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Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas

by W. D. Davies

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The Editor has asked me to comment on the international group of scholars who will assemble for the annual meeting of the Society of New Testament Studies at Duke University, August 16-20, 1976.

To understand the emergence and significance of SNTS it is necessary to recall factors which impinged upon the study of the New Testament since World War I. That war is still referred to in Britain and, I believe, on the continent of Europe generally as *The* War; even World War II did not impress itself as deeply on the European mind. The reason is simple. World War I was extraordinarily bloody. The immense loss of life it involved has been claimed even to have altered the genetic balance or reservoir of European society. And the wounds it inflicted invaded scholarship. When at last peace came, even New Testament scholars found it difficult to bury the hatchet. British students of my generation often imbibed the national prejudices. For example, in many, if not most, grammar schools far more French was taught than German; in many grammar schools no German was taught. On the other hand, on the dedicatory page of his *Das Matthäusevangelium* of 1927 Erich Klostermann could quote Eduard Reuss: "Wir reden deutsch, heisst ja nicht bloss, das wir unsere Muttersprache nicht abschwören wollen, sondern es heisst, das wir in unserer ganzen Art und Sitte, in unserem Glauben, Wollen und Tun deutsche Kraft und Treue, deutschen Ernst und Gemeingeist bewahren wollen." For many years after World I a few British New Testament scholars visited Germany, but it was by no means assumed that it was necessary to study there. C. H. Dodd found that he had to *advise* even R. H. Lightfoot to do so. Few German scholars studied in Britain, and French scholars also indulged in national isolationism.

Although most leading scholars escaped these consequences, some unfortunate results were predictable—national provincialism and international poverty in New Testament scholarship. Very gradually this came to be recognized. New Testament scholars began to combat scholarly isolationism and, just before the outbreak of World War II, SNTS came to birth, largely for this very purpose. The initiative for it came from a Dutch scholar, Professor J. de Zwaan of Leiden. At the Faith and Order Conference at Edinburgh in 1937, he suggested the formation of a society for New Testament scholars. The response was immediate and warm. The Very Rev. G. S. Duncan of St. Andrews was asked to invite the interest and support of New Testament specialists. The letter he directed to them on March 8, 1938, reads as follows:

> During the Faith and Order Conference at Edinburgh in August, a small informal group met together to consider the possible formation of a New Testament Society. The moving spirit was J. de Zwaan, Leiden. The others were C. H. Dodd; H. L. Goudge; T. W. Manson; H. G. Wood and G. H. Boobyer of Woodbrooke; W. Manson, Edinburgh; E. P. Dickie and myself from St. Andrews; H. Clavier, Montpellier; E. G. Gulin, Helsingfors; H. L. MacNeill of Hamilton, Ontario. It was strongly felt that such a Society was desirable; and various opinions were mooted regarding the form it ought to take. . . . Prof. de Zwaan has also in mind the issue of a new International Quarterly for N.T. Study. . . . As time was lacking for a more detailed discussion, it was suggested at Edinburgh that an attempt should be made to get a few interested people to meet together in England, say, in September, 1938. . . . I write now to inform you of the proposal, and to solicit your cooperation. . . .

The proposed conference was held at Carey Hall, Selly Oak College, Birmingham, on September 14-16, 1938. Professor J. M. Creed of Cambridge was elected Chairman of the Conference and Dr. G. H. Boobyer as Secretary. At this time the possibility that the Society should publish an international journal was discussed, especially under the urging of de Zwaan. At the fourth session of the Conference, Professor C. H. Dodd proposed "that we do form ourselves into a New Testament Society having for its object the furtherance of our New Testament studies." A provisional committee was set up to build the new organization. The members of it were: J. M. Creed, J. de Zwaan, T. W. Manson, Gerhard Kittel, W. F. Howard, and G. H. Boobyer. This provisional committee chose the name of the Society—a Latin name being preferred in keeping with its international character—and drew up a draft constitution and made plans for a General Meeting to be held at the College of the Ascension, Selly Oak, Birmingham, in September 20-22, 1939. Alas, World

War II intervened, and it was not until March 26, 1947, that the first General Meeting was held, at Christ Church, Oxford. Professor T. W. Manson, who had become Chairman of the provisional committee on the death of J. M. Creed, handed over the leadership to de Zwaan, who, in recognition of his initiative, was made the first President of the Society. He gave his presidential address, and papers were read by Anton Fridrichsen, William Manson, and A. E. J. Rawlinson. All their addresses are still very vivid in my memory. The first five General Meetings were held in Oxford, the sixth at Bern. Most meetings continued to be held in Britain, but then it became policy to meet at intervals in a Continental center.

The membership has steadily grown so that at present it stands at around 700, about half of whom are from this country—a striking and significant indication of the role now played by American scholarship. As will have appeared, from the first SNTS has been deliberately international, and among its greatest achievements has been the fostering of a new openness to all traditions of scholarship and of a mutual respect and friendship between New Testament scholars in all countries. It has helped to break down the national walls of partition and, thereby, added to the width, the depth, and the quality of New Testament scholarship. In 1972—in a year in which it had been hoped that SNTS would come to Duke University—the Society for the first time came to this continent, in connection with the World Congress at Los Angeles, organized by Professor J. M. Robinson (although the SNTS meetings were held separately at Claremont). The General Meeting at our University will be the second in the U.S.A. It is particularly felicitous that it should come on this year of our own 50th Anniversary and of the nation's Bicentennial celebration.

But the General Meetings—devoted to the reading of papers and seminars—are not the only activity of the Society. From the very first, as we saw, de Zwaan had urged the necessity for creating an international periodical of New Testament studies. The General Meeting in Cambridge in September, 1953, decided to proceed with such a periodical. Under the editorship of Professor Matthew Black, who had already served as Treasurer of the Society, it came into being, as a quarterly, under the title *New Testament Studies*. The first issue was published in September, 1954. Before this date the Society had published three Bulletins of Proceedings, for 1950, 1951, and 1952, published by the Oxonian Press, Oxford. The papers read at the first General Meeting held on the continent at

Bern in 1952 were published in a separate brochure, *Man in God's Design* (by C. H. Dodd, P. I. Bratsiotis, R. Bultmann, and H. Clavier, printed by Imprimeries Reunies, 9 rue Pasteur, Valence, France).

The aim of the journal is that of the Society itself: "the furtherance of New Testament studies." Such an aim is simply stated, but students of this Divinity School will know its complexity and comprehensiveness. It takes in the language and text, the background and content—historical and theological—of the New Testament. The journal has necessarily, therefore, been technical—many numbers have been exclusively so—and appropriate articles, in French and German as well as English, have regularly appeared. The Editor of *New Testament Studies* has maintained from the beginning the strictest textual, philological, historical, and literary critical standards. In the fifties and in the sixties the pressure was sometimes considerable, under the impact of the theological concentration of the days of the so-called Biblical Theology, to neglect those standards. But this was withstood, and *New Testament Studies* has consistently remained true to its fundamental charter of furthering New Testament studies in all their critical dimensions.

The Editor of *New Testament Studies,* although naturally concerned to give a certain priority to papers actually communicated at General Meetings, also cast a caring eye over the work of all members who desired to publish in the journal. This care was to lead to the inauguration of a series of *Monographs* under his editorship. The series was designed to further the publication of technical, scholarly works by members of the Society, which, because of their necessarily limited appeal, might otherwise never appear. The first volume in the series, published in 1965, was by Bertil Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament.* Thirty volumes, many by American scholars, have so far appeared. The present writer serves as assistant to the Editor in funnelling the works of Americans to the series. Both the journal *New Testament Studies* and the *Monograph Series* are internationally recognized for the excellence of their achievement. This is in large part due, it must be stated, to the dedicated guidance, learning, meticulosity, and wisdom of Matthew Black, who has also been fortunate, not only in the help of many colleagues, but particularly in the understanding cooperation of the Cambridge University Press, which has published the journal and the monographs. The same tradition is now being continued by the present Secretary, Professor R. S. Barbour.

Many readers of this *Review* may well ask what relevance all this strictly scholarly activity has for those immersed in the daily care of the churches. The answer is not simple, but it is not hard to give. In this comment I have emphasized the "scientific" character and purpose of SNTS. But in the very name of the Society stands the New Testament. It is, therefore, of necessity concerned with the foundation document of the Christian Faith under the authority of which all those who have been and are connected with this Divinity School stand. It is imperative to emphasize that the men who founded SNTS were not only governed by strictly scientific interests. They were also moved by devotion to the Faith that created the New Testament and is, in turn, sustained by it. I can testify to this from personal acquaintance with many of them. They were not indifferent to the strictly theological currents and religious needs of their time. J. de Zwaan, in the first Presidential Address read to the Society, wrote as follows:

> For us, it is our desperate privilege to stand in a world which no longer believes in the 'isms' of approved authorities or philosophies. Our world has passed through so much that it has reached the courage of despair. It is ready for a dive into the uttermost scepticism, a scepticism not of reasoning, not born from undigested thought, but a more fundamental scepticism, a scepticism of experience. Total experience, experience drawing its vitality from sub-conscious reactions, is the reaction of the whole of man to his experience as a whole. That is a great and indeed awe-inspiring experience. There is only one thing comparable to it. That one thing is faith, faith as we meet it in the New Testament. *Faith, not verbal, traditional or intellectual faith, but faith as it is set forth in the New Testament is the only weapon by which the perils of this situation can be overcome. I presume that it is the will of God that we, students of the New Testament, should by our professional studies and labours promote that better faith, directly and indirectly, in whatever way we can.* That should be our one purpose. We should inspire . . . by our vision of the tremendous importance of New Testament revelation, by the perfect loyalty, cleanness and openness of our methods and our whole mind, by the humility of our theorising and the stern rejection of any kind of insincerity. It is a joy to live on the threshold of a renascence of real theological thinking.

I have italicized words which unmistakably set forth what was and is probably the deeper motivation of most if not all members of SNTS. I cannot presume to enlarge upon this here. Within the limits available, one can only state that for us who are called to proclaim the Faith it is only by using the rigors of scientific criticism that we can stand four-square to the cold winds that now blow, and command any respect. Critical work such as goes on in SNTS, *New Testament Studies,* and the *Monograph Series* is not an irrele-

vant or optional luxury of scholars, but is the laboratory where the primary documents of the Faith are examined in such a way as to make possible honest exegesis and interpretation and proclamation. The laboratory may sometimes seem remote from the ministry but, in the end, feeds it. The theological problems created by the critical study of the Bible are real; to pretend that the questions posed by the Canon—its character and authority—are simple and negligible is impossible. It is these very problems and questions, with which every minister, and indeed every Christian, has to wrestle, that ultimately concern SNTS. For ministers as for the members of the Society an unexamined faith is not worth having.

But this is not all. The very examination of the New Testament is liberating and illuminating and feeds the soul—not cheaply, not easily, but with toil, sweat, and often tears. In these scholar and minister need not be separated and are called upon to share.

The Rise and Fall of the Bible in Recent American Theology

by Robert T. Osborn
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Once upon a time, during World War I, Karl Barth and his colleagues were driven as a last resort by the exigencies of the day to look to the Bible for their theological existence. Their search was rewarded, for they thought to have discovered in the Bible a witness to the "strange new world" of God and a new call to genuine "theological existence today." The resultant "neo-orthodoxy" was a theology for which the Bible was essential, its only necessary and sufficient cause. It was the "theology of the word of God."

Significantly, the new theology was born of extremity. When Barth made his discovery, he was a parish pastor whose inherited theology was failing. It was failing to speak to the concrete needs of the working people of his parish who suffered an economic oppression that was pushing them to the margins of their society, and it was also failing to answer to the roar of the guns across the border which threatened to drive the whole world to its extremity. Theological existence in this oppressing and oppressed world seemed impossible, except for the rediscovered witness of the Bible to the eschatological world of divine reality and promise.[1]

Barth and his associates eventually made an impression on America which contributed to the rise, if not of a neo-orthodoxy, of a new theological realism that was to find most persuasive expression in the word and writings of Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr, like Barth, had not only served as pastor in an industrial parish but also employed a Marxist analysis that gave him insight into the oppression and needs of his people.[2] He was ready for the realistic and promising Biblical word as it was being spoken and witnessed in European neo-orthodoxy. Thus, from the early thirties through World War II and into the fifties, theological realism and

1. For the beginnings of Barth's theology see James D. Smart, trans. *Revolutionary Theology in the Making* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), pp. 11-64.

2. See Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960 [original, 1932]), for an early articulation of theological ethics done from this perspective.

neo-orthodoxy were to find sufficient soil in America to grow and eventually predominate in centers of American theology. However, during the latter years of this period (in 1944 to be exact) Dietrich Bonhoeffer, while in prison, made some observations that were to bring neo-orthodoxy into question. He had come to the realization that modern man had come of age, that he had "matured" to the point that he no longer needed his "father" God to negotiate his world; at no point in his understanding of himself or his world was it necessary or even possible for him any longer to resort to the God-hypothesis. He was on his own.[3] It was almost twenty years later before this vision was to illuminate the American scene, interestingly enough in significant measure through the mediation of the English Bishop, John A. T. Robinson. He understood Bonhoeffer's vision and the correlative attack upon the "positivism" of Barthian theology as a call to be "honest to God" and confess that the neo-orthodox tradition with its transcendent, personal heavenly "father" no longer speaks to our mature age.[4] Corresponding voices in the United States which joined in the so-called "death of God" theology replied with a firm "amen," and challenged the United States to acknowledge its maturity and to throw off the yoke of European neo-orthodoxy, which, it appears, had never so radically claimed our theological existence as it had the European.[5] In fact, it then became evident that America had never been "neo-orthodox," certainly not "Barthian." Our Depression, shocking as it was, caused nothing like the suffering of war and its aftermath. Furthermore, we were victors and not the victims of wars that never reached our shores. No, that "neo-orthodoxy," born of European despair and pessimism, had never truly been our theology. In our immaturity we had aped the Old World; like children we had persistently followed the pied piper of German theology, but now we were at the threshold of the mature declaration and acceptance of our responsibility and prepared to sing our own theological tune.

I stress that Bonhoeffer merely illuminated our situation; he did not create or shape it. His vision enabled American theology to realize that "neo-orthodoxy" was a façade that had for awhile hidden our indigenous reality, even in the case of Reinhold Niebuhr.

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3. See the correspondence beginning April 30, 1944 in *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: S.C.M. Press, Fontana Books, 1953), pp. 90ff.

4. John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), pp. 11-64.

5. See Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), pp. 23-50.

Or, in other words, American theological independence appeared long overdue. We had mature resources and needed only to claim them. So, this move to independence in responsibility for our maturation was two-edged, including both a "no" to neo-orthodoxy and a subsequent "yes" to the resources of our maturity. Let us examine the negative moment first.

Recall that neo-orthodoxy was a theology made possible by the Bible. It was a theology for which the Bible was the word of God and the necessary and sufficient ground of theological existence. The casting off of this legacy meant that the Bible was no longer necessary or sufficient for God-talk and so for theological existence. The Bible and theology were fatefully separated.

This turning from the Bible, which for neo-orthodoxy had been the only possibility of theology, understandably brought theological existence itself into question. The death of the Bible was the death of God—the mythical personal deity of the Bible who was Jesus' "Father in heaven." Bishop Robinson rejected both the Bible myth of the God "up there" and the metaphysical vision of the God "out there," and asked rhetorically about "the end of theism."[6] Speaking for himself and other theologians of the death of God, William Hamilton plaintively confessed that "we do not know, do not adore, do not possess, do not believe in God. . . . We are not talking about the absence of the experience of God but about the experience of the absence of God."[7] For a theologian trained, as Hamilton, in the tradition of neo-orthodoxy, for which the Bible had been the primary if not the only possibility of God-talk, the death of the Bible meant the impossibility of such talk; it was the event of God's own death.[8]

When I speak of the death of the Bible, I should be understood as referring to the neo-orthodox Bible—the Bible as the Word of God. The Bible as a history book and as an important moment in our culture and in the history of the now mature theologian of course remained. Insofar as this Bible witnesses to the historical

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6. Robinson, pp. 29ff.

7. Altizer and Hamilton, p. 28.

8. The separation of theology from Bible was aided by (and itself aided) the separation of Bible from theology. Brevard Childs cites especially the efforts of Krister Stendahl to separate radically the descriptive task of Biblical studies from the constructive task of the theologian. See Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), p. 79, and as well the entire chapter, "The Cracking of the Wall," (pp. 61-87, especially pp. 77-87 where he discusses "the theological dimension.")

Jesus, he also remained an important historical fact, though with the death of God he had died as the "Christ" or the "Son of God." As Altizer stated, "the Jesus whom we know is wholly detached from the divine attributes of his traditional image."[9] The cross of Jesus is precisely the event of kenosis in which the transcendent, personal deity dies; it is the event in which Jesus is given over not to God but to man and to human history.[10] So, while the negative moment of the throwing off of neo-orthodoxy meant the death of God, the death of Jesus as the Son of God, and of the Bible as the word of God, it did not mean the death of the Bible as history, or of Jesus as a fact of history. Theologians appeared to have Bible and Jesus, but for the moment no theology, no word of God or word about God, except in the case of those who could digest the dialectic of a "theology" of a dead God. As subsequent events in the history of our theology were to disclose, that dialectic was in fact not digestible, and theology, in order to remain theology, had to find new possibilities of God-talk, a foundation for theological existence other than the Bible. On the other hand, since the Bible and Jesus did not disappear, but remained as moments of our history, they too had to be dealt with. However, we must stress that the God quest had to be undertaken beyond and independently of the Bible, and, of course, the Bible was then free to be pursued historically, independently of theological questions and concerns.[11]

Neo-orthodoxy—the theology of the word of God—was born in the parish. It was church theology. Understandably, if new theological possibilities were to be found, they were likely to manifest themselves in a different context—namely, the academic, preferably that of the university. Thus the sixties witnessed the exodus of many distinguished theologians from the more churchy halls of the seminary to the more objectively academic environs of the university. In his debate with Barth, Harnack denied the possibility of a scientific study of theology within the context of the Church and faith. Whereas Barth, and neo-orthodoxy generally, found it to be the only way, mature American theology, having thrown off neo-orthodoxy, was to reconfirm Harnack's judgment and return to the university in pursuit of a scientific theology that would stand the test of the times. The first task was the justification of theological

9. Altizer and Hamilton, p. 135.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 30ff.
11. Brevard Childs, *op. cit.*, documents this development thoroughly.

existence itself by the discovery of new possibilities of God-talk.[12]

The alternative to Biblical (neo-orthodox) theism, theology authorized by the Bible, was a natural theology authorized by universal human experience. This was and is not explicitly acknowledged in many cases, because of the historical hangover from neo-orthodoxy's critique of natural theology. Nevertheless, that was the only alternative. As theologians settled into the university to undertake the quest of God, it became apparent that there were already mature theologians at work who were prepared to point the way. Although their distinctive alternatives had been developed for some time, they had been hidden and significantly obscured in the shadow of the umbrella of neo-orthodoxy. Now, as theology moved out from this shadow, these alternatives emerged, and there were three major ones—the ontological theology of Paul Tillich at Union-Columbia, the historical-ethical theology of H. R. Niebuhr at Yale, and the tradition of process theology at the University of Chicago. In pursuit of theological existence, each focused upon a different dimension of experience—respectively the existential "courage to be," the moral responsibility of historical existence, and the organic process of nature.

Just a brief word about each of these approaches to theology will serve to indicate how they understood and used scripture. Paul Tillich found "God" manifest universally in human experience as the ground of man's courage to be in the face of existential threats to his being. As the eternal depth or ground and power of being who sustains all existing beings against the powers of non-being and the threatening limits of finitude, God is the infinite and transcendent "Being Itself." Each historical or existential event of courage to be is thus a symbol of this ultimate ground and power of being.[13] Two points: 1. God transcends finitude and its categories; he is the God above the personal, finite God of Biblical theism.[14] 2. The Biblical event in general and the Jesus event in particular, insofar as they too are rooted in the ground and power of "Being Itself," are symbols of it; however, insofar as they symbolize it radically, are indeed "transparent" to it, they are "once for all"

12. The sixties witnessed a spate of writings on the God question, e.g., Frederick Ferré, *Language, Logic and God* (1961); John Hick, *The Existence of God* (1964); Frederick Herzog, *Understanding God* (1966); David Jenkins, *Guide to the Debate About God,* (1966); John A. T. Robinson, *Exploration Into God* (1967).

13. See Tillich's phenomenology of such existential courage, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University, 1952).

14. *Ibid.,* pp. 186ff.

symbols, as it were, of the symbolic or sacramental nature of all reality.[15] Tillich's system cannot and does not claim exclusiveness for the Biblical symbols, except insofar as historically and contingently they tend to function exclusively in Western society as the determinative symbols.

H. Richard Niebuhr, in his *Radical Monotheism,* like Tillich advocates a "radical monotheism" that "dethrones all absolutes short of the principle of being itself."[16] This principle of "being itself" he designates as "the One," which is "no one reality among the many but . . . the One beyond all the many." As with Tillich, God is thus the radically transcendent one who is beyond all finitude, even beyond the finitude of Jesus and the personalism of Biblical theism. As such he is eternal, universal, and an immediate presupposition of all human experience, so that faith, as a relationship to the One, is a "universal human necessity."[17]

While similar in his basic ontology to Tillich, Niebuhr places a distinctive emphasis upon the moral experience of values as opposed to the ontological experience of courage as the dimension of universal experience in which "the One" manifests itself. The One is thus revealed as the unifying source of all values, as the principle of unity implicit in the diversity of value experiences. Niebuhr developed and modified the position in the direction of deontological ethics by speaking more of responsibility than of values, in which case "the One" is manifest as a 'haunting sense of unity and of universal responsibility.'[18] He is "the One" to whom all respond in every particular moral response. As for the particular events of the Bible—Moses, the Prophets, Jesus, etc.,—they are events of the "incarnation of radical faith." Moses was an example of the radical faith of Israel, whereas Jesus "mediated the radical faith to folk whom Moses and the prophets did not reach. . . ."[19] Jesus is the event of incarnation to the extent that he is "the concrete expression in a total human life of radical trust in the One and of universal loyalty to the realm of being."[20]

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15. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951), I, 120-122.

16. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 37.

17. *Ibid.,* p. 23.

18. *The Responsible Self* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 139.

19. *Radical Monotheism,* pp. 39ff.

20. *Ibid.,* p. 40.

Obviously, the Bible is not a necessary, even a primary source for God-talk. Jesus is "a symbol of a dimension of universal experience." The "ethos exemplified in Jesus is not unique."[21] Jesus is an exemplar of responsibility and thus a symbol, or, as Niebuhr preferred, a metaphor of the One, but he is not the necessary or "root metaphor," for that distinction belongs to the universal experience of "responsibility," through which we are finding, he says, a new way "to understand Jesus Christ as well as a new form through which to understand ourselves."[22] The implications for Niebuhr's use of the Bible are clear by the order and style of his *Radical Monotheism,* in which the first chapter is given to a definition of monotheism and monotheistic faith without reference to the Bible, and certainly without a Biblical style, as witness his preference for such symbols of deity as "the One," the "ground of being," "the source of values," etc. The same structure and style are evident in *The Responsible Self.* Niebuhr can and does do theology without the Bible. As a Westerner for whom Moses, Jesus, the prophets and the apostles are inescapable moments of historical destiny, he understandably though not necessarily cites the Biblical narrative as exemplary, as a record of the incarnation of "radical monotheism."

While the Chicago school of theology has been around for some time, in recent years those who have succeeded more than others in its rediscovery in response to Bonhoeffer's vision are John Cobb and Schubert Ogden, though mention should be made of the late D. D. Williams and Norman Pittenger.

Tillich's vision of Being Itself is mediated by the experience of being, and Niebuhr's awareness of "the One" by moral and social responsibility; however, Cobb, for instance, looks to the "natural" or physical dimension of life for his keynote. He is distressed by the ontological dualism of the spiritual and the physical and would overcome it "through a critique of the notion of the physical as physical."[23] His analysis of the physical shows that it is actually a process or sequence of "energy events." Energy events are the ultimate dimension of reality and include not only the so-called physical but the spiritual or mental as well, for the latter refers to energy events that are "conscious," events "in which thinking takes

21. *The Responsible Self,* p. 167.
22. *Ibid.,* pp. 158ff.
23. *Ibid.,* p. 69.

place."[24] Here is the basic metaphor for God, who may also be understood as an energy event, albeit, a "very special energy event" which is all-inclusive and which constitutes itself by providing every other energy event with an ideal for its own realization.[25] "He is at once the source of novelty and the lure to finer and richer actualizations embodying that novelty."[26] In a word, he is the source and ground of the natural process that embraces both the physical and mental dimensions of life. The awareness of the possibility and necessity of this experience of a process that drives persons forward and calls them, together with all of reality, to actualize the ideal in their own particular occasion and event, compels us to speak about God as the ground and source of this responsibility and possibility. This vision of reality "is the fundamental clue to thought and sensibility."[27]

Again, since Cobb can and must develop his position because of the universal experience of reality, he is not dependent upon scripture or Christian tradition. Unlike most traditional theology, "the starting point in earlier verbal formulations [apparently including the Bible] is not required."[28] Theology's subject matter is not distinctive, for it is concerned with "questions of importance for man's meaningful existence."[29] Such questions are universal and immediate to all experience. However, while Cobb's theology does not need the Bible, his Christian heritage moves him to look to it for perspective on experience, although experience itself remains the source and basis of theology. Biblical symbols, Schubert Ogden tells us, have as their reference "the abiding structure and meaning of our actual existence here and now. . . ."[30]

Reflecting a similar position, Ogden observed that Bultmann's failure was his refusal to accept "the implication that the significance of Jesus is simply that he decisively manifests or re-presents man's universal possibility of authentic existence in and under the love of God."[31] In a word, theology, even "Christian" theology, is

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24. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
28. John B. Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), p. 253.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
30. Schubert Ogden, *The Reality of God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 210.
31. Schubert Ogden, *Christ Without Myth* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), pp. 160ff.

natural and universal and depends on no "supernatural" and particular Biblical words or witness. The reality of God is "constitutive of not only the special faith attested in scripture, but the common faith and experience of all men simply as such."[32]

Formally, these three sources of mature American theology are very similar, differing primarily in terms of their root metaphors or symbols, but agreed that human experience itself speaks of God and provides both the necessary sufficient ground of theology without necessary or essential recourse to scripture.

In our review of Cobb and Ogden we have considered some of the more recent expressions of theology in the Chicago tradition. There are also later developments more in the tradition of Tillich and H. R. Niebuhr. Langdon Gilkey, for instance, appears to move with comfort within the Tillichian tradition, though certainly stamping it with his distinctive approach, for unlike Tillich he has had to contend more directly with the phenomenon of secularity and the apparent meaninglessness, if not the impossibility, of God-talk. It is necessary for him to discover and analyze again the dimension of experience to which religious language might apply. As he states, "a definite apprehension of the sacred is required in order that there be specific, particular, symbolic forms of religious discourse and out of them assertive propositions capable of validity and invalidity."[33] Theology which thus begins with experience cannot go the route of the hermeneutical and neo-orthodox theology which would seek to base God-talk on the Bible and the word of God, for such theology appears to presuppose the meaningfulness of religious language, is subject to no verification in human experience, and fails to relate to human experience and our real life situation.[34] Instead, the particular symbols of the Christian faith and the theological reflection upon them presuppose an awareness established philosophically of the universal experience of the sacred, what Tillich designated as the ultimate concern. Theology is 'Biblical' only because the general experience of ultimacy or sacrality is "socially and historically conditioned."[35] Historical, social contingency, not divine election, is the authority for whatever touch theology makes with its historical base.

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32. See *The Reality of God,* pp. 21ff.
33. Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God Language* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), p. 417.
34. See Gilkey, pp. 194-202.
35. Gilkey, p. 427.

In Langdon Gilkey we witness a relatively unequivocal fidelity to the general method of Paul Tillich. Gordon Kaufmann of Harvard, however, appears only recently to have shed the remnants of neo-orthodoxy in favor of a more consistent pursuit of an approach that finds its antecedents in H. R. Niebuhr as well as Tillich. In his *Systematic Theology . . . .*, Kaufmann evidently is seeking to some extent to remain in the "Barthian" neo-orthodox camp. The "historicist's perspective" he advocates is a theological point of view determined by the particular historical events witnessed by the scriptures. Since the Christian gospel is the announcement of "a particular act of God in man's history," then, he states, "it is evident that the ultimate epistemological foundation of Christian faith and theology must be the reports of witnesses to that event."[36] We sense some confusion and ambivalence when he speaks with approbation of Tillich's method of correlation to conclude that the historical norm [scripture above all] can adjudge whether a given position or claim is 'Christian'," but that "it is with reference to the experimental norm that we can adjudge whether it 'makes sense'."[37] This confusion, itself making dubious sense, runs through his *Systematic Theology*. However, by 1970, in his essay "Christian Theology and the Scientific Study of Religion," he drops his neo-orthodoxy altogether and comes down firmly and without confusion or contradiction in favor of an experimentally based and determined theology.[38]

He perceives that theology cannot be independent, grounded as it were on an independent historical event, like Jesus. With Troeltsch and the mainstream of mature American theology, he knows that Jesus was relative to his times, "a man shaped by his culture and by the needs of his own time."[39] He asks, rhetorically, "by what right, or on what ground, was any particular event . . . or person to be regarded as ultimately authoritative for man, even Christian man."[40] He concludes that theological method can no longer be formulated on the basis of God's revelation [i.e., the Biblical events] . . .; it must now explore, criticize and reconstruct or reconfirm that basis itself."[41] The Christian tradition, with its

36. Gordon Kaufmann, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 44.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
38. Gordon Kaufmann, *God the Problem* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1972), pp. 17-40.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Bible, becomes then but a contingent, historical "perspective" from which to "see and understand the emerging contemporary experience."[42]

That the Bible plays a secondary role is obvious, and for our purposes it is unnecessary to investigate the direction in which Kaufmann would move, appealing to Tillich, process thought, linguistic philosophy, etc., in order to provide alternative foundations for theology. Significantly, whereas Barth is the most quoted theologian in his *Systematic Theology,* he is cited rarely in *God the Problem,* with scarcely any exceptions, only to be put down or out of consideration. While the *Systematic Theology* has an extensive index of Biblical passages, *God the Problem* has none, with few references to be indexed should he have desired one.

While the mainstream of mature American theology has moved figuratively if not literally to the university to search scientifically and systematically for a universal depth dimension of contemporary experience upon which to establish the necessity and possibility of theology, there are some dissident theologians who fail to appreciate the universality of this university-established experience, and instead call attention to the plurality of individual experiences in contemporary culture. Perhaps most representative of this approach is Harvey Cox, who protests against the domination of theology based on what I have referred to as "university religion." He designates it, as well as all traditional religion, "signal religion," "religion that is coded, systematized, controlled and distributed by specialists."[43] In effect, he protests that once theology is understood to arise out of experience, then in a pluralistic society such as is ours today it is simply arbitrary to attach universal authority and significance to any particular experience. He advocates a "radical theology" which somewhat romantically presupposes attention to "one's own feelings in the midst of a new experience."[44] In search of a feelingful experience of the new, this middle class establishment person turns to "the people," in particular the poor and the new woman with the sensitized consciousness. Theology becomes the biography or storytelling of the person of the theologian as he or she enters into these new experiences of "the people." As such, it is not theo-*logos,* "reflective, analytical, objec-

42. *Ibid.,* p. 22.

43. Harvey Cox, *The Seduction of the Spirit* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1973), p. 10.

44. *Ibid.,* p. 148.

tive,"[45] but rather a playful activity . . . endowed with a certain kind of 'ludic consciousness'."[46] It playfully debunks the "magical authority of sacred texts and the spurious legitimacy of proud rulers." It is a "make-believe" which seeks to involve a form of "human consciousness which can move from one world to another without falling to pieces"; i.e., a consciousness that cherishes and lives through pluralism without compromising it in the comprehensive search for the 'really real,' the abstract universal.[47] Finally, this theology is "useless," done for its own sake. It celebrates as an end in itself the pluralism and novelty of personal experience, especially the experience of the emerging poor and the new "conscientized" woman.[48]

Such theology echoes the Biblical corpus in appreciating the narrative or story form, but its contents, derived wholly from present individual experience as it is informed by the religion of "the people," is independent of the Biblical narrative for its discovery or expression. Scripture is unnecessary for this ludic (not to say ludicrous) "theology," which has authoritative access to deity in personal experience, the novel experience available in a pluralistic world.

Lest I be charged with scholarly neglect and oversight, I should say a word concerning a dimension of contemporary theology I have overlooked viz., the hermeneutical tradition in theology that has its origins in the work of Rudolf Bultmann. I think, for instance, of the so-called "New Hermeneutic" and the continuing debate and conversation among Bultmannians, post-Bultmannians, tangential Bultmannians, etc., etc. However, as far as I am concerned this conversation has become moribund, almost incestuous, and of little impact anymore on the development of theology in America. It has become antiseptically academic, long uprooted from the concrete historical situation that gave rise to it and in which it found its necessity and significance.

There is a recent theological development, however, which presupposes instead an experience of godlessness and therefore the necessity, if not the possibility, of a word from God, such as is found in the Bible. I refer to so-called "liberation theology." The common denominator in all forms of liberation theology is the

45. *Ibid.*, p. 319.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*, p. 321.
48. See *ibid.*, ch. 11, pp. 288-301.

commitment to enter somehow the world and experience of the poor and oppressed, the "marginals" of our world, and to participate in their struggle for liberation. These marginals are those who do not find God at the depths of their experience, but rather a satanic godlessness. They are suspicious of the "God" who is alleged to lie at the depths of establishment experience, since it is from the establishment and often in the name of its so-called God that they experience the oppression and demonic denial that attests the apparent absence of God. So, while the mainstream looks confidently for God in its situation, the marginals look for a God who will "liberate" them from their situation, and the situation of their oppressor which so determines their own situation. Mature American theology looks for God in the world; liberation theology hopes and so struggles for a new world in God.

A second characteristic of liberation theology follows, viz., a common recognition of the necessity of social analysis and the usefulness, if not the necessity, of a Marxist analysis in particular. The reason for this emphasis is the justified persuasion that if the God of establishment experience is the source of marginal suffering and godlessness, then establishment experience, religion, and theology are in truth ideological expressions of a godless economic and political tyranny. Marx focused this ideological appropriation of religion more sharply than most. Very much aware of Marx's analysis, Frederick Herzog of the Divinity School of Duke University, a leading North American representative of liberation theology, therefore understands liberation theology as "ideology criticism."[49]

For my part, the third and decisive aspect of liberation theology is a consequent and necessary turn to the Biblical revelation of the transcendent God as revealed in the event of liberation in Jesus Christ. For a powerless, marginal, oppressed people caught up in the struggle for their liberation and justice, the Biblical word can become not only viable but necessary. They are open to the vision of Yahweh as "the God who intervenes in history to destroy the unjust . . . and to save the oppressed from the injustice which they suffer and which unfailingly cries out to heaven."[50] In North America the tradition of liberation theology is just about as old as the black Christian experience. Its most notable recent expression

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49. Frederick Herzog, "Liberation Theology as Ideology Critique," *Interpretation* (October, 1974), XXVIII.

50. José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx and the Bible,* trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 96.

is in the works of James Cone, in his *Black Theology of Liberation* and *God of the Oppressed*.[51] It is the black experience of oppression that moves the black Christian to be so Jesus-centered and Biblically rooted. In Jesus the black found and finds the transcendent liberator. As Cone states:

> Jesus is the subject of Black Theology because he is the content and the hopes and dreams of black people. He was chosen by our grandparents, who saw in his liberating presence that he had chosen them and thus become the foundation of their struggle for freedom. He was their truth, enabling them to know that white definitions of black humanity were lies. When their way became twisted and senseless, they told Jesus about it. He lifted their burdens and eased their pain, thereby showering upon them a vision of freedom that transcended historical limitations.[52]

When the slaves were uprooted from their African past, those among them who became Christian found their first and truest story in the Bible, the story of their creation as God's children and of their promised deliverance in the coming kingdom of Christ. They were truly a people of the Bible. According to Bishop James Walker Hood of the A.M.E. Zion Church, "the Holy Bible has stood as an everlasting rock in the black man's defense. God himself has determined that the black man shall not be robbed of his record. . . ."[53] This radical Biblical quality of black religion and theology is almost prima facie, as any familiarity with the "Negro spiritual" will indicate. It scarcely needs further arguing. Where a people are truly defenseless, then the divine defense, the word of God, may become both necessary and real.

The dean of Latin American liberation theologians, Gustavo Gutierrez, understands theological reflection today as "necessarily . . . a criticism of society and the Church *insofar as they are called and addressed by the word of God.*"[54] It seeks to become a "critical theology, worked out in *the light of the Word* accepted in faith and inspired by a practical purpose. . . ."[55] Even more explicitly, he

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51. *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970). *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

52. *God of the Oppressed*, p. 32. So, in his introduction Cone admits that as a theologian speaking to the black experience he went "instinctively" to the scripture (p. 6). The black theologian, the liberation theologian, "is before all else an exegete, simultaneously of scripture and existence." (p. 8).

53. James Walker Hood, *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Zion Church* (New York: A.M.E. Zion Book Concern, 1895), p. 34.

54. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Sister Caridad and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 11. (Italics mine).

55. *Ibid.* (Italics mine).

states that "the biblical message, which presents the work of Christ as a liberation, provides the framework for this [Gutierrez's] interpretation."[56] Of course, it is only as the word is read in the company of the oppressed, in participation in their struggle, that the Bible is faithfully heard. Indeed, "participation in the process of liberation is an obligatory and privileged focus for Christian life and reflection. In this participation will be heard nuances of the Word of God which are imperceptible in other existential situations and without which there can be no authentic or fruitful faithfulness to the Lord."[57]

I find it very significant that liberation theology, despite the crisis in Biblical theology and its recent demise in the mainstream, has already produced two Biblical theologies—notably, Frederick Herzog's *Liberation Theology* and José Porfirio Miranda's *Marx and the Bible.* The striking common denominator in both cases, aside from rather tacit (Herzog) and explicit (Miranda) references to Marx, and of course, the attention to the Bible, is the stringent eschewing of apologetics. Attempting as they both do to approach the Bible and the task of theology from the vantage point of a people oppressed by the present powers of the world and in a struggle for a new world, they understandably neither owe nor can offer any justification or apology to that old order. Herzog's task is not to answer to the world, but to undertake "an exercise in the discipline of a new listening" to the word and then to witness its promise of a new world.[58] Miranda, observing that "we have had more than enough apologetics in recent centuries," declares that he is "not attempting to prove anything," but rather only wishes "to understand what the Bible says."[59]

The reference to the North American, Herzog, brings to mind the significant and growing North American theological movement referred to as the theology of women's liberation. At this present juncture, the theology of this movement is less easy to characterize. In the case of Mary Daly, for instance, it is more of an anti-Church theology movement, and her writings are, as she herself claims, "philosophical." She writes not as a powerless marginal, but as a member of the powerful other half of our society. Her confidence and hope, therefore, are not in a transcendent deity and the liberat-

56. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
58. Frederick Herzog, *Liberation Theology: Liberation in the Light of the Fourth Gospel,* (New York: Seabury Press, 1971), p. 26.
59. Miranda, p. 35.

ing event of Jesus Christ, but in the untapped power of womanhood. Her task, she writes, "is to study the potential of the women's revolution to transform human consciousness . . . that is, to generate human becoming."[60] Rather than God's bringing liberation to women and so to all who are oppressed, it is the rising consciousness of women that "has the power to turn attention around from the projections of our culture [false male projections] to the radically threatened human condition."[61] In other words, "in the very process of becoming actual persons, of confronting the non-being of our situation, women are bearers of history."[62]

On the other end of the spectrum is, for instance, Letty Russell, who stands responsibly within the tradition of theology as well as within the experience and oppression of women. She is able to identify with Paul's awareness that the whole creation groans in travail, awaiting not, as in the case of Mary Daly, women's rising consciousness, but God's raising up of women and men, all creation, in Jesus Christ.[63] Certainly there is in the theology of Letty Russell a new interest in scripture as a possible source and norm of theology, although one does not sense here the radical need reflected in both black and Latin American liberation theology. Dr. Russell evidences a good deal of confidence in the life experiences of women and the potential of their immanent power.[64] This equivocation is even more apparent in Rosemary Ruether, who occasionally suggests that it is not so much the case that women and the oppressed need the liberating Biblical word as that the word itself is in need of the liberating word of women to deliver it from the debilitating sexism that has enthralled it almost from the beginning.[65]

In conclusion, it cannot be said that all theology that calls itself "liberation theology" is Biblical—i.e., radically dependent upon the Bible for its word and power. It can be said, however, that there is a strong current in this "new" theology which is distinguished from all other forms of contemporary theology precisely by its fundamental dependence upon the Bible.

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60. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 6.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

62. *Ibid.*

63. See Letty Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective—A Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), pp 33ff.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

65. See "*Women's Liberation and the Church* (New York: Association, 1970), pp. 32, 35f.

Biblical Missiology and Mission

by Creighton Lacy
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It is ironical that *missiology* ("the scholarly study of . . . the missionary dimension of the Christian church") is "coming into its own" just when *missions* (the active outreach of the Gospel in witness and service) seems to be on the decline. It is also ironical that missiology as a discipline, as a systematic program of research and analysis, should be lifted out of academe and out of exclusive Roman Catholic terminology not by narrowing ranks of traditional Protestant scholars, but by the Evangelicals.

The American Society of Missiology, inaugurated officially in 1973, emerged from the Association of Professors of Missions because of growing interest among missionaries, mission executives, and teachers—from both the Roman Catholic and the conservative wings of the Church—who were not technically eligible for membership in the A.P.M. Its current president is a priest of the Society of the Divine Word. Its modest but articulate little quarterly, *Missiology* ($8 per year), is edited and published from (not exclusively by) the circle of specialists around the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary. It is an exciting and stimulating constellation.

More surprising, for those still laboring under ancient stereotypes, conservative Evangelicals (to use an imprecise generic label) are predominantly responsible for developing missiology as a science. Their mission centers in Pasadena and elsewhere bulge with the latest computer equipment and statistical surveys. *Missiology* (the magazine) "continues," not replaces, *Practical Anthropology,* and many of its articles describe field data collected with professional efficiency. Whatever the Biblical assumptions and evangelistic goals these modern missiologists hold, their methods are no longer limited to pious but uninformed proclamation or manipulation. In sensitivity to cultural and psychological traditions (if not always to social and political change) they are putting most of us "main-line" teachers of missions to shame.

Whether missions itself—as a movement, not simply individual projects—is on the wane local congregations and world denomina-

tions will have to determine for themselves. The overseas personnel of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries did *not* reach the lowest figure anticipated a year ago. In addition to unprecedented response to the hunger crisis, sacrificially committed church members rallied to support the World Division program and to meet the accelerating costs of global inflation. Simultaneously Christian leaders in many nations flatly rejected the call for a "moratorium" on Western missionaries (and Western funds!), while continuing to affirm the need for greater self-determination in every area.

Yet no one can deny that the missionary enterprise is at present in one of the ebb tides so clearly traced by Kenneth Scott Latourette. A wave of neo-isolationism, disillusioned by Vietnam or fearful of Angola, reverses much of our historic interest in "foreign" people and places—at the very time when energy shortages, ecology, and economy demonstrate more clearly than ever before our global interdependence. Churches which still schedule annual "mission studies" are rare enough to be noteworthy. "Missionary rallies" attract only the faithful few. College and seminary enrollments in international courses, even on foreign policy or world religions, have dropped conspicuously in recent years. Christians in the pews, as well as critics in the press, voice doubts about "imposing" our (religious) values on other people, though we measure their worthiness by our (political) standards.

By and large we do not want to get "involved"—though we are still ready to contribute generously in order to *buy* national security or eternal salvation. And we do it by conscripting and debasing the term *missions*. Military missions—the $9.5 billion U.S. arms exports in 1975 represented 51 per cent of international military sales, as compared to 27 per cent by the Soviet Union. Trade missions—to explore where to drill for oil and whom to bribe. Diplomatic missions—casting a respectable aura over undiplomatic behavior. CIA missions—in competition with the most incredible James Bond exploits. Preaching missions—long on haranguing and short on listening.

When someone once asked Mahatma Gandhi what was the greatest obstacle to Christianity in India, his reply was short and simple: "Christians." So the problem of missions today may lie within the Christian Church—at home as well as abroad. Statements like the following emanate not from board headquarters, but from bored congregations who have never been challenged by the missionary imperative: "Charity begins at home; we must look after

our own." "Why do they have to *fight* for independence? Revolution is too violent; it's un-Christian." "Sure, the church is good for the wife and kids, but those coloreds are happier the way they've always lived." "I believe in ecumenicity, but church union would wipe out 600,000 Methodists from North India." "As a Baptist deacon told William Carey, if God wants to save the heathen, He can do it without your help or mine."

In various churches—not only the United Methodist—critics are insinuating that missions have been undermined by a lack of "Scriptural Christianity." That charge is unfair and untrue. A careful scrutiny of denominational and ecumenical statements, an open hearing of sermons and speeches by church leaders, reveals no abandonment of the Biblical basis for the Christian world mission. A "declaration" adopted by the Board of Missions in 1971 begins:

> The imperative of the World Division is to communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of all people and societies. Persons and communities must have the opportunity to hear about Jesus Christ, to study the meaning of the Christ event for themselves and their world, and to respond in the commitment of faith and action to Him.

At the World Council Assembly in Nairobi in December, 1975, the first—and most popular!—discussion group was on "Confessing Christ Today." Among numerous "Recommendations to the Churches" that Section urged: ". . . that regional or local clusters of churches engage in reflections based on Bible study and common experience, on the common content of their faith. . . ."

It also proposed "that the churches . . . study . . . processes of communication applicable to matters of faith and the interpretation of Scriptures, and that they give special attention to the question as to how their own interpretation of the Bible is culturally conditioned." There lies the crux of the issue. Modern missiology has not discarded Scriptural Christianity. It has recognized that Christ's mission to a world in revolutionary change requires fresh interpretation, fresh application, even fresh selection of Biblical texts—not simply new computers, scholarly anthropology, or even warm evangelistic hearts.

For hundreds of years, hundreds of thousands of missionaries—and millions of devout churchgoers supporting them—have been inspired by the Great Commission, usually quoted from the Ariston ending of Mark: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation." (Mk. 16:15) Despite the textual problems with this passage, and the anachronistic Trinitarian formula in Mt. 28:18-20, the parallel verses in Lk. 24:45-49 and Acts 1:7-8,

plus the repeated admonition to Peter in Jn. 21:15-17, leave no room for doubt about Jesus' final commandment. Would that the Church had been as clear in its obedience!

Yet disagreements over "translating," "exegeting" and "applying" the Great Commissions are no merely modern phenomena. Faithful Protestants are often disillusioned to learn that the Great Reformers tended to ignore or to discount the missionary mandate. Martin Luther declared that after the apostles "no one has any longer such a universal apostolic command."[1] Either the directive was intended only for the original disciples, or it had been sufficiently fulfilled by earlier missionary witness. According to Richey Hogg of Perkins School of Theology, "the overwhelming and wellnigh unanimous evidence points in the Reformers to no recognition of the missionary dimension of the Church."[2] To be sure, there were contemporaneous explanations—political, financial, geographic, ecclesiological, theological—but we are concerned here only with the apparent neglect of Scriptural authority.

Today the distorted—and un-Christlike—debate about evangelism *versus* service might easily rest on the question whether "making disciples" means primarily "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" *or* "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Obviously it involves both: faith and ethics, sacrament and practice. Most missionaries have been less "hung up" over priorities and emphasis than "armchair strategists" (or "back-pew drivers"). No one who professes to be a Christian can escape the categorical imperative of the Great Commission. No one in responsible mission administration or missiology has any desire to do so. But at the end of the second Christian millenium, in a world increasingly secularistic and pluralistic, the Gospel must be interpreted and expressed in ways that are both meaningful to contemporary cultures and faithful to the eternal Christ.

The remainder of this article, therefore, will seek to outline, to suggest, to illustrate—but not to delineate comprehensively—three areas in which a broader Biblical base is currently being employed to define and undergird the Christian world mission. The

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1. Quoted in Gustav Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1901), pp. 14-15.

2. "The Rise of Protestant Missionary Concern, 1517-1914," in Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *The Theology of the Christian Mission* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 99.

first—most ancient and most obvious—is the witness of service already mentioned. The second is the universal presence of Christ. The third is the eschatological promise, the assurance that "creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Rom. 8:21)

Witness through Service

Jesus came teaching and healing, feeding the multitudes and liberating individuals from sin. The Carpenter who preached and died and rose again also distributed loaves and fishes on the hillside, along the Galilean lake, in an upper room, at an inn on the Emmaus road. The Bread of Life is physical *and* spiritual. Because of this indisputable fact, Christ's own example, the Church has always recognized—if not always fulfilled—the call to educational, medical, and relief missions as a corollary of evangelism. Replying to his own question, "Is the Medical Missionary Obsolete?", Kenneth Strachan, a leading spokesman for conservative Evangelicals, has declared: "It becomes all the more important for true Christians to do good, to feed the hungry, to minister to the sick, without any other purpose than to express the compassion within them."[3]

From the earliest days of missions, feeding the hungry has involved agricultural services, improved seeds and livestock and fertilizer and scientific methods, as well as food "hand-outs." Most Christians have agreed that healing the sick includes preventive medicine, public health, nutrition, and sanitation. It becomes less obvious—to some people—that Jesus' concern for the deprived and oppressed is to be imitated in literal, material, political terms. The poor who inherit the Kingdom and the hungry who shall be satisfied (Lk. 6:20-21) are "spiritualized" in Mt. 5:3 & 6. It is far easier for us in the comfortable pew to mythologize away I Samuel —or even Mary—when we read: "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away." (Lk. 1:52-53)

Did Jesus refer only to some celestial Kingdom "in the sweet by and by" when he proclaimed his mission in Nazareth (Lk. 4:18-19)? If the good news were *only* the message of spiritual salvation, of God's love and forgiveness, why specifically—or even exclusively—

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3. *Missionary Mandate* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, Dec. 1959-Jan. 1960).

"to the poor"? Does the Incarnation mean so little, is our world view so Docetic, that we can allegorize the promise of "liberty to those who are oppressed" without regard to political or economic or social realities? From the Exodus out of Egypt, through innumerable "wars of liberation" in the Old Testament, right down to the fall of Babylon (and of "the merchants of the earth"!) in Revelation, God is at work actively and sometimes violently to create justice on the earth. Are we absolutely certain that "all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt. 26:52) was meant literally, while "I have not come to bring peace but a sword" (Mt. 10:34) was strictly metaphorical? Exegetically I like to believe so, but how, hermeneutically, do we celebrate Revolution in America 1776 and condemn Revolution in Rhodesia 1976?

These passages, too, represent Scriptural Christianity. All of us—preachers and theologians, teachers and missionaries—seek to proclaim the whole Gospel for the whole person in the whole world. We should not be surprised—in any age, especially this one—if the people of God emphasize other Biblical imperatives than those we select and interpret them in different ways for different cultural contexts. To be sure, "the Kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). Yet the Master himself, in a far more central portion of his teachings, asserted that those who fed the hungry, visited the sick and imprisoned, not only did it unto him but will enter into eternal life. (Mt. 25:31-46) "Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and give glory [not to you or me, to a denomination or a creed, not even primarily to Christ, but] to your Father who is in heaven." (Mt. 5:16)

Orlando E. Costas, one of the most stimulating of contemporary missiologists, discusses from a Latin American perspective "the question of humanization as an integral part of the missionary enterprise . . . Humanization, understood in its biblical perspective is not a mere indirect result of Christ's saving action. It is at the heart of Christ's redemptive activity."[4] This does not mean that humanitarian service should replace evangelism—or that it is doing so amid our multitudinous global ministries. It does mean that such service—in meeting indescribable human need, in combatting unimaginable injustice and inhumanity—has equally *bona fide* Biblical authority, and therefore should be seen as an essential

4. Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Missions: a Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1974), pp. 175 & 195.

aspect of our Christian witness, not a secondary or derivative obligation. Writing as an Evangelical, Costas continues: "If the Gospel is truly eternally contemporaneous, it must speak concretely to each new situation. This, I repeat, is not a mere question of application. It is a matter of the nature of the gospel itself. . . ."[5]

The Christian Presence

With rare but noteworthy exceptions, Christians have carried out their mission through twenty centuries not only in an advocacy role but as an adversary, vigorously condemning the ignorance, idolatry, and sin of heathen religions.[6] In varying degrees they have insisted that there is no salvation outside the Church—or (a very vital distinction!) no salvation outside of Christ. For example: "Elements of a primitive revelation may be found in all of these non-Christian religions. But they are so marred and defaced that no one can find salvation in and through them. . . . At best, then, all non-Christian religions are counterfeits of the one true faith."[7] Such people have been puzzled when a legendary village elder, variously located from China to Africa, finally understands that baptism will in the traditional view separate him eternally from his revered ancestors and therefore chooses his pagan loyalties.

There is good Scriptural justification for this position. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." (Jn. 14:6) "No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 3:11) "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) Hopefully we have laid aside the unloving, sometimes coercive, clearly un-Christlike attitudes with which, too often, we have proclaimed an exclusive soteriology. We are mildly concerned about where to assign the men and women of the Old Testament as well as such modern "saints" as Mahatma Gandhi. We know—in theory at least—that *we* are neither the final judges nor the intrinsic, efficient cause of another's salvation.

Missionaries and missiologists wrestle with this problem today, in terms of theology and policy. As faithful to the Biblical commission as any of their predecessors, they know that there are other

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5. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

6. "Heathen" and "pagan" are used herein not in a derogatory, discriminatory sense, but in the original meaning of those who are outside the "household of faith."

7. Harold Lindsell, "Fundamentals for a Philosophy of the Christian Mission," in Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

passages (often in the very same books) that suggest other perspectives and other truths. "The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world." (Jn. 1:9) "In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet he did not leave himself without witness." (Acts 14:16-17) "He will render to every man according to his works . . . glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality." (Rom. 2:6-11) "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Mt. 7:21) And many more!

This is not the place to renew the debate. Karl Barth, for all of his insistence on the unique Revelation of God in Christ, acknowledged that it "concerns the whole world . . . concerns all men . . . has imprinted itself upon the nature and history of the world in quite definite forms, and this it does ever anew."[8] Hendrik Kraemer, asserting the radical discontinuity between revelation and all religion (including Christianity), speaks repeatedly of "tokens" of revelation, God "shining through" other religions, even "revealing himself," and of "acceptable [to whom?] men of faith who live under the sway of non-Christian religions."[9] Paul Tillich in the final lecture of his life defined revelation as "a particular kind of experience which always implies saving powers. One can never separate revelation and salvation . . . Revelation is received by man in terms of his finite human situation."[10] Vatican II pledges Roman Catholics to "acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture."[11]

From there it is only a short step for the Council, in no sense retracting its faith that "the Church includes within herself the totality or fullness of the means of salvation,"[12] to speak also of

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8. *Revelation* (London: Baillie & Martin, 1937), p. 63.

9. Cited by H. H. Farmer, "The Authority of the Faith," in *The Authority of the Faith* (New York: International Missionary Council, 1939), Madras Series, Vol. I, p. 157.

10. Paul Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," in *The Future of Religions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 81.

11. "Nostra Aetate" (Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), in Walter M. Abbott, ed., *Documents of Vatican II* (New York: The America Press, 1966), p. 663.

12. "Ad Gentes" (Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church), *ibid.*, p. 590.

"whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as as a sort of secret presence of God . . . And so, whatever good is to be sown in the hearts and minds of men, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various peoples, is not lost."[13] In the second century Justin Martyr in his *Apologies* declared: "We have shown that Christ is the Logos of whom the whole human race are partakers; and those who lived [in harmony with or in obedience to the Logos] are Christians even though associated atheists."[14] (Notice that Justin stressed *living* according to the Word, not affirming a creed or a particular interpretation thereof.)

Many Protestants are seeking to express the same conviction in different terminology. "We do not *take* Christ to the heathen, to pagan societies; he is already there. The mission, therefore, is to help people—in distant nations or in our own!—to recognize him as Lord and Savior." If Jesus came "not to abolish [the law and the prophets of Israel] but to fulfill them" (Mt. 5:17), why not also the scriptures and traditions of Hinduism or Buddhism?

> When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Rom. 2:14-16)

This doctrine of "the unknown Christ" (Raymond Panikkar) or "the anonymous Christian" (Karl Rahner)[15] has great appeal for those who believe in the universality of the Gospel. But it has two obvious difficulties which can only be suggested here without elaboration. If we truly mean to assert that all those who do not acknowledge Christ, who may not even have heard of him, are nevertheless dependent on him for libration from sin and death, then we are being at least as imperialistic, as condescending, as our ancestors who demanded overt coversion as the sign of salvation. How would we feel to be told that we are crypto-Communists if we happen to believe in a juster distribution of the world's goods or in the dialectic process of history?

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13. *Ibid.*, pp. 595-6.

14. Quoted by A. C. Bouquet, "Revelation and the Divine Logos," in Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

15. Karl Rahner touches on this concept in many of his writings; see Anita Roper, *The Anonymous Christian* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1966); also Raymond Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1964).

A second reservation about this notion of the "hidden Christ" is more critical. To hold that pagans are "saved by Christ," without knowledge or conscious commitment, is to ignore the most central and most distinctive element in the entire Gospel: the Incarnation. We may—should!—agree that all persons are children of Almighty God and that in his infinite wisdom and love he has plans for their redemption. Radical monotheism demands no less a faith.[16] But if we are to claim the appelation of "Christian," we must affirm—with whatever diverse understanding—that God came into the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. "As one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men." (Rom. 5:18) "God was in Christ." (II Cor. 5:19) Amen! Hallelujah! But if that means merely an anonymous, universal Spirit, transforming not only our earthly lives but our ultimate destinies by "tokens" of truth and morality, we have exchanged the Incarnation for a unitarian Christology—which the Hindu may justifiably call Brahman or the Buddhist Maitreya or the Muslim Allah.

Without resolving the theological—and Biblical!—inconsistencies, it is possible to argue—from practical expediency or metaphysical conviction, from Christian love or human brotherhood—that persons in mission must be sensitive and receptive to truths and values and ethical standards and devotional experiences in other faiths as well as in our own. This calls for constant rediscovery and study of the infinite variety of riches in the sacred Scriptures. Like the men of Athens, the men and women of Calcutta and Bangkok and Nairobi and Cochabamba may be very religious, perhaps more religious than those of New York and Durham. "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you." (Acts 17:23)

The Eschatological Promise

If one focus of missiology today is humanitarian service as an indispensable aspect of witness, not simply a by-product of evangelism, and another is "natural theology" based on universal revelation, a third focus is eschatological. Not only God's sovereignty, not only his concern for human history, but his ultimate redemption is *intended* for all creation. This is not universalistic soteriology; it does not necessarily claim that all God's creatures will accept the

16. Cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960).

promises and premises of the Kingdom. But it does see the divine plan and purpose as inclusive rather than exclusive, as unifying rather than divisive, as liberating rather than restrictive.

This emphasis has found brilliant—and controversial—expression in the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, Jean Danielou, and other Roman Catholics. Their theory of "cosmic revelation" rests partially, though not entirely, on a scientific, naturalistic world view, but one which they trace unhesitantly to the Apostle Paul:

> We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now . . . For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because *the creation itself will be set free* from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Rom. 8:22, 19-21, italics added.)

The mission, then, is to proclaim this universal promise, to demonstrate, to facilitate, to expedite that fulfillment. "For in him [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." (Col. 1:19-20)

In Protestant circles Jurgen Moltmann's theology of hope leans, despite the concept of realized eschatology, toward the futuristic dimension of salvation.[17] Most forms of liberation theology, on the other hand, stress God's concern for the incorporation of the oppressed into a present kingdom of justice and freedom. For some Evangelicals the Church's world mission is a precondition for the eschaton: "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come." (Mt. 24:14) But let us not forget that Jesus' parables of the Last Judgment, in the very next chapter of Matthew's Gospel, reiterate the criteria of loving service rather than creed or ritual. Or that the Lukan parables of the Kingdom harshly slam the door on those who self-righteously trust in piety instead of obedience: "Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame . . . For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet." (Lk. 14:21, 24) "And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." (Lk. 13:29-30)

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17. Cf. Costas, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-231 *et passim.*

These few citations, among many which might have been chosen, are not intended to resolve the theological questions inherent in them—or even to uphold the author's own predilections, although those may be obvious. Nor is this hop-skip-and-jump through sample proof texts intended to replace the Great Commissions. "These [justice and mercy and faith] you ought to have done without neglecting the others." (Mt. 23:23) For me, personally and professionally, there is no more irresistible evangelistic call—and promise!—in the entire New Testament than Acts 1:8: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." (Meaning, as many have pointed out, local, national, cross-cultural, and international missions!) *You* shall be my witnesses. Not someone whom you pay to represent you in Sarawak or Zimbabwe. "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, *not counting their trespasses against them*, and entrusting to *us* the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal *through us*." (2 Cor. 5:18-20a, italics added.)

But when one asks the next question, *How* should we witness?, I turn again to that too-familiar, too-simple, too-demanding account of the Last Judgment: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." (Mat. 25:35-36) Clearly this too is Scriptural Christianity.

The Conference on World Mission and Evangelism said in Bangkok in 1973: "We are at the end of a missionary era; we are at the very beginning of world mission." That task of witness, on which the Church's very existence depends, "just as a fire exists by burning" (to quote Emil Brunner),[18] requires new methods, new technology, new attitudes, new anthropology, new commitment on the part of every Christian. Missiology as a new/old discipline can and must rest on Biblical foundations which inform all other aspects of the Church's activity—but a Scripture which is read more openly and applied more broadly to the life of the world.

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18. *The Word and the World* (London: SCM Press, 1931), p. 108.

Early Christian Variations on the Parable of the Lost Sheep

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We enter the world of the earliest Christian preachers and writers at some considerable risk. The terrain is foreign; many of the names are conspiracies against the tongue; riddles and obscure clues lurk in the language; and the issues for which people live, battle, and die bewilder the modern mind. To our eyes, those are mysterious energies which run through the thoughts, prayers, sermons, and disputes of ancient believers. Every piece of art, every surviving liturgy, and every written trace of theological warfare underline the fact that first generations of Christians entered the rhythms of religion in ways which catch us by surprise. Our past is richer and much less predictable than we suspect.

One way to part the curtains on this unfamiliar world of ancestors is to watch them at work on a familiar text like the parable of the lost sheep (Lk. 15:3-7). But there is so much to be misunderstood in a venture of this kind that some words of caution may be necessary. The first has to do with the nearly unimaginable circumstances in which early Christians sought to understand and proclaim their faith: the foundations were not in place. No broad agreement existed about the nature of God or the purposes of divine activity. Different people and groups of people experienced their savior and salvation differently. It might have been possible to settle these fundamental questions by turning to the sacred writings, but there was no consensus about what could be called "the Bible." In some quarters, "the Law and the Prophets" were thought dispensable, and in all quarters it was necessary to negotiate *which* "memoirs" and letters of the apostles would take their place among the charter documents of the Christian community. When a third-century Christian thinker accepted his pagan opponent's label of Christianity as a "new thing," he was not innocent of the elements of ferment and change in the religion he defended.[1]

1. Origen *Against Celsus* 8.41-47.

The second word of caution concerns our own historical provincialism. New understandings of the Bible made possible by modern critical study are both impressive and welcome. If, however, the assumptions and axioms which we bring to the contemporary task of Biblical interpretation make it impossible to appreciate how people in another age asked "What does the text mean?", our new-found shrewdness will have put us in blinders. A way of understanding the New Testament, for example, which illuminates two periods of time—Jesus' *Sitz* and our own—but leaves the intervening centuries in shadows might serve to alert us to the limitations of our methods and hermeneutic. At any rate, a sense of the transient character of our own presuppositions and rules of Biblical interpretation may make us pause before we brand early Christian (or Medieval or Reformation) treatment of Scripture "exotic" or "bizarre."

In Luke's gospel, it is the Pharisees' complaint that Jesus "receives sinners and eats with them" which prompts his parable-opening question: Is there anyone among you who would not search out one sheep lost from his flock of a hundred? Who would not rejoice, and summon others to share in the rejoicing, at the sheep's recovery? Joy like that, Jesus claims, will be in heaven over the recovery of one repentant sinner—it will surpass the joy over the ninety-nine righteous who do not need to repent.[2] The two succeeding parables of the lost coin and the prodigal son sound the same notes of celebration. What was lost has been recovered. Rejoice! In comparison with many other New Testament parables and similitudes, Lk. 15:3-7 is clear and uncomplicated. The evangelist employs it (and the remaining parables of chapter 15) to explain and defend the ministry of Jesus (and the Church) to unworthy "strays," and to represent that ministry as the promise of joy which belongs to God's own approaching reign.

This paper concerns itself with what became of this simple story when writers of the next few centuries pondered it, and used it to make sense of their own particular experiences of Christian faith. What meaning did the story of the lost sheep hold for (1) those groups of Christians in the second century who claimed to

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2. The parallel in Mt. 18.10ff. is addressed to the disciples and appears as one of the responses to their question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" In this context the parable is about the importance of the "little ones" to the heavenly Father. Cf. the form of the saying in the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas,* logion 107, in which the shepherd exerts himself for the stray sheep, "the largest," because he loves it more than the ninety-nine.

possess secret, saving *gnōsis;* for (2) their opponents, Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, and Origen, the Alexandrian Biblical expert and theologian of the third century; and for (3) Tertullian, the fiery African writer who was the Church's most fervent advocate and its severest critic?

1. Lost "in the midst of all kinds of suffering . . ."

One of the first people to make theological use of the story of the lost sheep was also one of the wildest figures to stride through the early years of the Christian movement. At least that is how Simon Magus is portrayed by scoffing detractors, who view him as the source of all heresies, the instigator of that irreligion which boasts of a saving *gnōsis.*[3] Possibly an account of Simon's life and teaching composed by one of his devotees (apparently they were numerous) would show us a less outlandish and improbable revealer and wonder-worker. But it is also conceivable that it was precisely his extravagant claims and behavior which attracted disciples. Who would not have wanted to learn more about someone who taught that he had appeared as Father among the Samaritans, Son among the Jews, and Holy Spirit to the rest of the nation?!

It was Simon's co-worker and companion, Helen, who earned him the most notoriety with his "catholic" Christian opponents. For Simon, however, she was no embarrassment—indeed, her rôle in his theology and mission was of central importance. When, sometime in the first century, Simon ended Helen's career as a prostitute in Tyre by purchasing her out of slavery, he viewed the transaction not merely as one of human compassion (his enemies suspected his motive was passion), but as a saving event of cosmic significance. Helen, he and his followers believed, was the precious lost sheep of the Gospel, at long last reclaimed by the "Supreme Father" (who in his current worldly manifestation was Simon the Samaritan). For those possessing the religious insight which sees beyond bare historical happenings, the ransoming of Helen was the climax of a long and tragic divine drama. In the beginning, the Father over all things had generated an initial Thought or Intent (*Ennoia*, a feminine word in Greek), by whom he planned to fashion angels and archangels. But Thought took matters into her own hands, formed these (imperfect) angelic beings, who in turn created the visible creation, a place of bad design, filled with fear and jealousy. The angels prevented the return of Thought to her

3. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.23.2.

Father, having learned rebellion from her, and they conspired to hold her captive in the world, "confined . . . in the bonds of flesh."[4] We are told that "she, passing from body to body, and suffering insults in every one of them, at last became a common prostitute."[5] The rest of the story nearly tells itself, at least to those capable of perceiving mysteries: the Father's rescue mission made it necessary for him to assume the form of a man (hence his epiphany in Judaea, where he was thought to have suffered on the cross, though he was invincible God), and finally to come and redeem his daughter from slavery.[6] Simon's liberation of the harlot Helen at Tyre was simultaneously and more profoundly the Supreme Father's release of a spiritual being from entrapment in flesh and a hostile world. In the process this divine rescuer and bringer of saving wisdom "conferred salvation upon men by making himself known to them."[7] For believers in Simon's revelation of who he was and what he had come to do, the recovery of the lost sheep (Thought/Helen) signalled their redemption as well. It was the act of redemption which assured their release and held the promise that, when the world was dissolved, they would be spared. In the meantime they were guaranteed their freedom from the malevolent and misguided powers who created the material world.[8] A remark by Irenaeus contains a hint of how this gnostic doctrine was registered by the Simonians; in it one spies (among other things) an emphasis not unfamiliar to readers of Paul:

> . . . those who place their trust in Him and in Helena no longer heed them [i.e., the angels who dominate this world], but as being free, live as they please; for men are saved through his grace, and not on account of their own righteous actions.[9]

To the chagrin of his critics, Simon used Jesus' parable of the lost sheep as the primary image of the divine drama he preached—apparently it lent itself in a striking way to his message about a God who searches out those lost in an alien world and carries them heavenward, to their primal home. There is every reason to suppose

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4. Tertullian *On the Soul* 34. (Translations throughout the article, unless otherwise noted, are taken or adapted from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, and reissued in 1969 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan.)

5. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.23.2.

6. *Ibid.*, 1.23.3. Tertullian, at his sardonic best, wonders (in *On the Soul* 34) whether Helen was carried back on her redeemer's shoulders or thighs!

7. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.23.3.

8. Tertullian *On the Soul* 34; Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.23.3.

9. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.23.3.

that his followers took delight in Simon's version of the parable because they understood themselves to be included in the celestial celebration.

"Catholic" theologians regarded Simon's revelation and his cultus as perversions of Christian truth, and their denunciation carried the day: the God of Christians did not go by the name of Simon, nor was he in the business of extricating spirits from a demon-oppressed and doomed existence on earth. There is, nevertheless, a trace of irony to be found in moralistic undertones which are part of the attack directed by right-thinking ("orthodox") Christians against Helen, the heavenly Thought tumbled into ill-repute. Recollection of the Pharisaic alarm to which Jesus' parable of the lost sheep was the answer suggests that there is at least this to say on behalf of Simon's religious imagination: he was unafraid to preach a divine compassion (though it was not open to all: the unillumined were unsaved) which extended the search for strays even as far as a brothel in Tyre.

Not all systems of gnostic Christianity were vulnerable to the same critique waged against the flamboyant Simon. Most proponents of salvation through *gnōsis* preached a similar message of emancipation from flesh and world to enthusiastic congregations of the "Spiritual" and "Perfect," but they did so without making themselves into deities. Knowledge of the story and structure of the cosmos, according to teachers like Valentinus and Basilides, explained why earthlings live in fear and estrangement. More importantly, it delivered souls from their existence in the world as displaced persons, and gave them access to the original home in the company of deity, in the place of "Fullness" (*Pleroma*). In some quarters of the Mediterranean world to which Christianity spread in the second century, this gospel had won the allegiance of the majority of Christians.[10]

Among these believers, too, the story of the lost sheep served as a vehicle for recounting the celestial accident which produced the prison of souls, the created order. A gnostic group known as the Marcosians, much given to number symbolism, told of a primal disturbance in the ranks of spiritual beings, the Aeons, and the exclusion of one of these beings from the divine region: "because an error occurred in connection with the twelfth number, the sheep frisked off, and went astray."[11] From a fuller description of the

10. See Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (ET, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), chs. 1-2.

same scenario found in the doctrine of a follower of Valentinus we learn who the culprit Aeon was. Sophia, whose attempt to conceive the nature of the invisible "Forefather" failed, produced an abortion-misconception unworthy of the presence of those beings dwelling in the upper region. This flawed and unfulfilled desire, which went by the name of Achamoth, was placed outside the boundaries which marked off divine Fullness (*Pleroma*), and in time produced the Demiurge, creator of earth and its seven heavens. Totally unaware of his own lowly status, this sub-deity, according to Valentinian dogma, was the creator God of the Old Testament. His worshippers called him Lord, Jehovah, Almighty; he was in fact the low-ranking keeper of the dungeon of souls. To the possessor of knowledge, this tragic tale made plain how the material universe became what it is now—a place of ignorance, fear, and grief. It also revealed the existence of the God above the Demiurge, to whom one might flee from captivity in flesh and history. Irenaeus provides us with some glimpses of the Valentinian interpretation of Lk. 15:3-7:

> They explain that the lost sheep must represent the mother from whom the Church here is said to have been sown. The wandering is her stay in the midst of all kinds of suffering outside the Pleroma, from which matter, in their opinion, derived its origin . . . the fact that Achamoth wandered outside the Pleroma . . . and was sought after by the Savior, he himself revealed when he said that he had come for the lost sheep.[12]

The strange cast of characters and even stranger happenings show what an elaborate drama was compressed in the image of a recovered sheep. No doubt the intricacies which confuse modern readers held great attraction for ancient worshippers. But the main points of the Valentinian preaching were not mistaken by the adherents: *they* were the progeny of celestial Aeons, legitimately homesick in the world because held hostage far from their transcendent haven. The true identity, destiny, and destination of those capable of enlightment had been made known when the savior assumed a human disguise in order to redeem spiritual beings from entrapment in materiality and ignorance. It was a gospel for a fearful time, and the note of apprehension which sounds throughout late antiquity is accented, rather than subdued, by a description of gnostic certitude of salvation:

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11. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.16.1.
12. *Ibid.*, 1.8.4. Elements of Mt. 15.2 and 18.12ff. appear in the passage.

> . . . they hold that they shall be entirely and undoubtedly saved, not by means of conduct, but because they are spiritual by nature . . . it is impossible that spiritual substance (by which they mean themselves) should ever come under the power of corruption. . . .[13]

So it was that advocates of saving knowledge understood themselves to be reclaimed by the shepherd from above and released in joy from the world's instability and impermanence. Scarcely a single important element of this understanding of Christian religion was to escape challenge from other followers of Christ who saw divine nature and action, as well as human nature and the human plight, in very different terms. For them, the parable of the lost sheep could not carry the same meaning, nor hold out the same promise.

2. The Wayward Sheep: Recapitulated and Restored

No one took up the challenge of Valentinus and company with more vigor and persistence than Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons. Even in an age which did not incline to breezy titles, his great attack promised by its name a thorough examination and critique; it was called *Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So-Called,* and ran to five substantial books.[14] There is one sense in which Irenaeus' lengthy rebuttal is uncomplicated. However intricate his particular arguments or exegetical ventures become, it is not difficult to trace a straight line to a few propositions basic to his experience and understanding of the Christian proclamation. They are primary assertions about the identity and purposes of God, and about the arena in which divine action occurs.

It is in the first place axiomatic, Irenaeus argues, that no God of greater majesty and honor than the Lord of creation can be thought to exist. Even if the gnostics' distant, unknowable "Forefather" and his supporting cast of Aeons were not so patently fantastic, so obviously the imaginings of demented minds, there would be the testimony of Scripture and the worship of Christians to refute this or any other plurality of deities. Far from being the benighted and dim-witted angel who, without knowing his limitations, fashions what he can from faulty materials, the Creater Lord of the Hebrews and (now) the Christian people is the holy God—there is no other. It is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, God the Father of Jesus Christ, "who has made heaven and earth, rules over all, and is the only true God, above whom there is no other

13. *Ibid.,* 1.6.2.

14. The shorter title, *Against Heresies,* is the usual name given to the work.

God."[15] To buttress this assertion. Irenaeus quickly turns to the "Rule of Faith," one of the most effective weapons in the arsenal of the anti-gnostic theologians: Why else do Christians, "though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth," profess a uniform belief "in one God, the Father Almighty, who made heaven and earth and the seas and all the things that are in them?"[16]

From the claim that ultimate goodness and glory reside in *this* God there follows another conviction which is central to Irenaeus' several arguments: because it is the good and purposeful work of God, creation is valued. The nature and identity of its author and framer make it blasphemous to count creation intrinsically worthless or beyond redemption.[17] Law-giver, prophet and apostle had denounced as idolatry the worship of things created and made. Now gnostic estimates of the world and its enfleshed populace prompt Irenaeus to charge that God is equally dishonored when creation (whether its prime "stuff" or its embodied beings) is held in contempt.

He is not insisting, as a nature-enthusiast or ecologist might, that our commitment to creation is a good, even imperative thing. The decisive commitment, he believes, is the one *God* has made to creation, and this commitment is total—the very dust into which God first breathed life is encompassed by the divine plan for redemption (*dispensatio*).

Who is correct about the nature of the world and the plight of humankind? Is it because of a prior, distant mishap that the created order is a zone of confusion and darkness, and its inhabitants are prisoners in sluggish flesh? Or does evil exist in the world and among its creatures because human disobedience introduced discord and estrangement into a kingdom of peace? For Irenaeus, the problem harks back to the story of Adam and Eve, and the broken compact which disrupted human relationship with God the lifegiver. Sin, ignorance, and mortality are facts of life in the world *not* because the world is evil by nature, but because the original human likeness to the creator was willingly forfeited. Everyone's story is the story of Adam, who "lost his natural dis-

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15. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 3.6.4. Chapters 6-12 of Book 3 treat numerous passages from Scripture and from apostolic writings which enforce this assertion.

16. *Ibid.*, 1.10.1.

17. See implications of this for Irenaeus' doctrine of resurrection in *Against Heresies* 5.2.2.

position and childlike mind" through disobedience.[18] A hard look at the human population, according to Irenaean analysis, will not reveal souls plummeted into flesh—all in need of deliverance from "sarkic" ignorance, but only some capable of "pneumatic" liberation. It will reveal instead a disfigured creation, bereft of its original goodness and natural harmony. It will reveal a race of beings who have turned a life of trust in the garden into life at cross-purposes. What, short of a new act of creation, an event of *re*-formation, can touch the dimensions of conflict and betrayal which beset human existence? Who is the redeemer who might restore the primal beauty of creature and creation?

Irenaeus' distinctive answers to these questions shape his way of understanding the parable of the lost sheep. His interpretation, predictably, is directed against the chief assumptions of gnostic piety. To combat the Valentinian claim that salvation consists in escape from the world, the flesh and the Demiurge, the theory is advanced that God's redemptive plan is a "recapitulation." In uniting his Word/Son to his own workmanship in the incarnation, God "headed up again in himself (*in se recapitulans*) the ancient formation of man, that he might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man."[19] This is the idea which controls Irenaeus' description of the shepherd's redemption of the lost sheep.

> It was necessary, therefore, that the Lord, coming to the lost sheep, and making recapitulation of so comprehensive a dispensation, and seeking after his own handiwork, would save that very man who had been created after His image and likeness, that is, Adam, filling up the time of his condemnation, which had been incurred through disobedience.[20]

In the other major passage in which the parable is discussed, we are told that the Son of God, in assuming human nature from Mary,

> . . . descend[ed] to those things which are of the earth beneath, seeking the sheep which had perished, which was indeed his own particular handiwork, and ascend[ed] to the height above, offering and commending to his Father that human nature *(hominem)* which had been found, making in his own person the first-fruits of the resurrection of man . . .[21]

The Lukan similitude is entirely in the service of the theologian's central propositions: (1) the framer of the universe, and none other, has sent his own creative Word as shepherd; (2) it is as *creature* that

18. *Ibid.*, 3.23.5.
19. *Ibid.*, 3.18.7.
20. *Ibid.*, 3.23.1.
21. *Ibid.*, 3.19.3.

the sheep is sought out by God, who values his own handiwork and is faithful to his commitments.

From this point the Irenaean soteriology becomes aggressively anti-docetic. Since human beings consist of body taken from the earth and soul quickened by God, it was fitting that the Word become truly incarnate.[22] As an actual human being "consisting of flesh, and nerves and bone," the Christ gained nourishment from food, was subject to aging, weariness, pain, and death.[23] According to the Irenaean redemptive scheme, the work of Christ has the effect of undoing and redoing, of reversing and commencing afresh:

> . . . as the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so it is rescued by a virgin; virginal disobedience having been balanced in the opposite scale by virginal obedience. For in the same way the sin of the first created man receives amendment by the correction of the First-Begotten, and the coming of the serpent is conquered by the harmlessness of the dove, those bonds being unloosed by which we had been fast bound to death.[24]

Against the gnostic attempt to disengage religious reality from the temporal and material arena, to disconnect the unknown Father from the God of the prophets and the peasant victim from Nazareth, Irenaeus pits the theology of recapitulation. Elaborating Paul's portrayal of Christ as Second Adam in Rom. 5, he underlines the continuity of the deity's work of creation and redemption.[25] The shepherd-redeemer comes to the sheep (which is Adam/human nature/the flawed image and likeness of God) not to lead the way to the world's exit, but to accomplish the restoration of holiness. Redemption has nothing to do with flight from materiality, everything to do with the renovation of creation. A spiritual presence hovering over the ambiguities of human life and history would have brought no salvation worthy of the name. The work of God in Christ, however, recapitulated and reclaimed all the dimensions of the life which humans actually possess, to the end "that he might bring us to be even what he is himself."[26] But Irenaeus, as clearly as Paul, knows that the end is not yet. Until the creation is restored to its primeval holiness at the Eschaton, Christians are to

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22. This doctrine, also, is firmly established in the "Rule of Faith," as can be seen in Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.10.2 and Tertullian *Prescription Against Heretics* 13.

23. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.2.3.

24. *Ibid.*, 5.19.1.

25. *Ibid.*, 3.18.7 and 3.21.10.

26. *Ibid.*, 5, Preface.

live faithfully and without succumbing to bodily passions. Members of the church are "spiritual" in a pointedly anti-gnostic sense—"not as incorporeal spirits . . . [but as those whose] substance, that is, the union of flesh and spirit, receiving the Spirit of God, makes up the spiritual man."[27] Nor will a saint be differently constituted, either apparently or actually, when the reign of God is fully established. In that time in which the renewed creature "flourishes in an incorruptible state . . . [and] the new man remain[s] continually, always holding fresh converse with God," resurrected humanity will still be "soul receiving the Spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was moulded after the image of God."[28]

Contra Valentinus and Simon, Irenaeus sees in the shepherd the Divine Word, whose incarnate descent does not pry souls free, but recapitulates and repairs wayward humanity, body and soul. The cause for rejoicing is the shepherd's descent, the decisive revelation in Christ that God fulfills his commitment to creation and to those who will be recalled to perfection in his image and likeness. If his understanding of the parable is more compelling to us than that of his opponents, we have only been reminded of the fact that a theology forged in a controversy long past has left its marks on the most fundamental ways in which we think as modern Christians.

Before his brilliant career ended in 253, Origen's work as theologian and Biblical scholar had come to the attention of educated Christians and pagans far beyond his native Alexandria and Caesarea in Palestine, where he lived after running afoul of his bishop in 230. In his capacity as theological expert he served as consultant and arbiter, travelling to churches troubled by disputes over doctrine. Equally expert in philosophy, he attracted some non-Christian students, though his reputation as a vigorous proponent of the view that Christianity was the only ultimately true philosophy made him a central disputant in the sharp arguments exchanged by pagan and Christian theologians.

Among the vast number of problems and projects which occupied him, Origen sought, with no less intensity than Irenaeus, to challenge and expose the ideas of the gnostics as innovations and departures from the faith of the apostles. In the preface of *On First Principles,* his ambitious attempt to build "a connected body of doctrine," Origen's description of the God of Scripture and the apostolic teaching is counterposed to gnostic speculations: God is

27. *Ibid.,* 5.8.2.
28. *Ibid.,* 5.36.1 and 5.6.1.

one, the creator God, both just and good (against Marcion's contention that a vengeful God reigns in the Old Dispensation, a loving God in the New), whose Word, Jesus Christ, came to earth and was incarnate, truly (not seemingly) undergoing birth, suffering, and death before his triumphant resurrection. With the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit is "united in honor and dignity."[29] These assertions, produced and refined through conflict with gnostic teaching and outlined in the "Rule of Faith," provide the fundamental bases and boundaries, the "first principles" of Origen's theology. In his case, these essentials of faith do not resolve all questions, but make possible those explorations which seek to unlock mysteries of God's purposes in and for the universe.

It would have been impossible for Origen, an Alexandrian, to be immune to those instincts and energies which rewarded gnostic Christianity with an early following and broad popularity in Egypt. Some have claimed, in fact, that Origen's anti-gnostic theology is itself gnostic in its essential structure and objective, and is only adjusted in its particulars to avoid violation of the "Rule of Faith."[30] The partial truth of that claim derives from the fact that when antagonists fight "in close" it is precisely the shared ground (the modes of conceptualization and language held in common) which heats discussion into polemic. In theological, as in other dealings, agreement over what matters (e.g., the question of being "lost" or "saved") is just what makes disagreement so volatile.

It is the attention which Origen devotes to questions concerning the soul which seems to place his theology (and his handling of the parable of the lost sheep) somewhere in the territory which stretches between Irenaeus and the Valentinians. Amid his clear anti-gnostic declarations on the identity of God, he raises his version of the problem, still unanswered, which had vexed and then inspired gnostic teachers and seers:

> In regard to the soul, whether it takes its rise from the transference of the seed . . . or whether it has some other beginning, and whether this beginning is begotten or unbegotten, or at any rate whether it is imparted to

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29. Origen *On First Principles*, Preface. Quotations from this work are from the edition of G. W. Butterworth (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

30. For the view that Origen's "system" bears closest resemblance to that of the gnostic theologians, see Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934) II, 1, pp. 171-233. If one is searching for extra-biblical influences in Origen's theology, a stronger case can be made for his dependence upon basic Platonic themes, as Hal Koch argued long ago in his masterful *Pronoia und Paideusis* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1932).

> the body from without or no; all this is not very clearly defined in the teaching [i.e., the teaching delivered by the apostles].[31]

From such wonderings emanated Origen's vision—a proclamation of God's saving "economy" and an account of the universe's origin and destiny. In a timeless beginning, he wrote, God begot as many pure minds as he could serve as sovereign, intending for them a life in beatitude, a life of basking in his love. Exercising their freedom as rational beings, these minds departed from the Father (either through emulation of Satan, the first rebel mind, or because they became sated and grew weary of adoration and contemplation of the divine). As the minds fell, they cooled into souls, assuming shapes and degrees of materiality determined by the distance they chose to put between themselves and God, the source of their life and enlightenment. In this way the created order came into being, populated by spiritual beings of fine substance (planets, stars, angels) or grosser (humans and the animal species) who were distributed throughout the universe in "different ranks of existence in accordance with their merit."[32] For Origen the visible world in its beauty and harmony revealed a design and cohesion imposed by a benevolent creator; the same world in its distorted and tragic aspect gave testimony to liberty badly misused by intelligent beings. In this cosmos of free choice and willing relationship God coerces no one, and no one's choice of good or evil is determined beforehand.

> No one is stainless by essence or by nature, nor is anyone polluted essentially. Consequently, it lies with us and with our own actions whether we are to be blessed and holy, or whether through sloth and negligence we are to turn away from blessedness to wickedness and loss.[33]

Origen's creator God is dedicated to the regathering of this universe of tumbled souls, who by their own decisions have surrendered their "first natural and divine warmth."[34] To these dulled intelligences he sends his Word and Reason, a divine beckoning to his rational offspring. The invitation will extend through cycles of worlds, if necessary, and to Satan himself, who was "once light, before he went astray."[35] When, finally, resistance is softened by God's chastening therapy, the restoration (*apokatastasis*) will be complete.

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31. Origen *On First Principles,* Preface.
32. *Ibid.,* 1.6.2.
33. *Ibid.,* 1.5.5.
34. *Ibid.,* 2.8.3.
35. *Ibid.,* 1.5.5.

Origen's vision of God is many things at once. It is a scientist's explanation of the multiplicity and diversity of the cosmos, and a theologian's proclamation of a God who desires reunion with his progeny. It is also the myth and gospel Origen the believer recites in hope, because mirrored there as a fact and promise is the end of his estranged condition, the termination of his unclear vision of who he is and to whom he belongs. In it is recounted God's commitment to win back through persuasive love every willful and self-destructive soul who has been given life.

The mark of Origen's theology, its structure and intent, can be detected in several of his references to the story of the lost sheep.[36] Even after his teaching has been softened by Rufinus (his translator who also sought through revision to protect him against accusations that some Origenist doctrine was heterodox), the edge of Origen's own thinking is not missing from these pieces of exegesis:

> . . . of a hundred sheep, one had been lost, but the good shepherd, leaving the ninety-nine on the mountains [and] coming down to this valley of ours, the valley of tears, searched for this sheep, found it and carried it back on his shoulders, and rejoined it to the number of those who had remained safe in higher places.[37]

The appearance of a detail from the Matthean form of the parable appears to be purposeful: the sheep are not left in the wilderness (as in Lk. 15:4, *en tē erēmō*), but "on the mountains" (according to Rufinus' translation, *in montibus,* reflecting Mt. 18:2, *epi ta orē*). The suspicion that this feature serves the vertical emphasis of Origen's scheme, i.e., the descent and ascent of souls, is corroborated by another passage in his *Homilies on Joshua.* Addressing the leadership of the Church, he asks if the shepherd (bishop) can watch the little sheep rushing to the precipice of damnation in the world without calling out. Have you forgotten your prototype, he asks, who,

> . . . leaving the ninety-nine in celestial places, came down to earth for the sake of one small sheep which had strayed, and found it, put it on his shoulders, and took it back to the heavens?[38]

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36. Not discussed here is Origen's argument for the unity of the church in his Homilies on Jeremiah, fragment 28. There he finds the text pointing to the fact that Christians are one body and one sheep. The shepherd's coming was for the purpose of binding the faithful together, and carrying them as one sheep to his realm.

37. Origen *Homilies on Numbers* 19.4 (translation by author).

38. Origen *Homilies on Joshua* 7.6 (translation by author).

With the disclosure of another piece of information—the lost sheep is humankind, the ninety-nine are angels—the outline of Origen's treatment of the similitude is clear.[39] Equally clear are the ways in which his theology is his own. Neither Helen, nor an Aeon of any other name, nor soul-fragments destined by their nature to receive *gnōsis* are the objects of the divine retrieval. It is mankind that God searches out: enfleshed souls meant to be minds in spiritual bodies, humans capable of joining the ranks of angels, free rational beings intended to respond to a higher calling. The determinism and elitism of gnostic religion are under direct attack.

On the other hand, operating in thoughtful but bold independence of certain themes of judgment and eschatology familiar to us in New Testament writings as well as Irenaean theology, Origen sets no limit of time or worlds upon God's saving patience. And he is unwilling to designate any creature a doomed goat—even Satan will be restored, converted at the last by the divine affection, "in order that God may be all in all."[40]

Little has been said to this point about the savior featured in this drama of restoration. It was in answer to Celsus, defender of the pagan Gods, not to the docetism of the gnostics, that Origen spoke in specific terms of the nature of the shepherd. Against the Christian idea of incarnation, Celsus reasoned that if God descended to man, he underwent change "from good to bad, from beautiful to shameful, from happiness to misfortune, and from what is best to what is most wicked."[41] To this sort of change true deity is not susceptible, as anyone minimally versed in philosophy should know!

Adapting the ideas of the "Christ-hymn" in Phil. 2 to meet this challenge, Origen speaks of the Divine Word who remains what he is while taking upon himself the limitations of humanity. So "the advent of Jesus to men was not a mere appearance, but a reality and an indisputable fact."[42] Origen chides Celsus for his inability to understand the different forms or aspects (*epinoiai*) in which the Word appears. He manifests himself in a "form corresponding to the state of the individual, whether he is a beginner, or has made

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42. *Ibid.*, 4.19.

39. We learn from Rufinus' *Apology* 1.38 that Jerome drew this idea of the meaning of the passage from Origen.

40. This is the logical implication of Origen's several references to 1 Cor. 15.28 in *On First Principles*. Rufinus' endeavor to obscure the unpopular universalism of Origen's theology was unsuccessful.

41. Origen *Against Celsus* 4.14. Translations from this work are from the edition by Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

a little progress, or is considerably advanced, or has nearly attained to virtue already, or has in fact attained it."[43] These modes of revelation were necessary because rational beings, having defected from God, were unable to gaze directly upon the radiance of the divinity. Finally,

> . . . because of his great love to man, God made one special descent in order to convert those whom the divine scripture mystically calls 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' which had strayed down from the mountains; in certain parables the shepherd is said to have come down to them, leaving on the mountains those which had not gone astray.[44]

Here began the "new thing," the Christian commotion which Origen defended against the criticism of Celsus and all his companion conservers of the custom and piety of the Empire.[45] The apologetic proceeds: surely the church could not be increasing in numbers, and there would not be such pervasive evidence of morally-improved lives if all this were not unfolding in accordance with the providential design. God's "one special descent" in the incarnate word released into the culture forces for change and reform which cannot be mistaken, nor ultimately resisted. But the commotion is no mere civil disturbance, according to Origen—it is the earthly signal that in Jesus Christ God is stirring his own citizenry throughout the universe and recalling them to their "first natural and divine warmth" in his presence.

3. The Fallen Sheep: Room in the Fold?

The story of the lost sheep had its part to play, as we have seen, in early Christian struggles to identify the deity and to define the salvation being claimed by believers. As a vehicle for doctrinal expression and a weapon for polemic, the parable proved its versatility. But use of this text was not restricted to questions of dogma and right belief. There were also lessons to be drawn from Jesus' similitude which bore directly upon the self-definition of the church and upon standards of Christian morality.

A single episode highlights the ways in which the parable was employed to buttress sharply conflicting ecclesiologies and ideas of discipline within the community of the redeemed. Sometime around the year 210, the severe African churchman, Tertullian,

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43. *Ibid.*, 4.16.
44. *Ibid.*, 4.17.
45. *Ibid.*, 8.43. See note 1.

learned of an edict issued by the bishop of Carthage.[46] It read: "I remit, to such as have discharged [the requirements of] repentance, the sins of adultery and fornication."[47] Tertullian's response was a scathing treatise entitled *On Modesty*. He viewed the episcopal decision as a betrayal of the sanctity required of the baptized. "Why do they . . . grant indulgence," he complains, "under the name of repentance?"[48]

Some of the theological and scriptural arguments advanced by supporters of the decree are visible in Tertullian's biting attack. There is no reason to believe that they disagreed with his view that Christians should commit no serious sins after their baptismal renunciations. But they insisted that the divine mercy was not to be withheld from those members of the community who falter, provided they undergo the discipline of public penance required for readmission to communion.[49] A policy branded by rigorists like Tertullian as moral leniency and defilement of the virgin church looked altogether different to them. It was faithful enactment of the purposes of God, who reveals himself in holy writings to be merciful and slow to anger, more desirous of a sinner's repentance than his destruction. The sons of God, they reasoned, were to be like him in mercy and peace-making, not judging others, lest they be judged.[50]

There are forceful and ingenious points in Tertullian's rebuttal. He views with outrage the presumption of human authority to speak for God, who alone is able to pardon sinners. The God of Christians, he reminds his opponents, is not merciful in some sense which negates his justice. This is why Isaiah warns that God's patience has an end, and St. Paul can envision the necessity of surrendering a person to Satan for damnation.[51] The demand for righteousness stands clearly in the Decalogue, and Tertullian finds

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46. On the debate over the dating of Tertullian's *On Modesty* and the long-popular view that Callistus, Bishop of Rome, was responsible for the edict, see T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), pp. 44-8, 247.

47. Tertullian *On Modesty* 1.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Tertullian had earlier endorsed the practice of *exomologēsis*, as we know from his *On Repentance* 9-10. There were two new factors when he composed *On Modesty:* (1) Tertullian had joined the spirit-filled Montanist church, and now adhered to the ethical rigorism of the community of the "New Prophecy" and (2) the edict, as he argued, attempted to reclassify irremissible sins (Cf. 1 John 5.16) as pardonable.

50. Tertullian *On Modesty* 2. Among the texts used for support are Ex. 34.6-7; Ezek. 18.23,32; 33.11; Lk. 6.36; Mt. 5.9; 7.1.

51. *Ibid.* References are to Isaiah 42.14 and 1 Cor. 5.5.

the relation of the prohibition of adultery to the prior commandments concerning idolatry and Sabbath observance suggestive, "for after spiritual chastity and sanctity followed corporeal integrity."[52] This integrity was not possible when mankind was "in Adam," but since the incarnation of the redeemer, it lies within the power of those reborn "in Christ," not of "the slime of natural seed, but of 'pure water' and a 'clean spirit.' "[53]

Tertullian's work is not finished. To justify their compassionate decree, his opponents have pointed to the parables in Lk. 15. The import of the parable of the lost sheep is, for them, unambiguous: "sheep," "flock," "good shepherd" are designations well-known among Christians, and the saying of Jesus clearly concerns "a Christian who has erred from the church's 'flock'."[54] The interpretation was not at all unfamiliar to Tertullian. A decade earlier, before becoming a Montanist, he himself had offered the proof of God's clemency in Lk. 15:3-7 for the consolation of the lapsed Christian, and as incentive to undertake second repentance while the door of forgiveness remained slightly ajar.[55]

All is changed by the time he challenges the edict of the Carthaginian episcopacy. Fired by the spirit of the "New Prophecy," he is compelled to drop a plumb line in the midst of the corrupt life of catholic, or as he calls them, "psychic" Christians (the term "pneumatic" he reserves for his fellow Montanists). The theology and exegesis by which these intemperate church members flatter God and indulge their carnality cannot go unchallenged.

This zeal for purity in the church produces a striking interpretation of our parable. Tertullian's starting point is an exegetical principle which sounds curiously modern. He demands that the actual setting of Jesus, rather than any subsequent allegorical or symbolic application, control the meaning of the text. Jesus' parable was an answer to a specific, historically-particular question. He was not speaking to or of Christians. They did not exist at the time. Jesus was answering the complaint of the Pharisees:

> [They] were muttering in indignation at the Lord's admitting to his society *heathen* publicans and sinners, and communicating with them in food. When, in reply to this, the Lord had given the similitude of the restoration of the lost ewe, to whom else is it credible that he likened it but to the lost heathen, about whom the question was then at hand? . . . [And] in order

52. *Ibid.*, 3.
53. *Ibid.*, 6.
54. *Ibid.*, 7.
55. Tertullian *On Repentance* 7-8.

> to express, in opposition to the Pharisees' envy, his own grace and goodwill even in regard of one heathen, he preferred the salvation of one sinner by repentance to theirs by righteousness. . . .[56]

His treatment of the parables of the lost coin and the prodigal follows the same principle. It is illegitimate to turn the parables to purposes and persons other than those which Jesus addressed. His opponents identify the recovered sheep with the lapsed Christian in order that "they may endow adultery and fornication with the gift of repentance."[57] But Tertullian insists that the historical sequence must be preserved. Christians were made out of heathens, being first "lost" and then carried back to God by the savior. The hermeneutic in this case is dictated by the writer's vision of a pure and obedient community of saints. Sound interpretation of Jesus' parable, then, will not allow the original saving event—the redemption of the lost sheep from "the universal nations"—to be made a warrant for cheap grace dispensed to (and by) Christians who strike compromises with the world too easily.

Neither Tertullian's exegesis nor his rigorist definition of the church won dominance in catholic Christianity. His views lived on in "pure-church" sects and reform movements. For most Christians, the trials and temptations met in the plain business of living required a different conviction and hope. The majority of believers sought the assurance that to their distorted and disobedient lives the good shepherd continued to descend, and that, in the end, rejoicing in heaven might be over their repentant faith.

Our past is richer and much less predictable than we suspect. There may be other inferences to be drawn from this telescoped study of a single parable in a brief segment of the Christian community's story, but this one is inescapable. The parable of the lost sheep did not always mean what moderns may contend it means, any more than the people of the church always understood themselves in the ways of understanding we have devised for our time. It may not be true that there was greater diversity and variety in Christian belief and practice in the patristic age than in the present, but it seems unlikely that there was less!

An encounter with the ideas of Simon, Irenaeus, and the rest may push our current perspectives out of shape in a refreshing way, if only momentarily. Perhaps it is always worth the trouble to

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56. Tertullian *On Modesty* 7.
57. *Ibid.*, 9.

ask again, in particular ways, whether theological and ecclesiastical (and for that matter, political) traditions triumphed as orthodoxy because they were self-evidently sound, or whether we regard them as sound because we are products of the traditions which triumphed. One is reminded of Ray Bradbury's story, "The Sound of Thunder," in which big-game hunters, thanks to a time-vehicle, safari backward in time, stalking Tyrannosaurus rex. Because one of the party clumsily slips in that former world, and destroys a butterfly, the hunters return to a different present—one in which a more graceless language is spoken and a more sinister government holds sway. All has turned out differently.

Behind our most cherished contemporary understandings, contested or unchallenged, there stands a long story of decisive and subtle turnings. Whatever modern sense we make of the parable of the lost sheep can only be enriched by a sharper consciousness of the places we have wandered and the many ways our rescue has been celebrated.

Biblical Perspectives on Human Sexuality

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"More Pre-teens Want Birth Control Advice," "New VD Strains Proliferating in U.S.," "Teenage Motherhood Within Months of Marriage Rising"—these recent headlines point quite clearly to the continuing need for Christian churches to take seriously their responsibility for sexuality education and to get involved in this area, especially on the local level, where the greatest effect is likely to be obtained. That problems related to sexuality are among the most pressing faced by our society today is hardly questionable (not only with respect to youth but also for more and more adults), yet local churches seem incapable of facing the problem squarely and often merely continue to voice the traditional "don'ts" without presenting anything approaching a convincing case for their views.

Such a case must in some way take into account contemporary biological, psychological, and sociological findings about human sexuality if it is to speak cogently and convincingly to people today. We must realize that it is not "copping out" to consider current data. The Christian Church is called upon to be responsible to and for (and therefore to speak *understandably* to!) the world in which it exists, and to do this it must use the language and knowledge of that world. Without a thorough familiarity with the results of recent research and a careful evaluation of these findings in light of traditional wisdom, the Christian in our scientistic culture will always be at an immediate and automatic disadvantage to the person who can cite the latest "scientific" support for *his* view (whether he really understands what he is citing or not).[1]

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1. I have attempted such an examination and application of recent biological and psychological research in a book (as yet untitled) to be published by Fortress Press in March, 1977.

But if the churches are to have more to offer than other agencies or individuals speaking about sexuality today,[2] if the churches are to develop a viable "theology of sexuality" to guide Christians and (one would hope) society at large in this confusing area—indeed, if the churches are to carry out their necessary task of articulating God's will for humanity—then their teachings must be firmly rooted in the Biblical material which is the ultimate source for the Christian Church. Without these roots (and it may not be far wrong to say that the true "radical" in the area of sexual ethics today is the person who is willing to acknowledge and hold to these *roots*!) the churches stand to lose a great deal. First and most clearly, the churches' uniqueness, identity, and, in a crucial sense, their very "soul" will be forsaken. Second, the many valid and desperately needed insights into human sexuality which the Bible contains will not be heard. Finally, as a result, the churches will lose the ability to contribute anything of real and lasting value in this crucial area. In short, the churches will become simply another voice in the rising cacophony, a voice which many are predisposed to ignore anyway, especially when they see that the churches are really only trying to find a theological justification for the latest hypotheses of psychology or statistical summaries of sociology.

Of first priority, then, is the attempt to wrestle seriously with the Biblical material concerning sexuality and to discover ways in which this material can speak to us in a world radically different from that in which the Bible was written. There are, of course, many specific aspects of human sexuality which are quite controversial today: The question of homosexuality (or at least the ordination of homosexuals) rages within United Methodism; the movement to forbid abortion by means of a constitutional amendment—largely the effort of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops—has recently gained new impetus through the support of such diverse Protestants as the Reverend Jesse Jackson and Billy Graham's wife, Ruth. Since I clearly cannot deal with all such specific issues here, I have decided to limit my consideration to a fundamental and presuppositional issue, namely, the *nature* and *purpose* of

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2. See, e.g., *The Pleasure Bond: A New Look at Sexuality and Commitment* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), by the famed sex researchers William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson (in association with Robert J. Levin), for an excellent contemporary presentation of many of the "traditional" religious teachings about sexuality from a physiological-psychological viewpoint. These two researchers, whom many associate with the "dehumanization" of sex and the spread of sexual freedom, instead come down very strongly on the side of *commitment* and fidelity as necessary for full sexual pleasure and fulfillment.

human sexuality itself as presented in the Bible. By doing this, I think information will be provided which any Christian can incorporate into his or her view of sexuality and which can serve as a foundation upon which to base considerations of the many questions of sexual morality which currently face us. Although all avenues for furthering our knowledge should be explored and taken into account, the Bible must remain as the informing and guiding source for *Christian* theological-ethical reflection.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament contains a great many references to sex and sexual behavior, and of necessity I have been highly selective in the passages to be examined. Only the Genesis creation accounts and the Song of Songs will be considered for their contribution to an understanding of the Old Testament attitude toward sexuality.

The Genesis Creation Accounts

An understanding of human sexuality is intricately interrelated with an understanding of man in general; any attempt to uncover the roots of the Biblical view of sexuality must take into account the broader question of the nature of man. Nowhere in the Old Testament is this interrelationship more clearly depicted than in the creation stories of Genesis, and to these accounts we will devote a major portion of this investigation of the Old Testament view of human sexuality.

The first three chapters of Genesis, as is well known, contain two accounts of the creation of man: the first, 1:1-2:4a, from the Priestly or P source (put in its final form ca. 500 B.C., although it contains much older material); and the second, 2:4b-3:24, from the Yahwist or J source (written ca. 950 B.C., making it the oldest narrative source in the Bible). For the sake of convenience, we will consider the stories in the order in which they occur in the Bible.

Perhaps the most significant point to be found in both Genesis creation stories, especially in light of traditional Christian interpretations, is the unquestionable affirmation of *human sexuality as good,* as God's willful intent for human existence. It is clear from a reading of the very first chapter of Genesis that the Old Testament faces the question of sexuality directly, as a basic fact of creation to be accepted, not hidden: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; *male and female he created them.* And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it' " (1:27-

28a, emphasis added). By presenting man's creation as male *and* female, the Priestly author assured that human sexuality must be seen as neither a mistake by God nor the consequence of man's sin, but as part of God's intention and therefore a meaningful aspect of human existence; indeed, in some sense man's sexuality participates in his creation in God's image.[3] The crucial point is that sexuality is presented as fundamental to what it means to be human and thus must be taken very seriously.

Furthermore, when God had completed his creative work, "he saw *everything* that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (1:31a, emphasis added). This judgment of "very good" was pronounced on *all* of God's handiwork, *including* the sexuality of man, and such a view makes impossible for those in the Judeo-Christian tradition a belief in metaphysical dualism (which views the material world and human body as inherently evil). In addition, it is important to note that God's *first* words to his new creatures are a command (also characterized in the text as a *blessing*) to exercise the sexuality he has created: "Be fruitful and multiply." Thus there is no suggestion that sexuality is the result of man's sin or that child-bearing is in any way a punishment—human sexual activity and procreation are part of the creation that God judged to be "very good."

Also, in this story, it is clear that the "image of God" refers neither to the man alone nor to the woman alone, but only to the two of them together, to the "them." It is significant further that the male and the female are created simultaneously with no hint of temporal, much less ontological, superiority for the male, and that the blessing of fruitfulness and dominion is delivered to both male and female together. In short, P makes clear that both man *and* woman were necessary for the completion of God's creation of mankind; not only did both have to be created, they had to be brought together in what was explicitly a *sexual* relationship in

3. Although it has been effectively obscured by the traditional misinterpretations, the J account clearly corroborates P's unequivocal statement that God intends sexuality from the beginning, that he chooses deliberately to make man a sexual being: In Gen. 2, both male *and* female (and therefore by definition sexuality!) are intentionally created by God before any hint of sin, of whatever kind, enters the picture.

order to fulfill God's purpose for those creatures whom he had created "in his own image."[4]

These themes of the goodness of sexuality and the necessity of the male-female relationship appear also in the J creation story, though the language and mode of presentation are much less theological and abstract and more personal and detailed. Throughout the P account, every act of Creation is judged "good," with the entire creation (including man's sexuality) characterized as "very good," as we just saw. The only place in the whole presentation of creation where the judgment "not good" is pronounced is Gen. 2:18b: "It is not good that the man should be alone." We see here corroboration of P's contention that man by himself is less than fully human, that he needs another in order to reflect truly God's image and to fulfill God's purpose. And this other is *woman,* the only companion really "fit for him." For J as well as P, true humanity exists only in community, and the fundamental form of this community for both authors is the relationship between man and woman. Again, sexuality—man's existence as male and female —is strongly affirmed as a central element in God's intention and plan for mankind.

The reason given by J for the creation of woman—that the man should not be alone—is also important to our inquiry. Given the Hebrew emphasis on procreation (a central element in the P story), it is significant that J stressed man's *loneliness,* his need for a companion worthy of him, as the immediate reason for woman's creation. Furthermore, there is no mention at all of children in this particular story, indicating that God's creation of sexuality was to serve purposes other than just procreation (this, incidentally, is a good example of the need to consider Biblical passages in their overall context and not to lift out certain passages or emphases—the procreative element of Gen. 1 needs the stress on companionship of Gen. 2 for balance and for an accurate picture of God's intention in the creation of sexuality). J apparently was interested in explaining why a man and woman forsook blood ties (of in-

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4. It is crucial for an understanding of sexuality rooted in the Bible to recognize, in Helmut Thielicke's words, "the fact that here the Bible does not speak first of the creation of man in general and then *afterwards* of the difference between the sexes, but rather from the very outset speaks of man only in the framework of the polarity of the sexes." For the Priestly author "there is no such thing as a human being apart from a man or a woman." See *How the World Began: Man in the First Chapters of the Bible,* John W. Doberstein, trans. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 89.

comparably greater importance in his time) and entered into a relationship with each other based on a love even stronger than that of a child for its parents. J found his answer in the fact that the power of eros, the inextinguishable drive of the sexes for each other, was given to man by God himself in the creation of woman from man (cf. "Therefore" in v. 24). According to Gerhard von Rad, this fact "gives to the relationship between man and woman the dignity of being the greatest miracle and mystery of Creation."[5] Furthermore, this eros is presented not as appropriate only in Paradise and certainly *not as a result of sin,* but as a permanent law of nature, based upon the clear statement that in the creation God intended not only the existence of man as male and female but also the desire of the sexes for each other, and apparently not solely for procreative purposes.

Because of the traditional misinterpretations, it is important to consider the implications of the J story for the status of women. As we saw, P makes no distinction whatsoever between male and female in terms of importance and thus indicates that God did indeed create them equal. J, because of the temporal priority assigned to the male's creation, has usually been interpreted as implying thereby an ontological superiority also.[6] But it is not unreasonable to suggest, on the contrary, that the whole story seems to build to an intended climax in the creation of the woman, whose elaborate creation is in marked contrast to the relatively perfunctory creation of the animals (and even of the man himself!).

Furthermore, it is significant that the words translated by the RSV as "helper fit for him" (the infamous "helpmeet" of the KJV) actually have a considerably different connotation in the original Hebrew: Their literal meaning is "alongside him" or "corresponding to him," with the notion of similarity as well as supplementation. The New English Bible offers perhaps the best translation of this concept in simple English: God provides "a partner for him." It is crucial to note that it is only *after* the sin of disobedience—when the state of existence God had intended for his creatures had

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5. *Old Testament Theology,* I, D. M. G. Stalker, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 150.

6. This same argument, if applied to the P account, would of course mean that "every living creature that moves" (not to mention light, the seas, vegetation, etc.) is superior to man since they were created first; and in the J story itself the human female would have to be seen as inferior to all the rest of the animals. Not surprisingly, however, those who are eager to apply such reasoning to the male-female relationship in J are much less willing to be consistent and apply it to P and to the female-animal relationship in J as well.

been disrupted—that woman is seen as subordinate. Gen. 3:16—often cited as proof of the divinely ordained superiority of the male—is actually a condemnation of it (after all, it is itself in the context of a curse, not a statement of how things should be!): The dominance/subservience model is clearly a *result* of the "Fall," with its disordered relationships, and therefore not God's will but the very thwarting of it. Thus, whatever the traditional interpretations of this verse, it appears that J considered the original state of creation (and of woman's place within it) to have been somewhat different, though since disturbed by sin.

Having mentioned the Fall, I feel obligated to look briefly at this story which has been the source of so much misunderstanding about the proper Christian attitude toward sexuality. The traditional (mis)interpretation of Gen. 3 goes roughly as follows: Adam and Eve did not know about sex until *after* eating of the tree of "knowledge of good and evil," which knowledge is therefore associated with the consciousness of sex, which automatically brings with it the sense of shame that the two humans experienced as soon as "their eyes were opened." This interpretation, however, is highly unlikely for several reasons, only two of which can be mentioned here.

First, the equation of "knowledge of good and evil" with consciousness of sex implies that the lack of shame about being naked means that the first couple were not conscious of their sexuality. Such a position assumes that sexuality itself occasions shame by its very nature (once one is aware of it). But this suggests that sexuality was *not* part of God's intention for humans in creation, whereas we have already seen that *both* creation stories consider sexuality to be a purposeful part of God's good creation, with no indication that sexual experience was jealously withheld from Adam and Eve. Second, it is clear from the temptation story that God (or members of his heavenly court) possessed the "knowledge of good and evil." This in fact was the serpent's argument for eating the forbidden fruit, in order to be "like God, knowing good and evil" (3:5), and it appears that such knowledge was the result (cf. 3:22). But one of the distinctions of Hebrew religion was, as Martin Buber once put it, that its God was "supra-sexual," creating merely by divine will rather than by sexual coupling with a female deity. Thus it is very hard to see how the "knowledge of good and evil"—a specific possession of God in this story—could possibly have been sexual experience or consciousness, as the traditional view has held.

An interpretation of the story which is more consonant with Hebrew attitudes toward sex, especially as they are presented in Gen. 1 and 2, would hold that the sin of the first couple, far from being sexual in any sense, was one of *pride,* of overstepping the limits God had placed upon them as finite creatures (symbolized by the forbidding of the one tree) and attempting to become "like God." The Bible throughout considers pride to be the root and essence of all human sinfulness, and here we have a graphic depiction of the first instance of man's attempt to set himself up as his own "center of value," of his refusal to accept his finiteness and limitations. Thus the "knowledge of good and evil" does not mean sexual awareness or experience; rather it is a symbol for the knowledge of everything, for omniscience in the widest sense, a quality which, unlike sexuality, Hebrew religion *did* attribute to its God. "Good and evil" was used in the morally based Hebrew culture as the two extremes of existence between which everything falls, much as we in our intellectually based culture might say, "He knows from A to Z."

The consequences of this prideful attempt by the first couple to usurp God's place were naturally the sundering of their relationship with God (symbolized by their expulsion from the Garden) and the subsequent disordering of their relationship with the rest of nature and with each other—the woman became subservient and the man dominant, neither a healthy position to be in and neither God's original intention for the male-female relationship. A further and not surprising result of these disrupted and disordered relationships was shame, which is *not* meant to be sexual at all here (though our society is so obsessed with sex that we tend to equate shame with sex automatically); rather, "nakedness" is a powerful symbol for having one's weakness exposed, a sign of shame and dishonor, of helplessness and vulnerability before a more powerful and righteous authority. Shame, in short, is a response to being unmasked, to being, as we would say, "caught in the act." Thus the point which the Biblical author wanted to convey by his use of the image of "nakedness" would be better understood today (and with far less detriment to Christian views of sexuality) if Gen. 3:7a were translated, "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew they had been caught *with their pants down!*" The imagery is the same, but the point is much clearer to us.[7]

7. Perhaps one explanation for the traditional misinterpretation may be found in the Genesis story itself: It is impossible for us to imagine sexuality without some sense of shame precisely because we live in the disordered state after the Fall!

The Song of Songs

Overall, then, there is little question that the view of human sexuality presented in both creation stories of Genesis is positive and affirmative, asserting that God intended man to be sexual and in fact blessed and commanded the use of sexuality. There are numerous other illustrations in the Old Testament of this understanding of sexuality as a good part of God's creation, but space limits us to a consideration of what is surely the pre-eminent example, the most explicitly sexual book in the Bible, namely, the Song of Songs. Although the scholarly problems concerning this book are numerous, enough consensus has emerged that we can draw several conclusions important to our study.

The weight of current scholarship supports the view that the book is most clearly a loose collection of lyrics with no theme other than love between the sexes and no purpose other than praise of this love. God is not mentioned in it and it contains no hidden moral; only by the greatest injustice to the text itself can the Song be allegorized into a depiction of the love of God for the Church or of Christ for the soul. Yet the Song of Songs *is* a sacred book with a deserved (though often overlooked) place in our canon. The reason for this is that to the Hebrew sages who preserved the Song there was no distinction between the "sacred" and the "secular" such as we make today—religion pervaded *every* aspect of life. The Song of Songs is secular, therefore, only by our modern definition, which makes a facile distinction totally alien to the mentality of those who preserved the Song. Although God neither appears nor is mentioned in it (which makes it "secular" for us), for the Hebrew sages he is not absent from the Song, nor are his love and concern for his creatures unmanifested in it. Rather they are clearly shown in the enjoyment and pleasure (given by God to man in the creation) which the lovers find in each other and in their surroundings. Although this view may strike us as strange and somehow "unchristian," it is a direct result of the presentations of creation in Genesis and the later Hebrew development of the notion of God's inseparability from and total involvement in all facets of his *good* creation, including man's sexuality.

The Song of Songs was preserved in the tradition, then, precisely because the sages did not distinguish between writings which explicitly mention God (i.e., the "sacred") and those which do not (i.e., the "secular"), even if the latter deal vividly and forthrightly with sexual love. Since God created everything, everything speaks of his love for his creatures if used as he intended. The relation-

ship of man and woman (including its attendant pleasures) was thus seen as an indication—perhaps one of the clearest indications—of God's love and concern for man. Sexuality expressed as God intended is one of man's greatest joys, and any God who would purposefully give his creatures the source of so much pleasure and enjoyment must surely be good and loving.

The Song of Songs is significant to us precisely because it reminds us of a central fact of Old Testament thought too often overlooked today, namely, the goodness of *all* creation, including man's body and his sexual nature. The Old Testament stresses that sexuality is a *normal* part of human existence, to be accepted as a gift from God and therefore to be celebrated and not denied. Sex itself is not sinful, contrary to later interpretations: Man can sin with sex, as he can with money, power, or any number of other things; but when he does, it is *man* who sins, not some alien, demonic force over which he has no control and therefore for which he has no responsibility.

For the Christian, it is of course necessary to ask how these Old Testament ideas were applied and developed in the New Testament. With the background we have now gained of the Old Testament attitude toward sexuality, we can examine some of the major teachings on this topic of the two dominant New Testament figures.

The New Testament

Jesus

After the abundance of statements in the Old Testament about the nature and purpose of human sexuality, it may be somewhat surprising to discover that the New Testament is relatively silent on the topic. Although there are certainly other reasons, both theological and historical, for this puzzling lack of attention, one of the most obvious is that the New Testament is in organic continuity with the Old, and the New Testament writers (and those written about) were mostly Jews, who had been brought up in the traditions and teachings of the Old Testament. Thus, where the actors and authors of the New Testament were basically satisfied with what the Old Testament taught, they did not bother to elaborate on that particular topic. For them the Hebrew scriptures were their "Bible," and Jesus himself clearly asserted his adherence to the sacred writings of his fathers (cf. Mt. 5:17). Even in his most scathing attack on the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus condemned only their *failure* to live up to the law, and he urged his followers to

"practice and observe whatever they tell you," i.e., the law (Mt. 23:3).

On the other hand, it is quite clear from the Gospel records that Jesus thought that he was inaugurating God's earthly reign (Mk. 1:15), within which he apparently felt free to appeal beyond the human *interpretations* of God's law to God's primordial will as originally intended in creation. Christian theology thus asserts that the work of Christ consisted in carrying through, fulfilling, the will of God; that Jesus so understood his mission is shown by the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount. The Christian, then, must listen carefully whenever Jesus claims to be stating God's true will for man.[8]

The importance of this point becomes immediately apparent when we consider Jesus' teachings about marriage and divorce, the prime sources for discerning his understanding of human sexuality. In Mk. 10:2-9, Jesus asserts that, whatever the current situation, God *created* man male and female so that they could come together in marriage, a physical union in which "they are no longer two but one flesh." This Semitic idiom indicates a merger of complete personalities, not just physical bodies. And this union, since it was God's *original* intention for man, is to be permanent; only because of man's disobedience and disordered relationships was this not the case. Since God's will was that the one-flesh union be indissoluble, for Jesus divorce was, in the deepest sense, literally impossible, and remarriage therefore necessarily constituted adultery. Far from disparaging marriage, then, Jesus implies a very high view of the sanctity and permanence of the sexual union between husband and wife, a view which we could well benefit from recapturing. Incidentally, it is significant to note, especially given the traditional stress of Judaism on procreation, that Jesus appears to emphasize in all his statements about marriage the unitive, relational aspect rather than the procreative.

Another of Jesus' teachings sheds further light on his view of sexuality. In the famous teaching on adultery (Mt. 5:27-28), Jesus points out that in lust, as in adultery, the *created purpose* of sexuality—to allow a man and a woman to unite in the most intimate of relationships—cannot be fulfilled, and the object of lust remains just that, i.e., an object to be used to gain the self's own satisfaction

8. The question of the direct applicability to our problems today of these appeals of Jesus to God's original will in creation is greatly complicated by the fact that we live in the "fallen" times, after Jesus' preaching but *before* his *parousia,* and not in the time of the original creation.

without regard for the other's needs. Jesus thus implicitly denies the use of a woman (or a man) as a mere "sex object" at the same time that he stresses once again God's original will for sexuality. Since in lustful desire as such the *physical* act is not yet committed, the decisive factor is the will or intention. Clearly for Jesus, then, sex involves much more than the physical merging of bodies if the mere wrong desire is as open to condemnation as the wrong act.

It should be noted that in this passage Jesus surely was not condemning the natural, involuntary, transitory sexual impulse, a perfectly proper aspect of human sexuality as created by God. His concern was rather twofold: first, that one not deliberately keep oneself in a prolonged state of desire for another that represents the actual wish or intent to commit the act, deterred only by lack of opportunity; and second, that the object of one's sexual impulses be appropriate—this is shown by the use of the phrase "commit adultery," which implies that the "woman" mentioned is *not* a legitimate partner. There is certainly no condemnation of proper sexual expression. It is hard to believe that these two verses could have been understood so often to indicate an anti-sex bias on Jesus' part and to encourage celibacy, but such are the vagaries of Biblical interpretation.

Biblically speaking, the *family* may be seen as both the proper context for and the result of the sexual relationship, and Jesus' positive regard for the family has been implicit in his teachings on marriage, divorce, and adultery. On the other hand, there are a number of sayings of Jesus which appear to degrade and even threaten the family (e.g., Mt. 10:34-49, 12:46-50; Lk. 9:59-62, 14:25-27). These sayings, however, share a fairly commonly accepted explanation which is consistent with Jesus' positive valuation of the family elsewhere.

There is considerable scholarly agreement that the central theme of Jesus' preaching was the coming of the kingdom of God (cf. e.g., Mk. 1:15 and Mt. 6:33), one of the major features of which was the absolute sumpremacy of its claims upon the believer (cf. Mt. 13:44-45). A careful examination of the passages under consideration here indicates quite clearly that Jesus is *not* advocating the denial of family ties or the natural relationships of life, nor is he saying that in order to follow him one *must* cease to feel natural affection for relatives. He is simply saying that *if* conflicts arise (as he realized were likely), the demands of the kingdom must come first.

In these "hard sayings," then, Jesus is not disparaging the family and thus, by implication, the sexual relationship; rather, he is set-

ting priorities that must be observed by those who follow him: If need be, everything must be given up for the kingdom, even family ties, and one must recognize the kingdom's greater claim that only those who do God's will are the true relatives of Christ. Indeed, far from demeaning the family, Jesus implicitly acknowledges the high regard he held for the mutual affections of the family by using family relationships in these examples of God's absolute claim upon us. He says in effect that when God demands it of us, *even* family ties—*even* those bonds of affection that should be dearest and most meaningful to us and the strongest on earth—have to be set aside. This is the *ultimate* sacrifice for the kingdom, on a par with giving up one's very life.

Although all the evidence cannot be presented here, it is important to make several summary remarks about Jesus' attitude toward women. In a culture in which women held a subordinate, subservient place, Jesus must have stood out for his radical attitude toward them. For Jesus, a woman was a person, a human being, an individual of equal worth with men before God, and she was to be treated accordingly. This view is illustrated by his assertion of the "one-flesh" indissolubility of marriage—precluding treatment of the wife as mere "property"—and even more clearly by his actions with regard to women: He healed them, conversed with them, taught them in spiritual matters, and allowed them to accompany him on his journeys (none of which was approved behavior in his culture).

Despite the low social and cultic status of women in his time, Jesus addressed them as equals before God, i.e., as they were *meant to be* originally by God in creation and are meant to be ultimately in redemption. As the "New Adam" (Rom. 5), Christ serves as God's agent in reconciling all humans—male and female—to himself and thus to each other. He reverses and corrects precisely what happened in the Garden and overcomes the disruption of the relationship between God and the man and woman and the consequent disordering of their own relationship. As we have seen, God's will seems clearly to have been that the two should exist in harmonious equality as one, and Christ, as the agent of redemption, restores the original intent of God in creation, of which he was also the agent (1 Cor. 8:6). Since Christ as Redeemer ushers in the "new creation," therefore, we have the hope that within a Christian framework there will once again be the proper ordering of sexuality as intended by God in the original creation.

Finally, we must consider briefly what has probably been the most taboo topic in the history of the Church, namely, the sexuality

of Jesus himself. In the traditional interpretation of the later Church, Jesus has been represented as an asthenic, non-emotional, "innocent" celibate who was far above anything so base as sexual feelings. With such a picture of the "model" for human life—the "most authentic man"—it is little wonder that the Church has had so much difficulty dealing in a positive, affirmative way with sexuality. Only two points can be made here in response to the traditional view.

First, Jesus was a Jew who, so to speak, lived in the Old Testament, and he would therefore most likely have held the overall worldview—including the attitude toward sexuality—of his tradition. This assumption is amply attested by his affirmation of marriage and of the proper expression of sexuality already presented; thus we can be fairly confident that Jesus indeed shared the Old Testament's healthy, affirmative view of sex and marriage. Second, if the cardinal doctrine of orthodox Christianity, the "fundamental Christian truth" in Brunner's words—the Incarnation—is to be valid, Jesus must have been a sexual being. If Jesus were "truly man" and "like us in all things" (as the Chalcedonian Creed puts it), then clearly he possessed a sexual nature and experienced sexual feelings. Jesus' humanity is demonstrated throughout the Gospels, especially in his expression of the very human characteristics of fatigue, thirst, hunger, anger, sorrow, love, and pity. To deny *sexual* feelings to Jesus solely on a priori grounds based on one's own preconceived notions is to tend dangerously toward the Docetic heresy and a Manichaean dualism, both of which are inconsistent with orthodox Christian doctrine. The Gospels do not tell us how Jesus may or may not have manifested his sexuality, but if he were truly human, by definition he *was* sexual.

In summary, then, Jesus' teachings that pertain to human sexuality reveal a healthy, affirmative attitude, as would be expected in someone of his background. He held marriage in high esteem as the divinely created pattern for the man-woman relationship, and he affirmed the importance of women within God's creation, not just for their child-bearing ability but as unique individuals worthy of respect and consideration in their own right. Though some of Jesus' statements appear to disparage the family and sexual relationship, these are explained by Jesus' demands for the absolute supremacy of the Kingdom of God in one's life. Finally, if one is to affirm the doctrine of the Incarnation, it must be clearly stated that Jesus himself was a sexual being, although from the available evidence we are unaware of the ways in which he may

have expressed his sexuality. Admittedly, our records of Jesus do not provide a great deal of information about sexuality, but what they do offer is overwhelmingly positive, and there is no hint at all of any disparagement of this crucial aspect of man's being.

Paul

The apostle Paul, on the other hand, is often considered to hold a basically negative view of sexuality and to advocate celibacy as the "true Christian way." Clearly we must come to terms with the thought of Paul—whom many consider to be more important in the formulation, and certainly in the spread, of the Christian faith than Jesus himself—if we want to reach a viable understanding of sexuality that is rooted in the historical documents of Christianity. At the outset, we can say of Paul what we said of Jesus: As a strict Jew (Gal. 1:14), Paul could be expected to have inherited the views of his community, and he clearly relied heavily on the Hebrew Scriptures (as did Jesus) for his understanding of God's will for man. It is also important in understanding Paul's statements about sexuality to keep in mind that, unlike most current theological-ethical writing, the only extant records we have of Paul's ideas are occasional letters, written hastily to particular congregations, usually with particular concerns in mind. This is especially evident in Paul's most extended treatment of sexuality, 1 Corinthians 6-7, to which we will turn for an examination of Paul's thought on the subject.

Although often seen as indicating a negative view of sex, 1 Cor. 6 clearly shows that Paul's interest lay with urging the *right use* of a God-given gift. The entire chapter, far from disparaging sexuality, presents Paul's exceptionally high view of it—a view that was based primarily on his belief that sex was created by God to serve a unitive function for man and woman, uniting them in their *total* beings and fulfilling both. Paul was extremely sensitive to offenses against this relational function (such as transitory encounters with prostitutes) and used as his fundamental sanction God's redemption and ultimate resurrection of man's body through the saving work of Christ. Since the body was the "temple of the Holy Spirit," bought at the cost of Christ's death, it was not to be defiled by the *immoral* use of that body--nothing negative is said about the use of one's body as God intended. Sexuality is one of man's most powerful and therefore most important gifts from his Creator; it is the *misuse* of this capacity, not sex itself as created by God, that offended Paul and called down his judgment. Sexuality must be

used rightly, and it is to this question that Paul turned in 1 Cor. 7, in which he addressed a group of Christians who seem to have had ascetic leanings.

1 Cor. 7 is the part of Paul's writings most often cited as indicative of his negative view of sex and marriage, and he does clearly express a preference for the single state; but he does not seem to recommend that the single remain so because of any inherent evil in sexuality or inferiority in marriage. In fact, he expressly *forbids* the married to become single, which one might expect if he viewed celibacy as intrinsically superior. Paul's preference for the single state can be explained most adequately and brought into harmony with his overall positive valuation of sexuality if one notes his very strong eschatological expectation of the imminent return of Christ. In fact, there are two eschatologically motivated thrusts to Paul's recommendation not to marry: first, that Christians should be totally free in the short time remaining to serve the Lord as Paul himself was (vv. 32b, 34b); and second, that unmarried persons would be spared anxieties about spouses in the end-time (vv. 28b, 33, 34c). But even though "the form of this world is passing away," Paul insisted that both men and women had the right to marry if they so chose (v. 28a).

A further refutation of the claim that Paul had an anti-sex bias is found in 1 Cor. 7:3-4. Here, instead of commending ascetic practices in marriage (as one who grudingly allowed sex only for its necessary procreative function would be expected to do), Paul explicitly forbade them, except for brief periods when *both* partners agreed to abstain for devotional purposes. He thus extended the "one-flesh" concept of marriage to the absolute equality and mutuality of the partners in conjugal relations. By demanding the surrender of authority over one's body to one's spouse, Paul recognized the right of each partner to personal satisfaction and fulfillment in the marital relationship. This principle is quite surprising given general first-century attitudes, and it is certainly alien to the popular picture of Paul.

There is more to marital coitus than just physical gratification, however, as illustrated by the extraordinary view of v. 14: Since for Paul marriage necessarily includes coitus (cf. vv. 3-5), he seems to be saying here that the union of two in one flesh—the highest expression of human sexuality when it occurs within the deep and total relationship that is marriage—is of such a nature that a believer can bring about the religious sanctification of a nonbelieving spouse. In a sense, then, Paul considers coitus (and thus human

sexuality in general) to be "sacramental," to be a channel through which the material is used to bring about spiritual results—in this case, the sanctification of the marriage partner.

Although Paul's attitude toward women has been very influential in Christian history, here we can only assert that his view was not altogether negative but quite paradoxical. On the one hand, he felt very great affection and appreciation for the women of his churches, and it seems safe to assert that no confirmed misogynist would have been likely to have so many female friends and trusted coworkers or to have spoken so highly of them (cf. e.g., Rom. 16:1-2, 6). On the other hand, as a product of his cultural heritage, Paul clearly stated the prevailing view that women should be subordinate (cf. especially 1 Cor. 11:3-16). Indeed, Paul often struggled with his Jewish background as it was confronted and challenged by his Christian faith, and his tradition sometimes won, especially on specific points such as dress in church and social roles. But when it really mattered, in his general theological statements, the power and truth of the gospel he preached came through. Thus he was able to write Gal. 3:26-28, whose words we could well benefit from taking to heart:

> For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

In Christ's inauguration of eschatological unity (i.e., his restoration of God's original intention), sexual as well as cultural and economic differences are to be transcended. But it is clear that Paul did not imply any disparagement of sexuality by this statement because it is characteristically a *religious* affirmation. That is, it refers to the equal dignity of all before God and the equal availability of salvation to all. As Robin Scroggs has put it, "*Distinctions* between groups remain. *Values* and *roles* built upon such distinctions are destroyed. Every human being is equal before God in Christ and thus before each other."[9] In short, if in God's eyes, according to Paul, all humans are of equal worth, can we as Christians strive for anything less?

To recapitulate briefly, throughout this examination of primary Biblical sources for an understanding of human sexuality, two major themes have emerged. First, the Old Testament attitude is

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9. "Paul and the Eschatological Woman: Revisited," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XLII (September, 1974), p. 533.

decidedly positive, as illustrated by the depiction of sexuality as a willful intention of God in his good creation and by the celebration of its appropriate expression in the Song of Songs. Jesus reflects this view in his teachings, echoing the Old Testament concern that this God-given gift be used *properly*. Neither the Old Testament nor Jesus suggests at all that sexuality should not be expressed because of some inherent evil attributed to it. As for Paul, his view of sex is also basically positive, even when he recommends not marrying in 1 Cor. 7. He certainly indicates his awareness of the possible abuses and temptations of sex (as did the Old Testament and Jesus), but this is no more than a recognition of its power and importance and not any denigration of sexuality per se. There may indeed have been an ascetic bent in Paul personally which was absent in his tradition, Jewish or Christian. When he wrote as theologian and ethicist, however, Paul transcended his own personal proclivity for the sake of the theological truth he wrote to maintain.

Second, it seems clear from both creation stories in Genesis that God's original intention was that the male-female relationship be one of basic equality and harmony, an intention that was thwarted by man's prideful disobedience. Jesus was consistent with this viewpoint in his attitude toward and treatment of women—not surprisingly, given his frequent appeals to God's primordial will for guidance. Even Paul, whose practical statements present a more ambivalent attitude toward women, in his theological statements strongly reaffirms the equality of all persons before God through the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The Christian Church thus has a very positive and relevant foundation in its Holy Scriptures for its desperately needed task of proclaiming a view of human sexuality which is consistent with God's intention when "he created them male and female."

The Bible in Worship

by Robert T. Young, M.Div. 1960, *Minister to the University*
and Helen Crotwell, *Associate Minister to the University*

Shortly after participating in a service of worship in which there was no direct Biblical reading or specific scriptural reference, the person responsible for the service was asked about the place of the Bible in Christian worship. The answer was unequivocal, "The Bible is essential to worship." Then a pause, and with some shock, "But I didn't use it at all." It would be rare to find any person objecting to the primacy of the Bible in worship. The Bible is a given, is basic, is fundamental to Christian worship.

The Christian faith presupposes a central place for the Bible in services of worship. The assumption is that the foundation for Christian worship is the Word of God found in the Old and New Testaments. But this principle is easier to verbalize than to actualize. The use of the Bible in worship consistently demands serious attention and hard work. It is not unusual to observe that the use of the Bible in a service of worship seems to be an after-thought; or the preacher may use fascinating linguistic gymnastics to connect the Biblical word to the preached word.

Corporate Christian worship is the gathering of the Church as a community, to stand intentionally in the presence of God to be renewed, to become aware of sin—to acknowledge it and claim it—and then receive forgiveness, to hear the Word of God, to respond to this word, and individually and corporately to become agents of God's healing, redeeming, reconciling love in the world. Liturgy is the public work of the people of God.

Corporate worship assumes a community which also gathers at other times, especially to study and to plan. When this happens, the people gathered for worship are more prepared because of their shared common life. When this does not happen, especially when there is no gathering of the community for study, the proclaimer of the Word must bear more responsibility as teacher.

The Duke University Parish Ministry (DUPM) has become aware of a renewed interest in Bible study. There is a serious quest by some students for a method of study which will include the advantages of two types of Bible study which have been characterized as "the academic" and "the individualized." The first method places major emphases on the factual material—author, time, place, historical situation, and variations in text; the second, on the meaning the word has for the individual, directly, with little regard for the historical context of the writing or of its relationship to today's world. We will continue the quest because we believe that persons who participate in Bible study and then worship together bring to worship an additional understanding and preparation for the worship experience. They see liturgy as the work of the gathered people of God, in contrast to seeing liturgy as a time for persons to sit passively, watching.

One of the goals of DUPM is to provide a diversity of opportunities for corporate worship. This diversity is in response to the pluralism of religious views of the Duke University community. Two of the major factors which inform and shape our liturgies are the Christian traditions represented at Duke and current theological/ethical questions. These two factors inform the content and style of the services. In these liturgies several elements of worship are held in tension: the tradition of the Church, the Bible (used explicitly or implicitly), current personal and community realities impinging on those who gather to worship.

Here are examples of how these factors shaped the liturgies. At some times an ancient rite of the Church will be used. This year, for example, the University community was invited by the Catholic Chaplain A. J. O'Brien, S.J., to participate in the Candlemass, which includes a procession of the faithful with lighted candles to commemorate the entry of Jesus the Christ, the Light of the World, into the temple at Jerusalem. The Candlemass was first practiced by the Franks in the fifth century. There are times of the Church year or University year when a specific part of our liturgy will be highlighted, such as the penitential and confessional dimensions of the Ash Wednesday worship. At other times there will be an experimental form of liturgy. For some services people gather for a time of preparation, dividing into sub-groups which take responsibility for various parts of the service. All are given the scriptural Word as the basis from which to work.

Two central experiences in the liturgy, the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist, find their origin in and are developed out of the Biblical word.

In all of the liturgies the Old Testament and New Testament provide resources for the different parts of the service: the words of praise, the confession of sin, the words of forgiveness and the assurance of pardon, the act of dedication, the sending forth into the world, the text for the hymns and anthems, as well as the focus for the proclaimed Word.

The selection of the Biblical passage is often determined by the liturgical year. There are many useful ancient and contemporary lectionaries, such as the one found in the Book of Worship of the United Methodist Church, or the one used by the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Episcopal Churches, which is in a three-year cycle.

In a university community the academic year is often celebrated in a service of worship, such as at the opening and closing of the year and at graduation. When preaching on a special University occasion, the preacher is dependent on his/her knowledge of scripture and the relationship of the Word to the event of the day. This is often very difficult to do with integrity to the Word and to the occasion.

The more traditional approach to Biblical exposition—the preached Word or the sermon—is still most frequently used as the method of proclamation. However, even in the formal setting of the eleven o'clock Sunday Worship in Duke Chapel, new ways to use the Bible have been introduced. On Palm Sunday a group of dancers under the direction of Mrs. Dot Borden interpreted Psalms 131 and 133 from Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms.*

In preparation for writing the sermon some preachers invite members of the congregation to join in discussing the scripture text and the projected sermon material. Other ways of using the Biblical Word that are being tried in Duke Chapel include:

1. The reading of a contemporary or ancient writing often illustrates, informs, or focuses the scriptural word. An example is the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden and Kafka's *A Report to the Academy.* Connecting the two is a setting forth of the Garden of Eden story so that the connection with the Kafka story can be made upon a first hearing by the congregation.

2. The reading of the scriptural word may be followed by a poetic restatement of the Word interpreted through movement. Heather Elkins, a Divinity student, wrote such a work as her inter-

pretation of the Martha and Mary story. Two women, Nancy Rosebaugh of the Divinity School and Ann Dunn, a graduate student, "bodied forth" the word through dance. This particular communication had a very powerful impact on the worshipping community.

3. After the reading of a Biblical passage, the text is placed in context and given a brief but sharp focus by the leader of worship. The worshipping community is then invited to make verbal responses to the lessons. The interpretive statement helps direct the discussions and keeps the comments pertinent and helpful. Such a discussion is strengthened when the community has studied and reflected on the passage before the time of worship.

4. Using the same basic approach as above, the community's response can be meditation directed by a series of provocative statements and questions. These ways of using scripture encourage the congregation to become involved actively in worship. The liturgy then becomes the work of the people.

Some people will intentionally come to a special or experimental service of worship, such as some of the above. But most people do not want to be surprised or shocked by the unexpected. Such an experience may limit their ability to worship. Thus we try to indicate what the characteristic features of our services will be: "Informal Worship," "Non-Sexist Liturgy," "Celebration of the Eucharist," "Worship in Duke Gardens." People are informed ahead as they rightly should be.

The role and status of women within the Church and society is of critical importance for the Church today. How we deal with this issue affects the Church as a worshipping community very directly in two areas: first, with regard to the ordained ministry; second, with regard to the use of masculine language and images in the liturgy.

Some men and women who understand and appreciate the primary importance of the ordained ministry's being open to women see the question of language as a peripheral and diversionary concern. There are other men and women who believe the use of language to be very important, and they are committed to work seriously and conscientiously to develop liturgies which are non-sexist in language use. We have felt that it is most important that women not feel excluded from worship because of sexist language. The negative effects of sexist language may be both immediate (at the moment of worship) and long-term (developing or sustaining

sexist images in children or others). We have found that there is already a deep reservoir of theological words (Biblical and traditional) which express the faith in non-sexist terms. To use such terms is a continuing affirmation of the centrality of the Bible and of tradition and re-affirms the inclusive nature of the Church. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." We try to use non-sexist language and deal with scripture and with contemporary needs with both compassion and integrity.

Some parts of the service can be made non-sexist by careful thought, genuine concern, and intentional word selection. Our experience has been that the prayers and the sermon can be made non-sexist in language without negative or harmful effects, but, in fact, can have very positive, affirming, and inclusive effects. Some of the changes in using non-sexist language have been difficult to develop or painful to experience, and have brought some sharp and hostile reactions. There is a continuing struggle to be open to God's Spirit as this Spirit directs us in these changes, and to be continuingly sensitive to those who do not care to change or for whom worship is disrupted by such change. We feel this struggle is consistent with the word of scripture, appropriate to the needs and hurts of many men and women in our community, and well worth enduring in order to let the Word continue to come alive in our midst. Persons leading worship in Duke Chapel are given instructions in leading worship which include the following request:

> "In your leading of the service, we ask you not to use terms which refer to God only in masculine terms. We have found, as you would know already, that there are way to address God in personal terms which do not use the masculine pronouns—(O Holy God, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, O Loving God, You). However, some people prefer using both male and female pronouns—Parent, Mother/Father, He/She. So we ask you to use whatever is most comfortable for you and yet is non-sexist and inclusive in meaning."

Many churches and communities are developing books of worship and hymnals which will be inclusive in language.* This development is being made in ways in which inclusive language facilitates rather than inhibits the worship of the congregation. But since any change in liturgy may cause some discomfort for the worshipping community, we who lead in worship will need to plan the services and its distinct elements on the basis of our understanding of the demands of the gospel.

The Bible is central to Christian worship. We take seriously this basic presupposition. Our experiences in the use of the Bible in worship in the Chapel have been exciting, helpful, illuminating, disturbing, demanding, changing, but consistently rewarding and enlightening. God's Word is continually revealing itself to us in new and creative ways. We are grateful for the interest and commitment of our worshipping communities here in the Chapel and for the new and deepening experiences we have shared. Our experiences with the Word the past two and one-half years in the Chapel give us continuing hope and promise for more richness and understanding in the future. The Bible *is* central. In this affirmation we rejoice!

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*A sub-committee of the Baltimore Task Force on the status of women in the Church (Roman Catholic) has published a *Liturgy for All People*. The following instructions are given concerning the use of scripture:

1) If the Scripture of the day calls for a passage with sexist attitudes, there are two viable alternatives:

   a. Substitute another passage.

   b. Explain the passage carefully, e.g., Paul's cultural conditioning, the assumptions of that era.

   Do not use a sexist passage without explanation.

2) Readings—Read the Scriptures in sexually balanced language. Just as we have adapted scriptural language to change archaic usages to modern phrases, so it is proper to insert sexually balanced language.

3) Prayers—Use sexually balanced language. e.g. Not "pray brothers" but "pray brothers and sisters."

4) Be sensitive to major forms of sexist language in the church. Sexism toward God—even though written in masculine dominated cultures, the Scriptures show a Yahweh of great range and vitality. Both feminine and masculine characteristics were attributed. It is appropriate to use both masculine and feminine terms to refer to and speak about God. Jesus was obviously a man. The Spirit is a person. Both masculine and feminine attributes are appropriate. The Spirit may also be referred to as an indefinite person.

Book Reviews

Anatomy of the New Testament: A Guide to Its Structure and Meaning. Robert A. Spivey and D. Moody Smith, Jr. Second edition. Macmillan, 1974. 539 pp. $10.95.

One of the gifts bequeathed to us by the general education movement was the modern American college textbook: a comprehensive introduction to a large field which distinguishes the major points, ignores the rest, and provides instant interpretation, thus saving the student the need to retain what he has learned and discover its significance over a short career of learning if not a longer lifetime of reading. The general education movement has long since vanished, but the textbook, while frequently declared dead or at least senile, seems to survive quite well. In many subjects it appears all but indispensable, and has become a staple item. This now appears to be the case for the field of New Testament interpretation. A series of excellent books has come from publishers in recent years, indicating that the books are a routine part of the publishers' repertoire, the courses for which they are intended a routine part of college, university and seminary curricula.

It is curious that so many superior examples of the genre should be associated with professors of New Testament at Duke University. Franklin W. Young is joint author (originally with Howard Kee, now also with Karlfried Froelich) of *Understanding the New Testament* (3rd ed., 1973); James Price has written *Interpreting the New Testament* (2nd ed., 1971); and W. D. Davies published *Invitation to the New Testament* in 1966. Perhaps it was inevitable that Moody Smith should lay full claim to his New Testament position at Duke University by writing, with his fellow Duke and Yale alumnus Robert Spivey (The Florida State University), *Anatomy of the New Testament*. Inevitable or not, was such a book justifiable? The answer is obviously yes. I say obviously not only because *Anatomy* (1969) is already into the third printing of its second edition (1974), but also because Spivey and Smith have written a different kind of book, one which has a distinctive tone and rationale which will appeal to many teachers and students. It is deservedly successful.

Success in this realm is a subtler matter than might at first seem the case. After one has solved the problem of scope ("How much of the New Testament shall we read?") and found the appropriate literary style (neither too breezy nor too pedantic), picked the illustrations (those in this volume are particularly welcome because so many are contemporary and Eastern) and found the proper level of exposition (one cannot suppose the reader knows anything—given the demise of general education—save how to be indignant if addressed as somebody who knows nothing), success might seem to be within grasp. But it will elude all but those who discern and solve the final riddle: How can you keep a book which has mastered all these other tests from being inherently more coherent, readable, and attractive than the text it seeks to introduce? The great liability of even (especially?) good textbooks for New Testament interpretation is the likelihood that they will be abused by students and teachers alike who will let what started out as an aid to understanding become the text to be understood. Since the primary text itself is craggy, full of little puzzles and sometimes a bit obscure, the temptation is obvious. Spivey and Smith, however, are going to keep their readers honest.

They begin with the usual background information ("The World of the New Testament," pp. 5-74) on cultural and religious affairs in Judaism and the larger Greco-Roman world. The first major division of the book (pp. 77-248) comprises a study of the synoptic gospels and their picture of Jesus. One chapter is devoted to each gospel, beginning with Mark, which itself is introduced by a compact rehearsal of the synoptic problem and the basic perspectives of source, form and redaction criticism.

For each gospel the authors provide a short outline or sketch of the anatomy of the work, followed by headnotes dealing with specific literary and historical problems. The initial outline makes clear which divisions of the gospel are to be dealt with in detail in the subsequent exposition, and which sections will be dealt with more summarily. Thus, for example, the book provides a rather thorough exposition of Mt. 1:1-2:23; 3:13-17; 5:17-20; 16:13-23; 18:15-22; 21:28-46 and 25: 31-46. In doing so, it sets these passages in their wider context, but also elicits from them what the authors regard as the most fundamental or evident components of Matthew's overall interest, which they describe as "A Radical Obedience." At the conclusion of the chapter the authors use their initial outline of literary structure to check the results of their more detailed exposition or exegesis. Do the parts contribute to what was initially described as the whole, and does the whole help guard against the danger of one-sided emphasis of some parts?

The results, I find, are unusually satisfying. The student is not given a series of vague generalizations or lists of detached observations, but quite specific texts which have been treated at some length and yet set in wider contexts which shape specific interpretations. Most important, the textbook becomes an organic extension of the text rather than a summarized substitute for it. To read the textbook itself is to deal seriously with the text, yet doing so requires no previous introduction to the problems of New Testament interpretation. Furthermore, reading the textbook invites reading the New Testament.

Concluding this redactionally-oriented treatment of the synoptic gospels is a chapter designed to move beyond the limits imposed by such a literary approach and provide "A Portrait" of "Jesus the Messiah" (ch. 5, pp. 182-248). Here Spivey and Smith seek to correlate a basic understanding of three areas in the synoptic gospels—Jesus' miracles, his teachings, and his death—into a single, reasonably unified and comprehensive portrait. Problems inherent in such an effort are only magnified when the intended audience is as broad, faceless, and heterogenous as a textbook's audience must be. What is even more important than the results, because basic to the results, is the set of criteria and principles by which judgments will be made in assessing the various texts. In *Anatomy* these criteria and principles are reasonably clear. Two seem primary: the Church's picture of Jesus, which supplies our gospels, is continuous with the historical figure, but not identical with him in his setting; and the various elements of his portrait will satisfy normal demands for coherence.

In Part II ("The Early Church and Paul," pp. 249-375) we are given a chapter on the Acts of the Apostles ("Witnessing to the World," pp. 253-287), and two chapters on Paul. The first of these ("Paul: Apostle and Man of Faith," pp. 288-335) introduces some basic details of Paul's career through introductory notes, and then turns to exposition of a series of central texts from 1 and II Corinthians, Galatians, I Thessalonians, Philippians, and Colossians. The texts chosen for discussion are arranged according to topic and deal with the apostle personally, with the concept of freedom in his gospel, and with the polemical issues which Paul and his message both encountered and engendered. The concluding chapter of this section provides an analysis of Romans ("Paul's Exposition of the Gospel," pp. 336-375) which is concentrated on chs. 1-12, as might be

expected, and goes about as far as one can in making Paul's views both accesible and internally coherent.

In Part III ("The Church and the World") the principle of selection has been those texts which best illustrate the dilemmas of a young movement in, but not of, the world. Chapter 9 (pp. 380-423) concentrates on the notion of the church itself in its post-Pauline development as evidenced in Ephesians, I Timothy, James, I Peter and Hebrews. The concluding chapter of this section ("Overcoming the World," pp. 425-87) deals with John's gospel (1:18; 9:1-41 and 17:1-26) as well as I John and Revelation. The authors do an excellent job in showing the inner coherence which still makes the blanket term "Johannine literature" seem to mean something, even while they set out clearly the difficulties facing any traditional view of common authorship.

Concluding the entire book is a brief resumé (pp. 491-7) which rehearses the actual structure by which the analysis of the New Testament was undertaken, itself a matter of taking structures, literary and historical, quite seriously. The concluding coda of each chapter attempts to provide a comprehensive view of the material which has been analyzed. The coda of the entire book makes the same sort of effort for the entire New Testament, and reinforces the consistent effort made by the authors to concentrate on specific NT texts and then help the student place such specifics into a gradually expanding, coherent frame of reference.

Supplementary aids, such as endpaper maps, have come to be virtually mandatory in such texts and are included in this one. The glossary at the end (pp. 498-506) is very well done and the bibliographies have had more than routine care given to them. In addition to bibliographical information at the end of each chapter, in an intelligently selective and annotated fashion, the entire book concludes with bibliographic annotations under eight categories ranging from "NT Texts" to a bibliography on bibliography, with helpful stops at the history of primitive Christianity, history of criticism, New Testament theology, etc., along the route. The subject index is acceptable, although in a book of this sort the greater the detail the better, always remembering that one's standards for indexing go in inverse proportion to one's responsibilities for compiling one. The Biblical index is particularly useful. From the point of view of craftsmanship the second edition seems to me somewhat more spartan and less pleasing than the first. Some errors remain to be expunged: "climatic," p. 84; "amoung," p. 215; "changes," p. 295; "It it," p. 451. "Adaption" on pp. ix, x is a word unknown to me, and while it seems a clever hybrid, we can probably continue to survive without it. On p. 454 the word "paragraphing" is barbarous, but not incorrect. Seasoned form-critics will want to separate Smith (Sm) from Spivey (Sp) in style and content. It can be done, but the overall level of uniformity and readability is quite high, some few transitional paragraphs being the most notable exceptions.

In summary, it is evident that this book has already made its place among other books performing a similar task. This is because it has its own distinctive excellence which is a genuine departure from earlier patterns of NT introduction for colleges and seminaries. The scheme is not a gimmick, but a productive and mildly coercive approach to textual interpretation which, like John the Baptist, is quite clear about what is primary and what is secondary. *Anatomy of the New Testament* introduces the New Testament itself clearly and in such a way that it drives the student right into that book's central themes, problems and realities.

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Kerygma and Comedy in the New Testament: A Structuralist Approach to Hermenuetic. Dan O. Via, Jr. Fortress. 1975. 179 pp. $8.95.

When a friend of mine in graduate school at Yale was asked by Professor Kenneth Scott Latourette about the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation, he replied that he was writing on humor in the Old Testament, to which the venerable Latourette snorted and commented: "Well, you certainly won't find much humor in the New Testament." Piqued by this response, my friend went on to expand his dissertation to include the New Testament.

Interesting as this anecdote may be, it has really nothing to do with Dan Via's most recent book, which is about the relationship of the New Testament to comedy as a type of drama and to what he calls comic genre. In no sense does it deal with humor, and it is certainly not very funny. Via belongs among the vanguard of those who are attempting to apply the insights and methods of the structuralist movement to the interpretation of the New Testament. His present work is nevertheless also an extension of the same hermeneutical interests which motivated his earlier book on the interpretation of the parables (*The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension,* Fortress, 1967) and of his efforts to apply to the New Testament the kind of literary criticism practiced outside the guild of Biblical scholarship.

Via's book is divided into four chapters: "A Structuralist-Literary Approach to New Testament Hermeneutic," "Paul and the Comic Structure," "Approaching the Gospel of Mark," and "A Structural Analysis of the Markan Narrative." It deals on the one hand with the general question of the nature of structuralism and its relation to New Testament interpretation and on the other with the structural analysis of specific Pauline texts and the Gospel of Mark.

Structuralism, as Via points out, does not have to do with the formal structure of various types of texts. Rather "structure" refers to "the hidden or underlying configuration that can offer some explanation for the more or less visible or obvious pattern in the text" (p. 7). The structure of a text or document is not contained by it. The text belongs to the structure rather than the other way around. The structure is inferred or constructed from texts, but the structuralist is committed to the proposition that the structure is in some significant sense prior to any specific manifestation of it. Via, in working from several NT texts, hopes "to construct a structure which will be a system of transformations or variations which *contain* [italics mine] these and other possible texts, which will disclose the kinds of relationships between the texts, which will not simply be a common denominator, which will be something other than the texts themselves onto which they can be projected but a something of which they will seem like realizations, and which therefore will provide a basis for assessing the meaning of the texts" (pp. 9-10).

Via discerns (and constructs) a comic structure or genre into which certain typical NT texts may be placed and within which they may be better understood. Hence the book's title. This genre is not only common to certain Pauline texts (e.g. I Cor. 1:18-2:5; see p. 42, fig. #2), but also, broadly speaking, to the Gospel of Mark and a number of Markan texts. Crucial to Via's structural analysis is the kerygma of Christ's death and resurrection; it is fundamental both to Paul's theologizing and to Mark's narrative, which culminates in the passion. The kerygma finds its counterpart in the death and resurrection theme of ancient Greek religion and derivative Greek drama. All belong to or participate in a common comic structure or genre. This commonality, i.e. common structure, far from detracting from the uniqueness of the Christian message allows that message to come to expression and to be heard. Via can call the comic genre "a deep structure of the mind" and "a basic

sense of human life."

At this point we may observe how Via's use of structuralist method differs from the disciplines of *Religionsgeschichte* (comparative history of religions) and form criticism. Unlike the former it presupposes or hypothesizes no necessary historical connections or relationships between or among the phenomena or documents in question (i.e., Paul's letters, Mark, Greek religion and drama). Such a relationship is perhaps undemonstrable and in any event not required for the purposes of structuralist analysis. The similarity is explicable as the expression of a common genre. But this genre is not analogous to the various forms or genres identified by form criticism (e.g. controversy stories, miracle stories, birth narrative, pronouncement stories, etc.). In fact, the same structuralist genre may be found in texts which form criticism differentiates precisely on the basis of, among other things, formal structure. Thus such formally different texts as a miracle story, a controversy story, and the entire Gospel of Mark participate in the comic genre.

Structuralism is no more congenial with redaction criticism than with form criticism or *Religionsgeschichte,* for redaction criticism as a method also views texts as products of historical processes rather than as things in themselves.

Via contends that redaction criticism characteristically fragments the text into tradition or source and redaction in a manner utterly foreign and unnatural to the reader. People do not read by taking texts apart in that way. Moreover, it frequently has recourse to hypotheses about the setting and causes or motivations behind the text that are in the nature of the case highly problematic.

In conclusion, a few critical observations. The use of structuralist method implies theologically buying into a view of reality and the human mind which may be tantamount to a special form of natural theology. This is not necessarily bad, but the Biblical exegete should at least be aware of this, as Via in fact is. Thoroughgoing structuralist method in the interpretation of Biblical texts could lead to the denigration of their historical and denotative dimensions. Via is aware of this and does not himself disparage those dimensions or the methods pertinent to them. It would be his contention that structuralist interpretation brings out other aspects of texts, which also illuminate the historical dimension. The process of structuralist interpretation involves the formation of syntagms and paradigms (graphic models) and the construction of grids into which allegedly common elements of texts are made to fit. As Via acknowledges, some element of uncontrollable subjectivity is involved in this procedure. There is always a danger that such "grids" may become procrustean beds into which texts are forced.

Via's book is doubtless intended to initiate and facilitate discussion of structuralist interpretation of the New Testament. It should do just that. While it may perhaps produce as many questions and objections as fruitful exegetical insights, it is nevertheless a welcome and timely contribution to the hermeneutical discussion.

D. Moody Smith

The Literature of the Bible. Leland Ryken. Zondervan. 1974. 368 pp. $7.95.

There is "blowing in the wind" (to coin a phrase!), a yearning among some persons in the area of Biblical studies for some new methodology which will release the study of the Bible from the burden of sterile scholarship; a new method that will take into account and help to unlease the power of the Biblical message. One of the directions this search is taking is in the area of a literary approach to the Biblical records. By literary is not meant the historical-critical methodology which so many of our students, both past and present, have learned, but literary in the sense that the Biblical books are approached

as literature and examined as one would examine any literary work as to type of literature (comic and tragic), plot motifs, and other considerations such as these which aid in understanding the *meaning* and *message* of the writing.

Most of the impetus for this movement, so far at least, has come from outside the field of Biblical studies, mainly from persons in the area of English literature. The present author, Leland Ryken, is an English professor. Some other works have appeared (and may be of interest to our readers) such as Helen Gardiner, *The Business of Criticism* (Oxford), and a newly edited book from Abingdon Press, *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* (ed. by R. R. Gros Louis, with J. S. Ackerman and T. S. Warshaw, 1974). To this latter volume Professor Ryken has also contributed, and the reading of that article is strongly recommended.

According to Ryken, literature is experiential but "not only presents experience but also interprets it" (p. 13). Literature is ". . . an interpretative presentation of experience in an artistic form" (p. 13). The point is that too often Biblical scholars have failed to understand that the Bible is a collection of books each of which expresses the emotional and experiential dimension of the writer or editor. And each of these works falls into one of the categories of literature.

Using as a basis the concept of the "archetype," Ryken examines various Biblical stories. The archetype is ". . . a symbol, character type, or plot motif that has recurred throughout literature. . . . Archetypal criticism is one of the most fruitful approaches to biblical literature . . ." (p. 22). "The archetypal content of the Bible gives it not only unity but universality as well. Archetypes express what is most common and elemental in human experience" (p. 25). These archetypes can be divided into two groups, the ideal (comic) and the unideal (tragic).

Having set down his basic ideas as to method, the author then applies these principles to various Biblical works. He examines the story of origins, some heroic narrative, epic, tragedy, poetry, wisdom, satire, gospel, parable, and epistle to cite the major topics. In each case literary methodology and categories are utilized to illustrate the message of the texts under consideration. And it must be said that the work is very readable and enjoyable.

The major negative criticism is, alas, that Professor Ryken is not (and does not claim to be) a Biblical scholar. There are many instances where elementary acquaintance with Biblical scholarship would have enhanced the author's point or saved him from some very glaring errors. For example, in his discussion of Job, Ryken makes much of the "Redeemer" or *Go'el* passage. Too much in fact, for he argues that Job believes in an afterlife and attains a "blessed hope" (pp. 114-115). The opposite is true which is why Job despairs!

Ryken further argues that Jesus had great "oratorical ability" (p. 293). With this comment we probably would not quarrel, but he bases his conviction on the illustration of the Sermon on the Mount which is an arrangement made by the author of the Gospel! Ryken gives no indication that he is aware that these chapters are a composite work! But much of what he says about the Sermon, however, is quite good!

The above illustrations could be multiplied, but these should suffice to make the point. What Professor Ryken is attempting to do is, in the opinion of this reviewer, very sound and much needed, but what is needed more is someone to do this task who is knowledgeable in Biblical content and criticism. As usual the extremes of either approach do not fill the bill. Not much can be said for Biblical criticism which has little feeling for the message or this type of literary approach with little knowledge of Biblical background.

—James M. Efird

Hosea. Hermeneia Commentary Series. Hans Walter Wolff. Fortress Press. 1974. 259 pp. $19.95.

Hermeneia is a new commentary series currently being prepared by scholars of international reputation. (Prof. Roland Murphy of Duke Divinity School is a member of the editorial board.) A few volumes will be translations of works already in print (e.g., this, the first Old Testament volume of the series to appear, is a translation of *Dodekapropheton 1,* BKAT XIV/1 [1965]).

The volume consists of an Introduction (11 pp. dealing with such matters as background, language, theology, and transmission of the text); discussion of the biblical text; a topically arranged general bibliography; and indexes to subject matter and passages discussed.

The biblical text is divided into units ("rhetorical" and "kerygmatic") and discussed under the following headings: bibliography; (a new) translation; text-critical notes upon which the translation is based; form; setting; verse-by-verse interpretation; and aim.

The text-critical notes will be most appreciated by those who have had an introduction to the biblical languages, but they need not deter those who will use only an English text. Indeed, they will help such readers to understand why translations differ so widely in this book (which, for difficulty, is rivaled only by Job).

In general, Wolff is moderate in his textual treatment, tending to read with the Masoretic text in most cases as against the ancient versions. Occasionally, however, a blunder in sound text-critical judgment is encountered (e.g., at 2:6 [Hebrew 2:8]; 4:19; 10:5). Especially helpful are Wolff's conjectural explanations for apparent variants in the Septuagint, e.g., at 2:15 [Heb. 2:17], where the original "vineyards" has been generalized into "possessions" for non-agricultural city-dwelling readers during the Jewish diaspora.

Wolff's discussion of "form" is insightful; indeed, such discussion is now a standard component of commentary presentation. It is this scholarly tool, as much as any other, which is rendering obsolete the commentaries of previous generations.

Plausible assignment of date to individual oracles and reconstruction of the situation to which each might have been addressed enables Wolff to give an unusually clear portrait of the development of Hosea's thought. For example, in chapter 4-11 (a once independent complex of traditions, later joined with two others, 1-3 and 12-14), initial ultimatums to repent, accompanied by announcements of doom, were followed by the realization that judgment cannot affect obedience. Even the catastrophic Assyrian invasion of 733 B.C. did not accomplish this. God's love (Hosea is the first to use this word to describe God's attitude toward Israel) transcends his wrath, and this is the ground for Israel's hope (as opposed to a hypothetical ability to change her priorities, i.e., to "repent"). Hence the prophet anticipates a new beginning, accompanied by the return of those who now dwell in foreign lands (see esp. pp. 201-204).

Unfortunately, Wolff's discussion of another complex of traditions, chapters 12-14, obscures his understanding of the development of Hosea's thought. In chapters 12-13 one finds announcement of God's judgment in the form of dismantlement of cultic and political institutions; God refuses to be compassionate. Then, in chapter 14, we find an announcement of salvation. The question which Wolff fails to clarify sufficiently is this: What is the relationship between the complexes 4-11 and 12-14? Do they reflect the same development in Hosea's thought, or do they reflect sequential stages? If the former is the case, then the anticipated dismantlement (which proved to be disfunctional) would have been fulfilled by the events of 733 B.C. Presumably, Hosea's new optimism after that date would not have included the Destruction of the re-

mainder of the country in 721. Or is it that the new proclamation of God's love allowed for hope even after 721? If, on the other hand, the complex 12-14 represent a later stage in Hosea's thought, then his optimism about a new beginning was shattered by the transgressions of his people, leading to a renewed proclamation of judgment beyond which salvation is possible.

Wolff's reconstruction of Hosea's hope for the future may be compared and contrasted with that of James Ward (*Hosea*. Harper and Row, 1966). Whereas Wolff states that "it also became clear [to Hosea] that Yahweh's judgment could not bring Israel to obedience" (p. xxix), Ward's Hosea believes that destruction of the present institutions is a *necessary* precondition for repentance and hope: "Nowhere does he offer redemption apart from national disaster" (p. 30; see also pp. 17ff.); such an experience "may lead to the re-creation of a covenantal community if she [Israel] proves . . . that she can accept Yahweh faithfully" (p. 59). Whereas Wolff states that, for Hosea, "Yahweh's judgment and mercy stand in conflict" (p. 204), for Ward's Hosea the two attributes of God cannot be separated so simplistically: God's judgment may be a manifestation of his graciousness; the impending destruction is another instance of God's unrelenting will to create a people for himself; while love stands opposed to wrathful retribution, it need not lead to a suspension of judgment (pp. 204ff.). However, Wolff and Ward agree that Hosea understands God's love (regardless of the manifestation it may take) to be the ground for Israel's hope.

Wolff's sections entitled "Aim" usually conclude with some mention of the relationship between Hosea's thought and that of various New Testament writers. This is an area so fraught with difficulty that many reputable commentaries avoid it (and one often wishes that many of the others had done so). A recent and responsible effort in this direction is Brevard Child's *The Book of Exodus* (Westminster, 1974). Wolff's remarks are insightful, but the sensitive reader may note a repeated evaluative tone: the NT discussion is "more comprehensive" (p. 29); Hosea's words are "limited and preparatory" (p. 204), and they direct us to "the Lord of all history, whom we recognize in Christ" (p. 218); only in the NT does God's offer of salvation come with "finality" (p. 177); the judgment which Hosea announced was "only the beginning of that judgment which 'the daughter of Jerusalem' brought upon herself in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth" (p. 169). It is fair to point out, however, that Wolff is only echoing assertions which the NT itself makes.

In conclusion: the volume reflects excellent scholarship and is highly to be recommended (but more so for the scholar than for the pastor, especially if the latter has not had an introduction to Hebrew). For the pastor, the standard work on Hosea is still that of Ward (which, unfortunately, is out of print).

—Lloyd Bailey

Targum and Testament: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament. Martin McNamara. Eerdmann's 1972. 227 pp. $3.45 paperback.

The author of this book, who has earlier produced a more technical work, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch,* belongs to a growing circle of scholars attempting to illuminate the New Testament through an investigation of the targums.

The targums are those Aramaic paraphrases and translations of the Hebrew Bible made in antiquity for the benefit of Aramaic-speaking Jews who could not adequately understand Hebrew. Hebrew had, of course, ceased to be the daily language of most Jews in or shortly after the exilic period. Jesus, in all probability spoke Aramaic as his native tongue.

The earliest translations of the

Bible were oral, not written, and for some time the writing of the Aramaic translation was frowned upon. Exactly when the oral tragums first became written documents (and how ancient are the translations or traditions of translation which survive in extant targums) is a good question and one that McNamara discusses in this book. He believes that the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch, particularly as represented by the recently discovered Codex Neofiti I in the Vatican Library, is very ancient. There is no question of the late, i.e., medieval, date of most extant manuscripts. The real question has to do with the antiquity of the translations they embody. McNamara contends that striking doctrinal and verbal similarities with the New Testament, among other considerations, suggest an early date for the Palestinian Targum. Whether or not that is so will doubtless be a matter of continuing debate, although the importance of this area of investigation, for its own sake and for the importance it may have for New Testament study, is undeniable.

Targum and Testament also contains a valuable discussion of the formation of the Targumic tradition in the setting of synagogue worship and a useful appendix giving a brief introduction to the various targums.

—D. Moody Smith

The Dawn of Apocalyptic. Paul D. Hanson. Fortress. 1975. 426 pp. $14.95.

This lucid and scholarly volume was written originally as a doctoral dissertation at Harvard University, where the author is presently teaching. It puts forth a new understanding of Jewish apocalyptic, arguing against the common view that sees it as discontinuous with Israelite prophecy and as the fruit of Persian dualism and Hellenism.

There are two key definitions that show the path traveled by this study. Hanson defines *prophetic* eschatology as "a religious perspective which focuses on the prophetic announcement to the nation of the divine plans for Israel and the world which the prophet had witnessed unfolding in the divine council and which he translates into the terms of plain history, real politics, and human instrumentality" (p. 11). It is the prophet Isaiah who best exemplifies prophetic eschatology, because he interprets for king and people how his vision of the plans of the divine council actually works in history.

Apocalyptic eschatology is born in Is. 56-66 and develops in Zech. 9-10, Is. 24-27 ("early apocalyptic"), and is full-blown in Zech. 11-14. It is defined as "a religious perspective which focuses on the disclosure (usually esoteric in nature) to the elect of the cosmic vision of Yahweh's sovereignty —especially as it relates to his acting to deliver his faithful—which disclosure the visionaries have largely ceased to translate into the terms of plain history, real politics, and human instrumentality due to a pessimistic view of reality growing out of the bleak post-exilic conditions . . ." (p. 11).

What accounts for the development of prophetic into apocalyptic eschatology? It is the breakdown of the tension between vision and history, between the vision of the divine plan, and its actualization in history. This is manifest in Is. 56-66, and in post-exilic prophecy. The visionary element of early apocalyptic gradually becomes predominant. Why? Because of the disappointments of the post-exilic community. No one was able to maintain "the belief that the fulfillment of the vision of Yahweh's restoration of his people could occur within the context of this world" (p. 26). History ceases to be the area where the vision of the divine plan is worked out. Vision alone remains, a return to myth. Kings and nations are no longer instruments of divine purpose; they are "mere pawns in a cosmic chess game," as the Divine Warrior comes upon the scene and takes over.

The above concise summary needs to be supplemented by Hanson's statement of his "contextual-typological" methodology, which "seeks to interpret the apocalyptic compositions within the context of community struggle discernible behind the material studied, and it applies typological tools in analyzing the material. The typologies traced are those of poetic structure and meter, of prophetic oracle types (genres), and of the prophetic eschatology-apocalyptic eschatology continuum" (p. 29). Hanson applies this methodology in great detail to texts of Is. 40ff., Ezek. 40-48, Hag. and Zech. He succeeds in reconstructing the conflict between a visionary group (faithful to the tradition of Second Isaiah, and identified with Levites) and the hierocratic or Zadokite party which prevailed in the Restoration. The latter was not averse to using vision for their own purpose of legitimation (e.g., Zech. 1-8), but their orientation is on the practical, political level. The defeated group has recourse to the vision of the Divine Warrior who fights for them (e.g., Zech. 11-14)—in a fully developed apocalyptic eschatology.

This very competent and important study will become fundamental in all future discussion of biblical apocalyptic.

—Roland E. Murphy

A Theology of the New Testament. George Eldon Ladd. Eerdmann's. 1974. 661 pp. $12.50.

This volume should be of interest to the readers of the *Review* for several reasons. First, it is one of the very few New Testament theologies which has been attempted by American scholarship. Secondly the author is a leading scholar of the conservative-evangelical school of interpretation, which means that his approach is much more positive toward the New Testament records than most of what passes for New Testament interpretation today. And thirdly, the book is quite readable, scholarly, and contains a large amount of valuable bibliographical data.

Intended to ". . . introduce seminary students to the discipline of New Testament theology," but not to offer ". . . an original contribution or to solve difficult problems . . ." (p. 5). this volume nevertheless does the former quite well and the latter much better than the author would lead us to believe. Structurally the book is divided into six major sections: 1) The Synoptic Gospels; 2) The Fourth Gospel; 3) The Primitive Church; 4) Paul; 5) The General Epistles; and 6) The Apocalypse. Under each section problems are discussed, and a consideration of the leading themes and topics follows. In each category extensive bibliography is provided.

One may not always agree with Ladd, but the reader will know where Ladd stands. In fact there are times when his writing is a breath of fresh air in the hypercritical world of New Testament scholarship so dominated presently by "negative" Germanic ideas and concepts. Ladd attempts to strike some balance in the picture and views the New Testament records with respect and a positive attitude toward their general reliability. For example in setting the background for Paul's thought he says, "Neither the historical nor the kerygmatic aspects of the word of God can be emphasized to the neglect of the other" (p. 390). This is Ladd's basic approach throughout the book, however, not simply in his exposition of Paul's thought.

Further, he challenges some of the currently "accepted" (though not proved) ideas prevalent in New Testament circles especially some of those which are related to the person of Jesus and the "Son of Man." For example, he argues that the term "Son of Man" was not used by Jesus as a designation of a figure who is to come in the future and then applied to Jesus by the early Church. "The idea that the Son of Man might be an eschatological figure other than Jesus —the prevailing view in German theology—is exceedingly difficult because

there is no scrap of evidence that Jesus expected one greater than himself to come, but there is much evidence to the contrary" (p. 153). "There is no evidence in the entire New Testament, aside from the presuppositions of an extreme form criticism, that the early church called Jesus the Son of Man" (p. 337).

Naturally a person of Ladd's theological stance will have a more positive attitude toward the historical validity of the New Testament writings. For example in his discussion of the resurrection he says: *"something happened to create in the disciples belief in Jesus' resurrection.* Here is the crucial issue. It was not the disciples' faith that created the stories of the resurrection; it was an event lying behind these stories that created the faith" (p. 320). But lest anyone think that Professor Ladd is reverting to a literal "historicity" type approach, the reader should hear what he says about the resurrection. "Bultmann says that the resuscitation of a corpse is incredible. Even if this should be a valid objection, it carries no weight, for the New Testament does not picture the resurrection of Jesus in terms of the resuscitation of a corpse, but as *the emergence within time and space of a new order of life"* (p. 323).

Overall, this book provides much information and stimulates further reflection on issues of interpretation. It is an encyclopedia of New Testament thought and scholarship. A work like this deserves a topical index which it lacks.

For the parish minister this New Testament theology will probably be more beneficial and useful than any other available today. This book is strongly recommended for analysis and reflection.

—James M. Efird

The Bible Belt Mystique. C. Dwight Dorough. Westminster. 1974. 217 pp. $7.95.

Years ago, while delivering a lecture to the Duke Divinity community, Kenneth Scott Latourette, renowned Professor of Christian Missions at Yale Divinity School, chided Protestant graduate students in religion for what he considered their slavish penchant for New England theological history and admonished them to pay more attention to religious leaders in the South, particularly those who had the greatest appeal for the common man. Professor Dorough's little book, which focuses upon the origin and nature of the "old-time religion" in the South in the 1780-1850 period and its twentieth-century "manifestations and effects," is written with that end in view. Designed "primarily for the layman, not for the church historian," it is, essentially, the product of thirty years of research into the religion and literature of the South, happily embellished with the author's current observations and reminiscences from a childhood in northeast Texas.

The sympathetic phenomenological treatment of "Southern religiousness" is worthy of praise, notably in its detailed description of camp meetings, the theological and emotional character of frontier revivalism, and the recognition of the sterling character and influence of the generality of its pulpiteers. While Dorough faithfully chronicles the grievous blemishes in the old-time religion—its bitter censoriousness, sectarianism, intolerance, anti-intellectualism, and the like—he generously recognizes that it served the high purpose of taming a lawless people, restoring order and direction to derelict souls, and supporting frontier democracy. Here one easily discerns the peculiar sources of strength and vitality that contributed to phenomenal growth of religion in the South and moulded the character of the frontier man in the pulpit. In his concluding chapter, with evident approbation, Dorough quotes from a 1897 address by Walter Hines Page: "I doubt if we have ever produced other men as great as our pioneer preachers. They were cast in so large a mould, they dealt so directly with the fundamental emotions of men and with

some of the great facts of the spiritual life, that they almost ranged themselves with the giants. I had rather have known one of these men than all the political and military heroes that we have since bred. The politician has been much the greater popular hero, but the preacher has had much the greater influence. For a century he was by far our greatest man—the man of the greatest original power and of the strongest character." Professor Dorough kindly refrains from lecturing us at this point, though, in fairness, he might have done so. Most of the pioneer preachers about whom he speaks had no formal seminary training.

Interestingly, as the contents of the book shift from description of the older faith to some of the "recent examples" with which the author is familiar, to this reviewer, at least, its tone appears less sympathetic, and considerable attention falls negatively, and perhaps deservedly, upon what has been bizarre, eccentric, fraudulent, misguided, cantankerous, and extreme in Southern twentieth-century religion. In the chapter entitled, "Sensationalism and Excesses," snake handlers and faith-healers seem equally yoked with "God's radio salesmen," "Brother Al" and "Reverend Ike." The subsequent chapter on "Emotionalism in Education and Politics" places the current public flap over the content of school textbooks in the wholly pejorative context of the Scopes Monkey Trial in Tennessee. This terminal section, though both interesting and informative and replete with pertinent anecdotes and illustrative material, is too loosely organized and rambling, and insufficiently analytical to achieve the kind of terminal evaluation the subject deserves. Also, the random content of the subject matter makes the absence of an index the more regrettable.

Professor Dorough's contribution to the study of the old-time religion in the South and its contemporary manifestations should be received with appreciation and respect by the scholarly community. In fact, it may well be that church historians will look upon *The Bible Belt Mystique* with greater sympathy and favor than many of the laymen for whom the book is intended.

Barney L. Jones