



**THE
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REVIEW**

Winter 1975

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Editor: Creighton Lacy; Associate Editors: John Bergland, Donn Michael Farris, Judy Mays, Arthur L. McClanahan, Roland E. Murphy, Harmon L. Smith, John H. Westerhoff.

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Karl Barth — ‘Despiser’ or ‘Advocate’ of Theology?

by H. MARTIN RUMSCHEIDT

A simple sentence could answer the question the title raises. It also could end my address right now. The sentence is: Veritably, Barth was an advocate of theology. And *that* you all know.

But let us reflect why one would want to *ask* that question anyway. Perhaps you have just come across the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* of December 21, 1934, where on the front page the large-lettered headline jumped at you: “Karl Barth finally removed by the Minister of State.” Was Barth not able to perform his teaching job with the competence the minister of state expected from professors? Our question could answer that.

Perhaps that question could help explain a curious fact to which Barth referred on his eightieth birthday. During the festivities, he coined a phrase which, I predict, will become a very apt description of how many a nation’s government goes about its appointed task. *Dei providentia et hominis confusione Helvetia regitur.* (God’s providence and man’s confusion rule Switzerland). He coined this phrase in connection with that curious fact of which he was then speaking: three days after the Nazis had fired Barth, he received the invitation from Basel to teach dogmatics there. Now that was not curious; what was, was the fact that the invitation was issued after two city-fathers of Basel had persuaded the city’s government to do so, and these two gentlemen—now comes the curiosity—were declared atheists. Was Barth “soft” enough in his theology that atheists could invite him to come to their city’s renowned university? Our question could answer that.

Once more, perhaps our question could explain yet another unusual fact. You surely know that the main theological advocates, before and during the period of Barth’s first ascendancy, loudly and critically *rejected* those minds who, according to Barth, raised

An address delivered at Duke Divinity School on October 16, 1974, in connection with the Karl Barth Exhibition of the PRO HELVETIA FOUNDATION of Switzerland. Professor Rumscheidt, currently at the University of Windsor (Ontario), is author of *Revelation and Theology: An Analysis of the Barth-Harnack Correspondence of 1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) and editor of (Barth) *Fragments Grave and Gay* (London: Collins, 1971).

the *right* theological questions: Feuerbach, Strauss, Overbeck, the Blumhardts and, as we are seeing more and more clearly now, Marx. Now, if such figures excite you theologically, whereas the stars of your guild reject them, can you really be considered a serious partner in the enterprise? Our question could answer that.

Oddly enough, all three of these questions were answered in the affirmative at one time or another. The Nazis did say that Barth was not competent, according to their understanding of that word. The cold-war over the successor of Barth at Basel showed very clearly that the city fathers of 1962 thought Barth to be too soft on atheism and thus chose not the man the faculty of theology had thrice recommended unanimously. And during the 1920's, there was a very public wondering whether Barth could really be considered a *bona fide* theologian. The brightest stars in the academic sky then not only wondered but were sure that he could not. Jülicher opines that Barth is a gnostic; (is it not remarkable that Jülicher's successor at Marburg became Barth's ally—Bultmann!). Barth is filled with a holy egoism, Jülicher writes, ignoring utterly the sound work of scholars and thinking their conclusions to be dead stuff. He is a *Schwärmer*—an enthusiast like Müntzer, someone else argued, a mystic, a psychopathic young man. Did Barth despise or advocate theology? What would your conclusion have been in view of such comments—to be precise (for this is what they were meant to be) such epitaphs? I say epitaph quite intentionally. On the front page of the fiftieth anniversary issue of the famous and influential *Theologische Literaturzeitung* the then editor penned the following sentence: "These men are pouring water into their wine and will soon depart from the field of scientific theology." The writer—Adolf von Harnack.

If such polemics come from men of such caliber, and if the one thus criticized is a new-comer on the scene, someone without a doctorate, an ex country parson, a professor whose call had come about only because a number of private citizens had given a university enough money to hire him (people—so they exclaimed in Germany at that time—from America!!!), what chance was there for him to show that he really was a theologian?

Questions like these take us back to the "roaring twenties." In late 1967 Karl Barth wrote me that he hoped to be able to do someday what had just not been possible in those years. He wrote, "We could not have had genuine dialogue with understanding," and went on to express his desire for such dialogue when he would

eventually meet them again who in their lifetime had had it in for him. And he specifically named Harnack.

I am quite sure that, no matter on what side of that confrontation one would align oneself, that period was and still is a period of import for theologians and the history of theology. Import not simply because the best of liberal theology was under fire and therefore engaged in a self-examination (which is, I believe, not yet complete), but also because foundations were being laid for a new kind of theology which also is by no means complete yet. Before I say something about it and then attempt to answer the question of my title, let me set it into relief by commenting on the confrontation.

From Barth's correspondence with Thurneysen, which is now becoming available in a much expanded form, we know of Barth's private or semi-public discussion with his colleagues, notably Emmanuel Hirsch. These did not create the ripples or waves which, for example, articles or reviews in learned journals did. How fascinating it is to follow the attacks by the older and well-established academics and the counter-attacks of the younger men like Gogarten, Brunner, and even Tillich. One of these verbal matches occurred in early 1923, when, in five open letters, Harnack and Barth sparred in the widely read and respected *Die Christliche Welt*. Harnack began to voice his doubts about these younger men's theology in fifteen succinctly phrased questions addressed to the "despisers" of scientific theology. Barth responded; his fifteen also succinct answers were written in a single evening. Two more letters from Harnack and one quite long one from Barth followed, five letters in all between clearly the doyen of Continental Protestant theologians, world-famous, a key-note speaker at the World-Congress of Science in 1904 at St. Louis, and a young, angry Swiss professor teaching at Göttingen.

But now what is a "despiser" of theology in Harnack's view? It is someone in whose hands the gospel is lost, or in Harnack's own words (to Barth at a meeting in Eberhard Vischer's home in Basel, April 1920): "You are turning the gospel into a cheap export article." The loss results from that holy egoism of which Jülicher had spoken; it comes about because the very tools—so it seemed to the teachers—which they had used to find what the gospel really was were carelessly ignored by the students. Sure, these younger men knew the labors of the masters, but they recklessly, so it seemed, ignored the individual conclusions and the presuppositions on which they had been built. What the teachers, especially fol-

lowing Ritschl, held to be the essence of the Christian religion, the younger men said was at best the self-consciousness of bourgeois society. So they said *No* when the older scholars pointed out the significance of Christianity to and for culture. In fact, the young men asked whether their teachers did *theology* or *anthropotheology*. They asked: are you really speaking of *God* at all? Obviously that was a rhetorical question, for they believed themselves to live "between the times."

Can one be surprised that Harnack was concerned? That which he had spent his mature years on creating, a theology based on sound historical data, was in danger of being torn down, it seemed; no teacher likes to see that happening. Yet Harnack was a greater man than to go on the attack just because it looked as if someone was trying to demolish his work. He feared that theology would pass into the hands of gurus, would become the craft of occultists, of a new breed of gnostics, of a new *Marcion redivivus*. (This phrase comes from a footnote from the second edition of Harnack's still unsurpassed monograph on Marcion, on which he was working during this confrontation with Barth. In that footnote that phrase is quite clearly a description of Barth.)

Elsewhere I have set out in detail what Harnack means by "despising theology."* A summary must suffice here: despisers of theology are, according to Harnack, metaphysical, speculative, unhistorical, gnostic and occult in their theological outlook.

Instead of defending his own position, Barth counter-attacked. Again, that counterattack is analysed in detail in that work I just alluded to.** In summary, it amounts to a charge of having lost what is determinative in Christian theology: the self-manifestation of God to man in the gracious condescension of the Christ event.

Who was right? I am not inclined now to judge that issue; we are too close still to the protagonists. Yet we shall forever fail to assess either of the positions rightly if we make either this one or that one our own battle-station. But we can go on searching for an answer to our title.

Some historians of theology have been willing to assess Barth's work during those roaring years: Hendrikus Berkhof said what Barth did to and in theology was like a Copernican Revolution in Protestant theology. James Smart said it was a revolutionary

* *Revelation and Theology: An Analysis of the Barth-Harnack Correspondence of 1923*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1972, pp. 68-119.

** pp. 119-167.

theology in the making. Jürgen Moltmann suggests that a new foundation was laid for a theology of the gospel. John Cobb, Jr., calls it one of the most brilliant failures of all times. Statements such as these are best taken as historical descriptions of Barth's constructive notes during those years.

In these notes is manifest an activity, a thinking which reflects fundamentally differently on the problem which every theology must answer, since that problem determines the existence of theology: to what extent is *speech* about God really speaking about *God*? The fundamental difference between the younger theologians then and their teachers was that the former doubted that men really have available a *method* by which it is possible to grasp and comprehend the mystery men have forever called God and about which the Scriptures say that he revealed himself to man and has made covenants with him. If, therefore, theology is genuinely speech about God it must live by him to whom it points, Barth said. And, thus, the very first theological question is not *how* does one do that, but *can* one do that?

The matter of Barth's advocacy of theology rests, therefore, on what he says in response to that question, which in fact he had raised.

Bultmann, as you know, responded that since we cannot speak of God we are of necessity required to speak of man who is confronted by the mystery of God. Barth initially made sure that all the negatives he uttered to the various methods of comprehending the heart of religion—he, who is said to have revealed himself to men—that the negatives uttered were not a new method again of doing the same. The argument runs something like this:

"Theology is suspended in mid-air precisely in its primary presupposition. Its object is not 'on hand' but must be given to it ever anew." (Thurneysen). The total uncertainty of theology, resulting from its inability to presuppose God, is nothing but its liberation from the encounter with the real, the living, and not an imaginary God in the event of revelation. The recognition that God is not in the grasp of man is at one and the same time the confession of God's sovereignty. This means that God, when he reveals himself, becomes revealed as *God*. This statement is tautological on the surface only; it does in fact testify to God's freedom for man and to his freedom in the encounter with man. It speaks of the liberation of theology from illusion, for objectivity, or, as we said above, for genuinely speaking of God.

Here, right here, arises what people seized upon when they named Barth's a "dialectical theology." For, the argument continued, that God is not an invention of man, and that, therefore, man is not secretly divine but *man*, becomes apparent above all in that God's revelation of himself to man is not one of correspondence with man, but one of contradiction to him. If God does appear in man's horizons, he does so neither as the climax of man's perceptions nor as the answer to his questions or quest, but rather as the radicalization, as the iconoclasm, of man's questions and quest. If, therefore, a method is apparent here, it is—in the marvellous expression Gabriel Vahanian uses—*waiting without idols*. I would maintain that Barth maintains this stance throughout his writings, even when the thunderous *totaliter aliter* gives way to the *analogia fidei*, the divine bringing of man into correspondence with revelation.

But now we have moved out of the twenties, away from the debate where "there was no way that we could have really discussed this matter with each other," as Barth phrased it before he died. Still, we are left with the question: if he is no despiser of theology, how is he its advocate? And I would now—in a final section—speak about what I regard as Barth's advocacy.

Again the twenties already show what it was: in the attack on what was held to be the *conditio sine qua non* for theologizing at all, namely the need to locate the enterprise in the "historical" (Harnack), the "cultural" (Ritschl) or the "psychic" (Otto), or—moving to the rather different camp—in a biblicism of Scriptural inspiration *cum* verbal inerrancy, in that attack lies the ovum of Barth's waiting without idols for no other God but him whom the Church addresses as Yahweh.

Karl Gerhard Steck called that attack Barth's rebuff to modernity. He attacked the absolutization or canonization of anything that would then be placed as an absolute alongside the evangelical assertion that God's wisdom is both scandalous and foolishness to man. It is not that the dimensions or phenomena of history, of culture, of the psyche—indeed of religion—are rebuffed; they are—so I judge that pipe-smoking, Mozart-loving man to have meant it—dimensions of man's activity and life and are to be enjoyed *as such*. The rebuff comes when they are taken to be normative for the comprehension of the truth of Yahweh, and it is a rebuffing of theologizing in such a way that speech concerning God celebrates any particularity, such as the depth-dimension of experience

as final reality and highest law. (*Church Dogmatics* I/2—669.) But such absolutizing is for Barth also the relativization of the gospel.

So Barth asks about the right self-preservation of theology. In 1938 he asserted that all efforts to ground theology anywhere but in its appropriate object indicate that theology no longer regards itself as theology. On January 8, 1957, he said that 19th-century man could well have taken theology more seriously had it not taken *him* so dreadfully seriously. Could that be a quotable quote perhaps also about us?

Many have interpreted Barth's unrelenting search for the specific concern of Christian theology as a drive to build walls behind which theology can do its ivory-towering. "Monologue in heaven," Heinz Zahrnt calls it. But should one really not know better than that? That advocacy of theology was not meant to hold back speech concerning man, culture, history and—ah yes!—philosophy. No, this continuous digging is there so that theology will claim its truth precisely for its statement about man, world, etc. You see, we all know that much has been and is being said about man, which depicts a humanity in which there really are no fellow-humans. In the big anthropology of *Church Dogmatics* III/2, Barth cites examples, Goethe notably among them, of people who in their cultural and intellectual horizon speak often movingly of genuine humanness without being *Mitmenschen* themselves. We are warned against being led into the error that one can speak of man without first and very concretely having spoken of God (*The Humanity of God*—p. 57).

I still think that this warning must be heeded: if, as Barth thinks, the theologians of the 18th century could sell their birth-right for the lentil-dish of Cartesianism, for what dish will we be ready to sell ours? Let it suffice to add that we cannot afford to sell it for "Barthianism"—an orthodoxy of Barth's Dogmatics—for we must ask ourselves, if the Word of God is not at our disposal through Cartesianism, can it be at our disposal through Barth's Dogmatics?

Asbury's Doctrine of Ministry

by DAVID C. STEINMETZ

Studies of the meaning of ordination in the United Methodist Church have appealed, as any study should, to the biblical, historical and practical dimensions of the problem. Biblical studies over the last twenty years have clarified many of the problems of Church order in the New Testament and have made it apparent to all that pluriformity in the Church's order and structure belongs to the earliest decades of the Church's life and is not a later development. Similarly, Wesley's understanding of ordination with its slow and painful development and its unresolved ambiguities has been discussed at some length by such divergent commentators as Franz Hildebrandt and Frank Baker. And, of course, Methodists have not been slow to heed the analysis of the sociologists, who have dispassionately examined the ministry from the standpoint of its observed functions and measurable impact upon society.

Yet in all these discussions of ordination and of ministry in the United Methodist Church, there has been little, if any, reference to the role of Francis Asbury in shaping the theology of ordination and the understanding of ministry among the early Methodists in America. The reasons for this neglect are understandable. While Asbury is Wesley's equal in administrative gifts and his superior in understanding the unique situation posed by the American frontier, he is clearly Wesley's inferior as a theologian. Furthermore, Asbury, while not slavishly dependent on Wesley's opinions and willing to oppose him in matters of strategy, certainly did not intend to deviate at any point from the Wesleyan standards of doctrine. It could conceivably be argued that Asbury's theology is nothing more than a homespun and simplified copy of Wesley's.

Still there are differences. Though Asbury is an avid reader of theology his life long and even learns Hebrew while on horseback, he is not university trained and lacks the university-trained concern with the delicate shades of less and more. Decisions which are difficult for Wesley and which are arrived at only after a long and painful process of setting aside dearly held beliefs are relatively easy for Asbury to assent to. The break with Anglicanism, once

it is deemed necessary, is quick, clean and without tears. Asbury has the plain man's interest in conclusions, not the scholar's fascination with arguments. If it must be, so be it. Asbury is even more consistent than Wesley in drawing out the implications of Wesley's decision to ordain, much to Wesley's own discomfiture and annoyance. Of all the characters in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, who bear no resemblance to Francis Asbury, he is least like Mr. Ready-to-halt.

For nearly forty-five years (from Sunday, October 27, 1771, when Francis Asbury arrived in Philadelphia from Bristol, England, until Sunday, March 31, 1816, when he died in Spotsylvania, Virginia) he made his impact felt on the American scene. He enforced discipline in Philadelphia, even if it resulted in a temporary loss of membership and was opposed by certain of the other ministers. He restrained his fellow-workers from the administration of the sacraments—with one exception—until the separation with Anglicanism occurred and then defended the validity of Methodist orders against all comers. His vision of the ministry, most fully elaborated in his valedictory address to Bishop McKendree, written in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on August 5, 1813, was indelibly imprinted on the early Methodist conferences, even in the face of the O'Kelly schism.

Wesley's understanding of ordination had been colored by his Anglican upbringing. When Wesley left for America as a missionary, he believed firmly in the historic episcopate and apostolic succession, even to the extent of denying the validity of baptisms performed by non-episcopally ordained clergymen. The Lutherans had no right to celebrate the eucharist. Only Anglican (and, of course, Roman Catholic) priests had received valid ordinations.

How Wesley changed his mind is too long and complicated a story to be told here. He came to believe, after reading Lord Peter King's *An Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity and Worship of the Primitive Church*, that presbyters and bishops do not differ in order, but only in degree. That is to say, that both bishops and presbyters have the same power to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to ordain, but in the interest of good order in the Church the right to ordain, which belongs to every presbyter, has been restricted in its exercise to the bishop. Nevertheless, in an emergency situation presbyters can ordain and can even consecrate a duly elected presbyter as bishop. The notion of apostolic succession Wesley abandoned as a myth. There is no single Scriptural polity in the sense that one form of Church government and it alone is prescribed by Scripture. Still in all, the Anglican polity of

bishops, presbyters and deacons is Scriptural, in the sense that it is compatible with Scriptural principles.

Wesley remained true to the Anglican tradition in his separation of the ministry of the Word, which could be carried on by lay preachers much less by a deacon, and the ministry of the sacraments, which could only be performed by ministers who were properly ordained. Laymen can preach, deacons can preach and baptize, and elders or presbyters can preach, baptize and celebrate communion.

While Wesley claimed the authority of King—and also of Stillfleet—for the ordination of Coke as Superintendent and his companions as clergy for the American Church, he did not follow the pattern recommended by them. He did not seek the majority decision of the English Methodist ministers, much less of the American Methodists, before ordaining Coke. In a sense Wesley ordained without the explicit consent of the Methodist Church and therefore ordained on his own authority. He substituted Wesleyan succession for apostolic succession. This was a state of affairs which Asbury found disagreeable and which he did not permit to be repeated in his own ordination to the episcopacy. Indeed, one may well ask whether Coke arrived in America as anything more than a presbyter of the Church of England. Certainly, he was not a bishop in Anglican eyes. It is doubtful whether he was one on Methodist principles either.

Asbury's understanding of ordination was much less nuanced but far more consistent than Wesley's. The threefold pattern of bishops, elders and deacons is the pattern for the government of the Church prescribed in Scripture. The bishops are the successors of the apostles and carry on their ministry of itinerant evangelism. All three orders have the right to preach, and both elders and bishops have the right to celebrate the Lord's Supper. As far as their sacramental function is concerned—and the sacramental aspect of ordination is the aspect which least interests Asbury—bishops and elders are equal.

Yet there is a more fundamental sense in which bishops and elders are not equal. The bishop has been set apart both to serve as the *pastor pastorum* and as the overseer of the Church's ministry. Since ordination to the office of bishop is ordination to a permanent status, barring abuse of the office, the bishop is the permanent chairman of the conference of elders and their perpetual overseer. As regards the proclamation of the gospel, all preachers are on the same level, whether lay or ordained. As regards the celebration

of the sacraments, all elders and bishops are on the same plane. But as regards the exercise of disciplinary authority in the Church, the bishop is on a permanently higher plane than the presbyters. One must also conclude, especially in view of the O'Kelly schism, that the bishop is superior to the Conference as well. Asbury observed in his *Journal*:

I recollect having read, some years since, Ostervald's Christian Theology; having a wish to transcribe a few sentiments in the work, I met with it, and extracted from chap. 2, page 317, what follows. 'Yet it cannot be denied that in the primitive Church there was always a president who presided over others, who were in a state of equality with himself: this is clearly proved from the catalogues of bishops to be found in Eusebius and others; in them we may see the names of the bishops belonging to the principal Churches, many of whom were ordained whilst the apostles (but especially John) were still living.' So far Mr. Ostervald, who, I presume, was a Presbyterian. In Cave's Lives of the Fathers, and in the writings of the ancients, it will appear that the Churches of Alexandria, and elsewhere, had large congregations, many elders; that the apostles might appoint and ordain bishops. Mr. Ostervald, who, it appears, is a candid and well-informed man, has gone as far as might be expected for a Presbyterian. For myself, I see but a hair's breadth difference between the sentiments of the respectable and learned author of Christian Theology, and the practice of the Methodist Episcopal Church. There is not—nor indeed, in my mind, can there be—a perfect equality between a constant president, and those over whom he always presides.

The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury, II, 289-90.

That is not to say that all *episkope*, all disciplinary authority in the Church, resides in the person of the bishop. Discipline and authority are shared by elders, deacons, lay preachers, exhorters, class leaders—indeed, by all officers. But in all disputed matters the final decision is the bishop's. He is not the sole authority, but as permanent president he is the highest.

Immediately after his consecration as superintendent (which Coke, Asbury and Charles Wesley understood to be an ordination as bishop, even if John Wesley was reluctant to use the term), Asbury donned the vestments of an Anglican bishop. He quickly removed them again when they provoked unfavorable comment and jokes among the rough-hewn frontier preachers. Nevertheless, the use of the vestments signifies that Asbury understood his election and consecration to be ordination to the office of a bishop, a successor of the apostles, with as much right—in Asbury's mind, more right—to wear the regalia of a bishop as any bishop of the Church of England.

When his authority as bishop was challenged, Asbury appealed to a fivefold base:

I will tell the world what I rest my authority upon. 1. Divine authority. 2. Seniority in America. 3. The election of the General Conference. 4. My ordination by Thomas Coke, William Philip Otterbein, German Presbyterian minister, Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey. 5. Because the signs of an apostle have been seen in me.

JLFA, II, 469-70.

Divine authority—the office of a bishop is Scriptural, however much the Presbyterians may deny it or the Anglicans abuse it.

Seniority in America—he was the Father in God of many of the preachers in the Methodist connection, quite apart from his election to be their overseer. Even without election and consecration, he had a certain claim on the loyalty of the Methodist itinerants.

The election of the General Conference—no one could accuse Asbury of the same shaky basis for his consecration as bishop as Coke could claim for his. The Conference had consented to his ordination. The elders had chosen one of their number as bishop as it was their inherent and primitive right to do.

Ordination by Coke, Otterbein, Whatcoat and Vasey—no Presbyterian could argue with the legitimacy of Asbury's ordination nor could any Episcopalian who accepted the theories of King and Stillingfleet. It was as good a Presbyterian ordination as any Reformed Church could offer; as good an Episcopalian ordination as the primitive Church had given.

The signs of an apostle—here is the Wesleyan note. *Medicus non est qui non medetur*. The physician is known by his cures. Apostolic succession is not conferred by digital contact with an Anglican bishop. The only succession which matters is succession in apostolic doctrine and practice. And the mark of this apostolic succession is, as some wag once noted, apostolic success. Who had more right to be called a bishop? The Anglican divine sipping port in his palace after a leisurely afternoon of calling at the salons of his wealthier parishioners, or the rugged son of a Staffordshire gardener crossing the Appalachians on a pony in order to preach at some remote farmhouse in Tennessee? The sign of apostolicity is to be under orders and not merely in them.

Asbury concurred with Wesley's pointed questions to the Anglican bishop who took "unfashionable pains" to examine his candidates for Holy Orders:

Examining them! In what respects? Why, whether they understand a little *Latin* and *Greek* and can answer a few trite questions in the science of divinity! Alas, how little does this avail! Does your Lordship examine whether they serve *Christ* or *Belial*? whether they love God or the world? whether they ever had any serious thoughts about heaven or hell? whether they have any real desire to save their own souls or the souls of others? If not, what have they to do with Holy Orders? and what will become of the souls committed to their care?

The Letters of John Wesley, VII, 31.

The chief mark of the apostolicity of the Methodist episcopate was its itinerant character. It was Asbury's contention that the bishops were the successors of the apostles and therefore like them were itinerant evangelists. It was not until the second century that bishops became identified with one diocese, that—to use the Methodist technical term—they located. This location of bishops marks the fall of the episcopate from its former glory. So far from regarding the Anglican episcopate as complete with the Methodist a pale imitation of it, Asbury believed the exact reverse to be true. Authentic episcopacy, lost for centuries, has now been restored in the polity of the Methodist Church. Like the Apostles, and unlike the Greeks, Latins and Anglicans, Methodist bishops are itinerants.

I am bold to say that the apostolic order of things was lost in the first century, when Church governments were adulterated and had much corruption attached to them. At the Reformation the reformers only beat off a part of the rubbish which put a stop to the rapid increase of absurdities at that time; but how they have increased since! Recollect the state of the different Churches, as it respects government and discipline in the seventeenth century when the Lord raised up that great and good man, John Wesley, who formed an evangelical society in England. In 1784, an apostolical form of Church government was formed in the United States of America at the first General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland.

JLFA, III, 475-76.

While itinerancy was essential to the nature of authentic episcopacy, celibacy belonged to its *bene esse*. It may be embarrassing to realize that the first bishop of the Methodist Church was not only a bachelor, but even defended celibacy and urged his presbyters to imitate him (as he imitated St. Paul) in pursuing a celibate life. It was not possible to carry out the functions of authentic episcopacy with a wife and family. The man who marries must assume his family obligations. He cannot really fulfil the obligations of itinerancy. Asbury is not opposed to marriage for laymen, but is convinced that it is not a suitable state for Methodist preach-

ers. His journal is full of wry comments about preachers he has lost either to the devil or to the women. Family life means location, the settled parish, Presbyterianism (in Church government if not in doctrine!).

Marriage is honorable in all—but to me it is a ceremony awful as death. Well may it be so, when I calculate we have lost the travelling labours of two hundred of the best men in America, or the world, by marriage and consequent location.

JLFA, II, 474.

While one can construct a fully developed theory of the episcopate from Asbury's *Journal* and letters, it is more difficult to describe the role of the elder and deacon. They share in the same ministry of Word and Sacraments, but differ principally in the degree of authority which they exercise.

Laymen, of course, are not represented at the level of the Conference. The government of the Church is in the hands of the travelling preachers. The ministry appoints the ministry. That is the Methodist *via media* between the Anglican delegation of sacramental authority from the bishop to the elders and the conferral of authority on the minister by the laity in Congregationalist polity. If a layman wishes to share in the government of the Church, let him become a travelling preacher!

Conclusion

There is not time to question Asbury about his understanding of the episcopate—to ask, for example, in what way the understanding of the episcopate proposed by the Consultation on Church Union corrects Asbury's teaching or needs to be corrected by him. There is only time to summarize his understanding of the ministry as a necessary prologue to that further discussion.

1. The threefold ministry of bishops, elders and deacons is the N.T. pattern.
2. The authority of the Methodist ministry was not conferred on it by the people called Methodists but was conferred through already existing ministries. Through Coke the Methodist ministry stands in succession to the Anglican Mother Church; through Otterbein it is linked to the Continental Reformation. The ministry appoints the ministry.
3. Bishops, elders and deacons share in the ministry of Word and Sacrament. All share equally in the ministry of the Word; deacons only partially in the ministry of the Sacraments.

4. Bishops differ from elders solely in administrative authority.
5. The office of a bishop is a permanent office. He is not merely an elder who returns to his place among the other elders when his term of office is completed.
6. Bishops are successors of the apostles and therefore must discharge the function of an itinerant evangelist. Itinerancy belongs to the *esse* of the episcopate, while it belongs only to the *bene esse* of the office of elder or deacon.
7. The first Methodist elders were ordained by Anglican and Reformed elders, since elders have the inherent right to ordain.
8. These elders then consecrated one of their number as permanent president or bishop.
9. The validity of Methodist orders is proven by the success of the Methodist Church in the discharge of its mission to convert the unchurched and to spread Scriptural holiness. They are a people whom God owns.

Conversing with the Text

Application of Conversational Exegesis to Hosea 4:1-3

by R. MICHAEL CASTO

This article is the second of a three-part series which attempts (1) to describe for the pastor a methodology for the discovery of the historical meaning of the biblical text,¹ (2) to illustrate that methodology through the study of Hosea 4:1-3, and (3) to discuss the assumptions and problems associated with the transition to a contemporary meaning and to illustrate that transition with respect to Hosea 4:1-3.² The text will be considered only from the point of view of easily available English translations.³

Listening to the Text

When first read in the RSV, the text might easily sound like a description of the United States in the mid-1970's. Lack of "faithfulness," "kindness," and "knowledge of God," (v. 1) are akin to much of the criticism that is levied against contemporary American society. The specific transgressions, "swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery," (v. 2) could easily sound like the catalogue of indiscretions and crimes which confront one in the daily newspaper. Even the results of these crimes, "mourn" and "languish," (v. 3) are comparable to the emotional responses which are often made to the difficulties of contemporary life.

While the pastor may initially find such points of contact between the current situation and the text, questions may be raised about the similarity of these two societies, the appropriateness of making such comparisons, and the actual meaning of the words

Mr. Casto, a doctoral candidate in the Graduate Program in Religion, is a 1970 alumnus of Methodist Theological School in Ohio, where he is currently serving as a visiting instructor in New Testament.

1. John Bradley White, "Conversing with the Text: Old Testament Exegesis—A Part of the Pastor's Job Description," *Duke Divinity School Review*, XXXIX (Fall, 1974), 153-180.

2. Part III, by David C. Hester, follows in this issue of the *Duke Divinity School Review*.

3. This discussion will be based on the King James Version (KJV), the New English Bible (NEB), and the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

in the RSV. The summons to "Hear" is specifically addressed to the "people of Israel" (v. 1). Is it acceptable for 20th century persons to understand themselves as also being addressed by that word? The controversy in the text is between Yahweh (the Lord) and "the inhabitants of the land" (v. 1). Is it appropriate to identify this group with those who inhabit America (or any other country) in 1975? Do the words "faithfulness," "kindness," and "knowledge of God" (v. 1) convey in English the meaning of the corresponding Hebrew terms? What is the significance of the imagery ("the land mourns") in v. 3, and how can that image be translated into language that is meaningful in today's world? These and other questions may help the pastor focus on the text, the modern situation, and the problem of the relationship between the two.

An even closer listening to the text may reveal subtleties which might otherwise be overlooked. The preliminary discussion has already hinted that there are three separate aspects to these verses: (1) an introduction (v. 1a) in which Israel is implored to "Hear" and given a brief reason for this call to attention; (2) an indictment or statement of what is wrong "in the land" (vv. 1b-2); and (3) a judgment in which the effects of this wrongdoing are stated (v. 3). In this same connection it is noted that there is a change of tense from the indictment to the judgment; the former states the present, ongoing condition, while the latter indicates a future situation or condition. Even though the indictment is specific and quite physical in its description, the judgment seems less so.

Finally, the limits initially chosen for the text are reinforced by the use of the standard introductory formula, "Hear the word of the Lord," which separates this unit from what precedes, and at the end by the appearance in v. 4 of the sharply disjunctive "yet" (NEB "but"). On the other hand, vv. 1-3 gain continuity with vv. 4ff because of the repetition of the term "charge" (v. 1) in v. 4 (NEB) and the concern with "knowledge" in vv. 1 and 6. Throughout chapter 4 the speaker is Yahweh (with the exception of the summons in 1a). However, in vv. 4ff the addressee shifts from Israel to "the priests."

Thus, the preliminary encounter between the pastor and Hosea 4:1-3 may reveal several observations about the structure and content of the text in its present form, as well as its meaning for today's world. Each of these observations raises a question with respect to its accuracy and importance for the interpretation of the text. These questions will serve as the beginning point for the pastor's dialogue with the text. They in turn will raise new ques-

tions which must be examined before an accurate interpretation of the text can be made. These preliminary observations/questions must now be examined more carefully using the tools of exegesis, but always keeping in the forefront of the discussion the goal of conversing with the text on an equal basis. Not only should the pastor challenge the text, but the text should also raise questions which challenge the pastor.

Text Criticism

While there are no serious problems in the Hebrew text of Hosea 4:1-3, several differences are apparent when the English translations are compared.⁴ The first is that while the RSV and KJV refer to a "controversy" in v. 1, the NEB uses the word "charge." The latter emphasizes the formal legal character of vv. 1-3 which might be overlooked in a quick reading of the other two texts. Although it is not immediately obvious why this distinction is important for the interpretation of the text, it will be shown in the discussion of the form of the passage that the legal character of Hosea 4:1-3 is decisive for one's understanding of it, both in its ancient setting and in its contemporary applications. The charge has authority not merely because the prophet claims that it originates with God, but because he can demonstrate that Israel has broken the terms of the covenant agreement made with God.

A wide range of meanings is given in the translations for the second of the missing 'virtues' in v. 1 (RSV: "kindness"; NEB: "mutual trust"; KJV: "mercy"). This variety reflects the difficulty of precisely translating the Hebrew into English rather than any uncertainty about the Hebrew text. Nevertheless, that variety poses a problem for the pastor doing English exegesis, since each of the three translations has a somewhat different meaning. "Mutual trust" does not necessarily have anything to do with "kindness" or "mercy," and one can be kind without necessarily being merciful or trustworthy. The importance of this difficulty should not be underestimated since it might influence the interpretation of the text and therefore the direction of a potential sermon or any other use to which Hosea 4:1-3 might be put. The problem is, however, one which is better solved in the discussion of "Content

4. The discussion of textual problems is entirely dependent upon the English translations. This is not in order to diminish the importance of biblical languages in solving these problems, but to illustrate to those who are not proficient in them the values of text criticism. It is assumed that those who have training in the biblical languages are also familiar with at least the importance if not the methods of text criticism.

Criticism" since it is a matter of interpretation/translation rather than a textual discussion.

In v. 2 there are serious differences in the translations of the RSV, KJV and NEB. A series of specific transgressions is followed by "licence" (NEB), "they break out" (KJV), or "they break all bounds" (RSV). The intention of the RSV and KJV seems to be to add a general transgression. The NEB, on the other hand, interprets the Hebrew word under question as adding force to the specific charge of adultery. At this point the interpreter working from the English reaches an impasse, the solution to which is dependent upon a knowledge of Hebrew. If he or she turns to the commentaries, it is clear that none of the three English translations cited is acceptable to the commentators. Mays,⁵ Wolff,⁶ and Ward⁷ all understand the five transgressions as the collective subject of the disputed element, which they translate as a verb. Once again, however, we are confronted with a translation difficulty rather than a textual problem. In the discussion of "Tradition History" we will attempt to solve this difficulty.⁸

In v. 3 there are two differences in translation which have a profound bearing on the outcome of the exegesis. The first is the difference between "dried up" (NEB) and "mourn" (KJV and RSV). Here it is not a matter of the interpretation of the Hebrew (as was the case with "kindness" vs. "mutual trust") but of identifying the verb in the Hebrew text. It is one of two identical roots which have different meanings. One verb means "mourns" and the other means "dried up." At this point the exegete working with

5. James L. Mays, *Hosea, A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 60. This volume is a part of the Old Testament Library series, the best series for the pastor who is limited to the English text. Its emphasis is on theological discussion based on sound exegesis.

6. Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 65. This volume is a part of the new series, Hermeneia, which promises to provide an excellent resource for both pastor and scholar.

7. James M. Ward, *Hosea, A Theological Commentary* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 75. Unfortunately now out of print, this is very useful, whether or not one is limited to English translations.

8. Both Mays (p. 60) and Wolff (p. 65) add "in the land" following the disputed verb of v. 2, in agreement with the LXX (the so-called Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament). The omission of this phrase is explained on the basis of homoioteleuton (the accidental omission of a word at the end of a line because of its similarity to another word at the end of a preceding or following line—in this case "in the land" appears at the end of v. 1, and it is argued that this caused the omission in v. 2 at the time of copying). While this particular example is significant for the restoration of the text, its impact on the interpretation of the text is minimal.

the English text must consult the commentaries. Harper⁹ adopts the translation "mourns." In a note on the text, however, he indicates that the reason for this mourning by the people in the land is a severe drought. This reference to a condition of drought is incorporated into the translations of Mays ("dry up"),¹⁰ Wolff ("wither"),¹¹ and Ward ("wither").¹² Ward also provides a sketch of the reasons behind his preference for "wither": the way in which the Hebrew word is used in other places in the Old Testament. This methodology may be practiced to a limited degree in English exegesis by consulting a good concordance.¹³ When this is done it is discovered that when this ambiguous verb is used in connection with soil, land or plants (as it is in Hosea 4:3) it is usually associated with parallel verbs meaning "to be dry" or "to wither." Therefore, it may be concluded that the translation "dried up" (NEB) is the more accurate.

In addition to the external evidence provided by the use of a concordance, the NEB translation may be strengthened by examining the parallelism of the passage itself. The other verbs in the verse (NEB: to pine away, to be swept from) indicate a physically disastrous change. This is clarified by Wolff, who argues for the translation "fade away" for the second of the three verbs in v. 3.¹⁴ While the pastor must always view such an argument with caution, since it is based on the form of the passage rather than on linguistic data, when added to the lexical information cited above about the verb in question, the translation of the NEB, "dried up," is given added support.

It may be asked, "What difference does this decision make for the interpretation of the text?" The NEB translation adds concreteness and force to the message of Hosea. In the RSV and KJV, on the other hand, there is a somewhat unintelligible reference to an emotional reaction *by* the land. It is much more straightforward to see v. 3 as describing the effects of breaking the covenant (vv. 1b

9. William R. Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1905), p. 251. Although the theological and historical discussions of this series are dated, its work with the Hebrew text is in general helpful and accurate.

10. Mays, p. 60.

11. Wolff, p. 65.

12. Ward, p. 75.

13. Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 22nd American Edition Revised, 1936). This volume is especially helpful since it provides the form of the word in the biblical languages as well as its English translation as found in the KJV.

14. Wolff, p. 68.

and 2), first *on* the land itself, then on those who inhabit it, and finally extending to the beasts, birds and fish. The NEB adds concreteness, accuracy and ease of understanding, and uses the standard element of Hebrew poetry, parallelism, to communicate the text.

Another major variation in translation is the use in v. 3 of the present tense in the RSV and the future tense in the NEB and KJV. Mays points out that it is a question of the English tense by which the Hebrew should be rendered.¹⁵ This is a continuing problem for translators of the Bible, and here it has a bearing on both the limits of the passage and its meaning. If the English present tense is used as is suggested by Harper¹⁶ and Ward¹⁷ and adopted by the RSV, then v. 3 is part of the indictment of Israel and should properly be seen in conjunction with vv. 4ff.¹⁸ If, however, one adopts the position of Wolff¹⁹ and Mays²⁰ and the translations of the NEB and KJV, then v. 3 is the judgment which follows from the indictment (vv. 1b and 2), and the unit logically concludes at the end of v. 3. (The NEB ignores the sense of its own translation and continues the unit through v. 4.) Since the Hebrew will bear either translation with no difficulty, other means which go beyond the scope of text criticism must be employed to arrive at a conclusion. Therefore, this problem will be deferred until the form of the passage is discussed. It is, however, a critical question for the interpreter because it determines not only the bounds of the unit, but also whether or not the "charge" is directed against Israel as a whole or only against specific groups within Israelite society.

Literary Criticism

The question of the authorship of Hosea 4:1-3 is one of the most difficult problems that must be confronted. While the material in vv. 1-3 is in the third person and is attributed to God, vv. 4ff are in the first person. This change of person indicates that the text is a collection of oracles. This raises the possibility that some of the material of chapter 4 may have been added by the editor who arranged them.

15. Mays, p. 62.

16. Harper, p. 251.

17. Ward, p. 77.

18. The RSV has a clear break between vv. 3 and 4 and thus ignores, as does the NEB (see below), the implications of the form of the passage for translation.

19. Wolff, p. 65.

20. Mays, p. 62.

Few commentaries even consider this problem. Harper includes vv. 1-3 in a list of oracles attributable to Hosea.²¹ But he offers no discussion of his reasons for this decision. In contrast, Good indicates (on the basis of a form critical analysis which we shall discuss below) that vv. 1-3 probably did not originate in oral form as did most of the rest of the book.²² Since it is generally assumed²³ that a collector/editor, and not Hosea himself, was responsible for the final form of the book, Good implies that vv. 1-3 were composed by an editor as a general introduction to the following oracles. However, it is possible that the compiler may have done nothing other than collect and arrange individual units of oral tradition. Furthermore, there are affinities between vv. 1-3 and the rest of chapters 4-14 which indicate their relationship to each other (e.g., in both 4:1 and 4:4 the word "charge" [NEB] appears, tying the thought of the two verses together; in 4:1 and 4:6, 6:6, and 8:2 there is a concern with "knowing" God). While this evidence is inconclusive, the form critical analysis which follows will provide indications of the oral character of vv. 1-3, and therefore, strengthen the argument for the authorship of these verses by Hosea.²⁴

When did Hosea 4:1-3 originate? There are no concrete historical allusions which would aid in dating the unit, nor are there any peculiarities of style or language which could help answer the question. Thus, the exegete must turn to the rest of the book for information on dating. This information may then be used in dating 4:1-3 if its relationship to 4:4-14:9 can be adequately defined.

The historical setting of the book falls for the most part between 747 and 722 B.C. in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.²⁵ According to 1:1, we know that an editor of the book placed the beginning of Hosea's prophetic ministry before the death of Jeroboam II of Israel (d. 746 B.C.) and ending after Hezekiah of Judah began his reign (715 B.C.). There are possible allusions to the Syro-Ephramite invasion of Judah (735-733 B.C.) in 5:8-15. The

21. Harper, p. clx.

22. Edwin M. Good, "The Composition of Hosea," *Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok*, XXXI (1966), 53.

23. See e.g., Wolff, pp. xxix-xxx and Mays, pp. 15-17.

24. Mays, p. 66, supports this position.

25. The information for this discussion comes mainly from James M. Ward, "The Message of the Prophet Hosea," *Interpretation*, XXIII (1969), 388f. (This journal should be read by any pastor wishing to keep abreast of the latest developments in biblical studies, theology, and the interpretation of the Bible.) A similar discussion will also be found in Mays, pp. 3-5.

political instability of Israel's last years is alluded to in 7:3-7 and 8:4-10. According to Ward the final editing of the book occurred for the benefit of a Judean audience between the time of Judah's survival of the Assyrian siege in 701 B.C. and her destruction in 587 B.C. (1:7 is such an obvious editorial gloss that the editors of the NEB have relegated it to the status of a footnote. According to Ward, this verse serves as evidence of the last editing of the book.)

If it can be shown (and this position will be argued in the form critical discussion) that 4:1-3 is a part of the oral material originating with Hosea, then one may conclude that the oracle originated sometime before the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C. The mention in v. 2 of "one deed of blood after another" may be a reference to the internal political intrigues of 745/746 which resulted in the assassination of two successive kings, Zechariah and Shallum. Although this conclusion is far from certain, since the situation described in v. 2 could also fit other periods in Hosea's ministry, it is given added strength by the observation that the transgressions mentioned in v. 2 have to do with the individual's relationship to his or her neighbor. Thus, the emphasis seems to be on internal difficulties rather than international strife. This description best fits the period prior to the death of Jeroboam II. From the point of view of the interpretation of the passage, this conclusion helps the exegete see the focus of Hosea's prophecy in 4:1-3 as centering more on the problems of internal societal decay than on external threats.

The final concern of the literary criticism of Hosea 4:1-3 is the intention of the unit. This question is also tied to the form of the passage. However, some tentative answers may be given in isolation from the form critical analysis which will follow. If, as Good states, vv. 1-3 are a "generalizing introduction"²⁶ to chapters 4-14, then one must distinguish between its function as introduction and the intention of the original author. Both purposes must be respected when we consider the meaning of the text in the contemporary situation.

The reference to "mutual trust" (v. 1, NEB) brings into use covenant terminology which has its origins in the ancient tribal confederation prior to the establishment of the monarchy. V. 2

26. Good, p. 30.

suggests that the Israelites have violated the requirements of the covenant as set forth in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:2-17 and Dt. 5:6-21). The sixth, seventh and eighth commandments are mentioned specifically as having been violated.

Therefore, one of the central concerns of Hosea 4:1-3 is to point out ways in which Israel is at variance with her ancient traditions, which are valid criteria for judging contemporary actions of the people. In this way, while not speaking of specific crimes (e.g., the assassination of a particular king), Hosea is able not only to communicate the historical significance of the ancient traditions, but also to provide a normative standard for behavior. These traditions would hold particular significance for a prophet from the North such as Hosea, since it was in the Northern Kingdom that the amphictyonic traditions were maintained with tenacity.²⁷ The theological significance of this relationship between Israel and her traditions is expressed by the form of the oracle and is of particular importance for the interpreter of the passage. If one is to interpret Hosea's message faithfully, and if that message is bound up in the prophet's understanding of Israel's relationship to her traditions, then that relationship must be clearly grasped by the interpreter. Therefore, the literary analysis gives direction to the interpreter's continued conversation with the text. That direction leads next to an investigation of the form of the passage.

Form Criticism

An analysis of the form of Hosea 4:1-3 will help one understand the original function and message of the oracle, and also identify one way in which that oracle communicated with those who listened to it throughout the history of its transmission. That the form of a particular piece of material communicates as much as its content is one of the basic assumptions of form criticism. Thus it becomes important for the interpreter to understand the form of every passage with which he or she works.

There is little disagreement over the basic form of Hosea 4:1-3. Most commentaries see these verses as a legal controversy (lawsuit)

27. In addition to Mays, pp. 1-3, the Northern origins of Hosea's work are discussed by Hans Walter Wolff, "Hoseas geistige Heimat," *Theologische Bucherei*, XXII (1964), 232-250. A good discussion (in English) of Wolff's work may be found in J. F. Craghan, "The Book of Hosea: A Survey of Recent Literature on the First of the Minor Prophets," *Biblical Theological Bulletin*, I (1971), 81-100 and II (1971), 145-170.

signaled by the presence in v. 1 of the word "charge" (NEB).²⁸ The lawsuit (Hebrew: *rib*) form consists of the following elements as they appear in Hosea 4:1-3 (NEB):

- I. Summons to hear (1a)
 - A. Identification of the addressees ("O Israel")
 - B. Naming of the accuser ("the Lord")
 - C. Employment of technical legal terminology ("charge")
 - D. Naming of the defendants ("the people of the land")
- II. The accusation or indictment
 - A. In general terms (1b)
(the lack of "faith," "trust," and "knowledge of God")
 - B. In specific terms (2b)
("oaths are imposed," "and broken," "kill," "rob," "adultery")
 - C. In a parallel expansion which may contain a specific historical reference (2c—see p. 25) ("deed of blood")
- III. The sentence (in v. 3, moving from a limited sphere to an all-inclusive one)
 - A. Against the land ("dried up")
 - B. Against the people who inhabit the land ("pine away")
 - C. Finally against all the creatures of the land

From this analysis one notes that the sentence is the direct result of the accusation. Thus, the word "therefore" is found at the beginning of v. 3. In v. 1 "for" has the same effect, giving the rationale for the summons to hear. Not only is the pattern of these verses very tight, but also the content is quite comprehensive. Both positive and negative ways of defining the accusation are used, and the

28. A brief discussion of this form appears in Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 199f. This book is basic for anyone who desires an understanding of the forms used in the prophetic literature. An excellent form critical commentary is Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea*, cited above, note 7. The most explicit form critical analysis available of Hos. 4 is that of Jared J. Jackson, "Yahweh v. Cohen et al.," *Pittsburgh Perspective*, VII (4, 1966), 28-32. The lawsuit form is described in detail in relation to Dt. 32 by G. E. Wright, "The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32," *Israel's Prophetic Heritage* (B. W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson, eds.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), pp. 26-67. An excellent theological analysis and interpretation of Hosea based on form critical studies is that of Walter Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis, A Study in Hosea*, (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1968). Martin Buss, *The Prophetic Word of Hosea; A Morphological Study* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969) also provides an excellent technical discussion of the *rib*-pattern.

far-reaching consequences of the sentence are emphasized by the progressive inclusion in v. 3 of everything inhabiting the land as well as the very land itself.

Hosea 4:1-3 not only fits the "*rib*-pattern" in terms of its form, but also in terms of the subtleties of its content. Gemser has identified four characteristics of this pattern on the basis of the usage of the term "*rib*" in legal clauses in the Old Testament (Ex. 23:2, 3, 6; Dt. 7:8; 25:1; Is. 1:17; Job 31:35), and the expansion of this usage by the prophets in which God is seen as an accuser (prosecutor) who presents the evidence and also brings the summons and decides the sentence.²⁹ In the context of Hosea 4:1-3 these elements include the following:

- 1) The personal, active nature of God; it is he who brings the charge, one element of which involves a deficiency in Israel's relationship to him: there is "no knowledge of God in the land."
- 2) An ethical-normative conception of God which presupposes a moral order given and maintained by God: the covenant stipulations of the Decalogue are specifically cited in v. 2 as having been broken.
- 3) A view of history and the individual in which nothing is neutral; every action has a far reaching effect: involved is the cause and effect relationship between the accusation in vv. 1b and 2 and the sentence in v. 3.
- 4) An undogmatic and unsystematic way of thinking about religious matters in which God's emotions play a definite role: in addition to positive acts of disobedience, it is the lack of faith, trust and intimate relationship with God which has caused the sentence.

This analysis clarifies several theological elements of Hosea 4:1-3 and relates them to the content of the *rib*-pattern in general. This illustrates an approach which should be especially helpful to the interpreter as he or she struggles with the development of themes and concepts within any given pericope.

One way of determining whether Hosea 4:1-3 was originally transmitted orally and therefore dates back to Hosea is to analyze its function in the book as a whole. Even the casual reader will

29. B. Gemser, "The Rib—or Controversy—Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East (Vetus Testamentum, Supplement, Martin Noth and D. Winton Thomas, eds.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 122-137.*

note the contrast between the basically biographical narrative-like material of chapters 1-3 and the more complex poetic form of chapters 4-14. While chapters 1-3 are united by the common theme of Hosea's life, marriage and children, chapters 4-14 do not have such an obvious unity. They are organized around brief, common themes and catchwords.

There is a sense in which 4:1-3 functions as an introduction to at least the rest of chapter 4 and possibly to the whole of chapters 4-14. This position is argued by Good³⁰ and Jackson.³¹ Jackson even goes so far as to see a tight structure to chapter 4 in which vv. 1-3 serve as an introduction to the chapter and vv. 16-19 as its parallel conclusion. The rest of the chapter is divided into four sections which carefully follow the *rib*-pattern. On this basis Good favors the view that vv. 1-3 were not part of the original oral tradition. Rather, he understands them as an originally written introduction provided by the editor of the oral material.

This position is difficult to prove. In the first place, there is a change in the addressees from v. 1 to vv. 4 and 5. In v. 1 the addressees are "Israel" and perhaps "the people of the land" (NEB), while in vv. 4f the addressees are apparently the "priest" and the "prophet" (NEB).³² One would not expect such a change in addressees if vv. 1-3 were composed by an editor to serve as an introduction for the rest of the chapter. If the unit was originally Hoseanic, the change in addressees could be explained by arguing that it had a different occasion for its initial presentation than vv. 4ff. Furthermore the thematic similarities between vv. 1-3 and the rest of the chapter (vv. 1 and 4, "charge"; vv. 1 and 6, the absence of "knowledge") are of the sort that might be present in a collection of genuine Hoseanic material. While these arguments do not provide certain proof for either position, the weight of probability favors the view that vv. 1-3 are a genuine oracle by Hosea which has been arranged by the editor to serve as an introduction to the rest of chapter 4 and perhaps the rest of the book.³³

30. Good, p. 53.

31. Jackson, pp. 28-32.

32. Due to the complexities of the textual difficulties of v. 4 this study will accept the reading of the NEB which is in accord with the decision of Mays, p. 65.

33. Our position with respect to the form and function of vv. 1-3 is supported by Wolff, *Hosea*, pp. 65-69. This position is challenged by Wilhelm Rudolf, "Hosea," *Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, XIII (1966), 95-105.

The life setting and date of the lawsuit form are discussed at some length by Wright.³⁴ He argues that the theme of this literary form, the lawsuit, developed from the covenant-renewal motif in the North of Israel. It was especially used by the Levitical teachers of the North.³⁵ Only later (certainly no earlier than the time of Hezekiah) was the form adopted and used in the South. As an adaptation of the covenant-renewal liturgy, the lawsuit does not necessarily have the character of liturgical material (though examples are found, e.g., Dt. 32), but it is frequently found as the address of a particular prophet.

Tradition History

Through form criticism the interpreter has already identified the unit as a "lawsuit."³⁶ The fact that a lawsuit has been initiated would imply that an agreement has been broken. The legal contract most basic to Israel's self-understanding was the covenant with Yahweh. It is the function of Tradition History to determine the nature of that agreement and the way in which it was employed by Hosea to indict Israel in the 8th century, B.C.

There are five specific transgressions mentioned in v. 2: the swearing of oaths, the breaking of oaths, killing, robbery, and adultery. While the order and wording of these transgressions do not correspond precisely to the prohibitions listed in the Decalogue (Ex. 20 and Dt. 5), it is clear that the indictment is directed against Israel's disregard of specific covenant obligations. More precisely, Israel's transgressions all involve relationships between individuals in the society. These relationships come under the control of the covenant outlined in Ex. 20 and Dt. 5, and when that covenant is broken, so also are these relationships destroyed. Thus, the tradition of covenant prohibitions serves to define the charge which is brought against the people. The interpreter is confronted, then, with a *lawsuit* which goes beyond the description of social decay and a general moral collapse to charge Israel with the deliberate transgression of her covenant agreement.

The Mosaic covenant stipulations not only give authority to the lawsuit, but also define the sentence in v. 3. All but the second of the transgressions mentioned carry with them the sentence of

34. Wright, pp. 58-67.

35. This position is also supported by Wolff as cited by Craghan, p. 89.

36. See above, pp. 26-28.

death.³⁷ The sentence of v. 3, then, follows directly from the indictment of v. 2 according to the terms of the Mosaic covenant.³⁸

This study of Hosea's use of tradition will prove valuable at several points. It enables the interpreter to define the type of oracle being considered (covenant lawsuit) and yields a clearer understanding of Hosea's intention in using this speech form to expose Israel's transgressions of the covenant. Also, the interpreter is enabled to understand the relationship between Hosea's oracles and the tradition which preceded them. The covenant tradition is central to both the judgment and the sentence which they contain. Finally, the continuity between the 8th century community and the preceding generations is emphasized. The covenant, made generations earlier, is still seen by Hosea as the central factor of Israel's life (and in this case, death!).

Content Criticism

There are no specific historical allusions in Hosea 4:1-3 other than the natural calamities hinted at in v. 3 and the veiled indications of internal strife in v. 2. While conjectures may be made, certainty concerning the precise dates of these events is impossible. On the other hand, there are several key words and phrases which are worth examining because of their importance both in the work of Hosea and throughout the Old Testament.

The word "charge" (NEB, v. 1) sets the tone of the passage and even identifies its form. While there are problems with any English rendering of a Hebrew technical term, "charge" conveys the formal legal imagery implicit in the Hebrew *rib*. An equally good translation, as we have seen, is "lawsuit."³⁹

In the context of Israel's present history there is no "mutual trust" (v. 1, NEB; Hebrew, "*hesed*"). Other translations include "mercy" (KJV), "steadfast love," "kindness" (RSV), "loyalty" and "devotion." Also contained in the term is the technical concept "covenant loyalty." However, none of these translations sums up all that is meant by the Hebrew term. The context of Hosea 4:1-3 suggests "covenant loyalty" or "mutual trust," since it is the rela-

37. Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 66. Also see the related passages: Ex. 21:17 (swearing oaths); Ex. 21:12 (killing); Ex. 21:16 (robbery); and Lev. 20:10 (adultery).

38. Among the best studies of the Old Testament covenant traditions are those of Delbert Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969); George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (George A. Buttrick, ed.; New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), vol. I, pp. 714-723; Dennis J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1972).

39. This translation is adopted by Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 65.

tionship of Israel to God, defined in terms of the covenant, which has been broken. Perhaps the best translation, then, would be a combination of terms "covenant trust."⁴⁰

Another problem is the implications of the phrase "knowledge of God" in v. 1, which serves as the culmination of one of the sets of charges against Israel. "Knowledge of God" seems to summarize both "good faith" and "mutual trust," at least in the opinion of the editors of the NEB.⁴¹

Many scholars⁴² would like to distinguish between "knowledge of God" (4:1; 6:6; 8:2; 13:4) and "knowledge of the Lord" (2:10; 2:22; 6:3; 11:3). It is argued that "knowledge of God" involves knowledge of "traditional Hebrew morality," while "knowledge of the Lord" has to do with religious prohibitions against the invocation of foreign gods. This distinction seems artificial as one reads the texts involved, for there is no evidence that Hosea had anything different in mind when he used one phrase than when he used the other. Mays indicates that "knowledge of God" was bound up with Israel's recital of Yahweh's deeds in her history.⁴³ It was the failure of the priests to communicate these traditions which is attacked in 4:4ff.

There is more at stake, however, than the recital of Yahweh's role in Israel's history. As indicated in the discussion of tradition history, Hosea 4:2 points to specific covenant obligations which have been broken. These obligations are a part of the "knowledge of God" which is emphasized in v. 1.⁴⁴ This combination of the

40. Among studies of the term "hesed" are those of Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (Cincinnati: The Hebrew Union College Press, 1967) and Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), pp. 103-107.

41. In the arrangement of the NEB text, "knowledge of God" stands alone in parallel to both "good faith" and "mutual trust." While the arrangement of an English text cannot be definitive for a precise exegesis, for the pastor working only with the English text, its arrangement must be accounted for and taken into consideration. At the very least the interpreter of the English text should notice that there is something significant about the way in which this phrase is emphasized.

42. E.g., J. L. McKenzie, "Knowledge of God in Hosea," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXIV (1955), 27; and Wilhelm Reiss "'Gott nicht Kennen' im Alten Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, LVIII (1941), 78.

43. Mays, p. 63.

44. Hans Walter Wolff, "'Wissen um Gott' bei Hosea als Urform von Theologie," *Evangelische Theologie*, XII (1953), 153ff proposes that awareness of the covenant obligations as the source of Israel's life as a community is the primary meaning of "knowledge of God." This view is challenged by E. Baumann, "'Wissen um Gott' bei Hosea als Urform der Theologie?" *Evangelische Theologie*, XV (1955), 416-425.

historical relationship of God and Israel with the covenant obligations which result from it provides a comprehensive condemnation of Israel's internal life. This leads, in v. 3, to the imposition of an equally comprehensive sentence. The God who punishes Israel is intimately involved in her history from its beginnings to its possible end. Israel ignores both that historical involvement and the obligations which it carries. Thus, the charge of a lack of "knowledge of God" is as devastating a charge as could be brought.

In summary, v. 1b reflects the failure of Israel to maintain her covenantal relations with Yahweh. The specific breaches of the covenant are outlined in v. 2. The dissolution of the covenant thus affects not only the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, but also life within the community itself. The order which God has brought to Israel's life is destroyed, both internally and externally. Vv. 1b and 2 are thus intimately related to each other and find their necessary conclusion in the sentence of v. 3. The central thrust of the text, then, is to announce the far-reaching consequences of Israel's transgression of her covenant relationship to Yahweh. The results of this transgression affect the internal life and relationship of the covenant people. Part III of this series will deal with the transition to a contemporary meaning.

Conversing with the Text

Assumptions and Problems in Interpretation

by DAVID C. HESTER

The dialogue with the text continues. By now, the pastor has been introduced to "conversational exegesis" as a concept and methodology for listening to what the ancient author intended to convey to his specific audience in their specific life-situation.¹ Further, the methodology has been demonstrated with respect to Hosea 4:1-3.² Still, the conversation is not over. Having heard the text in its ancient setting, the pastor must hear it in his/her life-setting and proclaim it to the world in which he/she lives.

This article is offered as an aid to the dialogical movement from text to sermon. And "sermon" here is understood to mean not just the formal proclamation in the context of worship, but also the multiplicity of ways in which the Church and Synagogue proclaim a biblical text in a contemporary setting. The formal structure of the proclamation will be guided and shaped by the "setting-in-life" of the community to which it is directed and by the intention perceived by the one proclaiming. Nevertheless, the questions raised by the movement from the "then" of the ancient proclamation to the "now" of its present proclamation remain the same. "Conversational exegesis" is critical to biblical interpretation in every situation in which the Tradition is considered fundamental to reflective thinking and acting.³ Interpretation, then, engages the pastor *daily*, at every point at which he/she listens to the Tradition for a word of God.

It is assumed that the reader has worked his/her way carefully and thoughtfully through the other two "conversations" before

David Hester, a graduate of Bangor Theological Seminary, serves as Teaching Assistant in New Testament Greek and Old Testament, while completing his doctoral studies at Duke.

1. Part I of this series: John Bradley White, "Conversing With the Text: Old Testament Exegesis—A Part of the Pastor's Job Description," *Duke Divinity School Review*, XXXIX (Fall, 1974), 153-80.

2. Part II: R. Michael Casto, "Conversing With the Text: An Application of Conversational Exegesis to Hosea 4:1-3," in this issue of *DDSR*.

3. Cf. White, 160-61, for similar thoughts.

coming to this point. The urgency of this assumption is not a plea for symmetry and logic (three *should* follow one and two), but a conviction that the full context of interpretation includes exegesis. Conversely, exegesis takes place within an interpretive context, since exegetes approach the text with their own "situational baggage" in tow.⁴ (The appeal here is to "self-honesty," as John White aptly said, not to textual dishonesty which shuffles the baggage claims, to continue the metaphor, and grabs the past for present or shoves the present into the past.⁵) In a sense, then, interpretation already has begun, since the text is read in contexts, both old and new.

In other words, we take the image of "conversation" seriously, and we assume the active participation by both parties, text and interpreter. The exegete speaks first, as Michael Casto has demonstrated, selecting the text and addressing some preliminary questions to it. These questions are framed in his/her interpretive context but shaped by the exegetical methodology which defines their appropriateness with respect to the text. Next, the text speaks, and the interpreter listens through exegesis. Finally, the exegete speaks, this time as interpreter in the full sense of the word, translating the meaning of the text to the present life-situation. Clearly, the reader who begins with this article is coming in at the "tail end" of the conversation, to use the unglamorous idiom, and is likely to miss the point altogether.

The dynamics of the encounter between interpreter and text as I have briefly described them must determine the shape and boundaries for any discussion of interpretation. If, then, we divide the encounter, speaking at one moment of the text and at another moment of its interpretation, we are doing so for the sake of description only. In reality, the ebb and flow of past and present pervades, and the interpreter already stands with one foot in each world. The pastor must keep in touch with both worlds; his right hand must know what his left is doing, and vice versa.

First, we will point out elements of the "interpretive context," those pre-views which the interpreter brings to the text. Next, we will look at "contextual analogy" as a proposal for relating the two contexts with which the interpreter is engaged. Finally, we will relate the proposal to a specific text, Hosea 4:1-3.

4. On the "interpretive context," cf. James D. Smart, *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church: A Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 51-64.

5. White, 154-63.

The Interpretive Context: What the Interpreter Brings

The pastor, struggling each week to prepare a sermon knows very well that he/she wrestles not only with the self but with the corporate and individual personalities and lives of a congregation. As the sermon develops, certain faces and happenings in the congregation come quite literally into view. This common phenomenon may help the sermon to make contact and take hold on matters of important, even urgent, need. The aim is not that the preacher may receive a verbal pat on the back (head?) from a parishioner who "couldn't agree more" (a phrase which itself begs exegesis!) or who may affirm, "You were certainly speaking to me today." The aim is rather that the sermon may receive a hearing precisely because it is audible in the context of a congregation's life. It is a basic homiletic rule that a sermon written and delivered unmindful of the congregation's context for hearing never gets off the pulpit (And the fact remains true even if the pulpit moves down among the pews!). We hear in context, and we speak in context. And knowing the constituent elements of the contexts in which we hear and speak is essential if communication is to happen, "communication" here taken to mean that what is heard is what was intended to be heard.

This basic fact of communication extends as well to the interpreter as the text is considered. Indeed, it is upon this rock that the project of hermeneutics, the project of understanding and interpreting the text, may flounder if the course is not charted carefully. A part of the course is charted by the historical-critical method of exegesis, the aim of which is to define the context of the biblical text. But the hermeneutical journey to understanding may not be made until another chart is graphed, one which shows the outlines of the interpreter's context. To push the image a bit further still, the interpreter's chart will not show where he/she is going but where he/she has been. The interpreter is like a navigating explorer. He/she must chart a course for the unknown, having at hand only the best charts of past experience, the experience attested by the biblical text and his/her own experience for guidance. The chart for the future must wait upon the exploration at hand. The need to study the available charts is clearly urgent, then, and the wise navigator will not leave port *before* he/she has studied them carefully and thoroughly.

What I am urging, in addition to text-critical analysis, is self-criticism to determine the context in which the pastor first reads

and hears the text. It is by now axiomatic that one does not come to a text completely shed of presuppositions, though "presuppositions" may be too philosophically pungent, generally, to describe what is brought. James Barr's point is well taken: presupposition suggests a commitment to a carefully worked out system, philosophical or theological, which delimits critically the reading of a text.⁶ Such presuppositional systems, of course, do exist, and thus the interpreter may be deafened to the text. What most of us bring to the text are more like pre-views than presuppositions. That is, we have in mind, or perhaps not yet in mind, a partially and provisionally articulated view of God and humankind and the world in which we live. Not only this; we bring the values of our parents, educators, and social "neighborhood" from which we have come. We hear the text as capitalists, as Americans, as Protestants, who live in the country, in the city, or in the suburbs. And we expect to see our values reflected in the text. In addition, we have a general familiarity with the Bible and the biblical world and perhaps even a particular familiarity with the book in which we find our text or even the text itself (we've read it before, had a course on Hosea in seminary, or heard a sermon preached on it or saw it in the church school curriculum). Our approach to the text, then, is not without context; it is not as if we came from nowhere to something of which we have no knowledge. Barr's advice is worth taking again: in reality, our stance toward the text is more a reappraisal than an approach as if we had never been here before.⁷

That pre-views exist as the interpreter's context does not short-circuit the urgency for critical exegesis. Faithfulness to the biblical witness demands that the interpreter articulate such pre-views as carefully as possible. The claim to lay them aside is a false claim and a futile effort. The imperative is to make what is unconscious, conscious, to speak the unspoken assumptions, and to rehearse one's past experience. Having done so, these pre-views may be held in tension, and hence in check, as the interpreter listens to the biblical witness in its context. Only by this hearing-in-tension can the differences *and* similarities in human experience which constitute the two contexts of the interpreter become apparent.

I offer two possible foci for asking and responding to the self-analysis questions: theological pre-views and sociological pre-views.

6. Cf. James Barr, *Old and New In Interpretation* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 176-92. Barr's careful description of the debilitating effects of the purist's arguments against "pre-suppositions" is worth reading, especially for the pastor/exegete exiled by the apparent relativity of his effort to interpret the Bible.

7. *Ibid.*, 185-6.

Doubtless there are other categories equally useful, but these two foci allow a full orchestration of questions.

By "theological" I mean specific questions concerning one's pre-views of God, the community of faith, the Bible, and the inter-relationship of these three parts. Anyone with a taste of systematic theology will recognize immediately that these three general categories can be divided again and again and, like the loaves and fish, still have left-overs. I am not trying to be comprehensive but suggestive.

By "sociological" I mean specific questions concerning one's pre-views of the world in which one lives: who am I in my world, what kind of world is it, and why does it look *this* way to me? In part, these are newspaper and television, frontroom and bedroom, hospital and market place questions. Of course, theology will impose itself here, too; but it will be important to think about what others in your world see and say: the non-theologians, the *saecular* view, if you will. The obvious may be half-forgotten in the pastor's concentration: world-views, views of reality abound beside those of our theologies, yet they are part of our context and must not be excluded.

A Pre-View of the Scriptures

Though space will not permit anything like a complete description of the interpretive context from which this essay is being written, something must be said about the pre-view of the Bible which has shaped the interpretation of Hosea 4:1-3 offered below. The statement which follows is not so much confessional as it is historical in character, arising from the efforts of historical-critical investigation of the biblical texts. James Smart and other biblical scholars have pointed to the widening gap between biblical scholarship and the church, which discloses general abandonment of seminary-learned critical investigation.⁸ A fundamental aim of this series of articles is to quicken that seminary-fired flame once more, so that the best biblical scholarship may be the point of departure for efforts to proclaim a word of God for the moment.

Recent investigation in canonical criticism and comparative midrash has focused attention on the use made of the Tradition by the community of faith. Canonical criticism asks questions con-

8. Smart, *Ibid.*, 15-27, 117-29. This book is highly recommended for the pastor's careful study. The hermeneutical issues raised are not resolved, but that is not Smart's intent. Rather, he raises important questions and places them in close perspective, a perspective both careful and useful. Cf. also White, 157-63, for a discussion of the "crisis in exegesis."

cerning the present shape and extent of the canon. Since the Bible has not preserved all of the traditions available to the community, canonical criticism asks why *these* traditions and not others have been preserved, why were *they* authoritative for the community, and how did they *function* authoritatively.⁹ Comparative midrash, on the other hand, is concerned with the use of tradition after the concept of canon arose. If canonical criticism is concerned with the *formation* of the canon, comparative midrash is concerned with the *use* of the canon.¹⁰

The questions posed by comparative midrash and canonical criticism are vital to our discussion because they are questions of hermeneutics, questions concerning the meaning of the tradition for a community of faith and the means by which interpretation was achieved. These problems of interpretation and the response of the biblical writers to them provide a critical point of contact with our hermeneutical concerns. That point of contact rests upon an attitude—a theological conviction, if you will—which regarded the traditions as dynamic and adaptable to the needs of successive generations. This conviction of adaptability Sanders calls “the primary characteristic” of the canonical story:

Israel's canon was basically a story adaptable to a number of different literary forms, adaptable to the varying fortunes of the people who found their identity in it, adaptable to the needs of peace or the strains of war, adaptable to widely scattered communities themselves adjusting to new or

9. James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), xiii-xx. Sanders' introduction provides a helpful definition of each of the sub-disciplines of biblical criticism; the whole book is a demonstration of canonical criticism. Further help is provided by two articles by Sanders: “Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon,” in the forthcoming G. Ernest Wright Festschrift and “The Ethic of Election in Luke's Great Banquet Parable,” in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics: J. Philip Hyatt, In Memoriam*, eds. James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1974), 247-60. For a proposed hermeneutic in “canonical context,” see Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 91-148.

10. Sanders, *Torah and Canon*, 15. For a discussion of midrash and midrashic exegesis, cf. G. Vermes, “Bible and Midrash: Early Old Testament Exegesis,” *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, eds. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), I, 199-231. Further, a useful introduction to the problems of comparative midrash may be found in a review of Father Addison Wright's *The Literary Genre Midrash* by Roger LeDeaut, “Apropos A Definition of Midrash,” trans. Mary Howard Calloway, *Interpretation* XXV (July, 1971), 259-82.

strange idioms of existence, but retaining a transnational identity, and adaptable to a sedentary or migratory life.¹¹

The use of the exodus tradition at various stages in Israel's history provides an example. In the early monarchical period, the story of the deliverance from Egypt provided the framework in which Israel understood herself as an elected people and established her identity in juxtaposition with her neighbors (Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 7:6-8). The memory gave form and substance to a people seeking national identity. Furthermore, in the deliverance from Egypt, Israel saw a guarantee for the future, the absolute surety of God's perpetual favor. And the prosperity of the kingdom under David and Solomon seemed to confirm this view. Yet the tradition is adaptable to judgment *against* the nation in a different time. Amos uses the memory of deliverance and election as prophetic criticism against the national pride and arrogance which claimed to have a binding hold on the Deliverer (Amos 2:9-11; 3:1-2). The story which was a source of national stability and pride for one generation became a promise of destruction to another. Both salvation and judgment are inherent in the exodus tradition, since salvation demands appropriate response. This dynamic quality within the tradition permits—even demands—adaptation and contemporizing to the identity questions of each generation.

What has been said concerning the adaptability of traditions is not limitable to the Old Testament. Clearly the New Testament was shaped by adaptation of traditions to meet the needs of the primitive Christian community. Nor was the adaptability of traditions witnessed by the New Testament limited to the use of the Old Testament in the New. Traditions arising in the Christian community (words of Jesus and stories about Jesus, for example) were adapted to new purposes by the Gospel writers and in response to a particular community's search for identity and life-style in the face of crises.¹² Charles E. Carlston recently wrote of the author of the Gospel of Matthew, for example:

11. Sanders, "Adaptable for Life." For a brilliant example of tradition criticism's contribution to the discussion concerning the hermeneutics of J, E, and P, see Terrence E. Fretheim, "The Jacob Traditions: Theology and Hermeneutic," *Interpretation* XXVI (October 1972), 419-436.

12. Cf. Sanders, "The Ethic of Election in Luke's Great Banquet Parable." On the use of the Old Testament in the new, see Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (cited in note 9 above) and Dwight Moody Smith, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays: Studies in Honor of William Franklin Stinespring*, ed. James M. Efrid (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1972), 3-65. Very helpful also is Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (cited fully, n. 6 above), esp. 149-70.

Matthew should be read as a *traditor*, one who passes along his tradition; as a theologian, one who thinks about what he is doing; and as a churchman, one who knows that a larger circle than his immediate friends will be influenced by his acts.

He adds, notably, "To the extent that we can discern his intention and follow him in it, we are performing the same tasks."¹³

Matthew's addition of one parable (the wedding garment) in 22:11-14 to another parable (the marriage feast, 22:2-10) is a case in point. That this is Matthew's addition is clear from the parallel to the marriage feast parable in Luke 14:16-24. The point of this parable is generally the same in both Matthew and Luke, though they differ in significant particulars. The point is that the elect are not those whom the community considers *obviously* elect. The application of the parable *in the gospel setting* is against the Christian community's misunderstanding of election. But Matthew amends the point with the parable of the wedding garment. The thrust of his addition is to qualify the reversal of the definition of "the elect" given in the marriage feast parable. The elect include those not obviously worthy, but, according to Matthew, appropriate conduct (the thrust of the wedding garment parable) is still demanded. This qualifying point is driven home by the closing verse: "For many are called (klētoi) but few are chosen (eklektoi)." This point is very much in keeping with Matthew's emphasis throughout the Gospel on right behavior, which is an important emphasis for Jewish-Christians in search of identity within the new community.

The insights gained from canonical criticism may help us bridge the gap between historical criticism and application of exegetical insights to the contemporary setting. The exegete must focus on hermeneutical issues: Why was *this* tradition used and not another? How was the tradition being adapted to a present need? What was being said in its present context and how was it heard? The emphasis of these questions is on *purpose* and *function* rather than content; they are questions of meaning in changing life-situations. And they are *types* of questions which the contemporary interpreter must ask: Why was this passage chosen for a sermon and not another? How is the tradition adaptable to a present need within the boundaries set by exegesis? What is the tradition saying? How will it be heard, and who must hear it now?

13. Charles E. Carlston, "Interpreting the Gospel of Matthew," *Interpretation* XXIX (January 1975), 3-12. This article is an excellent demonstration of comparative reading in the synoptics.

The issue at stake is scriptural vitality, the continuing ability of the traditions to give and shape communal and individual life. The traditions are not dead weight, an ancient burden to be borne reverently, but with some embarrassment, on the back of a church which aches to become "contemporary." Yet either the uncritical use of the Bible, or the abandonment of the traditions altogether, both of which characterize much current preaching and church school curricula, proclaims a different view. If God is not dead, the traditions which witness to his dialogue in covenant with humankind lie comatose. The Bible continues to be read and expounded, but the vitality which enabled the community to respond to issues of identity and existence is missing. Vitality is not restored by a verbal oil change which substitutes, for example, the jargon of psychology for biblical language, inserting "hang-up" where "sin" is read and "whole being" for "salvation." Nor is vitality restored by forcing twentieth-century minds into first-century and earlier molds and transporting a congregation, even for an hour, from Durham to the banks of the river Jabbok. These maneuvers belie the claim that God is alive and has something to say which we have not heard, and, further, they silence the traditions through which the community of faith may see and hear a word of God.

But some may object that I have posed the wrong problem. It is not that we have silenced the scriptures but that the scriptures are, in fact, silent with respect to contemporary issues and human needs. The gap between *then* and *now* is an abyss, and we are left on the other side, able only to look back appreciatively but, in reality, left quite alone to find a way into the future. The Bible, so this view continues, is an historical heirloom, bequeathed to a community of faith by those whose reality was different than our own. We may respect, even revere, our heritage, but it is no motivating force for our present.

The view I have sketched is admittedly extreme. Yet it is operative, consciously or unconsciously, in the current quest for "relevant" preaching and teaching which takes Sartre, *Time Magazine* or "Peanuts" as a text. This view is also discernible in attempts to separate the traditions of the Old Testament from those of the New Testament. At the extreme, one may recall church historian Adolph von Harnack's concluding comment to his work on Marcion:

To reject the Old Testament in the second century was a mistake which the Church rightly repudiated; to retain it in the sixteenth century was a

fate which the Reformation could not yet avoid; but to continue to keep it in Protestantism as a canonical document after the nineteenth century is the consequence of religious and ecclesiastical paralysis. To sweep the table clean . . . is the action required of Protestantism today. . . . And it is almost too late.¹⁴

Parenthetically, it may be noted that von Harnack's imperative has been achieved, practically, if one may judge from the silence of Old Testament preaching.

Less extreme, but equally effective, is Rudolph Bultmann's view. For Bultmann, the Old Testament is historically important and even theologically important as "instruction" or "preparation" for the New Testament revelation; but for the Christian, "the Old Testament is no longer revelation as it has been, and still is, for the Jews."¹⁵ Or, again, ". . . to us the history of Israel is not history of revelation. The events which meant something for Israel, which were God's Word, mean nothing more to us."¹⁶ Only the Old Testament *as law* justifies its position in the church canon:

Thus the Old Testament is the presupposition of the New. Not in the sense of a *historical* (*historisch*) view, as though the historical phenomenon of the Christian religion had become possible only on the basis of the evolving history of religion attested by the Old Testament; but rather in the *material* (*sachlich*) sense that man must stand under the Old Testament if he wants to understand the New. The *material connection between Law and Gospel* means that the Gospel can be preached only when man stands under the Law. (Italics Bultmann's)¹⁷

Quite logically, Bultmann concludes:

But this Law, which is embodied in the Old Testament, by no means needs to be the concrete Old Testament. The pre-understanding (Vorverständnis) of the Gospel which emerges under the Old Testament can emerge just as well within other historical embodiments of the divine Law. (Italics Bultmann's)¹⁸

The key issue concerns revelation. If revelation may be taken to mean, at least, God's continuing dialogue with humankind, to

14. Adolph von Harnack, *Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, line *Monographic zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche. Neue Studien zu Marcion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960). Quoted in James Barr, "The Old Testament and the New Crisis of Biblical Authority," *Interpretation* XXV (January 1971), 34-35.

15. Rudolph Bultmann, "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith," *The Old Testament and Christian Faith: A Theological Discussion*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 31.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, 15.

18. Bultmann, 17.

which the traditions witness, then Bultmann's claim effectively silences the Old Testament by dubbing it "no revelation." Instead of revelation, the Old Testament becomes wholly pedagogical and wholly "other" with respect to the New Testament.

Such a double standard or others like it which would subdivide the canon on christocentric grounds is intolerable. No one would deny that the lines between the testaments are both continuous and discontinuous. And it is demonstrably apparent that the lines of continuity extend beyond the quotations of the Old Testament in the New to the God of Israel who is also the God and father of Jesus Christ. The word God speaks in the New Testament is new, indeed; yet, its creative, liberating purpose resounds already in the Old Testament. James Barr's comment is to the point: though Christian faith may say that the sending of Jesus Christ is the culmination of God's purpose, Jesus Christ does not become the criterion for the meaningfulness of that which is done by God before he is sent.¹⁹ The word God speaks to Israel is a real word for salvation and cannot be made less real by calling it "preparatory." God is known in Israel, and what is revealed in the New Testament is not an unknown God but a different word in continuing pursuit of a creating, saving, liberating relationship. The growth of the traditions is, to borrow another phrase from Barr, "soteriologically functional," providing the matrix for the coming divine acts as well as the impulse for their very occurrence.²⁰ The traditions, then, are a variegated whole, and the authority of any one or all of them resides in their ability to convey a word by which the community to which they are entrusted may be shaped and guided. Some may speak more loudly at one time than another, since differing needs for identity will formulate different questions to be put to the traditions. Therefore no part of the tradition may be discounted or cut off.

It should be said that whatever arguments may be raised concerning the historical specificity or relativity of Old Testament tradition must, in honesty, be raised against the New Testament as well. The shape of the New Testament was no less subject to the accidents of its own time than the Old. The interpreter's problem in moving from *then* to *now* is the same, whether the text being studied is from the New Testament or the Old. Ultimately, if the Old Testament traditions cannot transcend their time, neither can those of the New.

19. Barr, *Old and New*, 153.

20. *Ibid.*, 156.

Contextual Analogy: A Proposal

It should be clear by now that any methodology for interpretation of the biblical text must (1) take seriously the results of the historical-critical exegesis, (2) acknowledge the interpreter's life-situation, and (3) affirm and be subject to the demand for life of the canonical story. These imperatives describe the function and purpose to which the pastor as interpreter is committed: to transmit and translate accurately a word from God to the human situation. It is God who is listened to, who demands, challenges, and promises fearfully, "I will be with you!" through the texts. Therefore, the interpreter and the community to whom the word heard in the texts is directed are subject to that word. This is to say that interpretation has the character of an encounter in which the word which is heard lays claim to those who hear it and demands response.

The basic affirmation of faith, that God continues to be in dialogue with humankind and that his word is mediated through, though not bound by, the whole canonical story which witnesses to his speaking, leads to the problem of transition. We may put the question directly: What point of contact do we have with the ancient witnesses that enables us to translate and transmit a word first directed to and heard by them? Put differently, how does the canonical story become *our* story and hence authoritative, responding to our existential questions concerning who we are and what we are to do in the situation in which we find ourselves?

It seems to me that the movement of interpretation is more accurately described as a movement from one context to another context than from one time to another time. The categories, obviously, are not mutually exclusive: context includes time, and time, in part, defines context. The point I wish to make is one of emphasis and focus. Attention to context may permit us to see more clearly the differences and similarities of the human condition to which a word of God was and is addressed. The point of contact for translation, I believe, must be found in the human response to the questioning of existence, personal and communal, by which we seek identity. Every generation paraphrases the Elders' question to the Prophet Ezekiel when news of the destruction of Jerusalem reached Babylon: "How shall we live?" in this community and under these circumstances. In this question, and in the response made to it, we make contact with the ancient traditions. The circumstances which give a particular shape to the

questioning and response differ from generation to generation, and the interpreter must take these differences seriously. These are trappings for a moment and cover the dialogue of God with humankind in every age. The historical circumstances and the language used to describe them cannot be disregarded, because only an understanding of them will allow them to be stripped away to lay bare the essential dialogue which must be translated. The hermeneutical question I have been describing, Lawrence E. Toombs sums up in this question: "To what facet of the human condition was the passage originally directed, and what was it saying to that situation in its own terms and in its own time?"²¹

Having established a point of contact with the text, we must look now at the context in which the essential dialogue described by the ancient author will be heard anew. The second hermeneutical imperative should come to mind: the preservation of the integrity of the interpreter's life-situation. The methodological question is: How may a translation be made which will preserve the essential dialogue of the text and be cognizant of the very real differences of the new setting? If the exegetical task was to remove the ancient historical and linguistic trappings which draped the essential dialogue, the interpreter's job, at this point, is to reclothe it. The exegetical questions become hermeneutical questions; the exegete asked to whom the passage was directed, to what purpose, and in what setting-in-life. The interpreter now asks, to whom IS the word directed, to what purpose, and in what contemporary setting-in-life. Again, Toombs' hermeneutical question is a summary: "In what contemporary forms does the human situation to which this passage speaks manifest itself?"²²

The preacher must be cautious. The differences between the ancient context and a contemporary context are real. Contextual analogy IS analogy and no more than that. We are not looking for one-to-one correspondence between the ancient setting and our own; that would amount to a simplistic denial of any difference. Analogy recognizes that things have changed; it does not deny reality differences. We seek, rather, comparability in the identity questioning to which the text was addressed—Who are we? What

21. Lawrence E. Toombs, "The Problematic of Preaching from the Old Testament," *Interpretation* XXIII (July 1969), 304. The title of this very helpful article is somewhat misleading, since Toombs' insights are germane to preaching from either testament.

22. *Ibid.*

are we to do as people of the covenant? Who/what is God—through which the canonical story may be contemporized.²³

Comparability may be sought along the broad horizon of contemporary human experience. Direction may be given for the search, however, by considering first to whom the passage is directed. The ancient situation sets the boundaries: To whom was the message delivered? The hermeneutical question then follows: What community or part of a community is comparable to the ancient audience? If the ancient audience was the covenant community, whether Israel, the disciples, or the Christian congregations, the comparable contemporary community for the Christian pastor is the church, the covenant community of which he/she is a part. This point is vital, especially with respect to Old Testament interpretation. The sense of election, of being a people summoned into covenant relationship with God with the accompanying responsibilities that relationship demands, pervades the traditions of both testaments. It is a focal point of that continuity and discontinuity which links Old and New. What is “new” in the new covenant in Jesus Christ needs carefully to be explored. Central to that task is Romans 9-11 which interlaces the destiny of Jew and Gentile. The argument in Romans is brought to a head in the passage in Ephesians in which Jew and Gentile are made into one body and thus bring reconciliation to all. The Old Testament traditions which address the covenant people, frequently with severe criticism, belong in the church as well as the synagogue, and the focus of the criticism may be directed against the church, as well as the synagogue.

The search for contextual analogy, then, is carried on from within the covenant context, which is itself a contextual analogy. The search may be narrowed further by asking a second exegetical question: To what purpose did the ancient author speak, or what did he wish them to do in response? Did he mean for his audience to be comforted or perhaps challenged? Was his message, to borrow from James Sanders, a “prophetic critique,” a challenge to “in-group” thinking or acting?²⁴ This ability to use the traditions as “witnesses against ourselves,” to use Joshua’s words, is frequently neglected by Christian interpretation. We tend to identify with the “good guys” or those whom we presume to be “good guys” at least. But we may do so only at the peril of blurring and confusing the

23. Cf. Sanders, *Torah and Canon*, xiv-xv.

24. Sanders, “The Ethic of Election in Luke’s Great Banquet Parable,” 250, 253.

appropriate contextual analogy. Lloyd Bailey's hermeneutical warning is noteworthy:

This appears to me to be a basic rule of interpretation: When the text is read in such a way that the *status quo* is supported, when one is inclined to identify with those in the text perceived as 'the good guys,' then one likely has misunderstood the intent of the text. Has this not implications for the Christian attitude toward the Old Testament? Do we find the interim otherworldliness of the New Testament authoritative in part because it enables us to escape the social demands of the Old Testament?²⁵

Again, the hermeneutical questions respond to the labors of exegesis. What is the contemporary form of that human condition (within the covenant context) which is challenged or comforted by the tradition? What is the contemporary response comparable to that called for by the text? Again, the intention is not to duplicate the response called for by the text, but to find an appropriate contextual analogy for it. The analogy is not static; it compares different contexts and assumes that God may do "a new thing," as Second Isaiah announced. Yet the analogy must also assume, based on the witness of the traditions, that the new will be of the creating and liberating character of the old. Thus, the community may say, in one breath, "Behold, the former things have come to pass and new things I now declare" (Is. 42:9).

Hosea 4:1-3

In closing, may I offer a few remarks regarding the text from Hosea which has been exegeted by Michael Casto.

The exegesis has shown us, in the first instance, that to have preached along the lines suggested by an initial hearing could have resulted in a sermon unfaithful to the text. Such false starts are not uncommon, especially if one is "keeping the night watch" before Sunday morning. The sermon might have decried the vices mentioned in vs. 2, vices which indeed make headlines on the nightly news. And, for the Prophet's "O people of Israel" (vs. 1), the congregation would have heard, "O people of America (except for those of us gathered in this sanctuary)," and would have agreed that the land does mourn under the burden of such worthless scoundrels.

But such a sermon, as we have learned, would have pointed the gun in the wrong direction. God's contention, his lawsuit (RSV "controversy"), is with Israel not as a political body (and hence

²⁵ Lloyd Bailey, "From Text to Sermon: Reflections on Recent Discussions," *Concilium*, 1975 (forthcoming).

the analogy with America crumbles) but as a covenant people. The covenantal language of vs. 1b ("faithfulness," "kindness," and the summary "knowledge of God") and the implicit reference to the Decalogue in the catalog of crimes in vs. 2 make this clear. The contextual analogy for God's trial of his people must be found among those who today claim the covenant relationship: the church. Hosea's announcement, rightly heard, is a prophetic critique against *us*!

The exegesis has shown us also that we will miss the point if we focus our attention on the crimes enumerated in verse two. Though they would seem to be the most specific handle which we could grab homiletically, we have learned that they do not constitute the main thrust of the text. Casto reminds us:

The central thrust of the text, then, is to announce the far-reaching consequences of Israel's transgression of her covenant relationship to Yahweh. The results of this transgression affect the internal life and relationship of the covenant people.²⁶

The crimes are only specific counts in the indictment. The indictment, however, accuses Israel, and by contextual analogy us, of having totally rejected God and the covenant relationship. The crimes are offered as demonstrable evidence, prosecution exhibits, in the indictment. It has been pointed out that the crimes are acts against other members of the larger community and in violation of normative life under the covenant. If, in the course of the sermon, we wish to offer corroborative evidence to the central indictment, we shall have to determine first the forms which normative life in the covenant take for us. The "evidence" may be specifically presented, then, in terms related to the human situation of *our* context.

A third point drawn from the exegesis is likewise instructive. The broken relationship with God tears the very fabric of creation (vs. 3). The covenant relationship with God is a constituent of the created order, and the severance of that relationship totters creation toward chaos (Cf. Is. 24:1; Jer. 4:19ff., where the "without form and void" of Gen. 1:2 is attested; Rom. 8:20ff.; and the apocalyptic descriptions of the end of the "evil age" in Mk. 13, Matt. 24, and Lk. 21:5-36). This point could find its contextual analogy in our present struggle to understand ourselves as a part of the created order, insisting as it does that humankind is part of the ecos and that our treatment of each other has ecological ramifications.

26. Casto, *supra* p. 33.

Undoubtedly, more can be said. But perhaps these three points are sufficient to demonstrate the methodology and perhaps to spur a sermon on its way. It seems appropriate to close with a final comment regarding the third hermeneutical imperative: interpretation must affirm and be subject to the demand for life of the canonical story. This I take to be the purpose to which the minister, as preacher, teacher, and pastor, is called and invited. In whichever capacity he/she is ministering at the moment, his/her responsibility and privilege as interpreter leads him/her to challenge and be challenged, to grasp and to be grasped, to knock and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to find a door opening to a word of God. "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5)

Focus On Faculty

E. C. SHOAF: *Director of Field Education*

My journey begins before I was born, when German immigrants settled in the Yadkin River Valley to carve out a new society. Their dogged individualism and simple piety helped them construct a society on the frontier marked by hard work, determination and elemental faith. These fundamental traits were woven into me from my beginning.

The rise of the furniture industry brought my parents to High Point, N. C., which formed the context of my life through high school and the undergraduate program at High Point College.

As with most, my spiritual and character formation drew deeply from my contributors and experiences. My father, who did not complete high school but was rich with the wisdom of experience, insisted on work, frugality by saving and not spending, fair play, equal treatment and justice for all. My mother savored ideas, reading, language, religion and music. They were churchmen and built most of their non-working life around the activities and relationships of the congregation. I was truly reared on the "front pew." We lived three houses from the church and, because my mother was playing the organ for some service, wedding, funeral or leading some other activity, I spent as much time at church as at home. Participation in the Boy Scout Troop, Sunday School, Youth Fellowship and helping fire the furnace gave a sense of belonging and ownership that no doubt have spilled over into my pastoral life. I was influenced deeply by this community of faith and especially by the genuine spirit of those adults who gave time and attention to me.

Adolescent struggles hit me hard. My church was fundamentalist in Biblical and theological views. In high school I discovered science! A new world dawned, and with it the questions. I challenged the Church—it was intertwined with my parents—and after high school left home for a year of work in construction trades. A year of experimenting with life outside the church brought more questions and the fundamental insight that I needed the Grace and Power of God to construct a meaningful life. Reconstruction began with the decision to enter college and shortly thereafter the decision for Christ's ministry.

In college the spiritual struggle continued. A double major in English Literature and Psychology indicates the bipolar interaction of my mind. Is the meaning of human life most accurately portrayed by science or the mystery and poetry of literature? I opted for science and fought my ideological way through Divinity School and ten years of ministry before accepting its limitation for ultimate redemption. At that point the influence of my home church and the basic formation of my theological courses arose to inform and characterize a new faith and practice in ministry.

The ministry has provided me an opportunity for a variety of services. I was a student pastor while in the Divinity School and subsequently served parish churches in Lillington, Fayetteville, Fremont and Edenton in the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. At intervals I served as Minister of Education in Duke Memorial Church in Durham and Edenton Street Church in Raleigh. In this period I did extensive graduate work in Education at UNC, Chapel Hill. While serving the Edenton Church I taught part-time for four years at the College of The Albemarle in Elizabeth City, a mission ministry to Tidewater people. My recent assignment in the Divinity School has enlarged this ministry to students and provides a more basic ministry to the future leaders of Christ's Church.

My spiritual journey has taken succor from many, but the most enduring have come from lay persons who have shared a genuine and abiding faith with me. Their fresh revelation of God's presence and direction have inspired and sustained and keep me still!

* * *

ROBERT C. GREGG: *Assistant Professor of Patristics and Medieval Church History*

Judging from the frequency with which you and I emerge as the heroes of our own tales, it is evident that no life-story is ever quite so enthralling as our own. But if that's true, why is the task of composing an autobiographical sketch so odious and painful? Perhaps it's because we must do openly and baldly what we've invested years learning to do with ingenious subtlety. Or is it that there's something unsatisfactory in the genre of "personal history" or *vita* itself, conspiring to summon from you the prosaic details

(schools, degrees, jobs, etc.*) of a life you are convinced has seen some poetry?

I can scarcely remember the name of my elementary school in Houston, but I have indelible recollection of the eyes of my friend "Tubby" when I saw him the day his mother died. It's hard for me to recover the name of a certain high-school teacher of English. I do not forget the mysterious disappearance of the bi-focal line through her eyes when the muse overwhelmed her. When the inhibiting invitation comes—"Tell us about yourself!"—it's curious that the people with memorable eyes come forth so reluctantly from the chambers of the past. I suspect there are good and gentle reasons for that.

Someday I shall seize upon such an invitation as this one and run through my myth in language from the world of late antiquity, noting my generation from deep Silence, and recounting how, when my soul wearied of adoring the Good, I plummeted into materiality and cooled into flesh around the year 1938. But not today.

When I try to sort out what I've been doing in the spent part of my life, I sense that the deeds and misdeeds render public and private readings. Publicly, mine is a fairly undramatic history—not a great deal to arouse prurient interest, and virtually nothing to inspire hagiography. But it is known to *me* just how much passion was involved in some events which barely register in a *résumé*: notably, the discovery and winning of (or was it surrender?) the person who continues to make a believer out of me, or the strange and serpentine journey to a vocation that brings genuine pleasure. I would like to believe, and on most days do, that much of my life has been spent investigating and living through variations on what Clement of Alexandria called the queries of the gnostic: "who we were, and what we have become, where we were, where we were placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth is, what rebirth." In the resolution of those questions I am able to report only the most provisional advances.

*[EDITOR'S NOTE: University of the South (Sewanee), B.A. in English literature; Episcopal Theological School, M.Div., 1963; University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. in Patristics, 1974; chaplain and teacher at St. George's School, Newport, R. I., 1963-67; assistant professor of New Testament Literature and Languages, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1971-74; dissertation, *Consolation Philosophy: Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories*, to be published this summer; current research in the soteriology and politics of the Arian dispute.]

Recently, a regional newspaper billed my appearance as a speaker with a string of superlatives which, though a touch effusive, struck me as not being totally unreasonable. The howls and cat-calls which emanated from my wife and children were, to say the least, sobering. In retaliation I challenged my offspring to explain, if the media had been so wide of the mark, what in fact makes their father tick. Their responses were, if I remember correctly, "wisdom," "idiocracy" (*sic*—I'm hoping he was playfully seeking a term akin to "idiocy"), and "Mom." There resides enough pure verity in those offerings to keep me busy for a while, and to make me think twice before I ask such a thing again.

Book Reviews

MINISTRY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Unvanquished Puritan: A Portrait of Lyman Beecher. Stuart C. Henry. Eerdmans. 1973. 299 pp. \$7.95.

Lyman Beecher's life spanned years of tremendous change in America. Born in the midst of the revolutionary period, Beecher spent the bulk of his ministry dealing with social and intellectual issues of the early nineteenth century; toward the end, his career floundered on the issues which ultimately divided the nation in the dark days of the civil war.

Beecher's Puritan credentials were eminently respectable. Born in New Haven, he grew up in Guilford, Connecticut, and was graduated from Yale College in 1797. He began his career at Yale during the last years of the presidency of the insatiably curious and unfailingly benign Ezra Stiles, but he soon came under the influence of the vigorous new president, Timothy Dwight, recently come from the parish of Greenfield Hill. Dwight came to Yale determined to stem the tide of infidelity and immediately set out to convert the student body to the staunch New England Puritan faith of the fathers. Beecher was converted and remained at Yale for nine months after graduation to study theology with the fiery Dwight.

In 1799 Beecher was called to the pastorate of the Presbyterian Church of East Hampton, Long Island. There he remained until 1810, when he moved his growing family to Litchfield, Connecticut, a center of culture and education. In these years Beecher continued and deepened his intimate friendship with Nathaniel William Taylor, influential preacher and professor of theology at Yale. Taylor sought to apply Calvinism to early nineteenth-century America and interpret the faith in such a way that it would at once accommodate both continuity and change. In fact, by allowing man a role in his salvation, Taylor modified Calvinism to such an extent that, claims to the contrary aside, the conservatives were right to see that the heart of the message was irreparably altered.

Beecher tirelessly traversed New England proclaiming the need and possibility for man to be saved, and he became the principal spokesman for fidelity to the ancient faith. It was no wonder, then, that Boston, besieged with rapid growth of Unitarianism, called Beecher to the center of infidelity. In 1826 Beecher left Litchfield and moved the headquarters of his battle for orthodoxy to Hanover Street Church in Boston.

A Plea for the West, Beecher's famous book in which he stressed the importance of Christianizing the West, was published in 1832 and contributed immensely to his stature as a national figure. He soon left Boston to accept the presidency of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, a fledgling institution founded to prepare ministers and missionaries for the American frontier. Lane's existence was intended to guarantee that national expansion would be undergirded by Puritanism rather than infidelity or, worse, Catholicism.

Unfortunately for Beecher, the primary battle on the frontier in the 1830's and 40's turned out to be over means of dealing with slavery rather than over the nature of faith. Lane students, under the leadership of one of their number, Theodore Weld, became avid abolitionists. Residents of Cincinnati, and the trustees of the seminary, were horrified at the speech and actions of the students. Beecher failed to grasp the realities and complexities of the situation

and lost control. In the process he also lost his students who, except for a very few, moved in mass to Oberlin, where they were given free rein. In 1850 Beecher left the presidency of Lane and returned to the East, where he lived quietly among his children until his death in 1863.

Beecher was husband to three wives and father to eleven children, among whom are counted some of the most notable Americans of the nineteenth century. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote numerous novels, one of which was the international best-seller, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Catherine Beecher was a pioneer in women's education; she established schools and wrote eighteen major works on subjects ranging from home economics to theology. Henry Ward Beecher, for forty years world-famous pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, was an enormously popular preacher.

Lyman Beecher, America's most celebrated early nineteenth-century Puritan preacher, sought to guarantee that the future of America would be worthy of its past; he recognized that the character of the nation would be determined on the western frontier. To the end of his life, he remained convinced that America's well-being depended on the willingness of her citizens to hear and accept the call to order life after the fashion of God's directive as defined by traditional Puritanism.

The thesis of Stuart Henry's book is that Beecher "was a living illustration of an evolving optimistic anthropology in American religion." (p. 9) American Christian thought moved progressively away from the pessimistic view of man in relationship to God that was the hallmark of Puritanism, as expressed so brilliantly by Jonathan Edwards, toward a more congenial affirmation of man's potential to effect control of his own destiny. Henry argues that Beecher, while giving lip service to the Calvinism of the fathers, consistently preached that *man could choose to accept God's grace*:

Early and late this was Lyman Beecher's message, that man is obligated and able to turn himself to God, and able also to establish and maintain society as testimony of his submission to heaven and joy in the gospel, refining the old and initiating the new in strict conformity to that law of God which is plainly declared in the Bible. (p. 58)

Henry vigorously defends his thesis, which is an able interpretation of Beecher's life. Through the use of effective quotations from the primary documents, the reader comes to understand that Beecher was a man of his times to a far greater extent than he, or many critics, ever realized. Although ever affirming the authenticity of the fathers' religion, the message Beecher proclaimed was in full harmony with the dominant thinking of the first half of the nineteenth century. Beecher would have it both ways, always insisting "that any man, every man, was able without spurning his birthright or laughing at heaven, to control the circumstances of his own life." (p. 252)

Stuart Henry has written a superb book which uses biography to illustrate his thesis about the development of Christian thought in America. This is not to say that the biography does not stand on its own as an important contribution. Henry has searched out all the Beecher papers and created a portrait of Lyman which is richer and truer than that of the famous *Autobiography*, which is actually a collection of letters, documents, and reminiscences compiled by Lyman's remarkable children. But the full significance of this book is not understood until it becomes clear in the reading that Henry is demonstrating the way in which Christian thought has shaped, and been shaped by, American society.

In his excellent interpretive biography of George Whitefield, Stuart Henry previously demonstrated his ability to use biography to highlight important issues in American Christianity. The portrait of Lyman Beecher is well-

researched, well-documented, and well-written. I emphasize the last point. Henry has the increasingly rare gift of turning a felicitous phrase; and he has taken pains to write a book that is not only worth reading but is eminently readable.

This volume is timely reading for those of us who are ministers and provides much food for thought. What is it that denotes effective ministry? Was Lyman Beecher effective as a minister of the Gospel? Henry shows that, for the most part, Lyman left each successive arena of ministry frustrated and convinced that "extraneous forces forever inhibited his effort to prod the world closer to model existence under the moral government of God." (p. 242) Despite Beecher's frustrations and doubts about his effectiveness, his impact was great and he merits continued attention not simply because of his progeny. Henry makes it clear that Beecher was important because he lived fully in his own time and consciously sought to develop means of effective ministry for those particular times.

It was not that Beecher sought to make Christianity relevant; he always rightly insisted it *was* relevant and no human efforts were needed to make it so. Nor was his attempt, at least not consciously, to accommodate society, or to solve social ills. Beecher vigorously opposed Unitarianism, perhaps the ultimate accommodation, and largely ignored the moral bankruptcy of slavery. Beecher did, however, take the present seriously and recognized that the message of the church must always be directed to the present. Beecher's abiding problem was the one all ministers face: How does one proclaim and interpret the continuity and richness of the Christian tradition in the face of social and intellectual change?

The early nineteenth century was no more or less difficult a time in which to minister than any other. Beecher's ministry was characterized by joy, hard work, and perseverance; we would all do well to pray for Beecher's stamina. He never gave up. Though the odds appeared insurmountable, he fought to the end confident that God, in his own good time, would prosper efforts directed at realizing the Gospel. Beecher was indeed an unvanquished Puritan.

—Dennis M. Campbell (Duke A.B. 1967, Ph.D. 1973)

[Dr. Campbell, a member of the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, was until recently Associate Minister of Trinity Church, Durham. He is now Assistant Professor and Chairman of the Department of Religion at Converse College, Spartanburg, South Carolina.]

Oxford Bible Atlas. Herbert G. May, ed. Oxford University Press. Second Edition, 1974. 144 pp. \$9.95.

For understanding the biblical world or many aspects of the biblical text, an atlas is an indispensable tool. A number of reputable volumes have recently become available in addition to May: *New Atlas of the Biblical World*, by Jan Negenman, edited by H. H. Rowley (Doubleday, 1969); *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, by Y. Aharoni and M. Avi-Yonah (Macmillan, 1968); *Atlas of the Biblical World*, by D. Baly and A. Tushingham (World, 1971); and *The Westminster Historical*

Atlas, by G. E. Wright and F. Filson (Westminster, rev. ed., 1956). Soon to appear (1975) will be *Discovering the Biblical World* (Hammond Inc.), whose cartography is superior to all others. See comparative statistics:

Maps in the *Oxford Bible Atlas* have a limited range of colors, and include such areas as natural regions, vegetation, rainfall, boundaries, archaeological sites, etc. Special sites (e.g., cities of refuge, Solomon's forts, cities mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah) are indicated by color-coded dots, a unique and helpful system. The map of archaeological sites (detailed and

up-to-date) gives both biblical and modern Arabic place-names, a convenient combination of data that is usually scattered in other volumes. A limitation of this map (p. 95) is that it does not give the duration of habi-

tation of each site (e.g., Early Bronze? Hellenistic?), but neither do the atlases cited above. There is very little treatment of the provincial systems (Assyrian, etc.) in contrast to the Macmillan atlas.

	May	Baly	Macmillan	Rowley	Westminster
number of pages	144	208	184	208	130
cost at publication	\$9.95	12.95	14.95	19.95	?
bibliography	none	excel.	none	none	none
color photos: no.	none	16	none	53	none
quality	—	excel.	—	spectacular	—
black/w. photos: no.	89	53	none	104	82
quality	good	fair	—	excel.	good
sketches; drawings	none	none	hundreds	some	some
multicolor maps:					
quality	fair	excel.	none	good	fair
total no. of maps	27	49	264	34	36
integration of all the above with the text	excel.	fair	excel.	fair	good
coverage of natural geography	brief	excel.	brief	none	none
history	good survey	good survey	excel. detail	good survey	good survey
treatment of Arabic place-names	v. good	poor	good	fair	good

Those interested in more detailed comparisons will find my reviews of Macmillan and of Rowley in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 25 (1970), 570-571; and of Baly in *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, 91 (1972), 578-579.

May's photos are spaced throughout the volume and thus can be directly related to the discussion on the same page, in contrast to Baly (where they are grouped) and Rowley (where there is little correlation with the text). There are rare violations of this principle, e.g., on p. 21, (where a photo of the Elephantine papyri precedes one of the Amarna texts). When a photo is relevant for a subsequent map discussion, there is an appropriate cross-reference.

The text has three major parts: (1) a general overview: "Israel and the Nations" (47 pp.); (2) the maps and accompanying discussion; and (3) "Ar-

chaeology and the Bible" (21 pp., with photos). The maps are generally full-page or more, and each is accompanied by detailed discussion on the same page-opening, a great convenience and aid to clarity. Occasionally, however, relevant discussion is separated from the map, e.g., that of climate (p. 11) from the map on p. 51.

The Gazetteer gives a brief identification of the sites mentioned in the text or maps, including biblical reference (if any) and the modern Arabic place-name. Conversely, the Arabic place-names are listed alphabetically (a "must" for understanding discussion of biblical geography in other volumes). It would have been helpful to have some indication of whether (in scholarly opinion) the proposed identification was certain or merely possible (such as one finds in the Macmillan atlas). Some certainly would fall into the latter category: e.g., that

Tell Beit Mirsim is Debir or that Tell el-Khalaifeh (sic!) is Ezion-geber/Elath.

The volume does not contain the beautiful color photos of the Rowley volume (or even of Baly), the excellent coverage of physical geography of the Baly volume, or the detailed historical discussion and the unexcelled maps of the Macmillan atlas. But one does receive a more coherent and convenient presentation, and in a scope which reduces costs. If one were limited to a single atlas, this one is perhaps the "best buy." If one can afford two, then a combination of Baly and Macmillan is unsurpassed.

—Lloyd Bailey

Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective—a Theology. Letty M. Russell. Westminster. 1974. 213 pp. \$3.95.

This book is the one that many Christian women have been waiting for, and Christian men will also find the reading and discussion of it unusually rewarding. Dr. Russell gives a very helpful interpretation of the movement to liberate women and assures us that we can find in the Christian tradition the sources for our identity and true role as children of God. She also outlines the relationship of women's liberation to the other groups who have become conscious of their oppression, but she always speaks in the context of Jesus Christ and the Church.

I have to admit that I had to read the book twice in order to feel comfortable with it. My difficulty was with some of the terminology used in the theological discussions. I expect that those who are familiar with liberation theologies and theologies of hope will recognize the concepts more quickly. Indeed the author gives definitions of those terms that puzzled me. This is not a complaint, therefore, but encouragement to the readers of this book to keep reading because it is worth the effort.

Another frustration was in the need to discuss this material with others as

I stopped to appreciate neat phrasing and especially effective theological summary. I believe that *Human Liberation* could be used for church study groups very successfully, and I recommend such use.

The *Foreword*, written by Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jürgen Moltmann, is helpful as a taste of what is coming, "an exceedingly fortunate combination of theology and life; of Christian action and Biblical reflection. . . . the reader will be invited, even urged, to discover his or her own task and potential, in order to participate in God's all-embracing liberation movement. . . ." (pp. 12-13)

From the introduction to the final pages the author demonstrates her concern with all those people who are yearning for freedom. She says: "This book comes out of my own experience in the search for liberation. Its very shape represents the constant process of action-reflection which has led me, in a journey with others, for others, toward God's future." (p. 21) Her journey has included work in an ecumenical parish of a black and Puerto Rican community in New York City, and service with the National Board of the YWCA of the United States and the YWCA of India. At present she is Assistant Professor of Women's Studies at Yale University Divinity School.

Dr. Russell begins with an overview of the "Journey toward Freedom," reminding us of the section in *Romans* (8:22-23) in which Paul speaks of the whole universe groaning toward freedom. The liberation of women must involve the liberation of all their sisters and of other oppressed groups, and also must include the oppressors who are locked into the pattern of discrimination. Liberation theologies make a needed contribution to contemporary thought by pointing out that sin can be "the refusal to give others room to breathe and live as human beings." (p. 112)

She concisely describes the phenomenon that women will recognize as true: that the "specifically feminine forms of sin" are not so much those

of pride as of "triviality . . . lack of an organizing center . . . dependence on others for one's self-definition . . . tolerance at the expense of standards of excellence . . . in short, underdevelopment or negation of self." (p. 113)

The section "Incarnation and Humanization" was especially helpful to me. I have been dismayed at the call from "women's libbers" to give up the Church and Jesus Christ as source and support for women's liberation. Dr. Russell speaks of Christ as "the unique representative of God's humanity," and she says that women "must struggle to make clear that Christ's work was not first of all that of being a male but that of being a new human. . . . Christian women can see in Jesus a unique revelation of true personhood: One who helped both men and women to understand their total personhood." (p. 138) The true role of women is to cooperate with men in service to others on behalf of God, following the pattern of Christ as Suffering Servant.

Dr. Russell writes of the necessity of a dialogue between oppressor and oppressed, and, happily for us, gives specific suggestions concerning how each can begin to be open to the problems of the other. Her final "Prologue" reminds us that "we have only just begun the search for human liberation in a feminist perspective" and issues "an invitation to each person and group to join the others who have begun, in a continuing experiment of humanization." The reading and sharing of this book would be a significant way for us to begin.

—Harriet V. Leonard

Interpreting the New Testament Today: An Introduction to Methods and Issues in the Study of the New Testament. R. C. Briggs. Abingdon, 1973. 288 pp. Pb. \$4.75.

This book is an expanded second edition of Professor Briggs' earlier work, *Interpreting the Gospels*, published in 1969. That work dealt primarily with methods and issues involved in Synoptic study. This new

edition includes some revisions of and additions to the earlier work with new chapters on Paul and the Fourth Gospel, thus necessitating the change of title.

The purpose of the author is to make available for the "non-specialist" a ". . . brief, analytical description of the basic tools [in New Testament research] which are necessary for meaningful interpretation. . . ." (p. 17). The focus is centered on the Synoptic Gospels, Paul and the Gospel of John. The second goal is to give ". . . some implications of the use of these tools which contribute to meaningful understanding of the biblical message. . . ." (p. 17).

The author succeeds admirably in achieving both of his goals. The book is a well-written description of where New Testament studies are now and how this happened, and the author has accomplished this in simplified language for the novice. Each chapter deals with certain aspects of New Testament research. The topic is discussed, and at the end of each discussion there is a conclusion which summarizes in a clear and concise form the issues dealt with in the chapter. There are also some additions to certain chapters. These are labelled "Excursus" where Professor Briggs shows how one applies the principles of the preceding chapter to specific passages. This is especially helpful.

Some of the topics discussed are textual criticism, form-criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, the problem of Historical Jesus vs. Christ of Faith, Authority and Unity of the Scriptures, problems in interpreting the Scripture, and chapters on Paul and the Fourth Gospel.

Professor Briggs has pointed out issues, tentative conclusions, areas of controversy, and given his own evaluations in a manner that is both informative and challenging. I commend this book to pastors and students alike, for review of or introduction to problems of New Testament interpretation. At today's prices it is a bargain in this area.

—James M. Efrid

To See the Kingdom: The Theological Vision of H. Richard Niebuhr. James W. Fowler. Abingdon, 1974. 292 pp. \$10.95.

H. Richard Niebuhr has emerged as one of the most influential American theologians and ethicists in the 20th century. This study of his thought by James Fowler of the Harvard Divinity School faculty (incidentally, a Duke B.A.) is the most thorough and impressive attempt to trace the development of Niebuhr's thought that we have had thus far. It is an expansion and revision of Fowler's doctoral dissertation, but differs notably from such usually ponderous exercises in that it is lucid and readable, and in this case incorporates materials from some unpublished manuscripts to which Fowler had access. One of these, "Faith on Earth," was a full-length book manuscript from the 1950's, a fascinating probe into the phenomenology of faith. One may hope that the glimpses Fowler gives from this manuscript may prompt someone to see to its posthumous publication in full.

Niebuhr was averse to the Teutonic habit of writing systems of theology or ethics. He suspected all dogmatic final judgments; his own conclusions were always put tentatively. Yet, as Fowler traces the evolution of his thought, he makes evident the kind of integrity, a singleness of direction, in the pilgrimage of Niebuhr's thought. The *leit-motif* is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. From his first published article, "An Aspect of the Idea of God in Recent Thought" (1920) until *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (1960) a dominant preoccupation of Niebuhr was with the meaning of the primal affirmation of the Christian faith: *credo in unum deum*. His Jacobean wrestle with this first and last mystery of existence led him to an independent position quite to the right of the liberalism of Troeltsch and of his Yale schooling, but also more intra-historical than Barth's Christo-monism. Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Bergson, Troeltsch,

Whitehead, Tillich, are all strong influences, as were the tragic events of the war and the revolutions of the middle decades of the century, but Niebuhr's final faith-stance is uniquely his own. It is interesting to note that in the "Faith on Earth" manuscript he came to affirm, albeit on existentialist rather than biblically literalistic grounds, a quite orthodox and "high" Christology: "That Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and that he sits at the right hand of God exercising power over us, that is one of the most patent facts in interpersonal history." (quo. p. 230)

Fowler rightly focuses his attention on one of the richest aspects of Niebuhr's thought: his analysis of faith as trust and loyalty. He traces out carefully and appreciatively the way in which the trust in the grace of God bears with man's distrust and misplaced devotions and leads out of polytheism and henotheism to a trust in the first and last one, God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his critical estimate of Niebuhr's legacy as ethicist, it seems to this reviewer he quite wrongly takes Niebuhr to task for failing to provide sufficient principles and guidelines for decisions and action. A quick recollection of my own lecture notes from Niebuhr's course in ethics indicates no "rules," to be sure, but there are definitive guidelines: the ethics of stewardship, in response to God's creative activity, the ethics of discipline and restraint in response to God's action as governor, the ethics of forgiveness and reconciliation in response to God's redemption. Fowler is on target, however, in pointing to the problem that Niebuhr's strength in providing built-in guards against idolatry and self-pretension becomes a weakness in not providing guidelines "to adjudicate between the conflicting value-claims of other persons or causes than our own." (p. 263)

The inclusion at the end of the book, incidentally, of an outline of topics and bibliography for Niebuhr's lecture course in Christian Ethics for

1952-53 does not add anything of value. His bibliography of all of Niebuhr's writings, published and unpublished, on the other hand, should prove of great worth for future scholarship.

—Waldo Beach

A Process Christology. David R. Griffin. Westminster, 1973. 273 pp. \$10.95.

In Part I Professor Griffin expounds selected features of the theology of Tillich, H. R. Niebuhr, Bultmann and Schleiermacher with a view toward showing how their thought, along with important contributions, points forward to the need for an appropriate process Christology. In Part II Griffin undertakes to develop a revelational Christology in the basic conceptual framework of Whiteheadian process philosophy under the mentorship of John Cobb. The basic interpretation of the person and work of Christ throughout the book is that of the one who may evoke an important alteration in our fundamental cognitive "vision of reality." How we are to determine the appropriate content of this cognitive vision is not entirely clear. It is not simply a matter of our appropriating *Jesus'* vision of reality, since this requires some substantial improvement (pp. 204-5, 234) along lines developed by Whitehead and Hartshorne.

Griffin's basic exposition of the Whiteheadian conceptuality in terms of a revelatory interpretation of God's personal act of self-expression is in a sense Whiteheadian. But the sense in which it is "Whiteheadian" is mostly in its loose, imprecise, ambiguous and equivocal employment of some technical Whiteheadian language along with the introduction of major concepts which may enhance and enrich the apparent meaning of the Whiteheadian framework—such as "relations," "existential dimensions," "agency," "character," "person" and "selfhood"—but which are no part of the technical terminology and categories of that framework. Since the

concept of "person" is not a basic category in the Whiteheadian understanding of *us* (the reader may notice that Griffin does not quote or footnote Whitehead on this issue), I fail to see how it either has been or could be "argued cogently" that, even though Whitehead himself did not speak this way, it would somehow be "much more consistent with Whitehead's principles to speak of God as a living person." (p. 181)

Whitehead's God functions as a kind of differential filter which allows relevant ordering-possibilities from the "forms" or "eternal objects" to become available as "ideal aims" in reaction to the ongoing spontaneous "creativity" which is characteristic only of "self-creating creatures," not of God. This may in some faded sense still be somewhat "like" the Biblical view of God as Creator and Lord of history. But it is far more like Plato's view of God in the *Timaieus* and perhaps even more like modern conceptions of cybernetic "feed-back" relations.

Professor Griffin is apparently not writing for the Whiteheadian scholar, but rather for the general reader who has some interest in Christology but who knows little if anything about Whitehead. For that readership he is apparently endeavoring to maximize the impression of affinity between the Whiteheadian framework and Biblical theism. In my judgment an age which may sometimes tend to relish novel and impressionistic presentations of theology needs, whether or not it always wants, to receive from the "philosophical" theologian a clearer and more straightforward confrontation with basic issues than Griffin has here provided.

As a kind of Postscript—I wonder whether Griffin's own judgment (pp. 163-4) upon the earlier history of theology might not conceivably have some relevance to the neo-Whiteheadian enterprise of interpreting theology: "the formative theologians . . . could have allowed their faith that the (Hebrew) Jesus was the de-

cisive revelation of reality more radically to inform their thinking . . . allowing Jesus to revolutionize the philosophical concept of God, rather reconciling their assertions about Jesus to this non-Biblical idea of God."

—Charles K. Robinson

John Wesley and the Bible: A Psychological Study. Thorvald Källstad. Translated by Roy Fox, Alexander de Courcy and Carl Victor Schmidt. Nya Bokförlags Aktiefolaget. Stockholm. 1974. 356 pp.

Originally written in Swedish, this book is the doctoral dissertation of the principal of the Methodist Theological Seminary in Gothenburg, Sweden. It was accepted in the Spring of 1974 at the University of Uppsala and is the first work in the series *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Psychologia Religionum.*

The book is an attempt to understand the development of Wesley's personality in terms of the biblical tradition which was a part of his reference system. The role theory of Hjalmar Sundén is the instrument which Källstad uses to give "a psychological interpretation of certain traits in Wesley's religious development, and as far as possible a psychological interpretation of his personality within that development." (p. 28) According to Källstad, Sundén's theory implies the existence within religious traditions of role systems. These roles are then adopted under certain circumstances by those familiar with the religious traditions. Within the Bible there are several role models which one familiar with that tradition may actualize. Since, according to Källstad, the Bible emphasizes the interaction between God and persons, it is the constant assimilation of those interactive portions of the biblical tradition which prepares a person for role-taking, either as one in interaction with God or as one who takes the role of God.

Källstad analyzes the cognitive processes involved in Sundén's role theory

using Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance. According to this hypothesis the human organism continually strives to establish "internal harmony, consistency or congruity among his opinions, attitudes, knowledge and values." (p. 32) Using these two main principles, Källstad attempts to answer twelve questions centering around the origin, development and effect of Wesley's biblical frame of reference, Wesley's relationship to various biblical roles, the origin within these roles of Wesley's belief system, and Wesley's cognitive decision process in relation to the elements of his belief system.

In addition to the two main psychological theories, Källstad also employs George A. Kelly's psychology of personal constructs, Richard S. Lazarus' view of the coping process, and Kurt Lewin's "field-theory."

Following the Introduction in which Källstad reviews the background and methodology of his study, the first three chapters analyze various influences on Wesley's development. The topics considered include Wesley's family and childhood, the influence of Jeremy Taylor, Thomas à Kempis, and William Law on the development of Wesley's biblical frame of reference, and the origin and importance for Wesley of the style of life of the so-called 'Oxford Methodists.'

The next ten chapters analyze on the basis of the five psychological theories several key events and factors in Wesley's life prior to 1739. This analysis begins in chapter 4 with a discussion of how Wesley dealt with the opposition to Oxford Methodism. Chapters 5-9 consider the function of the biblical frame of reference during Wesley's voyage to America (1735-36) and the influence of Moravian faith and behavior both during and following that voyage, the stress created over Wesley's relationships with Mrs. Hawkins and Sophia Hopkey, and Wesley's attraction to and reaction against certain mystics. The final series of events consists of the conflict between the Anglican and Moravian

models of faith, and Wesley's Aldersgate experience and visits with the Moravians in Holland and Germany as means of resolving this conflict. (chapters 10-12) Chapter 13 deals with Wesley's development of a new self-understanding which Källstad characterizes as the adoption of the role "Evangelical Prophet." Chapter 14 states comprehensive answers to the twelve questions posed in the Introduction.

While Källstad's study provides the reader with a helpful tool for viewing Wesley's psychological development, it also contains several historical problems which may mislead the reader. The title of the first subsection of chapter 1 is "John Benjamin Wesley—Child of Reconciliation." This title repeats the error of other Wesley scholars, such as John A. Newton, John Telford, and Luke Tyerman, who indicate that Wesley's middle name was "Benjamin." According to the baptismal records at Lincoln, "John Wesley" was the full name of the child born to Susanna and Samuel Wesley June 17, 1703 and baptized July 3. (See Frank Baker, "The Wesley Family," *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, p. 2512.)

Another problem is the dating of Wesley's first reading of William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Källstad places this reading in 1729. Contrary to Källstad and not cited by him, Frank Baker argues convincingly for the later date of December, 1730 (*Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, XXXVII [1969], 78-82). This creates a serious difficulty for the relationship described by Källstad (p. 80) between Wesley's new pattern of life at Oxford and the influence of *A Serious Call* on the establishment of that pattern.

On p. 52 the reader could be misled by Källstad's statement that Susanna gave John special attention "immediately" after the rectory fire of February 9, 1709. In fact, it is not until Susanna's evening meditation of May 17, 1711 that we have any record of a resolve on her part to give special

attention to her son John. And, contrary to Källstad (p. 47), it is far from obvious from the record itself that Susanna considered John's rescue "an act of Providence."

There are also several instances in which Källstad indicates the probability or certainty of a relationship when no such probability or certainty is obvious. For instance, on p. 124 Källstad says that the words of Ps. 23:4 "must have been an adequate expression of what Wesley himself felt" in relationship to his anxiety over death at the end of his voyage to Georgia. With reference to the landing in Georgia on February 6, 1736, Källstad concludes that Wesley "must have remembered vividly his experiences during the crossing" when he referred to Jesus walking on water and urging his disciples to have no fear. There is, however, no evidence cited (or available, to the knowledge of this reviewer) to support either of these conclusions.

The study concludes that it was Wesley's belief system and more specifically his biblical frame of reference which enabled him to resolve the various incidents of dissonance in his life and which shaped his coping process with respect to similar incidents. This belief system, then, served as a primary element in the development of Wesley's personality.

While Källstad provides in terms of modern psychological theory a thorough analysis and elaboration of the development of Wesley's personality, his problematic use and interpretation of historical data raise doubts about any conclusions which are based upon such data. On the other hand, *John Wesley and the Bible* does provide a framework and basis for further exploration into the development and functioning of the belief system of a historical figure. As such the work may serve as a model for future efforts in the study of the historical dimensions of the psychology of religion.

—R. Michael Casto

