8% faced attempts to have them removed. No wonder ministers are forced into a bland, indecisive, fence straddling role. Still it is important to note that some clergymen did take a stand on the Vietnam War involvement issue and risked hostile reaction.

The bias against power. It is important to keep in mind that the Christian tradition has a built-in bias against power. Power for many is a dirty term. "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." It is the meek (weak?) who shall inherit the earth. The emasculated male becomes the symbol of sainthood. The sadistically oriented are condemned, the masochistically are exulted, although each has a distorted understanding of power, each is fear-riddened: the one that he will be discovered to be weak and helpless, the other that he will be strong and destructive. The roots of such distortions lie in encounters between the Church and political and social systems exemplified by Roman Legions and the "Divine Right of Kings;" the roots of such distortion lie also within each family system. We know not only socially and politically but quite personally and immediately what it is like to live with authorities who control through threats, who demand compliance and submission, who punish any act which would appear to be disobedient, noncomplying, non-conforming.

What we have been saying is that clergy, as human beings, constantly face emasculators, emasculators who frighten and intimidate: pastoral relations committee members, members of church boards, leading laymen, major contributors, mill owners. These voices from without are joined, indeed in a profound sense are given their power by, voices from within who constantly warn: don't become angry, forceful, insistent, out-spoken, antagonistic. To illustrate the emasculating experience, one clergymen told the following, not a typical story: There was an elderly lady in the first

church where he served who used to come out of the 11:00 service, pat him on the cheek, and say without fail, "Aren't you a sweet boy." One Sunday he preached what he thought was a rather courageous sermon about the closing of the public schools in the county. He knew that what he said went against everything this woman believed in and stood for, but at the end of the service she came out of the church, patted him on the cheek and said, "Aren't you a sweet boy."

Emasculating experiences may be the rule rather than the exception. In any event, the net result is the clergy are left fearful of competition with powerful and often demanding, angry, rejecting authority figures and left fearful and unprepared for the prerogatives and responsibilities of personal and professional roles. Others have their "daggers" blunted by "sweetness and light." In various ways clergy are forced into ineffectual roles, at best as mediators, at worst as bland, indecisive noncommital fence straddlers. There is a keen sense of dissatisfaction with one's profession among the clergy and in increasing numbers joining an exodus into allied professions. This exodus is speeded up as more and more options become available with less and less stigma attached to leaving the ministry. The changing social attitude toward the acceptability of leaving the ministry may, in itself, be indicative of the changing value placed by society on ministry.

A recent issue of a denominational publication had an article on clergy who were carving out vocational careers in teaching, rehabilitation counseling, mental health counseling, social work, urban planning. A typical reaction spoken with satisfaction and penetrating self-criticism was, "Our ministry was never more effective." Spoken with equal satisfaction and equally revealing are other reactions: "I feel liberated. . . . I feel free to be a man. . . . My feelings about myself have improved. . . . I have an increased sense of personal integrity. . . ."

A TIME article on young managers entitled "The Generation Gap in the Corporation" may also speak to today's clergy. Young managers were described as having a desire for almost instant responsibility, a chance for individual expression, and the "opportunity for impact." The article states that "Today's young businessman is a member of the committed generation who insists on meaning and a sense of social responsibility in both his job and his life. . . . Some young managers demand time off from their jobs to do consulting for black businessmen or to assist in urban development programs. They prefer to work for companies involved in projects such as pollution control or urban renewal. Perhaps parallel concerns are to be found among some clergy with the churches

reluctant to support clergy who become involved in social action.

A Brief Digression; The Nature of Sin. It is possible that as clergymen become more relevant to today's personal and social issues, they will lose in popularity but gain respect. Relevancy, especially if it involves confrontation, may be less popular but more effective and deserving of respect. The attention of the writer was drawn recently to a statement by Kierkegaard that sin is always an "impotence" "Psychologically speaking," wrote Kierkegaard (*The Concept of Dread*, p. 55) "the fall into sin always occurs in impotence." The essence of sin, he believes, is retreating before the dizziness brought by the prospect of freedom and its attendant responsibility. Anxiety, or dread, is the painful dizziness in the face of the abyss of possibility, in the fact of ". . . the alarming possibility of *being able*." (page 40) To confront and move through the anxiety created by freedom and possibility is strength. Conversely, the fall into sin always occurs in impotence.

In this sense, sin is not disobedience within an authoritarian moral structure but the failure to act, to do what one could. Affirmation and worth come not through an obedient, compliant life style but through an assertive, acting, productive life style. The danger is that one's resources, one's abilities will be wasted or remain unused or, in biblical terms, that one's talents will be buried or wasted in riotous living in a far country. A deep sense of satisfaction comes to those who realize that their personal resources have been spent and spent wisely. There seems to be a widespread feeling among clergy today that this kind of satisfaction is being denied to them.

This digression points to a rather profound shift in normative categories over the past few decades. A decade or two ago there occurred a shift from the moralistic category of sinful to the medical category of sickness or illness. At the present time there seems to be a shift from the medical category of sickness to the personal category of unproductiveness and irresponsibility. As one of the participants on this discussion pointed out, "Part of the loss of the clergyman's power may result from a movement away from the Puritan period when it was possible to take a person's guilt and beat him over the head with it, illustrated so well in the early Sunday morning radio programs—where we have a narrow concept of man—goodness and evil—man in relation to the Gospel."

Part IV: Professional Impotence: Sources and Solutions

In this part of the paper we shall consider some sources of professional impotency and suggest ways of achieving a greater

sense of professional power.

1. *The Gap Between the Ideal and the Achieved.* For most people, a gulf exists between what they are and what they think they should be. Clergy are not protected against this gulf. Indeed, clergy may be thought of as frustrated and disillusioned idealists. Clergy, among all professionals, are least likely to tolerate less than the noblest of motives and the highest of achievements. But the pursuit of an ideal is not our concern; rather, our concern is with clergy who are intimidated by the gap between what they are and what they think they should be. Whenever someone says: "Things are not *going* as well as they should be," he is saying that he wants to do something he cannot do, or wants to be someone he is not, and this gap may be the source of considerable frustration. When intense feelings of frustration extend over a long period of time they generate deep feelings of inferiority and despair. Wendell Johnson summarized these consequences by calling them demoralization. Usually the goals or ideals of the demoralized are vague, unrealistic, and highly valued. They tend to be "either-orish," that is, the only alternative to success is considered to be failure. Unable to be sure in the face of vague, high, and highly valued goals that one has attained success, the only possibility left is that one has failed. Until success is assured beyond a doubt, failure is the outcome. And with goals so unrealistic and so vague, defeat is inevitable.

Clergy in particular are victimized by goals which are vaguely defined, unrealistically high, presented by both anonymous and identifiable authorities as though etched on tablets of stone. Certainly clergy goals are not easy to define. Clergy continue to struggle with the distinction between a ministry that is "successful" and one that is "effective." As Sam Blizzard's study of roles of the clergy points out, the criteria applied to ministers have secular, rather than theological, overtones. Unrealistic expectations of clergy is illustrated by the stereo-typed image of "Mr. Success," the hypothetical minister of a large church, "who" in the words of one minister "has the intellectual competence of a Ph.D., the managerial qualifications of a G.M. vice-president, the eloquence of the world-renown orator, the warmth and piety of a St. Francis, the golfing ability of Arnold Palmer, and the social graces of an aristocrat. Toss in some more modern images such as social reformer and community servant, and you have quite a package! . . . We become worse than Don Quixote with his impossible dream, because we are not given the luxury of being romantics." Clergy are driven to prove themselves in the face of impossible expectations and are thereby robbed of earned and deserved professional satisfactions. What clergy are and can be to people in significant

and critical moments of life is often lost sight of in the face of what they think they should be.

To those caught in the Idealism-Frustration-Demoralization (IFD) trap, two suggestions are made: (1) define your goals in specific, realistic terms; (2) be more compassionate with yourself. That is to say, clarify and redefine goals realistically and theologically. Goals need to be stated more clearly and stated in terms which take into consideration the person's potential. And efforts in the face of these goals need to be viewed with compassion. Ministers need to learn to bring together and reconcile goals and abilities, and be willing to settle for less than expected of a saint or divine being. Could but ministers say to one another, "Let's stop kidding ourselves: we are not angels, or saints, we are humans and we may wear our humanity with satisfaction since it was not achieved without effort and some pain. We are what we are, no more, no less: good and bad, tender and angry, with strengths and weaknessess. We have a right to be tolerant of ourselves, yea, more than tolerant, to be good to ourselves, to choose for ourselves, to be able to put our arms around ourselves and say, 'I like this me.'"

The goals and purpose of the church today are the biggest single point of disagreement among the clergy and laity. As one minister pointed out, our Lord did not fail to define his goals in specific and realistic terms. "He *did* commit himself to a definite and limited strategy for his public ministry. For example, he preached primarily to the Jews, his journeys took him progressively toward Jerusalem and he trained a corps of close followers. It may be that after finding some agreement on our Lord's purposes for the church, we could begin to develop more specific strategies that will help us overcome our sense of powerlessness. . . . Certainly our *power* to do depends on our knowing *what* to do—having a vision, sharing it and working towards its fulfillment."

2. *The Credibility Gap.* Clergy suffer from a tremendous credibility gap. Clergy may be committed to defend in concrete terms myths which were never intended to be taken literally. To this extent at least clergy carry a lot of excess belief baggage with them and consequently suffer a vulnerability to beliefs which they can only half-heartedly defend. The mood of the times, particularly among the younger generation, is to "tell it like it is." Perhaps there are people who cannot tolerate hearing it like it is but the minister does not have to be burdened by myths whose meanings have been lost or are no longer relevant. Clergy have the right to authentic beliefs. In Bishop Robinson's phrase, clergymen's "aspirations toward authenticity" deserve to be honored and respected. Integrity is a more fundamental theological virtue than orthodoxy. In the

face of some beliefs the minister might do well to cultivate a beneficient agnosticism—to live with uncertainty but to act "as if" certain. "Life after death? I do not know. That is in God's hands. Life here and now is in my hands." For the here and now each of us needs to identify a few basic beliefs which will weave a fabric for a philosophy of life which is flexible but tough, one which may not look pretty but will wear well during storms.

Many religious symbols no longer have power. According to Daniel Day Williams, "It can be truly said that the pastoral task is so to minister to people who have lost the power of a right use of Christian language that this language can be restored to them with reality and with power." (*The Minister and the Care of Souls*, p. 49) Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing from his prison cell in Germany, said:

> It is not for us to foretell the day, but the day will come to utter the word of God in such a way that the world is changed and renewed. There will be a new language, perhaps quite unreligious, but liberating and saving, like the language of Jesus so that men are horrified at it, and yet conquered by its power. *(Letters and Papers from Prison)*

When we speak of the power of the symbol we mean at least two things: (1) the ability of the symbol to represent, to make sense of, to provide an understanding of what one is experiencing; (2) to orient the individual toward those realities in the processes of life which are essential to his growth and integration. Clergy find much of traditional language impotent, without power to capture man's experiences and to liberate from bondage. We are bound unduly to traditional language in part because in our idolatrous tendencies we identify God with words. But liberating acts, not words, are of God. Until people can see that their experience is somehow caught up and reflected in symbols, they can be little more than text book pictures or museum pieces. We cannot teach people experiences. We can only report the experience of others and how people reflect on and find some of the meaning of their own experiences. Hopefully, they may then see their experience reflected in the symbols. No Christian symbol is irrelevant when it is tied to life experience. What more appropriate terms are there to describe life experience than with such words as creation, alienation, bondage, grace, forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, and resurrection? How else do we describe Viet Nam, the racial crisis, birth, sickness, tragedy, divorce, evil, death and on and on? The theological words of our day are present in the headlines of every morning newspaper, and these words not only tell it like it is, but what it is all about.

One of the tragedies of religious symbols is not only that they have lost the meanings for which they were originally intended but that they may also be used to conceal meaning rather than to reveal

meaning. The aim of religious symbols, suggests Carroll Wise is to provide insight into the nature and meaning of life and to outline a way of life, a *Weltanschauung*, based upon that understanding. Another way of saying this is that the task of religions may be defined to be that of discovering the meaning of life, to capture that meaning in symbols and to interpret ways of drawing people into the way of life based upon that interpretation and thereby transform and fulfill persons. But religious symbols may be used to justify defensive or immature behavior, to resist change or transformation, to conceal motives. Religious symbols may be used to cope with anxiety through denial rather than as the impetus to uncover the conflicts which create anxiety and ally the person with personal resources to resolve conflict or live more productively in the midst of conflict.

Clergy seek for themselves and for others, a liberating language. Clergy need to be willing to exchange, at least temporarily for strategic purposes, a dead language for one which lives, an enslaving language for one which liberates, a powerless language for one with power. This is no plea to discard theological language. Rather it is a plea for clergy to feel comfortable with a second language system. Clergy achieve power when they are able to think and act according to behavioral principles and understandings; when pastoral conversation is seen as preventive psychiatry, when the organizational life of the local church is viewed psychodynamically, when a suicidal attempt is not viewed as sinful but as a cry for help, when anger is viewed not as disgraceful but as the response of someone who has been hurt. Today, behavioral sciences offer clergy a language which captures man's experiences and which has liberating power. The form of the communication is not important if communication occurs. And every important and relevant psychiatric question is a theological question, and vice versa. The Gospel is good news, and that good news may be expressed in different languages. It is good news if it speaks to the present and opens up the future.

3. *The Gap Between Love and Aggression.* Clergy specifically, and human beings generally, have difficulty with both love, affection and intimacy and with aggression, anger and interpersonal strife.

The term impotence brings into focus one of the significant problems of ministers: The demand made of the typical clergyman to be more female than he may feel comfortable in being. There are to be sure other meanings for the vestments, but they may represent skirts and the feminine and mothering functions assigned to clergymen. As one minister pointed out, some laymen will not tolerate the clergymen as an assertive, confronting figure. Such

laymen expect not fathering but mothering. They often say quite clearly that what they come to church for and what they expect from their clergyman is protection from the world, they want to be comforted, stroked, soothed. In many different ways, laymen indicate they they see their clergy as being less than or other than men. A minister referred to a meeting in which one of the laymen used a well-placed "damn" or "hell" and apologized to the clergymen, but *not* to the three females present!

In our culture, women are expected to have and express deep feelings and emotions, whereas men are to be unemotional, strong and silent. Boys in our culture are taught that it is somehow not really masculine to cry, especially in public. In contrast to this masculine cultural image, clergy are called on to be empathetic, to be in touch with their own feelings and those of their parishioners and to draw upon those feelings and emotions which the culture labels as feminine, affection, tenderness sympathy, in order to care for parishioners. Thus the problem of impotency is compounded by the fact that clergy appear to serve a function which the culture mistakingly feels is a feminine, mothering function.

Clergy are also made uncomfortable by angry feelings, find angry feelings unacceptable, are apt to become disorganized and immobilized when anger is felt and expressed openly. Indeed, clergy are apt to believe that anger is less than Christian, something to be denied, to feel guilty for if felt, and to be punished for if expressed. This negative attitude toward anger extends to all forms of aggressive behavior, including any self-assertive behavior. It may be of value to distinguish between at least two forms of aggression: assertiveness or forceful behavior and hate which is behavior intended to destroy. In the latter category would fall those expressions of aggression which tend to ridicule or to humiliate and those clergymen who vent their anger and their own hostilities on their congregations from the safety and sanctity of the pulpit. There are of course laymen whose need to be whipped once a week matches the needs of preachers to administer whipping.

To the extent to which all forms of aggression are taboo, clergy are cut off from the drive which provides the basis for assertiveness, forcefulness, strength, effectiveness in personal relationhips. To this extent clergy are unprepared to meet self-assertive, forceful, strong, angry people.

Clergy need to be able to claim all their feelings, especially their angry feelings, to experience them as acceptable, and to find some of the creative uses to which conflict situations may be put. Angry feelings are valuable clues to what one is facing and living with and relationships in which anger is acknowledged and accepted are far

more satisfying and real than those in which it must be denied or concealed. Not many people, especially not many religious people, have had the opportunity to be a part of a close, deep fellowship that has survived hostile feelings. Too often the experience has been that of hate overpowering love or that of a shallow, fragile love which has not room for and is shattered by anger.

So clergy are encouraged to claim their right to have angry feelings. Recovery of respect for persons and a sense of personal integrity occur when a person claims his feelings and asserts his right to all his feelings.

Related to the concept of aggression is the concept of power. Power, like aggression, may be viewed in neutral terms, as a potential for either creative or destructive action. Like aggression, power may be employed selectively, with discrimination, to achieve valued goals. Clergy have more power, potentially, than they are willing to assume and use effectively. A minister said that not only does the Christian tradition seem to have a built-in bias against power, but judging from his own experience, it may well be that some clergy enter the ministry in order to avoid some of the more obvious burdens, demands, responsibilities and conflicts that go along with the use of power.

> I remember quite clearly that one of the things that attracted me to the ministry was that I was, at one point in my life, greatly repelled by the competiveness of American society (of course, after the Bishop laid his hands on my hand and ordained me, and I got all that extra Holy Spirit, and my eyes were open, I could see that one of the most competitive institutions on the American scene was the local church). At first, this discovery was upsetting and I tried to ignore it. Later I came to see that competition was not necessarily in itself all bad—but there was something positive to be said for the competitive way of doing many different things. In fact, to push it a little further, I think that in my own case, which may be reflective of others, I discovered that the real problem was not to compete or not to compete, but the real problem had something to do with my own sense of self-confidence. Do I feel confident enough to compete?

Clergy need to be encouraged to find, develop, and claim a sense of competency in or mastery of some selected task of ministry. In other words, each clergyman could develop a sense of expertise in some area or facet of ministry. Certainly, all clergymen need to remember and appreciate their contribution as specialists in meanings—in person-centered meanings, in person-centered values, in person-centered goals of society. A sense of expertise will go a long way toward guarding against a feeling of dependency upon, hence vulnerability to, those upon whom one's job security is dependent.

In a consideration of the relation of clergy to power some

thought needs to be given to the relation of clergy to The Establishment (i.e., the power structure, the sources of authority, the centers of decision making, etc.). Clergy may be cast in dual roles: clergy are both Establishment men and Revolutionaries. They seek ecclesiastical endorsement; they receive ordination, appointments, and support through The Establishment; they are called upon to support, defend, and develop Establishment programs. Yet clergy are also revolutionaries, innovators, mavericks. Present day revolutionaries it would seem are those who stand against The Establishment, any establishment. They are hero-figures because they have become individuals who are significant in their liberating social activity. As such, their aims parallel the aims of the Gospel, to liberate, to set free.

The struggle with The Establishment may be understood, to some extent at least, in terms of the phenomenon of transference. Transference means relating to persons in the present with the attitudes, feelings, impulses, wishes, and expectations experienced toward powerful parental figures in the past. Transference may occur in relation to institutions and organizations just as it does with individuals. One's way of relating to The Establishment may be a re-enactment of the earlier parent-child drama, a repeat performance, with the same positive or negative attitudes, feelings, expectations, and with the same ending. Clergy may at times represent the feelings, expectations, and with the same ending. Clergy may at times represent the parental figure and at other times the child in the transference drama. The skillful and selective use of the transference phenomenon provides an opportunity for a constructive, freeing, integrating, maturing influence upon the people.

4. *The Gap Between Producer and Consumer.* The point to be made here is that clergy need to recognize that in many instances they are marketing a commodity that people don't feel they want or need. Hell-fire and damnation preaching no longer provide the leverage it once did. Pertinent are the comments by Eugene I. Van Antwerp in an article, "So Who Listens?" as he describes characteristics of the modern truth seeker, especially the young intellectual, "His leisure time activities are all optional, and church going and believing are leisure time activities. Just as he can play tennis or not, watch TV or not, become a real believer in the superlative of the local football team or not—so he can commit himself to faith or not, to the church or not, to Christ or not."

A ground rule in Personal Encounter Groups is relevant at this point: "Tune In and Talk Up." Clergy need to learn to plug into real life processes whether it be within individuals, in the family, in

the church, or in the community. They need to be alert to what is being said in places and in words which may initially be foreign territory. Van Antwerp brings this to our attention when he says that ". . . the words of prophets are written on subway walls and tenement halls." A helpful way of tuning in is to seek the internal frame of reference to understand the individual, that is, to try to view the world from the point of view of other persons. But probably even more basic is to be in tune with one's own feelings. Clergy and religions tend to be isolated from deeper humanness and to suspect it and stay in chronic isolation from it. Fearful of blood-and-guts humanness, facades of humanness are erected. Religion and clergy may thwart gut living through intellectualization, through liturgy, through ritual, through "norms." These need not however, but often do become, substitutes for vital, living life processes.

5. *The Gap Between Profession and Commitment.* Many clergymen are in the ministry but not committed to it. They seldom have the opportunity to reconsider and recommit themselves with regard to the ministry. No matter how responsible the personal choice or decision initially the opportunity to up-date and make current this choice or decision is seldom possible. The truth of the matter is that for many clergy being in the ministry reflects an earlier period of their lives with its immaturities, its unconscious motivational factors, its pressures from family and society.

We know that vocational decision serves deep personal needs and that conflicted aspects of personality may be expressed in such a decision. The relationship between the decision and the growth and integration of the individual may be either constructive or destructive and probably contains elements of both. The call to the ministry is not a simple matter.

> "It is rather, the way in which the unique individual interprets the complex constellation of processes and experiences which comprise his life. If unconscious motivation is overriding and is in conflict with the conscious feelings and desires of a young seminarian or pastor, then he will not be free to minister. In any vocational decision, unconscious as well as conscious factors are operating. And often the really controlling and determining elements in the decision are unconscious. The unconscious forces may be healthy or unhealthy but sometimes because of their intense somewhat mysterious nature they are interpreted or misinterpreted as the working of the Holy Spirit." (Williams, Donald S., "Anger and Aggression, The Local Church, and the Pastor")

The preceding is intended to emphasize the importance of clergy having the opportunity to bring into consciousness unconscious motivating factors, to permit their maturing, to permit other and hopefully more mature factors to be operative, to release and channel his energies away from conflicting and distorted activities

toward those which bring increased personal and professional satisfaction. Each clergyman:

> ". . . needs to be given and he must find for himself an opportunity to make a conscious and rational decision. This is the decision either to be and to become or not be and not to become a pastor. To recognize the influence of unconscious motivation in his choice of career, in no way degrades a seminarian or sets him apart from his peers. Perhaps it does quite the opposite. Rather than denying his humanity and his individuality, it affirms and describes it in its richness and complexity. It highlights the need for conscious choice to be fused with and in control of unconscious drives, as these are increasingly embraced into awareness. The seminarian becomes a person before he becomes an effective parson and there is no shortcut available." (Williamson, Donald S., "Unconscious Motivation and Motivation for Ministry")

At another level, this crisis is a crisis of faith commitment. Perhaps the crisis of faith is the crisis which underlies the entire problem of professional impotency. A minister, in reaction to this theme, wrote:

> "All else—worries about image, congregational expectations, the irrelevancy of the parish, the immovibility of vestries, all of these are a smoke screen for the real issue. The real crisis is contained in questions like: 'Do *I* believe Jesus Christ was the incarnation of God? Do *I* actually believe something happens when I offer prayers in church for victims of cancer or for soldiers in Vietnam? Do *I* believe the words of Morning Prayer or the Holy Communion speak with power to the people in the congregation? Does the doctrine of God, the Holy Spirit, mean anything to *me* above and beyond an intellectual theory? Do *I* become embarassed when an elderly person talks about heaven? Do *I* believe, really believe, that all things work for good to them that love God? Do *I*, at the present, actually feel and experience the love of God in my life?' These are the real questions which we need to ask ourselves as we talk about professional impotency.

> "Did the Prophet Isaiah feel this impotency? Was Paul the Apostle concerned about a lack of power? Was Peter worried over the irrelevancy of his profession on the Day of Pentacost?

> "Until each one of us, in his own way, feels some sense of the excitement and hope which filled Isaiah and Paul and Peter, I believe we shall continue to operate without power. That there is a possibility for such a ministry, a ministry with power, can be seen in a letter to a recent issue of *The Living Church*, giving thanks for the twenty-year ministry of a clergyman in the San Francisco area. This is what the letter said: 'In an age when most men doubt, his faith in God and in his fellow man has been unique. In a time when most men cannot love even themselves, he has offered his love to every man. In an era of pragmatic opportunism when most men compromise their ideals, he has remained steadfast to his vocation. In a period when most men scowl with hostility, he has smiled with joy. Let us say of him no more than the truth: That he has attracted sinners and feasted with them. That he has gone to the side of the road and tended the waylaid traveler. That he has lent without expecting return. That he has neither judged nor condemned. That he has done much for the least brethren. That he has shouldered his cross and kept his path

straight for Jerusalem. Good Shepherd, Good Samaritan, Fool for your Lord, may your Master reward you with more difficult service among us who need and love you. Your simple faith and love has given us hope.'"

Further Reflections. The foregoing analysis of some sources of powerlessness among clergy is suggestive and not definitive. In terms of proposed solutions, it should be understood that words on a paper do not provide answers to problems like impotence—whether it be professional or otherwise. Competency and effectiveness as persons and as professionals are not easily achieved, nor easily and consistently maintained. One's strength is discovered in depth experiences in relation to others who also dare to live deeply.

This paper, hopefully, is a beginning for the therapeutic and redemptive tasks which lie ahead for many, if not all ministers and indeed, for every man.

Teaching Moral Theology

by Harmon L. Smith and John H. Westerhoff, III

Almost all seminaries require at least one course in ethics or moral theology. Among the assumed and commonly stated aims of these courses is a prominent one: to stimulate the *active thinking* of seminarians on moral issues. Few efforts, however, are or have been made to evaluate whether these courses improve the moral thinking of those who participate in them, or whether faculty evaluations of the student's ability and progress can be in any sense objectively verified.

In 1975-76 while conducting a team-taught course in Moral and Value Education, the authors discussed ways in which the teaching of the required foundational course in the Duke Divinity School's Master of Divinity curriculum, "*Christian Ethics*: Theological assumptions, ethical principles, and their application to contemporary issues of Christian social policy," might be evaluated. Continuing efforts in the field of developmental psychology suggested some clues for one possible approach to such an evaluation.

Early in this century, John Dewey theoretically postulated three moral stages: *Pre-conventional* in which persons are motivated by biological and social impulses; *conventional*, in which persons uncritically accept the standards of the group; and *post-conventional* in which conduct is judged by individual standards.[1] Somewhat later, Jean Piaget, through observation and interviews with children, identified a number of stages of moral decision making: *premoral* (0-4 years), in which there is no obligation to obey anyone or anything; *heteronomous* (4-8 years), in which persons literally obey, without question, the rules of their group; and *autonomous* (8-12 years), in which persons consider the purposes and consequences of following the rules of their group.[2] More recently, through longitudinal and cross cultural studies, Lawrence Kohlberg has redefined, validated, and expanded the three-level work of Dewey and Piaget and elaborated six stages of moral thinking. Kohlberg's typology is the following:[3]

I. Preconventional Level

At this level persons are responsive to cultural rules and labels of good and bad, right or wrong, but interpret these labels in terms of the physical power of those who enunciate the rules and labels. This level in divided into the following two stages:

Stage 1: The Punishment and Obedience Orientation. The phys-

ical consequences of action determine its goodness or badness regardless of the human meaning or value of these consequences. Avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power are valued in their own right, not in terms of respect for an underlying moral order.

Stage 2: The Instrumental Relativist Orientation. Right action consists of whatever instrumentally satisfies persons' own needs and occasionally the needs of others. Human relations are viewed in terms of the marketplace. Elements of fairness, or reciprocity, and of sharing are present, but they are always interpreted in a physical pragmatic way. Reciprocity is a matter of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," not of loyalty, gratitude, or justice.

II. Conventional Level

At this level, maintaining the expectations of the individual's family, group, or nation is perceived as valuable in its own right, regardless of immediate and obvious consequences. The attitude is not only one of conformity to personal expectation and social order, but of loyalty to it, of actively maintaining, supporting, and justifying the order and of identifying with the persons or group involved in it. At this level, there are the following two stages:

Stage 3: The Interpersonal Concordance or "good boy–nice girl" Orientation. Good behavior is that which pleases or helps others and is approved by them. There is much conformity to stereotypical images of what is majority or "natural" behavior. Behavior is frequently judged by intention—"he means well" becomes important for the first time. One earns approval by being "nice."

Stage 4: The "law and order" Orientation. There is orientation toward authority, fixed rules, and the maintenance of the social order. Right behavior consists of doing one's duty, showing respect for authority, and maintaining the given social order for its own sake.

III. Postconventional, Autonomous, or Principled Level

At this level, there is a clear effort to define moral values and principles which have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles and apart from the individual's own identification with these groups. This level again has two stages:

Stage 5: The Social-Contract, Legalist Orientation. Generally with utilitarian overtones, right action tends to be defined in terms of general individual rights and in terms of standards which have

been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society. There is a clear awareness of the relativism of personal values and opinions and a corresponding emphasis upon procedural rules for reaching consensus. Aside from what is constitutionally and democratically agreed upon, the right is a matter of personal "values" and "opinion." The result is an emphasis upon the "legal point of view," but with the possibility of changing law in terms of rational considerations of social utility. Outside the legal realm, free agreement and contract are the binding elements of obligation. This is the "official" morality of the American government and the Constitution.

Stage 6: The Universal Ethical Principle Orientation. Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen ethical principles which appeal to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. These principles are abstract and ethical (the Golden Rule, the categorical imperative); they are not concrete moral rules like the Ten Commandments. Indeed these are universal principles of justice, of the reciprocity and equality of the human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.

Kohlberg has further developed a series of moral dilemmas and questions that can be presented to individuals and groups to determine their moral stage and to stimulate discussion and thinking:

Story A: In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid $200 for the radium and charged $2000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about $1000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

1. Should Heinz steal the drug? Why?
2. Which is worse, letting someone die or stealing? Why?
3. What does the value of life mean to you, anyway?
4. Is there a good reason for a husband to steal if he doesn't love his wife?
5. Would it be as right to steal it for a stranger as his wife? Why?
6. Suppose he was stealing if for a pet he loved dearly. Would it be right to steal for the pet? Why?

7. Heinz steals the drug and is caught. Should the judge sentence him or should he let him go free? Why?
8. The judge thinks of letting him go free. What would be his reasons for doing so?
9. Thinking in terms of society, what would be the best reasons for the judge to give him some sentence?
10. Thinking in terms of society, what would be the best reasons for the judge to not give him some sentence?

Story B: Joe is a fourteen-year-old boy who wanted to go to camp very much. His father promised him he could go if he saved up the money for it himself. So Joe worked hard at his paper route and saved up the $40 it cost to go to camp and a little more besides. But just before camp was going to start, his father changed his mind. Some of his friends decided to go on a special fishing trip, and Joe's father was short of the money it would cost. So he told Joe to give him the money he had saved from the paper route. Joe didn't want to give up going to camp, so he thought of refusing to give his father the money.

1. Should Joe refuse to give his father the money? Why?
2. Is there any way in which the father has a right to tell the son to give him the money? Why?
3. What is the most important thing a good father should recognize in his relation to his son? Why that?
4. What is the most important thing a good son should recognize in his relation to his father? Why that?
5. Why should a promise be kept?
6. What makes a person feel bad if a promise is broken?
7. Why is it important to keep a promise to someone you don't know well or are not close to?

Story C: Two young men, brothers, had gotten into serious trouble. They were secretly leaving town in a hurry and needed money. Karl, the older one, broke into a store and stole $500. Bob, the younger one, went to a retired old man who was known to help people in town. Bob told the man that he was very sick and he needed $500 to pay for the operation. Really he wasn't sick at all, and he had no intention of paying the man back. Although the man didn't know Bob very well, he loaned him the money. So Bob and Karl skipped town, each with $500.

1. Which would be worse, stealing like Karl or cheating like Bob? Why?
2. Suppose Bob had gotten the loan from a bank with no intention of paying it back. Is borrowing from the bank or the old man worse? Why?
3. What do you feel is the worse thing about cheating the old man?
4. Why shouldn't someone steal from a store?
5. What is the value or importance of property rights?
6. Which would be worse in terms of society's welfare, cheating like Bob or stealing like Karl? Why?

7. Would your conscience feel worse if you cheated like Bob or stole like Karl? Why?

8. What do people mean by conscience? What do you think of as your conscience and what does it do?

9. What or who tells you what is right or wrong?

10. Is there anything about your sense of conscience which is special or different from that of most people? What?

11. How do people get their consciences? (How did you get or develop a conscience?)

In the scoring and evaluation of these interviews, Kohlberg is not primarily concerned with a particular "why" response or a preferred kind of action. Rather he places his emphasis on the reasoning process.

Further, based upon his research, Kohlberg has evolved the following principles of moral growth:

1. Moral development takes place invariantly by stages, i.e., one cannot get to a later stage without going through an earlier stage.

2. In moral development, one cannot comprehend reasoning at a stage that is more than one stage beyond one's present stage. This is a particular application of his first principle and emphasizes the uselessness of inappropriate expectations such as appealing to a three-year-old's sense of principled justice.

3. In moral development, one is cognitively attracted to reasoning that is one stage beyond one's present stage. This principle is more than a positive statement of the second principle in that it provides a reasonable basis for expecting gradual moral growth.

4. In moral development, movement is effected when cognitive disequilibrium is introduced. This principle provides the basic orientation for the use of group discussion where different viewpoints are expressed and the participants are afforded the opportunity to see the perspective of others. If the others are trusted and there is a mutually emphatic relationship in the group, the cognitive disequilibrium that brings out a clash of reasoning and of values is likely to be growth-productive for some of the participants. (Kohlberg has also noted that up to stage four each stage represents an ability to think more abstractly and to identify with a more adequate perception of the social system.)

Kohlberg has suggested that productive moral discussion is fostered when there is (1) exposure to the next higher stage of moral reasoning; (2) exposure to situation posing problems and contradictions for the person's current moral position, leading to dissatisfaction with one's current level; (3) an atmosphere of interchange and dialogue, combining the first two conditions, in which conflicting moral views are compared in an open manner.

There have been numerous criticisms of Kohlberg's work,[4] the most consistent of which centers around the distinction between moral reasoning and moral behavior: one can be rated high in moral reasoning but rated low for one's actual level of behavior.

Kohlberg replies to this problem by arguing that moral judgement, while only one factor in moral behavior, is the single most important or influential factor in moral behavior. He holds, moreover, that while other factors influence moral behavior, moral judgement is the only distinctively moral factor in moral behavior. Finally, he believes that changes in moral judgements are long-range or irreversible; a higher stage of reasoning is never lost and eventually moral behavior will correspond.

A second criticism is that Kohlberg has adopted a Kantian understanding of morality currently represented by the work of Hare and Rawls. Alternately utilitarianism and the central principle of justice is challenged, by some, on the ground that there are other acceptable central themes for principled behavior. Some critics while presuming the category of justice for autonomous, principled behavior assert the centrality of sacrificial love, God's kingdom, and obedience to the will of God.

A final difficulty that deserves mention pertains to inadequacies in research, and particularly in certain aspects of the Moral Judgment Scale and of the Stages themselves, particularly Stages Five and Six. The critics do not maintain that sufficient evidence has been compiled to discredit the Kohlberg model, but they argue that there are both problems connected with the administration and scoring of the Scale and with the lack of sufficient positive empirical evidence to support the theory.

Whatever the difficulties with Kohlberg's approach, many scholars who are interested in both morals and psychology agree that through his efforts a new stimulus has been made available to educators and researchers for measuring and fostering the moral and psychological growth of future citizens.

In the fall of 1975, we therefore decided that a blind pre-test and post-test using Kohlberg's instrument for measuring moral thinking would be given to students enrolled in one section of the required course in Christian Ethics. Our aim was to establish whether the moral thinking of students was positively affected during participation in the course. The authors were aware that other influences might contribute to a student's growth and development, but since this was the first introduction of students to moral thinking in the Divinity School's curriculum, it was thought that some insights might be achieved.

The course evaluated is one of eight required introductions in Duke's M.Div curriculum.[5] Apart from those general problems which are typically associated with any required foundational course, some idiosyncratic elements which are (or seem to be!) endemic to the Duke situation deserve noting. The Divinity School at Duke is

one of several graduate-professional schools within the University, which means (in part) that academic excellence is measured chiefly by the scholarly community, both here and elsewhere. The Divinity School is also one of the designated seminaries of the United Methodist Church, which means (in part) that professional credibility is assessed largely by this ecclesiastical body. These joint accountabilities are generally acknowledged by both the academy and the Church to be highly desirable and appropriate; it has been difficult, however, for the lines of those accountabilities to be clearly drawn.

That we are a "graduate-professional" school endows us with similar uncertainties in respect of the faculty's obligations especially in curriculum development and administration, to both the academy and the Church. Course offerings are expected to be simultaneously of high academic excellence and vocational utility, an ideal that is currently and widely advocated in both undergraduate and graduate education, but one which is also not easily or obviously achieved in many places.

We might note, finally, that both faculty and students at Duke come from a broad spectrum of ecclesial and religious traditions. While we cannot say whether or how this variety is significant in other classroom settings, we know that it matters profoundly in a foundational course in Christian ethics *if* personal and professional formation is part of this course's responsibility along with academic training in the discipline. It is relatively easy to teach ethics descriptively, as it is relatively easy to mark papers which indicate the student's grasp of natural law in St. Thomas, or nature and grace in Luther; but it is rather a different matter, if we are engaged in professional preparation where it is necessary to appreciate the personal and vocational purpose for which these things are learned. Thus, it is necessary to assess whether students show growth and development in moral reasoning as well as knowledge about moral theology. For this reason, over the course of a semester, we employed the Kohlberg test to optimize evaluation of student progress.

Three Years of Evaluation and Change

In the fall of 1975 we began our exploration into the teaching of moral theology by pre-testing the students enrolled. The Kohlberg test was administered to the students in this manner. They were notified before the course began that they were to participate in an experiment. Students were requested to place their social security number at the end of the test for post-test matching. They were given fifty minutes and told that they should attempt to complete
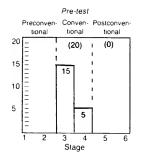
all the questions in this time frame. This was done to eliminate, as much as possible, student attempts to anticipate desired answers. The tests were then scored and filed. At no time during the course were test questions discussed or alluded to. The post-test was administered on the last day of the class with the same constraints. The tests were scored and then compared with the pre-tests. Further, no mention of Kohlberg or his work was made during the semester.

The readings and written assignments for this course in 1975 were designed to acquaint students with principal options within contemporary Protestant ethics and to show the variant applications to moral problems which derive from this diversity. Barth, Bennett, Bonhoeffer, Brunner, Bultmann, H. Richard and Reinhold Niebuhr, Nygren, Ramsey, Schweitzer, and Tillich were among the assigned readings; and abortion, ecology, racism, and war were among the particular issues addressed. Frankena's *Ethics* and Warnock's *Contemporary Moral Philosophy* were employed to contextualize ethical theory and method. Although this approach had been conceived (in large part) in order to be responsive to the legacy of the 60's, it was apparent that students left the course as fragmented as they entered it, that is, without a coherent and cogent framework within which they could give sustained and systematic treatment of a moral issue, and still heavily dependent on intuitions and feelings. Thus half of Robert Fitch's diagnosis of "The Protestant Sickness" was tellingly confirmed: "There is a Protestant strength, and its name is liberty. There is a Protestant sickness, and its name is anarchy."[6]
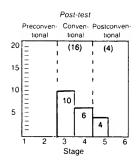
During the fall term of 1975, twenty students were enrolled in this introductory course. On the pre-test, fifteen (or seventy-five percent) of the students were considered to be reasoning at Kohlberg's stage three. Five (or twenty-five percent) were considered to be reasoning at stage four. One hundred percent were thus found to be operating in terms of conventional moral thinking.

At the close of the course a post-test was given. Forty-five percent of the students had improved in their moral thinking; twenty percent had moved into post-conventional thought. Significantly, while only eighteen percent had used any theological categories in the pre-test, seventy percent had done so in the post-test.

Concern about these results caused us to discuss a revision in the course. Before we could proceed, however, a discrete question confronted us: are the problems associated with this class a function of method, or content, or both? We adopted the working hypothesis that the most serious problems experienced in this class did not lie in teaching method but in the composition of readings,

Pre-test 1975-76 Post-test

Preconven- Conven- Postconven-   Preconven- Conven- Postconven-
tional   tional   tional   tional   tional   tional

STUDENTS

Pre-test: (20) (0), 15, 5 — Stage 1 2 3 4 5 6

Post-test: (16) (4), 10, 6, 4 — Stage 1 2 3 4 5 6

lectures, discussion topics, and the like. The teaching method employed in this series of classes was therefore essentially the same throughout, and consisted of the following: lectures, class discussions, brief papers weekly, quizzes, team presentations by students which were followed by critique by the entire class, and a final paper.

The initial two-thirds (approximately) of the term was conducted with sets of lectures, together with both spontaneous and scheduled discussions; also two one-hour quizzes and a series of weekly one-page papers were required. The final third (approximately) of the term was given to group presentations on assigned topics, accompanied by preparatory readings by the entire class and followed by the class' critique, and the final paper. This approach to instruction remained largely unchanged throughout, though substantial variations in materials and content were introduced.
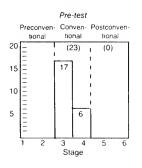
Interaction between students and assigned readings and lectures was the principal purpose of the one-page papers and quizzes; interaction with the instructor and graduate assistants was achieved both spontaneously and deliberately, sometimes emergent from lectures and sometimes set as agenda for scheduled discussions; interaction between students and their vocational commitments was sought in the team presentations and critique, where students had to negotiate personal and corporate claims, and in the final paper which engaged students with one of their church's formal moral teachings. Difficulty or ease with student interaction seems, in our experience, to be largely related to the subject-matter at hand; and the theological and ecclesial diversity and pluralism represented among the students, far from being an impediment, appears to be an impetus for involvement and engagement when the subject-matter is sufficiently interesting and urgent. Because these interactions do seem to occur, the working hypothesis (i.e., to retain the teaching method but change the content) appeared reasonable at the outset and is, in our judgment, confirmed by the
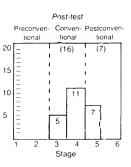
results of this study.

In preparation for the 1976 Fall term this course was revised to offer students a more coordinated introduction to the discipline, but still within a Protestant perspective. So the large variety of readings was abandoned, Frankena and Warnock were retained, and substantial parts of Clinton Gardner's *Biblical Faith and Social Ethics*, George Thomas' *Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, and H. L. Smith and L. W. Hodges' *The Christian and His Decisions* were introduced. A somewhat different set of particular issues (human sexuality, politics of dissent, poverty, racism, and sanctity of life) were addressed; and a series of "master sessions" with colleagues in the field was developed. A final paper was intended to demonstrate the student's competency to assess the ethical adequacy of one of his or her church's formal moral teachings and to engage the student in the (almost inevitable) conflict which occurs between conscience and ecclesial authority.

During the 1976 term a pre-test was once again administered, this time to twenty-three students. Seventeen (or seventy-three percent) were found to be operating in Kohlberg's stage three, and six (or twenty-seven percent) were in stage four. This pre-test result was not significantly different from the previous year's class.

At the close of the course, a similar post-test was given. The results indicated a dramatic improvement from the year before. Eighty-two percent (as compared with fifty percent the year before) of the students indicated an improvement in their moral thinking. Thirty percent (as compared with twenty the year before) were now using post-conventional moral thought. Also, while only twenty percent had employed theological categories in the pre-test, eighty-nine percent had done so in the post-test.

Still not satisfied, it was decided to proceed with yet another revision of the course for the Fall of 1977. In our curriculum, recall that this course is intended to be an introduction to the principle themes of Christian ethics—theological assumptions, ethical prin-

ciples, and moral practice—and any altered design is deliberately predicated on some discrete notions. For example, given the faculty's intentions to combine *theoria* and *praxis*, students are to be equipped both to think ethically (i.e., to discriminate, classify, order, analyze, assess, *et al.*, values, and to develop conceptual clarity and cogency in that undertaking) and to act morally (i.e., to shape character in ways which self-consciously show congruity and coherence between affirmation and action, belief and behavior, character and conduct). Both these dimensions claim interest and energy in providing a serious intellectual forum within which students can be introduced to the discipline of moral theology and participate in a religiously committed community concerned about their vocational and professional formation.
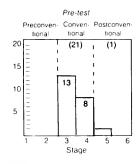
Work already done in other historical and critical disciplines of the required curriculum is presupposed. While students entering this course will not have completed the required course in Systematic Theology, most will have fulfilled the requirements for Old and New Testaments, Church History, and Historical Theology. Additionally, most of our students appear to have undergraduate majors in disciplines other than religion; and that circumstance, together with the required curriculum, permits the introductory ethics course to reflect an interdisciplinary character.

In this revised form, the initial weeks of the course are now devoted to ethical method and value clarification as these derive from historical, philosophical, and theological aspects of the discipline. Investigation thus proceeds to the nature of the ethics *qua* ethics, Christian ethics as a species of this genre, natural law and moral law, Biblical ethics, Catholic and Reformation ethics, and some representative contemporary types of Christian ethical reflection. These investigations are then directed toward enunciating the respective ethical conclusions which these inquiries reach (or appear to reach) in articulating the good, the right, the proper, the appropriate. Over the course of these weeks (about two-thirds of the term) vocabulary, basic concepts, and reasoned argument are also treated.
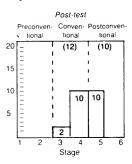
The final weeks of the course (about one-third of the term) are given to applying the vocabulary, conceptual apparatus, and methodologies to several contemporary issues which are ethically significant (e.g., political dissent, poverty, racism, sanctity of life, human sexuality). These are not intended to be either exhaustive or definitive treatments; they serve rather as exploratory, illustrative, and exercise time, during which the paradigms derived earlier are examined and assessed in decisional settings. Their purpose is therefore chiefly heuristic; and the hope was and is that through

these sessions students will come to complement their acquired proficiency with a sense of ease in dealing with particular issues, and thereby become both competent and comfortable in the subject-matter of this discipline.

In the Fall of 1977, a pre-test was administered to twenty-two theological students. It was determined that thirteen were in stage three, eight in stage four or ninety-five percent in Kohlberg's conventional stage and one or five percent was in the post-conventional stage. At the close of the course, four remained in stage three, ten in stage four and eight in stage five. This meant that eighty-six percent had improved in their moral thinking and forty-five percent had moved from conventional to post-conventional thought, an improvement of fifteen percent over the year before. Further while nineteen percent used theological categories in the pre-test, ninety-two percent did so in the post-test.

Conclusion

Our preliminary conclusion supports the hypothesis that the content of a course is as important to moral thinking as the teaching method used. Educators have typically employed methods as the crucial factor in learning. In this case, however, the teaching method remained constant, only the content was changed. Nevertheless, significant improvement in learning to think morally resulted.

It is a continuing concern to us that only forty-five of the class, most of whom were about to graduate and be ordained, functioned at Kohlberg's post-conventional level of moral thought. Surely this situation merits serious attention. Perhaps additional courses in moral theology need to be required, or courses in moral theology need to be introduced earlier in the curriculum, or courses offered by other faculty need to be constituted so as to contribute to the development of moral thinking.

A no less important implication, in our opinion, is the serious need for more critical self-reflection among faculties of divinity. Regrettably few faculties appear to be open to evaluation of the

content and methods of their teaching, and what is ordinarily communicated about these aspects of a course is rather superficial. That, of course, in the legacy of education cast in an individualistic academic mold; an inheritance that does not serve theological education well. If the seminary is to aid in the formation and development of moral leadership, experiments such as this one will continue to be necessary. Our preliminary study is offered only as a stimulus for others.

ENDNOTES

1. John Dewey, "What Psychology Can Do For The Teacher," *John Dewey on Education*, ed. Reginald Archambault (New York: Ramdon House, 1964).

2. Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1948).

3. Lawrence Kohlberg, "Stage and Sequence: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization," *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*, ed. David Goslin (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969), pp. 347ff.

4. Thomas C. Hennessy, S. J., (ed), *Values and Moral Development* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976).

5. In addition to Christian Ethics, the required curriculum includes Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Historical Theology, American Christianity, Systematic Theology, and Black Church Studies.

6. Robert E. Fitch, "The Protestant Sickness," *Religion in Life* (Fall, 1966), pp. 498-505. The other half? "There is a Catholic strength, and its name is order. There is a Catholic sickness, and its name is tyranny."

Orientation for Ministry

by Richard Lischer

A sermon preached on Mark 9:30-35 in York Chapel, September 27, 1979

The last time I preached in York Chapel I came as a visitor with the visitor's inalienable right, the right to speak—and the right to disappear. Anyone who preaches around (the phrase has an immoral sound) will tell you that it is an unsatisfying activity, for it bestows upon the speaker certain privileges without corresponding responsibilities. Thus this morning symbolizes for me a kind of first sermon, since this sermon arises in a new context, that of love, community and a partnership in the Gospel which I pray that God will bless. All of this is a way of saying: I will treasure these opportunities to speak the word, and I will not disappear.

These days continue to be for me, as I presume they are for many of you, days of orientation. *Orientation* is one of those worn out words George Orwell talks about which no longer recollects its original image. Webster continues to list as its first definition the determination of one's position by points on a compass; the second definition has to do with the position of the altar at the east end of the sanctuary, and only thirdly does orientation mean adaptation to an environment. But our orientation, at least my orientation, has stalled at definition no. 3. It has preoccupied itself more with the minutia of adapting to a new environment—the nuances of faculty protocol and trails within the catacombs of the library—than with the determination of my position in relation to something in my life or faith that is fixed, like the point of a compass or the rising of the sun.

I took a lesson in orientation this summer. I became a little league coach, partially because I enjoy that sort of thing, but also because I wanted to be there to subvert the first signs of little-league syndrome. On the day of our first pre-season practice game, I was to umpire at first base and my seven-year old son was to play right field. The manager walked my son all the way to right field and said, "This is right field. Whenever a ball comes to you, throw it to second base as fast as you can." "Yes sir." About a minute later I heard a voice from the high grass in right field, *sotto voce*, "Psst, hey Dad, where *is* second base?" The instructions were clear but how could he play without a basic orientation to the purposes of baseball?

Have you even become involved in the explanation of a book, film or street direction only to notice a glazed look of incomprehension in your friend's eyes, as though you were speaking in a

foreign language? The confusion often arises not in the details but in the lack of fixed points of reference and understandings. Haven't you stood before garage mechanics or lawyers and listened to words like universal, manifold, catalytic converter or stripulator and stipulatee only to capitulate by saying, "Enough! How much do I owe? Where do I sign?" As students, you have heard professors ask for an analysis of the hermeneutical circle with reference to the early Barth and the later Heidegger, and you may have felt so lost that, out of the wave of cynicism rolling over you, you heard someone speaking in your own voice, "O.K. When do you want it?" The lack of fixed points of orientation may first produce humor, like the drunk who leans on an imaginary lamppost, but it is all downhill from there: confusion, frustration, cynicism, rage.

The disciples were having one of their many orientation problems. Jesus had laid aside his parables and was speaking in plain English, using solid monosyllabic Anglo-saxonisms like "kill," "killed," "dead," and "rise." "The son of man will be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise." And in response to that stabbing clarity, they argued over who was greatest among them.

"But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him." They had just come down from the Mount of Transfiguration after which Jesus had spoken to them about his resurrection. Mark writes, "So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant." The darkness was thickening about them. Is it any wonder that immediately after the transfiguration they were unable to exorcise the little boy with convulsions and, feeling like orderlies where a doctor is needed, later asked Jesus, "Why could we not cast him out?" They could not do the ministry because they did not yet have the proper orientation.

Three years of academic theological education cannot possibly provide all the data you need for ministry, but by the same token, you need not wait until you have been five years in a parish before you discover your basic orientation for ministry. The sooner we find that *here* the sooner will the data begin to make sense as components of a larger structure and the more readily will we embrace our ministry *now*.

I do not see anything terribly evil in the disciples' discussion of greatness. It was a way of passing the time as they walked the miles. They may have begun with a general discussion of greatness and moved from the general to the particular or vice-versa. It does not matter. The point is they were trying to define greatness or, to use a word more acceptable to us, ministry, without reference to cross and resurrection, and given that lack of orientation, they could

have talked forever and not hit it. They could still be babbling *today* about this style of ministry as opposed to that, about my triumphs as opposed to your modest gains, about my theological integration as opposed to your pietism, and never by any philosophical or ecclesial route come upon the simple paradox: "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." It would take nothing other than the death and resurrection of Jesus to open their eyes, to give them their bearing, their fixed point, so as the change them from ambitious climbers to servants of the Lord.

May I issue a warning on this word "servant"? It ought to be flagged. We are not talking about a moral quality like humility. Woe unto you if you are even drawn into playing the "humility game," whose object is the out-serving and out-self-abnegating of the other. The winner goes to the bottom of the class which is really the top, and the game begins anew. The more I read the Bible the more I realize how little the great themes of Scripture have to do with moral qualities in humankind. Luther discovered this about the Biblical theme of righteousness. We could say the same about faith, which is not a moral attribute such as naiveté or childlike simplicity, but only the empty hand that receives the gift. It saves not by it strength but by its Object. Such could be said of peace, holiness, and especially of today's point on the compass: servanthood. Servanthood does not live by humility but in the humiliation of Jesus. Philippians 2, the great hymn of Christ's self-emptying servanthood, speaks not of Christ's modesty but his ministry.

Nor can we conceive servanthood as a strategy, as if Jesus were saying, "Would you like to come in first? Then you need to finish last." Then to complicate matters further, Jesus introduces a child. Commentators, the childless among them, I presume, have sung paeans *ad nauseum* to the moral attributes of children, thus again distorting the meaning of servanthood and deepening our confusion.

Where does this leave us? It leaves us with an orientation which is core and not elective. This orientation is ministry as servanthood in the shadow of the cross and the hope of the resurrection. Having got the point, however, we also know that servanthood in the church is a tangle of temptations.

It is the One who dismissed his equality with God and took the form of a servant who enables us to grasp servanthood. He leads through the humility games and related temptations by telling us, "Keep your eyes fixed on the cross. You too are on a journey. Your journey will take you to Jerusalem and to the death of dearly held theories of ministry, for you are being called to sign everything you do 'death and resurrection.'" That is our key signature. Christ is

the servant before whom all analogies and examples pale. Dead last and vulnerable, like a wounded child he cries out in Gethsemane, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me twelve legions of angels?" That would have been some *kind* of display of greatness. But He never called. And they never came.

If you are uncomfortable with paradoxes, you will be uncomfortable with the New Testament: first but last; great but lowly; dying and behold alive. Is this a paradox you can live with? Can you live with this paradox? Is this a pardox you can live? How? Know that this Jesus once crucified, now living and reigning, is not just an example, but He is the prototype of everything we ever hope to be.

Every sermon should be as open as the Gospel itself to action and change. May I leave the door ajar leading to these avenues of servanthood?:
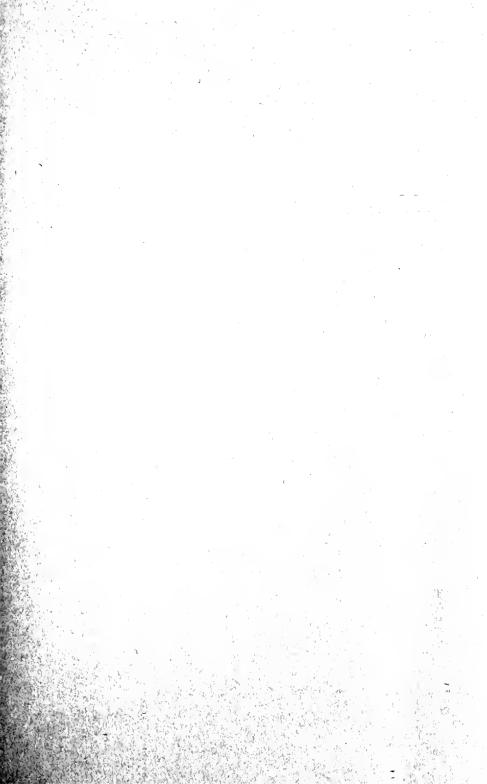
We will become vulnerable to the needs of others without becoming weak, knowing that the work of ministry requires strong, healthy servants. The servant has the broadest back and the deepest capacity for work and suffering. That's what servants are for.

We will be servants of the word. Our most frequent contact with God comes through the forms of his word. After we have searched it out for data, ideas and truth itself, we will submit ourselves to its light both to expose and illumine us.

We will be servant of the church, not as the Great Employer, but the church as the body of Christ and the people of God. The church does not exist "out there" as an alien institution but "in here" as present vocation. As servants of the church we will minister to the church in this institution, in the great hospital next door and in local congregations, always equipping ourselves and others to become deacons in the world.

Finally, we will be servant of the death and resurrection of Jesus, so that we can say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I the ego who live, but Christ who lives in me." The servant says, "Death is at work in us, but life in you."

Do you have the idea that the whole course of our ministerial enterprise is nothing but an orientation to a fixed point, like the point of a compass or the rising of the sun? And do you see that our journey's destination lies behind us in the event of Christ's death and resurrection, looms before us in a future we share with him, and, best of all, lives among us as the "form" of our servanthood?