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Fifty Years of Theology and Theological Education at Duke; Retrospect and Prospect

by Robert E. Cushman
Research Professor of Systematic Theology

I. Our Just Cause for Rejoicing

Let me say first—and especially to faculty, to students, and to alumnae and alumni—that I am sensible of exceptional privilege in addressing this company on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of our Divinity School. What, to me, is distinctly a gracious invitation is, at the same time, if not a dreadful, then an awesome responsibility. This latter is so because an anniversary such as this puts us in remembrance of a host of men and women: founders, administrators, faculty, staff, and students who labored here. To what, during a half-century, it has been given for this school to become, this company—visible and invisible—is a cloud of witnesses to a vision, to a faith, and to a hope for which very many, in divers roles and ways, have invested the substance of life itself. I know this is true; I have known the investors.

Fifty years is not a long time in the annals of theological education, even in this country. Yet in these fifty years I number nearly four score teachers—of varying tenure—whose learning and devotion to Christian enlightenment have enriched the minds and the lives of students and the Church itself. At the same time, I count approximately 3500 students, in the several degrees, who have enlarged their understanding of their faith and of their vocation and passed through these halls—the majority of them—to service of God and mankind, literally the world around. These graduates of the Divinity School—whether in the Southeast or northward, the mid or far West, or in far off Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Sweden, Austria, Greece, France, England, Scotland, Canada, Indonesia, India, Tonga, or Ghana, to remember only a few—these graduates are, likewise, a cloud of witnesses. They are witnesses to the outreaching vision of our founders but, more centrally, to the Lord of Life who is over all. As I see it, it is their testimony of word and deed—

quiet or renowned, in obscure or in focal places—that is very central to our celebration and its principal justification.

I think it was at the closing Divinity School service of worship in June 1958 that the late James Cannon III—and, as it proved, on the eve of his deanship—prayed over the assembled students and faculty somewhat as follows:

> We thank thee, O God, that thou has called us to serve thee in the work of this school. We remember with gratitude our fellows who labored here to advance the training of young ministers of Christ. We thank thee for the tasks we have been given to do in our time of passage, and the strength to do what we could. Establish thou the work of our hands, according to thy Word; and to thee shall be the praise. Amen.

As presiding minister that morning, I was struck by Dean Cannon's prayer. In retrospect, it seemed to me nothing could have been more appropriate. With terse eloquence it said: *Sic transit gloria mundi.* But, above all, it said: We are a cloud of witnesses in transit, and what it has been given us to invest looks beyond itself for its justification. So it is, "and thine shall be the praise world without end."

Something like this I take to be the real authorization of our Fiftieth Anniversary celebration. We signalize a corporate endeavor of a host of witnesses. Always we are debtors to a heritage bequeathed to us. We are stewards of riches to which we may add our small treasure, but the harvest is the Lord's.

But, now, what *is* a school? Is it not a place or, better, a community where light is kindled and nurtured *in the meeting of minds?* Of a Divinity School, however, it may also be said that it is a collective or corporate biography of faith in search of understanding. Here, St. Augustine's declaration is masterful: *Fides quaerens intellectum,* "faith seeking understanding." By this, Augustine meant to signalize not only a point-of-starting but a process, and the Divinity School or the seminary provides the auspices. It is the hope and expectation for such a school that, in the meeting of minds, the light of faith burns brighter—perhaps bright enough, by God's grace, for men and women to find their way to fulfilling service in the Kingdom of God. No other kind of school either expressly aspires or presumes to attempt so much!

As, now, we look back over a half-century, I venture to affirm we need not doubt that something like the lighting of the way has truly happened in the lives of very many. Accordingly, I believe we may justly celebrate these fruitions as a harvest of the years that

proves itself commensurate with the vision and the hope of the founders. And, in the measure this is so, I have no hesitancy in judging that at half-century Duke University Divinity School, as a corporate endeavor, has, so far, vindicated its reason for being. I know of no other significant criterion to judge such a school. Comparisons in externals are not only invidious; they are by reference to the primary goal finally irrelevant. In a Divinity School what counts is whether, in the meeting of minds, the light of faith burns brighter to illumine the way of those who venture into the dark night of this world in the Name of Him whose radiance "lighteth every man" coming into it. At half-century, it is these things, I believe, I have the awesome privilege of calling to our common remembrance, and, with you, to rejoice and give thanks that we can celebrate—and with a cloud of witnesses—the prospering of Christian enlightenment through the years 1926-1976.

II. What of Theology at Duke?

On this Fiftieth Anniversary these things are what I am most deeply moved to say on the subject of "theological education" at Duke. On this subject, however, I believe I have earned the right to be brief, since I am copiously—I hope not redundantly—on record in the Divinity School *Review*, or its predecessor, from 1945 until a final Alumni Address in 1971. Meanwhile, every opening Convocation Address in my years as dean (1958-1971) was devoted to aspects of theological education and is on record in the *Review*. Having reread the statement of 1945 and having glanced at others, I doubt that I would now retract much of anything I have hitherto said, but why must I repeat myself?

Accordingly, I would like to invite your attention to the other end of the stick I was expected to balance. With you I should like to reflect upon "fifty years of theology" at Duke. In a formal way little has ever been said about it. Undoubtedly the business is full of risk. The whole story is long, and our time is short. But I was asked. I will, therefore, accept the risk, but with the warning that what I shall have to say is subject to the limitations and biases of a chief participant over many years and, in that time, a wearer of different hats. Furthermore, I must warn in advance that the course over which we must needs travel is both long and various, sometimes colorful and exciting, but now and again tedious and, sometimes, hazardous as a minefield or studded with sandtraps—if, as is probable, you prefer golfing!

First, then, if we are to speak of theology at Duke, what may we mean by "theology"? Nowadays, this is not an idle question. The fact is that it has been in dispute for so long that there is today no little controversy among practitioners and, understandably, no little confusion among bystanders. In this situation I might show my colors and invite you to join me in taking our cue from John Wesley's *Plain Account of Genuine Christianity* (1749), except that, to my knowledge, hardly any Methodist theologian ever had the good sense to set us a precedent for doing so. We might ponder the subject by reference to the first paragraph of Calvin's *Institutes*. This might well be helpful, especially if we were also interested in going on to show how Schleiermacher laid the foundations of so-called "modern theology" by seizing upon one horn of the dilemma Calvin there seemingly propounds. But we have no time for elaborate historical recollections, and I will come quickly to the conception that, for me, alike describes both theology and the role of theological education.

It is that saying of Augustine's already quoted: *fides quaerens intellectum*. For me, whatever more it is, at rock bottom, Christian theology is "faith seeking understanding." And the *scandalon* is—as the Apostle Paul first saw and enforced upon the attention of the Corinthians—that appropriating Faith in "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," however alien to the wisdom of the world, is just exactly the kind of response suited to that unspeakable gift which passes all human understanding. For the Apostle faith is acceptance of the incomprehensible grace of God in Christ. Accordingly, St. Paul saw that it was indeed a God-given starting-point, *from* which, not *to* which, enlightenment proceeds.

This, too, is what John Wesley, at length, arrived at by way of a personal ordeal he found resolved under the auspices of the long-standing Pauline formula, then, lately rejuvenated: "justification by grace through faith." But what had been a tenet of doctrine among both the Continental and Anglican reformers became alive and recapitulated itself in Wesley's own experience, and the 18th century Evangelical Revival was born. For Wesley, as it were, the doctrinal map had all the while lain open before him, but it was a "dead letter" until Wesley himself actually made his own way over the road. This is what he conveys in his *Plain Account of Genuine Christianity*. Then, for him also, theology became "faith seeking understanding." And this meant new comprehension of the whole range of human experience—its depravity without Christ,

its radical promise of renovation through Christ—and this, both for the individual and for societal renewal.

III. Faith Seeking Understanding—A Corporate Endeavor

With this background we are, perhaps, in better position to understand the meaning of "theology" within the institutional context—that of the theological school, including this one. If indeed, theology—as also theological education—is, at bottom, "faith seeking understanding" as chief witnesses of the Faith declare, then, plainly, the indispensable prerequisite of any Christian theology is Christian faith. And this is more nearly a gift than a good work. It follows that this puts theology in a somewhat different position from other human inquiry, although not so different as is usually supposed in one respect, since all human inquiry starts, at last, either from naturally assumed premises or expressly formulated hypothetical ones. In any case, Christian theology, in so far as it is candid and not primarily apologetics, openly acknowledges its faith-premise as its reason for being and proceeds to inquire what this premise means, that is, how it illuminates the totality of human life in the world. This is interpretation and reaffirmation of the *given* Christian faith.

The exploration of this import through successive generations in changing contexts—which history always thrusts upon us—is, perhaps, a major differentia of systematic theology as distinguished from historical studies, whether Biblical or doctrinal. Yet we can hardly speak of theology in the institutional setting—that of a Divinity School—without acknowledging that this same theology is a corporate endeavor of the whole faculty, and, furthermore, in the context of serious faculty-student dialogue.

Space forbids discussion of the distinctive contribution of the several disciplines to the theological climate and standpoint of the school. It is apparent, however, that the curriculum of Biblical studies, the application of historical method to the Scriptures, to the interpretation of Christian origins and to the Apostolic and post-Apostolic witness, adopts standpoints having implicit doctrinal import. Yet, for all of these inquiries, it is still faith seeking understanding. Likewise church history, attending as it does to the unfolding of the tradition catholic—as the church discharges its vocation in the world and in interchange with it, for better or worse—is nerved also by faith pursuing enlarging self-understanding. Nor can pastoral theology and professional studies be ex-

cluded from this comprehensive inquiry, since the meaning and verity of Christian faith comes better into relief precisely in the granulating exchange which attends its communication and interaction with the resistant and resilient mind of the world. All of these disciplines, premised upon faith, pursue, in their several provinces, enlarging understanding.

When, therefore, we seek to take the measure of theology at Duke over the half-century since 1926 and ascertain its character and directions, we are immediately confronted by the fact that theology, here as elsewhere, is the many-sided *resultant* of a corporate endeavor of a company of teacher-scholars manning their distinctive disciplinary tasks in their own time and place. But there are, in addition, other very influential factors that have shaped theological emphasis and standpoints during the half-century of Duke Divinity School. These can be mentioned and some of them considered briefly.

IV. The Policy of the Founders: A Dialectic of Opposites

Let us, then, attend first of all to the intention of the founders. When we do so, we shall, I think, be persuaded that the presiding influence has been the inherited religious motivation and theological frame of reference of the founders, firmly rooted in the Methodist tradition. Yet it would be over-simple not to perceive that, granted this foundational commitment of the founders, their ends and aspirations for the school also reflected perspectives and a certain selectivity from the given tradition which seemed to them of central importance in setting forth the objectives of a university school of ministerial education. These objectives were, in fact, quickly implemented in the gathering and subsequent further staffing of the faculty. And, in this whole matter, William Preston Few was undoubtedly the original architect and builder as also, for many years, he continued to shepherd at close-hand the fledgling enterprise.

The two-fold principle that embraces *both* the received religious tradition of the founders *and* yet freedom to accent those essentials deemed suited to advance theological understanding in a university context is simply and candidly set forth under the title "School of Religion" in the first *Bulletin* or catalogue for 1926-1927. It reappears largely unaltered for several years and, in revised language, has persisted substantively to this time. Because of its formative significance I shall quote the concluding paragraph entire:

> Duke University retains the same close relationship which Trinity College always held to the Conferences in North Carolina of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. This legal relationship has always been broadly interpreted. Members of all other Christian denominations, as well as Methodist, will be made to feel welcome in the School of Religion and may be assured that the basis on which the work is conducted is broadly catholic and not narrowly denominational.[1]

No little exegesis and commentary upon the facets of this statement—which must, I believe, be referred to President Few himself primarily—might well occupy us. Concerning the original name of the school, Professor Emeritus Kenneth W. Clark, in his important account "Four Decades of the Divinity School," refers to the change of name from "School of Religion" to that of Divinity School as occurring in 1940.[2] The theological import of that change was far from negligible, as Professor Emeritus H. Shelton Smith is quite able to tell if he were inclined to do so. But I let this and other matters pass that we may focus upon the two facets of this declaration which are offered in dialectical juxtaposition so as to implicate, rather than negate, one another.

On the one hand, then, the status of the new school—as that of its parent institution, Duke University—stands in close, derivative, and even legal relationship with the then Methodist Episcopal Church, South; but, on the other hand, instruction in the theological disciplines is to be "broadly catholic and not narrowly denominational." On this latter basis, it is affirmed that "all other Christian denominations" are welcome. And on this basis, and from the very start, theological education at Duke was grounded on the ecumenical premise. This was immediately implemented by recruitment of an interdenominational faculty and, likewise, little by little, an interdenominational student enrollment. In the first two decades it was mainly Congregationalist and Baptist students who swelled the predominatingly Methodist core of the student body. Meanwhile, the second dean of the school was Elbert Russell, a Quaker.

The history of developments cannot here detain us. Yet the import of this candid and daring policy—combining in single amalgam Methodist derivation and grounding with ecumenical or

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1. *School of Religion—Duke University,* 1926-27, Announcements for 1927-28 (Durham, N. C., 1927), p. 18.

2. *The Divinity School Review,* Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring 1967), p. 172. The School *Bulletin,* Vol. 13, No. 6 (May 1941), supplied the official public notice of change of name.

"broadly catholic" commitment— not only makes the status of Duke University Divinity School, from its origin, all but unique among university divinity schools in this country but also, without much question, was the formative influence in pre-determining the tone and character of the theological enterprise at Duke during the past half-century.

This deliberate and clear-headed espousal by President Few— in collaboration, we may reasonably suppose, with Edmund D. Soper, the first dean—of a *dialectic of opposites* as foundational policy must be seen for what it was and still remains. On the one hand, it expressly grounded theological endeavor at Duke in one particular historical tradition of Reformation Christianity as channelled through the Wesleyan evangelical heritage. On the other hand, it explicitly claimed a place for the riches of the whole range of "catholic" Christian tradition as the rightful domain of responsible scholarship and unfettered theological teaching. But in this, too, it is not amiss to note that it was scarcely at variance with Wesley's notable sermon on *The Catholic Spirit* or with his equally famous *Letter to a Roman Catholic.*

V. Corollaries of the Founding Policy

There are two or three corollaries deriving, I believe, from this dialectic of opposites, which I should like to mention for the record. The first is that the founders did not suppose that legitimate theological reflection or teaching could proceed without reference to either a particular living church or to the Church universal. Theology without grounding in a living *consensus fidelium* would be, in the absence of this, rootless. The founders did not, therefore, confuse the scientific study of religion as a phenomenon of human culture, with the distinctive tasks of Christian theology. Such study, together with philosophy of religion, might well have place in the total University curriculum, but it was not the galvanizing center of Christian theological studies devoted to the Church's ministry.

Secondly, resident in the phrase "broadly catholic and not narrowly denominational" was the clear reaffirmation of both "the freedom of the Christian man" under God (Luther) or "the liberty of prophesying" (Jeremy Taylor). To both of these John Wesley, long since, had already consented. And here was the minimal statement of the "liberal creed" which the founders invoked. By this they meant to say that, however rootless theology is in abstraction

from a living church, yet it can never be in bondage to any one dogmatic rendering of the Christian Tradition. From these two corollaries in tandem a third quite properly followed: the founders were standing in the truly "catholic" tradition—whether of Augustine in the 5th or Wesley in the 18th century—namely, that theology if it is to be *Christian* theology is at the core "faith seeking understanding."

If we put the outcome of these three corollaries together, they come to this: There is to be, as an integral part of the University, a faculty of theology which—with the School it represents and whose defined tasks it discharges—relates itself positively to the *consensus fidelium* of the living Church as its primary and constant point of reference. From that reference, the standpoint of living faith, it proceeds to enlarging understanding of the on-going tradition and to the communication thereof as its reason for being. But it does so with liberty to explore the entirety of the Tradition and, furthermore, in the confidence that the tradition of faith itself is a *living* reality with, as we say, a growing edge or an expanding frontier. And, indeed, this frontier must expand if it is to be commensurate with its proper Subject-matter. And that is God, the Creator and Redeemer, in his dialogue with man in history.

VI. The Structural Basis of Christian Theology: the Curriculum

If I have treated at some length the intentions of the founders and commented upon their conception of the role and task of the faculty of theology in this Divinity School, it is because, at half-century, it seems timely to recall from what wells we have been dug and, by reference to these, calculate better how theology at Duke has fared in the interim. As, shortly, I turn to this theme, I would have you alert to factors I think essential to any reliable understanding of the unfolding shape of theology at Duke Divinity School over these years.

It must be seen that, whatever form or style "theology" has taken, as a resultant, it is, plainly, the outcome of the corporate endeavor of the entire Divinity School faculty. And we may add that, to this end, the unfolding of the curriculum over a half-century must be studied and interpreted for its important indications concerning the substance and character of theology at Duke. To put it in a word: the curriculum is the message, that is, the dominating theological emphases current over the years of our purview.

If the curriculum is, as it were, the message, then it is plain that it is the curriculum which may, in any era, be tested most easily by reference to the three basic principles I have described as inherent in the founding policy. Nor is the curriculum, therefore, indefinitely admissible of modification or rank growth to comply with the intellectual fashions of the times; rather must it remain accountable to basic principles as adjudged by the faculty and, finally, by arbitrament of the dean and the University. This I believe has prevailed at Duke Divinity School this first half-century. It is, however, to be observed that tendencies to blur the lines between the explicit mandates of a faculty of Divinity and those of a merely scientific and phenomenological study of religion have become marked in American universities for a quarter-century and are not without a presence among us today. Unless this is understood and the integrity of the Divinity School's curriculum conserved, an erosion of the intent and policy of the founders is a possibility and will always remain so. During this half-century the leadership of Duke University has been remarkable both for its understanding and its undergirding of the founding policies.

I wish there were space for some observations and generalizations respecting the curricular history of this first half-century. The barest mention must suffice. The curriculum from the start, but progressively, has been diligent to represent the whole spectrum of the Christian Tradition from its Biblical origins through the successive ages of the Church and of the Church's witness and worship. The Biblical languages have been taught with great distinction. The liturgy has been plumbed for both its doctrinal import and its vehicular power in the School's life of corporate worship.

Some twenty-five years past the curriculum, through specialized professional studies, began far more expressly to relate the message of faith to the corrugations of life in the world and, I think, with direct bearing and usefulness for the minister's task in an increasingly problematic and changing society. Important revisions of curriculum took place in 1948, 1959, and 1968—the last, perhaps overly responsive to the anti-institutional and anti-ecclesiological spirit of the time.

Yet it is, I think, fair to say that, on the whole, the curriculum has remained answerable to the *dialectic of opposites* expressed in the formative policy of the School, with the corollaries I have mentioned. These have indubitably fostered and encouraged the

character of theology at Duke all the way from appointment of faculty to the presiding emphases of the curriculum. The influence of the policy of a dialectic of opposites has been, at once, ecumenical and liberating; at the same time, it labors under no misunderstanding as to whether the theological faculty has as its controlling point of reference the on-going and living Church.

VII. Fifty Years of Theology at Duke in Résumé

Now, having fully insisted upon these fundamental considerations and principles as basic to the unfolding shape of theology at Duke, how, then, would one characterize the outcome over these fifty years? This is to raise the theological question head-on or, more exactly, the question of doctrine in the theological curriculum. This question is no longer concerned simply with what *has been witnessed,* historically considered, but what *must* be reaffirmed in fidelity to the essential Gospel as it bears upon human life in the world. But this, to be sure, is always being done according to the light and understanding of its delegated professors at a given time in history. So we ask, what is the doctrinal profile of the School during these years? Can we, or ought we, label it, and with what tag or tags? Or are tags both dangerous and superfluous in evaluating the doctrinal contribution of the School to its students, the Church, or the world?

Now, at this point, the dreadful privilege to which I referred at the start becomes pressing indeed. To address myself to this latter question requires, it would seem, the naming of names of justly revered teachers and the omission of others, both living and departed, whose express and implied Christian witness has been doctrinally formative through these years. In addition, I find myself in a peculiarly delicate not to say treacherous position, since for well-nigh thirty-two years, for better or worse, I have been by title a teacher of systematic theology and for thirteen years—likewise for better or worse—I administered policy as dean. In short, I am, as they say nowadays, "involved"! Accordingly, I must avoid at all costs a course which John Henry Newman—and however laudable in his case—found unavoidable, namely, an *apologia pro vita mea!*

Fortunately, both of these hazards can be circumvented in some measure if we may take careful note of the conception of systematic or doctrinal theology twice referred to already in this paper. The latest mention was the implied definition of this kind of theology

as what must be or *ought to be reaffirmed* in fidelity to the essential Gospel as the latter bears upon human life in the world in the considered judgment of its delegated professors. Here I use the word "professor" in its classical as well as in its etymological meaning. But, more importantly, I intend to differentiate systematic from other theological disciplines by two considerations: first, it takes explicit responsibility for what *ought to be reaffirmed* of the received catholic Tradition, and, secondly, it does so, in part, by reference to the pressing issues enforced upon it by sundry problems of man's life in the world as currently understood, and, in turn, as these reflect back upon the Christian message itself.

Do not confuse this description of the doctrinal task with the late Paul Tillich's much patronized "method of correlation" in theology. Rather, is the description I give, as it were, the more general case of which his, in my view, is a very dubious derivative. The intentions here are very nearly the reverse of one another. Tillich would find what is still luminous in the Faith by submitting it to the "spot-light," as it were, of the world's ultimate concerns. Mine would be to illuminate the human world with the light of the Gospel and, *in the process,* recover and further discover the inherent luminosity of the Faith itself. In this way Faith not only seeks but finds understanding, indeed, acquires enriching discoveries respecting its own essence.

But, now, this conception of the task of theology is useful for deciphering the character of theology at Duke these fifty years. In short, one may get significant leads respecting Duke theology (or any Protestant theology of the recent past) by taking one's bearings—much as the sextant serves the sea captain—by reference to the prevailing "problematics" acknowledged and faced by theologians at given periods.

Accordingly, in fifty years of theological reaffirmation at Duke there have been, I judge, at least three quite distinguishable periods of doctrinal response to the circumambient environment punctuated, at intervals, by World War II, the civil rights movement, and the prolonged and adversely influential Viet Nam national debacle. It is this surrounding environment of issues—as understood, of course, by theologians—that stimulates the response of faith and greatly contributes to the shape of theology or doctrinal expression anywhere. This has most surely been the case at Duke. Here, this generalization applies provided we do not forget that theology is a corporate product and that, at Duke, it has developed

under the aegis of what has been described as the "dialectic of opposites."

The three periods to which I refer—each distinguishable by presiding concerns, problems, and diagnoses—are the following: There is, first, the liberation of preaching and doctrine from both Scriptural fundamentalism and provincial and denominational traditionalism. There is, second, the powerful thrust of the World Ecumenical Movement toward recovery of a united Christendom—attended, at the same time, by a truly vast reassessment and critical reappropriation of doctrinal riches of the Church Universal. There is, thirdly, the current period—world-wide in scope and presupposing, likewise, the so-called "third-world"—which, taken at large, is bewilderingly diversified in concerns and aspirations. It manifests a reactionary temper toward the previous period in persistent ambivalence toward confessional theology and the Church catholic. Its prevailing standpoint is "contextual," which means *either* that it measures the truth of Christian faith by its *relevance* to the ubiquitous human problem, *or* that it lays the churches under judgment—in some few instances, truly, the judgment of God in Christ.

About each of these eras and how they are reflected in theology at Duke only a few words can be said in the allotted space.

(1) Concerning the first era: when Gilbert T. Rowe accepted appointment at Duke for the fall of 1928, the catalogue had already for two years carried six hours of "Christian Doctrine" as required work but with no surname in the space prefixed by the word "professor." When Dr. Rowe—whose colleagueship I was privileged to share for three years prior to 1948—took up teaching duties, he was already a pastor and noted preacher of the Western North Carolina Conference with a record of rather meteoric rise to church-wide recognition and veteran experience. Furthermore, he had come to Duke from the important position of Book Editor for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and was the highly admired if somewhat controversial editor of the *Methodist Quarterly Review*. The persistence with which he was courted by Drs. Few and Soper, albeit with near failure, to occupy the chair of Christian Doctrine has now been revealed by Reverend O. Lester Brown in his valuable biography of Dr. Rowe.[3]

Among the interesting statements of the reported correspon-

3. *Gilbert T. Rowe: Churchman Extraordinary* (Greensboro, N.C.: Piedmont Press, 1971), pp. 74-90.

dence is Dr. Rowe's written comment to Dr. Soper, which gives us a glimpse both of the context for doctrinal revision as Dr. Rowe conceived it then, and of the message he deemed suitable to the hour. In 1927 he wrote: "It seems to me that Duke has a very great opportunity and responsibility in the matter of helping the preachers get in touch with the last [latest?] thought and life of the age and at the same time to be genuinely evangelical in their ministry. . . ."[4] In his subsequent teaching of Christian theology he recurrently used as textbook D. C. Macintosh's *Theology as an Empirical Science.* This he commented upon with extensive elaborations of his own in a style inimitable, picturesque, whimsical, but also trenchant. As one who studied under Professor Macintosh —indeed as his first successor at Yale as also, curiously, Dr. Rowe's successor at Duke—I believe I understand something of Dr. Rowe's theological interests and prepossessions. Both men—Rowe and Macintosh—were, in their distinctive ways, spokesmen for an "evangelical liberalism" that accepted the findings of Biblical criticism and the import of the biological and physical sciences as these related to God's work in creation, and yet strongly affirmed both the experiential basis of Christian faith and its consequential compelling and lofty moral vocation.

Much, much more there is to say were there space to say it, and as it should be said. The *Resolution* of the faculty on the occasion of Dr. Rowe's retirement in 1948—written by very knowledgeable colleagues—underscores the point of special bearing upon the question before us. Among other things, it states: ". . . the South owes him much for the transition which he assisted it to make from an older uncritical orthodoxy to a more *timely* grasp upon the eternal gospel."[5] As one studies Dr. Rowe's article on "Present Tendencies in Religious Thought" in *The Divinity School Bulletin* of 1936, one has clear glimpses into the theological premises from which he worked.[6] His final word on the work of the new school, after just over two decades, was this: "Without pressure from any source all the members of the faculty were gradually drawn together into an essential unity, and Duke Divinity School is now well known as an institution characterized by evangelical liberalism."[7] Although we have but scratched the surface, this general characterization of

4. *Ibid.,* p. 78.
5. *Divinity School Bulletin,* Vol. 14, No. 2 (May, 1949), p. 20. Italics are mine.
6. *Ibid.,* Vol. 1, No. 2 (May, 1936), pp. 29-35.
7. *Divinity School Bulletin* (May, 1949), p. 19.

theology at Duke in the earlier days, I am content to leave standing, coming as it does from a chief expositor.

(2) Chronologically, the second period at Duke overlaps with the first, extending, let us say, from 1940—or prior to the Second World War—into the mid-sixties. I take, for objective reference, the close of the Second Vatican Council (1965) as the approximate terminus as, likewise, it was the summit point of the World Ecumenical Movement. This movement, together with its accompanying theological renaissance, undoubtedly provided the living *milieu* for theological endeavor and doctrinal reformulation at Duke as elsewhere during this second period. Not merely regional but even national boundaries of earlier American theological preoccupation, animus, and debate acquired a span, certainly as wide as the Western Christian world.

The theological faculty began to re-think long-standing impasses between conflicting confessional viewpoints as refracted by species of Protestant "liberalism"—either historicism, on the one hand, or ethicism on the other. It did so in the enlarging consciousness, sometimes half-articulate, that Christian faith and devotion, after all, do antedate the 16th century Reformation. Especially did trends in Biblical study at Duke as well as in Church History both reflect and contribute to the emergence of an expanding context for doctrinal restructuring and emphasis.

The marks of this change of perspective at Duke cannot all be enumerated here. One such mark was the manuscript and textual researches of Kenneth Clark, that made him a respected and trusted New Testament scholar of the West with leading representatives of Orthodoxy in the eastern Mediterranean world and led to unprecedented textual studies and findings at St. Catherine's monastery, Sinai, at Athos, in Palestine, and elsewhere. One of them was Ray C. Petry's extraordinary unfolding of the rich Medieval inheritance. Another, surely, the flowering of studies in the hitherto obscure and neglected but rich heritage of our own American Christianity in the notable work of H. Shelton Smith. Still another sign is the enormous undertaking represented by the Wesley Works Editorial Project, now incorporated. Begun in 1959—and still far, too far, from completion—it is committed to the publication of the *Oxford Edition* of the Works of John Wesley. Of this, Frank Baker is the incomparable Editor-in-Chief. The collaboration required has been international. In this enterprise the Divinity School has been principal investor and so continues.

Other marks there are of the thrust toward recapture of the great tradition—such as Stinespring's studies in Near Eastern history and Cleland's quarter-century of preaching and teaching in Duke Chapel. One would miss the main point, however, unless he sees that the ecumenical movement, not only fostered unprecedented international theological exchange across long and rather firmly closed denominational frontiers, but that it nurtured exploration and recovery of the entire range of the Christian Tradition in depth.

It is in *this* perspective, primarily, that Karl Barth's or Emil Brunner's resurgent neo-Reformation theology received the attention it in fact commanded in those days. Today, it is doubtful that such system-building is possible, were it in all respects desirable. A principal reason, I believe, is that there is today no comparable "rising curve of Christian affirmation" in the churches to support it. The emerging but unfinished *consensus fidelium* that attended the high-tide of the ecumenical movement has fallen silent—not so much exhausted, I think, as overwhelmed by other insistent cares in an era of world-wide and profoundly resident anxiety. In our time the word salvation, therefore, has largely been redefined by the twin-concept: security and social mobility.

If, then, I am to characterize the second period of doctrinal ferment at Duke, I might venture to describe it as the inaugural era of exploratory ecumenical theology—as yet unfinished—and based upon a very considerable recovery of the Tradition catholic as contrasted with the traditions, plural, and featuring the two-fold theme of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order, namely, "Christ and his Church."

(3) In the second period of the Divinity School's theological creativity, professional theology assayed its tasks in a consciousness of growing colleagueship with practicing churchmen and the larger fellowship of believers. In addition to enhancing general ecumenical vision, the now near-forgotten liturgical revival of the same period offered a common ground of the Spirit for both theological revision and common worship in a developing interdenominational forum. For historical reasons of baffling complexity and enormous scope, the succeeding third period of theological endeavor at Duke reflects more than a decade of widespread societal disassociation if not disintegration, although signs of healing may be appearing in the wings. As, perhaps, the disunion of Christendom was the central "problematic" of theology in the second

period, so, in the third, the self-conscious disunity of mankind becomes the focus.

A mark of this trend is that, viewed as a whole, theology in America has become predominantly either "free-lance" or emphatically "academic," and tends to be as remote from "Church dogmatics," in self-understanding and method, as the previous period was well advanced on the way towards it.[8] This is true especially of the American scene, and more emphatically, perhaps, than in Europe. American provinciality in theology, therefore, is already fully resurgent but in pluralized and multifarious shapes and platforms too numerous even for mention here. Meanwhile, the so-called "third world" viewpoints—representing more nearly socio-economic and ethnic concerns than geographic ones—are belatedly clamorous for their share in Christian doctrinal revision, especially as this bears upon *both* the social application of acknowledged Christian ethical norms to the plight of the oppressed of the earth and, also, the fidelity of the Church to its calling in the world.

Of the several species of so-called "renewal theology," which came forward with some very understandable incentives in the late sixties, two mottos, in particular, may sample aspects of the theological program of the time. As you may recall, one of them was: "Let the world provide the agenda." This was exhortation to the churches. The other was its complement, namely, J. C. Hoekendijk's injunction for the times: "The Church Inside Out." The corrective included the thesis that the whole business of Christianity *is* mission—indeed, it seems, is quite exhausted in mission. Explicit was the exhortation to "de-ghettoize" the church—which is, to be sure, always timely—but in particular Hoekendijk with others enjoined the need to quit making of the Church a refuge for private salvation and all cloistered virtues. For some representatives of the viewpoint, justification by faith considered as private salvation was totally expendable. Accordingly, a new evangelicalism was in the making! But it is not clear that it had a firm grasp upon the whole Gospel.

Further accounting of recent theological tendencies is excluded. On the whole—and taking a purview of the rather humorless, tactless, and joyless voices in "professional" theology of the im-

8. The word "academic" denotes more than institutional setting. It denotes also, as Dean James Laney makes clear in his Convocation address, a "guild" mentality among academicians who are more disposed to find their "identity" by reference to their "peer group" than to any fellowship of the community of believers, the Church.

mediate present—the preponderance of utterance seems to derive from three sources: the applied-ethics bureaucracy of the churches, religious journalism of many stamps, and the faculties of university departments of religion. Meantime, it is a good while since churchmen of the stature of Francis J. McConnell, Henry Sloan Coffin, William Temple, or a Gilbert T. Rowe of the South have entered the lists for anything like serious theological discussion.

Taken together, these circumstances are, I think, indicative of a pressing issue today respecting the sources and norms of Christian doctrine, namely: "Who speaks for the Church"—*anymore*? Shall the word spoken be primarily that of its critics, or, if its thoughtful communicants speak, will they have the currency of "paper-back" appeal and, hence, find a publisher? Here at the Divinity School, as elsewhere, the disciplined theologian experiences as his regular diet something not unlike a Sahara of sand in the midst of which he is intermittently buffeted by squalls of special interest, often abrasive, coming from the twelve points of the theological compass. What shall he do? Where shall he begin, and how shall he speak?

Under such circumstances it does get to be rather a matter of nicely calculated priorities, as Professor Herzog has quite lately urged, namely, as to which of the winds—and from what point of the compass—one faces into. Yet facing into the winds is much as any seagull, I have noticed, regularly does on the rock-bound coast of Maine. This goes even for Jonathan Livingston Seagull!

In his frequently misunderstood "liberation theology"—yet, I think, with a proven evangelical concern—Herzog has faced into winds blowing, probably, ever since the Barmen Declaration of the confessing Evangelical Church of Germany—with solitary courage in 1934—acknowledged in the face of the ill-wind of Hitler's National Socialism a treacherous temptation of the churches and reaffirmed the sovereignty of God over man's history and the fidelity of the Church to its calling before God in the world. Karl Barth later declared himself on this head in his *Rechtfertigung und Recht* (*Justification and Justice*, 1939), and one will not really understand "liberation theology" in Herzog's version, I believe, unless one sees that—in line with Barth, his teacher, before him—Herzog is urging that to take "justification by faith" seriously and to comprehend its full import requires the acknowledgement that salvation is not only a private transaction between Christ and the individual, but a public commitment of the justified community, the Church, to the purpose of God in the affairs of mankind.

I think I am not far afield in judging that "liberation theology" is a call to the Church and church people really to affirm their liberation, through Christ, from conformity and bondage to "the mind of the world." In addition to recalling the Apostle Paul to our attention in this way, Professor Herzog is underscoring what Luther was saying in the 16th century: Let God be God in the Church! In Herzog's view this is an urgently needed word for the hour among the established churches of the South. On this point, although I think we can be somewhat more inclusive, he can scarcely be wrong. Yet the insistence is as old as Amos' exhortation against "ease in Zion" and as recent as H. Richard Niebuhr's stress in the '40's on the pressing need of Christians to be converted to Christianity.

Anyone who has read even moderately in the writings of Wesley knows that the conversion of nominal Christians to Christianity was what Wesley's preaching and indefatigable labors of more than a half a century were all about, and, furthermore, that in contrast with very nearly the whole Continental Lutheran and Reformed theology Wesley made "Christian perfection"—with social outreach—the undoubted test of any private salvation worth mentioning. It does not follow, of course, that Wesley's succession has continued to hear him. It is, therefore, reassuring to know that the voice of authentic Wesleyan evangelicalism is timely among us. I believe it has promise of recovery of the great tradition. It is always healthy for Methodists, in particular, to be reminded of Wesley's later life *Thoughts Upon Methodism,* where he says: "I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power."

What this means for us today Dr. W. P. Stephens touched upon in his first Gray Lecture in the stress that "conversion is political and social as well as personal." Unpopular as this has been among many evangelicals, it is plain enough that Wesley would be no stranger to the thought that authentic Christianity cannot be passed off for private fence-mending between God and the sinner. He was, of course, clear about man the sinner. But, in the hotly controverted *Conference Minutes* of 1770, Wesley scandalized the Calvinists of his day by declaring that "works meet for repentance" are the inescapable obligation and outcome of justification and, further, if absent, absent too is the "condition" of salvation. This

let loose probably the most formidable doctrinal debate of the 18th century, between John Fletcher, against antinomianism, and Augustus Toplady and others. In plain words, Wesley had flown in the face of Reformed theology simply to stand firm with the words of our Lord: "By their fruits ye shall know them." With Wesley "Christian perfection" was not optional. It was part of the doctrine with which the Methodists began and heedlessness to which might incur the sectarian deadness he feared most.

VIII. Conclusions

My account of theology at Duke these fifty years is now done. I have attempted, in brief compass, to recount and to interpret the story as faithfully as I am able. It cannot escape our notice how vastly expanded is the context and how multiplied the issues by reference to which doctrinal reaffirmation today must be undertaken as compared with the '20's and the '30's of this century. Nevertheless, I must register the judgment that any and all responsible theological reflection of the future at Duke will be well advised to keep before it the foundational guidelines embraced in the founders' conception that I have named "the dialectic of opposites." Authentic Christian theology must recognize that, from *faith,* it may *hope* to move onward to understanding—also that its primary point-of-reference is the faith of a living Church. Coordinately, on the other hand, this same theology is under mandate to go on probing the Scripture and the tradition of the Church catholic, always with a view to illuminating the darkness of the human world with the "light of the world," even Jesus Christ.

Finally, I see much in the story recounted to reassure us, as also the founders, and to justify no little rejoicing that, in truth, the Divinity School of Duke University has been, during this half-century, a real community for the meeting of minds whereby the light of faith has been nurtured and has burned brighter to illumine the way of those who, nerved by it, have ventured forth to discharge their given vocation in church and world. But the Psalmist has the final word for the past as also for any future in theology: "In thy light shall we see light."

Theological Education: Near Horizons

by James T. Laney
Dean, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

My assigned topic is "Theological Education: Near Horizons." Transposing that into my own idiom, I would entitle this talk "On Being the People of God in the University the Last Quarter of this Century." These reflections will draw on first-hand aquaintance, unfortunately not with Duke but with four other seminaries, two in the East and two in the South, all university-related. My thesis is simple and direct. It is this: the crucial element in theological education is who the faculty see themselves to be, i.e., their principal identity. This is based on the assumption that true education occurs in a context of sympathetic identification; that is, we are shaped in mind and spirit as we participate in and under the tutelage of others. Discipleship is the quintessence of that kind of education. If this is the case, our present confusion in curriculum and in program across the country is a reflection of contending identities among the faculty. Such a statement is intended in the first instance as an observation and not as an indictment. What is the basis for such an assertion? A brief historical overview may assist us here.

By the time Duke Divinity School was established, the major battles of fundamentalism had been fought, and modern critical historical scholarship had won an untrammeled right in the university. Princeton had survived a split, and while Vanderbilt had gone its own way apart from the Church, the Methodist Church in the South replaced it not by independent seminaries which the Church could control but by two new universities, one to the west and one to the east of the Mississippi River, indicating the continuing Methodist conviction that the training of the ministry should occur in a university setting. This was already the case in Boston. It was also the case in Evanston (with Garrett and Northwestern), in Denver (with Iliff and the University of Denver), and similarly in Los Angeles with Southern California, and subsequently in Durham, Atlanta, and Dallas. It has only been, interestingly enough, since the Second World War that the Methodists have sought to establish independent theological seminaries.

Now while this was true, the early days were not all roseate, because many people still had a suspicion that true religion could not survive so much learning. There's a story that Bishop Warren Candler, who was the chancellor of Emory University when it was first established, went to the dean of the Candler School of Theology and said, "We are having a lot of trouble over one of your New Testament professors who doesn't hold the Bible in enough respect. It might be wise if you got rid of him." The dean assured him that he would take this under serious consideration. After thinking it over he hit upon a solution. It turned out that Bishop Candler's son-in-law, a man named Sledd, also taught New Testament in the same seminary. The next time the dean saw Bishop Candler he went to him and said, "Bishop, I've decided you are right. We ought to get rid of Professor X. But if we get rid of him we have to be equitable and we'll have to also get rid of Professor Sledd. Both of them are two peas in a pod, believing in higher criticism." Bishop Candler went, "Harumph, well maybe we ought to think about it a little more." This to illustrate the creative use of nepotism in the early days of scholarship!

After these battles over ecclesiastical control of the seminaries subsided, there was a generation of teachers whose inner lives still evidenced the marks of piety. However sophisticated their language and thought, they were consciously a part of the people of God. There was a penumbra of piety, a recognizably religious quality to the lives of these memorable figures of the 1930's, 1940's and the early 1950's. Reinhold Niebuhr came out of a Detroit industrial parish. To his dying day he continued to be a preacher, albeit in dialectics, to the entire nation. Some of Tillich's best theology was preached in James Chapel at Union Seminary. Those who were at Yale during this period will never forget Richard Niebuhr's lectures, which invariably began with a simple but moving prayer. Among my most precious possessions is one such scribbled prayer on the back of a Just-Remember pad from the Presbyterian Ministers' Fund. Likewise in the practical disciplines people like Buttrick, Fosdick, Luccock, Sockman were churchmen and preachers. All of them, whether in research and reflection or practice and reflection, were grounded in and expressed a faith: their attempt at self-understanding of their world, however enlarged to include politics or church or national life. For themselves, there was no question of their identity with the people of God.

Now we have to resist romanticizing. These so-called giants were like that in part because theirs was an age when church and society and learning were still seen to be compatible if not congenial. Nor should we blink the many problems which they faced and the genuine faith questions they wrestled with. Nevertheless, they were still possessed of a stable identity. And that identity was an identification with the church. Those who were educated by them took some of their identity from them along with the church in the center. Duke and Emory had their counterparts to these men. Thus a student who attended seminary any time during those decades through the '50's might be challenged and pushed and pulled and tested. Some of their worlds would collapse and some of their worlds would explode. But for the most part there was an underlying confidence that those to whom they entrusted themselves were themselves faithful, that they had a clear identity and that identity was related to the people of God. That era is past. It is not just that the giants are gone. They are. But it is passed as an era. In their later years when Buttrick and Tillich went to Harvard they found a different situation, one which troubled them, not simply because Harvard was different, but because the times were changing and Harvard was only the harbinger of the change.

What changed? First of all the setting changed. The university is a different place from what it was in the '30's and '40's. The ethos, the dominant tone, the controlling spirit is different. Since Sputnik all so-called soft disciplines have felt intimidated by the hard disciplines. By soft disciplines I mean to include the humanities such as history, literature, philosophy, all of which have direct counterparts in the theological curriculum. An emphasis upon method, language analysis, modes of argumentation became dominant in a quest to find a firmer, less vulnerable basis for continuance in a modern university which was scientifically dominated.

Second, the self-understanding of theological disciplines itself has changed. A tighter focus, comparable to developments in methodology that occurred in literature and history and philosophy, has now occurred in their counterparts in the theological curriculum. For example, in most of the seminaries across the country use of the historical-critical method is a foregone conclusion. The question now is, given that emphasis, whether there is time left to attend to the literature of the scripture.

Third, much of the education which our present faculties have

received has itself changed as a result of these other two. We have to look at the socialization of the graduate students as they apprentice for teaching to appreciate what is going on in their lives, how their horizons have changed, how their identities have been shaped. That socialization has taken place within disciplines which ask their own questions, questions that are often prompted by other considerations than the life of faith. Those disciplines which tend toward phenomenology and objectivity have located in university departments of religion for the most part. Where theology faculties and departments of religion share in graduate instruction there have developed some very real strains as to what the dominant tone in graduate professional education should actually be. The result of much of this has been that the self-identity of the faculty has tended to move toward a discipline of peers independent of religion. The American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature have become the arbiters not only of scholarship but of peer identity and recognition. Their remarkable growth in size and influence over the past several decades testifies to this. The practical fields have also organized into professional groups, with increased role-definition established by competencies to the point where the understanding of the ministry itself can be defined in terms of professionalism. The implications of these two developments, not only for theological education but for the church, are far-reaching. A scholar-theologian who once taught on a theological faculty and later went to a department of religion in a secular university has written poignantly about his pilgrimage through the kind of identity crisis I have just described: one who came out with a kind of neo-fundamentalist faith, went through graduate school, established peer relationships with scholars, and then found himself in a crisis of belief and now speaks about the morality of belief—the importance of being true and honest in what one can actually avow and affirm with integrity. Having gone through all this, he now states he wants to teach in a department of religion, but in one that is next door to a faculty of divinity. What this person is stating with courage and clarity, many others still on theology faculties feel vaguely or refuse to acknowledge. Similarly, many clergy find their identity more compatible with non-church related roles, such as counseling, social work or teaching.

There is, in short, a confusion in identity, and students who come to seminary and become identified with faculty are neces-

sarily plunged into that confusion. Now to be sure, there will be certain students who, regardless of what seminary they attend, won't make any identification with faculty. They will be defensive and guard their commitment like a treasure in danger of being plundered. They will not become educated; they will have simply survived the educational experience. It is not to protect such students that the issue of identity is raised. It is to say that we as faculty inevitably reflect the various and sometimes conflicting communities of our primary identification, with all the pressures and blandishments that those communities can hold forth. In a sense, our seminaries reflect the disruption and atomism of contemporary life as it is found in other areas of society. Thus our problem of identity is part of our time. One could suggest that the question of lifestyle in the ministry, so troubling to many of the Annual Conference—differing understandings of what is acceptable, whether we are talking about things to eat and drink or whether we are talking about clothing or whether we are talking about sexuality, divorce, etc.—expresses this tension in a most dramatic way. Lifestyle can be understood as the living out of one's primary identification. With whom do we seek to be identified, for what reasons, and are the people of God recognizably a part of that?

For the last ten to fifteen years seminaries have been trying to address this. We have all had the feeling, growing out of the 1950's, that there needed to be a new kind of relevance for academic discipline. We felt that students should have a broader experiential base, and we have tried all kinds of changes in curriculum, such as experiments in contextual education, teaching parishes, internships, supervised ministry programs, etc. These have had their value. They have indeed broadened the experiential base of the student. But what about the faculty? Unless faculty are also struggling to bring these disparate worlds into coherence, students are left without guidance and support at the critical juncture of their professional lives. But how can this be encouraged in a natural and unforced way?

We hit on one such way almost by accident at Emory several years ago. We established what is called Supervised Ministry to expand the world of the student beyond the strictly academic. Similar programs have been set up in seminaries around the country. From the outset, the faculty not only authorized this program but agreed to participate in it across the board. It took this shape.

Ten students and a faculty member meet two hours a week through the first year of seminary, with the students placed in supervised settings where they experience human need, whether it be aging and death, emergency rooms, or poverty. The student becomes aware of his or her limitations in dealing with these extreme or demanding situations, and they bring back to their reflection group the turmoil, distress, or sense of accomplishment derived from life situations. The unintentional benefit of this program has been that while the students gained a measure of clarity about who they were, their identity, it also expanded the world of the faculty. The faculty came to be perceived as colleagues with students in situations which raised issues of personal faith, the capacity to respond in certain situations, in short, questions of ministry. Through this the faculty became aware, and the students knew they were aware, of the struggle the students were going through, and this reflexively helped redefine and stimulate their classroom work.

More recently we have attempted to further enlarge the shared experiential base of faculty and students by having courses taught in local churches; not just practical courses, but Bible, theology, etc. The courses are jointly taught by faculty and pastors, and are attended by students and lay persons. The courses seek to address a "problematic" that church or some of its people are involved with. If Supervised Ministry deals with the existential commitment question that students press, these courses deal with questions of the people of God as they struggle to live and survive faithfully in the world. It happens that I taught a course last fall with a black minister in his church in downtown Atlanta. The course was "The Mission and Ministry of a Local Church." Our students and those lay people tried to understand what that church's own task should be in that particular setting. And of course the setting was black. It became clear that we were not providing adequate opportunity for our students to come to terms with the problem of racism, either within themselves, or within the institutional structure of the church and of society. What it did for me as an ethicist was to help me realize that there is no way of understanding the task of the church in today's society without a sense of complicity. Supervised Ministry challenges the students—and vicariously, the faculty—in our limitations. The urban setting threatens us because we feel implicated. Reflecting on this, I realized that this is the academic pay-off for me: that there can be no meaningful social ethics written today that does not have com-

plicity written into the heart of it, not as a cheap confession but as an appreciation of the corporateness which binds us one to another in hope and in guilt. This is possible only when there is a community of sufficient grace that allows us to be that threatened and yet not undone.

What does this mean? We attempt to place whatever "text" we're teaching in a different setting where it becomes enlarged as well as seen in a different context. That move allows a different set of questions to be asked with appropriateness.

The move back and forth in juxtaposition of the same text in different settings creates a new understanding of ourselves and of the "text." This process does not challenge the integrity of an academic discipline; it does not require a certain lifestyle for the faculty or students; it does not presuppose formal church ties. What it does do is to allow latent identities and identifications with the church to emerge freely, and, along with the students, to provide an occasion to recapture and reconfirm one's identity as a servant of Jesus Christ. To be sure, there are genuine resistances to this in all of us. The issue of identity is no longer just a student problem; it is also ours. It is also an exhausting process physically and logistically. It takes time and energy. But at least the confusion of identity that all of us are now sharing is being articulated, reflected upon, suggesting new ways of being bound together as the people of God. We continue to affirm that a seminary in a university is not an ecclesiastical agency; therefore the problem of identity cannot be resolved by ecclesiastical control or fiat. But while a divinity school is not the conventicle of the church, at the same time it is not just another graduate school. There is historic basis for this, the attempt to combine faith experience and parish involvement with theological reflection. We find it in Augustine, who was an active bishop, in Luther and Wesley and Edwards, as well as in many of the nineteenth-century theologians. This approach simply takes seriously the sociology of knowledge, but it turns it around. We are no longer only relativized by our setting. By placing ourselves in another setting than the strictly academic, we recognize that spiritual formation and identity require intention in a fragmented world. Theological education in this last quarter-century must assist in affirming our identification with the people of God in the common ground of the church. In that way students themselves may have their identity tested and confirmed as the people of God.

God and America's Future

by John K. Roth
Professor of Philosophy, Claremont Men's College

and Frederick Sontag
Professor of Philosophy, Pomona College

"Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God."
—I Peter 2:16

I. A Theology of Liberation

One repeated American promise is to grant individual liberty. Often because of religious convictions, Americans have assumed that our task was not only to extend freedom at home but to crusade in making the world safe for democracy. This ideal of providing liberty for all of our citizens, even extended to aid self-determination in other lands, is so basic to American self-understanding that our national self-consciousness becomes confused when these hopes are thwarted, as they have been recently.

As Americans look to the future, some part of national identity lies in framing theologies of liberation which state how religion can fulfill promises for release. Then we can see better the limits we face, what falls to government to promote and what must be left to the individual. Conditions in much of the world are so unsympathetic to cries for liberation that there seems to be little use in battling for political and social change. However, where enthusiasm to achieve liberty does exist, it receives added impetus from a parallel religious drive to release the spirit. Since political idealism is partly the result of evangelical fervor, a theology of liberation keeps spiritual aspirations channeled toward liberating goals.

"With God all things are possible" (Mt. 19:26). One task for any theology of liberation is to take seriously the multiple implications in that Biblical claim. The assertion is a two-edged sword. It points out the demonic potentials of existence as well as our chances for a good life. Part of the enigmatic power which God allows to evil is its ability to take people unaware. Like Eve, beguiled by a serpent who convinced her that no harm would come

from eating forbidden fruit (see Gen. 3:1-24), we often take our safety, security, and happiness for granted. Millions of Jews, to name another case, turned into smoke in Nazi ovens without rebellion. Many could not believe the horrors produced by men and women—and allowed by God—until it was too late for effective resistance. No theology of liberation can offer naive optimism about the simple goodness of nature, man, or God.

No sane person seeks liberation from restrictions which he finds are necessary, and most people will not resist oppressions which are inescapable. Probably a majority of the world's people live under conditions of scarcity and tyranny; only small numbers ever gather the strength for rebellion. Due to God's reluctance to intervene directly to assure political victory, theologies should be cautious about urging open protest and rebellion where increased brutality and oppression are the likely results. Even taking the American experience into account, any historical evaluation of the "success" of revolutions is extremely ambiguous with respect to the liberation actually produced, e.g., the French Revolution. Most revolutionary warfare does not follow the relatively controlled American model. A sound theology of liberation, then, should warn that the paths of protest—from nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience to armed insurrection—are always treacherous, risky, and sometimes self-defeating.

American colonists did not step off their boats with a violent cry of "Revolution!" on their lips. By and large, they desired little more than peace with the established civil authorities in England. True, they did have a strong sense of individual autonomy and an inclination toward religious and social community patterns which encouraged liberation from authority imposed from outside. But even in religious circles they debated long and hard whether violent revolution was the only path open to them.

God seems to act on similar principles. The structure of the natural order does erupt in violence from time to time, but no singular revolutionary thrust against oppression is involved. In fact, the wreckage often falls most painfully on the weak and innocent rather than on those who tyrannize. According to religious accounts, God does intercede to lead people in rebellion and out of bondage. The same records, however, indicate that he does so only rarely and in special cases. Even if we use Jesus as the model, we must admit that God's performance in human flesh is quite restrained.

Reading the Biblical reports of Jesus' life leaves us with a mixed reaction. His potential power is overwhelming, but simultaneously one is struck by how sparing Jesus is in using it. For every miraculous healing, many continued to suffer hopelessly; for every Lazarus raised from death, thousands perished. Rebukes and judgments brought against religious and political corruption did not alter the fact that day-to-day life in Jerusalem went on much as usual. Jesus' driving of the money changers out of the temple and his flaunting of the religious establishment are trivial incidents compared to the reforms he might have guaranteed had he unleashed his full power.

The crucifixion and resurrection have sometimes been taken as a mandate for Christian revolutionary violence on the grounds that they reveal how violent acts and even death itself may be necessary to achieve God's goals. However, those early events certainly were much subdued in their immediate impact. Only a few felt the implications of Good Friday and Easter at first. The emerging understanding of God's newly revealed liberation does not seem to have been aimed primarily at producing armed outbursts against oppressive Roman authority. More characteristic was the conviction that "we should love one another" (I Jn. 3:11).

Jesus is indeed a strange liberator. To embody so much power and to use it with such restraint for the fragile aim of love—no wonder that many of his followers became confused and disillusioned. No wonder that the "good news" of Jesus remains foolishness and a stumbling block to many (see I Cor. 1:22-25). Yet, this same Jesus is the Christian's sign that, in the mode of future triumph, all things are possible with God.

The liberating theme which Jesus communicates is that death, and every destructive force that contributes to it, is ultimately under the control of a God who loves and cares enough for human life to save it. This puts God basically "on our side." Freedom from the final limitation of death does not guarantee us liberation from every other restriction that the world can produce, but it encourages work against any enslaving circumstances that do not have to be. If life is not necessarily ended by death, there is no reason why men and women should simply acquiesce before any other limitation in this life. Our successful liberation efforts, however, still rest on a judicious estimate of the odds and the best courses of action. Having promised people liberation in the ulti-

mate case, God essentially frees us to find our own way in the world, to use the powers we have as best we can.

God urges us to set aside every obstacle that thwarts us, but we are told not to use our freedom "as a pretext for evil" (I Pet. 2:16). He knows that we may reject his injunction as presumptuous, given the horrors he has unleashed in our path. But the challenge he throws out is for us to match his ultimate overcoming of evil with our own acts of care and mercy. God calls those who trust his love and eventual goodness to lend their hands as servants to free others from every misery and degradation of body, mind, and spirit in the present age.

Jesus raises another basic issue for a theology of liberation: Can God stimulate the desire for liberation and at the same time reconcile persons to each other? The answer is "yes," but the way is neither clear nor easy. On the one hand, Jesus can say, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth: it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword" (Mt. 10:34, Jerusalem Bible). He realized that the liberating thrust of his ministry would have its divisive effects just because it opposes every form of selfishness, legalism, and tyranny. Wherever the appetite for freedom is whetted, disruptive protest, rebellion, and even violence are not easy to restrain. In most cases, the drive for liberation starts off with a further fragmentation of human relationships. Thus, it does not come with reconciliation as its most immediate and obvious quality. Certainly liberation implies reconciliation as an end product, since no one has much freedom when the world is dominated by hatred, fear, and guilt. Still, liberation and reconciliation become synonymous only far down the road of human action.

The aims of liberation may lead to the use of violence when any opposition refuses to yield to reasonable pressures to recognize individual or national rights. We may concur with early colonists that violence is even justified religiously if honest and prayerful deliberations convince us that more restrained courses of action only play into the hands of tyrannizing forces. Short of such considerations, however, armed force remains a questionable means from a Christian perspective. In no case is it an unambiguous instance of the works of love Jesus stressed.

James and John were ready to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village that refused to welcome Jesus. But Jesus is hardly an enthusiastic advocate of violent revolution, and he rebuked those disciples (see Lk. 9:51-56). Human revolutions

often kill people in the name of liberating them. Jesus saw his mission differently. His aim was to save, not to destroy. He fed hungry bodies and gave sight to blind eyes to encourage new life. *The goal was to replace the waste of liberation-through-violence with the hope of liberation-through-love.* In this way God seeks to bring liberation and reconciliation together. Unfortunately, these fragile motives are left to work in a volatile and hate-filled world. Christians believe that "love never ends" (I Cor. 13:8), but no one can deny that many efforts to liberate and reconcile through love are trampled out of existence every day.

Such realities help to show the complexity of God's nature and the difficulty of the path he selected for this world. Although our optimistic hopes and religious beliefs tend to obscure the fact, God has many faces. One side of him leans toward violence and destruction, as we see from the sheer presence of evil in existence. Another suggests healing and a concern that refuses to allow us to be lost forever. Freedom and love find each other in God but not without struggle, since he refuses to reduce himself to any single quality. This is our dilemma too. We never have one simple identity. Freedom makes us pluralistic. Still, our task is that we must hold the many together as one or else face self-destruction.

Self-centered demands hinder reconciling love and threaten freedom. Thus, God does not frantically clutch at himself or simply demand that which pleases him immediately. He defines and establishes freedom and love by turning toward the world, although he does not choose to make the situation calm and idyllic. He opens himself to emotional involvement and suffering, and thus to being affected. Self-giving may be the ultimate route to self-liberation, but only he who gives himself can expect others to do so. Such action is a defining factor in God's nature, even as he chooses to allow opposing tendencies to operate within his life. God chooses to love in the situation where love means the most: namely, where his freedom and ours create horror and destruction which do not have to be and which threaten love at every turn. His saving care remains in control, but this happens only through his willed identification with Paul's injunction to us: "Make love your aim" (I Cor. 14:1).

Because man's powers are limited and his understanding slight, it is natural for him to think that liberation simply means to secure his own position. Thus, we require conversion before self-giving on any broad scale becomes possible. A loving God of liberation

is a constant subverter of the human tendency to seek our own security first. He liberates by helping us to accept our own uncertainty. Once we take a step in that direction, we can begin to offer aid to others in precarious conditions and thus further our own release by self-forgetting love. Just as God's freedom involves sharing his power and love with us, so one is released from self-enslavement if someone else becomes of greater concern. When it serves us well, religion moves people toward this revolutionizing discovery.

Ironically, religion all too often actually presses its own people into servitude rather than working for their release. This is not completely surprising, because forms of sacrifice and ritual intended as a means to free the spirit can in turn become obstacles when required and performed for their own sake. In such cases, religion does not feed the human desire for freedom. Exactly the opposite: it only becomes an added burden. Unless ecclesiastical communities can check their own tendency toward inflexible and worn-out patterns, they can never act as a spiritual source for social liberation.

Thus, even as we advocate religion as a source of incentive for liberation, we must remember its pluralistic character in America. Religious communities are unlikely ever to agree completely on political and social courses of action. Moreover, much religious life tends to respect established political authority, when others see it as corrupt and oppressive. In addition, every religious press for liberation concentrates first on the spirit, and it is no simple matter to say exactly what the human spirit requires as a necessary condition for freedom. Sometimes the soul seems free in adverse external conditions and most lost in easy surroundings.

II. God's Authority as a Sign for the Future

There is no question but that churches and the moral force of God once served as basic sources of authority in American life. There is also little question that this situation has changed substantially since the 'fifties. The authority which religious communities and God previously offered to underwrite our goals has largely dissolved. Of course, iconoclasm is not restricted to religion. Consciousness of pluralism and mass pressure for liberation challenge authority everywhere. Thus, if new visions of God are to have a part in our life together, we need to consider: How is it still possible to interpret and perceive God's authority?

God holds the many together as one. His existence involves no unity that destroys variety, but neither does plurality lead to his disintegration. God expresses his emotions and energies so that they achieve a controlled outlet. This creates a world more wild than we would choose for ourselves, but nonetheless our existence is a reflection of God's grappling with freedom. Insofar as men and women are created in God's image, they participate in these same tensions. Thus, our relation to God authorizes a human quest not only for freedom and liberation but for reconciliation as well. It infuses democracy with a mandate to assist the weak, since God finds a way to nourish variety wherever possible. True, God does not force anyone to live in ways that further human liberation and reconciliation. But the general outline of his creation, plus the fundamental qualities of his nature, link him closely with liberating and reconciling interests. To appeal to this authority does not guarantee success for our struggles, but it provides a sense of confidence and encouragement which may spell the difference between improvement or further decay.

Such an authoritative God is one who directs attention to freedom and majority decision, but who also stresses compassion and help for minority groups who suffer unjustly. This view of God demands a constant watchfulness to assist those unable to hold their own in an unchecked competition. At the same time, if this God controls evil up to a point in our present life, he does not eliminate it altogether. Thus, the organization of all humanitarian aims must make plans that take account of what will destroy and work against any utopian project.

Choices between "life and good, death and evil" (Deut. 30:15) face us perpetually. The most Americans can say is that, like God's activity in creation, we always choose some of each. We will never become a nation of pure and simple goodness. Our debauchery has gone too far; our Eden is permanently spoiled. In all Christian experience, however, the future is never completely closed, and God's sustained authority over existence is revealed by the fact that new opportunities remain available. What should this mean in the United States today? As far as work within the nation is concerned, God's authority points toward a primary emphasis on freedom, and particularly it involves a stress on ways to liberate people from enslaving dependence on either stimulants or luxuries, from narrow self-concern, from needless governmental intrusions into private life, and from physical miseries which will destroy

many in our population as well as in other lands. Release of the American spirit is needed so that it can flower in art and literature as well as in religion. *God's authority is located in pressure to keep the future open for diversity.* Without this, the present tends to close in—deadly and dead-ended. This has happened already for some lands and people, including many Americans. But we can escape that fate if a new sense of God's intentions is felt among us.

God's authoritative concern for freedom is incompatible with any narrow focus on our own self-fulfillment. He requires movement toward communal concern that promotes the broadest range of personal achievement. Thus, insofar as people are religiously motivated, they should feel the spirit of the Lord pressing an obligation to bring "good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18; see also Isa. 61:1). This means offering immediate relief from suffering, even if pain and need cannot be eliminated. It means checking the spread of poverty, even if Jesus understood correctly when he said that "you have the poor with you always" (Mt. 26:11, Jerusalem Bible) "Release the captives" (Lk. 4:18; see also Isa. 61:1) is the special message for Americans to preach and act upon.

The oppressed are where you find them: in underdeveloped "third world" states, in despair-breeding ghettoes, or in the most fashionable suburbs. Americans who respond to a vision of God's authority will "proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk. 4:19; see also Isa. 61:2). That is, they will work to heal the wounds of involuntary servitude, whether it is as a bondage to self or to others. We can do this even though we know that full freedom cannot be achieved in America or anywhere else on the face of this earth.

Every American who can hear God's voice has a mission for the days ahead. It is the call to open new land. Such "new land," however, will have to mean something less literal than it did in our nation's beginning. Thus, we must learn the necessity for inner renewal as a condition for breaking through inhibiting conditions. Whenever and wherever such need exists, we are called to meet it.

III. America, Land of Odyssey

The 1970s created a forced journey for many unwilling American adventurers. We would like to return to easier ways and simpler days, but we sometimes feel like "strangers and exiles on the earth" (Heb. 11:13) as we face trials not of our own choosing. We would like to feel the comforts of a homeland, but instead

events once again launch Americans on an odyssey, a painful and soul-testing voyage of self-discovery.

No one consciously desired the problems which recently have affected us all. Critics of the Vietnam War were sometimes paranoid, but few went to the extreme of claiming that the actual results of that involvement were planned or wanted. Even the most optimistic interpreters of the "drug culture" now admit that our high rates of addiction and personal disintegration were not quite what they had in mind. Environmental deterioration came in spite of an optimistic trust in science and technology. Violence on the educational scene was hardly the anticipated outcome of the billions spent on schooling. Economic upheavals, not to mention corruption in domestic politics, added still other unwelcomed pressures.

We thought we knew our homeland; now we are not so sure. Few Americans expected to become restless in the midst of success, and it is disturbing to find that many natives simply cannot settle down. This mood of restless wandering has a religious dimension, but even this seems strange to us, because we thought the era of roaming evangelists was over and done with. Early pilgrims entered unknown American territory in a spirit of adventure, and the opening of the West by migrants and refugees is still a tale with worldwide romantic attractions. It is just that once streets were paved and telephones installed, Americans tended to think that past history could not become present experience. We knew the early colonists often saw themselves as Israelites struggling toward a promised land. As we built on their accomplishments and found so many of our dreams fulfilled, we came to take success, prosperity, and power for granted.

Our wandering now occurs largely in labyrinths of the soul, even when it is coupled with a frantic pacing up and down the globe. But this spiritual dimension to our difficulties is not easily fathomed. For so long our struggles seemed to be primarily material and, what is more, overwhelmingly successful. Such physical obsessions leave people ill-prepared either to see or to accept a religious element placed into the national quest again. Even the religious life that sometimes accompanied our drive for power and wealth was so optimistic that it leaves us disoriented when our expectations are thwarted. When corruption and failure, disillusionment and restlessness set in again, we have no concept of God

that seems adequate to explain this. When we most need religious insight, it strangely seems difficult to find.

Religiously, a pilgrimage is more our model now than any restful contemplation, although thousands seek such escape from tension. Or at least our contemplation of God will have to be seen mainly as a seeking movement. Religious pilgrims have always been important in the romantic interpretation of American life, but now we have a chance to appreciate that role more profoundly. We seem destined always to be seekers in spite of all we found. As real pilgrims have always done, can we learn to die "in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar" (Heb. 11:13)?

Many Americans seem not to be "at home" with what we are or have become. The concept of *alienation* expresses this mood. Such feelings are not strange to one who understands the life of a pilgrim. To move out or to be forced away from "home" can be a necessary experience religiously. Moreover, he who seeks religiously to lose his life for others cannot expect to escape alienating experiences. Only in a purely secular context does alienation appear either as strange or as completely bad. Religiously alienation can be accepted; secularly it remains a puzzle to us.

Today luxury abounds. That much is different from the early situation of pilgrims in America, and it makes it difficult to see our present similarity with those pioneer times. It is there nonetheless. They struggled with little; we struggle with much. The spirit can be disoriented and remain in need as much in circumstances of light and plenty as in those of darkness and want. Because our appetites set no limit on us short of addiction, enslavement, or self-destruction, a luxury culture destroys human spirits as fast as any. It produces a restlessness of soul not unlike that prompted by the tyranny, poverty, and corruption which first forced early American pilgrims to set out on their voyages across the sea. The human spirit seems satisfied by neither too much nor too little. Can we learn that the religious dimension always retains some independence from any economic and cultural setting? If so, we are better prepared to meet spiritual need on its own terms and also to see our solidarity with people in every time and place.

Perhaps we thought that affluence and power had eliminated the need for religious pioneering. But if the harsh side of God's character drives us into spiritual wastelands exactly at the peak of material success, then the austere trials of the early American

pilgrims in seeking a new home will be repeated, not in exact detail but as an internal dimension of our own experience. To think that we have come of age as persons passed beyond God, therefore, only makes our need more intense and more difficult to satisfy because it goes unacknowledged.

A God who keeps us constantly in motion, blocking our attempts to rest and sending us off on strange journeys—this is a God of turmoil as well as of compassion. When we falter and fail, he offers liberation as a challenge. This God "is like a refiner's fire" (Mal. 3:2). To be confronted by him is to raise uncertainty to a new pitch, since we have no absolute assurance that he will find any of us worth saving. But perhaps this is the setting in which the Christian promise best comes to life. "You will have to suffer only for a little while: the God of all grace who called you to eternal glory in Christ will see that all is well again: he will confirm, strengthen and support you. His power lasts for ever and ever" (I Pet. 5:10, Jerusalem Bible). In these trials we feel the need not to lose sight of Jesus as the truth that makes us free (see Jn. 8:31-32). Perhaps we can see him more clearly as "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2), which is that ultimately "God is love" (I Jn. 4:8).

If God loves us now, he does so in a restless manner. That is, his concern for people takes the form of constant disturbance when we seem about to settle down to enjoy prosperity. This disturbance is reflected in American diversity, and it contributes to our odyssey. Since we agree on no single form of religion, some tend to reject or wander among them all. God seems to intend us to search for him in many ways and to find him satisfactorily in no one alone. God's ultimate aim may still be release and fulfillment, but now this comes more by complex means of adventure and dislocation, risk and loss, pain and death.

Responding to these realities, religion should teach a detachment from material possessions and develop an ability to travel light and to stay flexible. Worship, then, becomes a means for gathering strength to venture out. Prayer aims less at peace of mind and more at seeking God's strange ways within the disruptions of our plans. Religious communities should give the spiritual support all adventurers need if loneliness is not to destroy them in the desert. At least religion can still offer some "good news." A pilgrim should go out to spread it, announcing God's support even when our wanderings seem pointless at the time. To be lost from

home is not a condition we are likely to choose for ourselves. Given such a predicament, religion's function is to help us see how the longest distance between two points can be the most rewarding. The effort to survive, to improve life, and to "sing the Lord's song in a foreign land" (Ps. 137:4) is still at the center of faith.

The ancient concepts of odyssey and pilgrimage suggest the reality of a God more austere than we often expected or hoped to meet. He is a nomadic deity who has no fixed location and who forever claims his independence from simple assumptions about what he is or ought to be. This God can still be encountered and even experienced as good and loving, but we are faced with the fact that his presence shifts and his appearance changes. He may not be found a second time where he was before, and he can speak in unexpected forms and places, just as Christians claim he once did in Bethlehem. If these things are true of God, it is not surprising that our land is one of spiritual odyssey, one whose borders are no more fixed now than in our days of geographical expansion. To wander and seek is our lot because in God "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Responses

Waldo Beach, Professor of Christian Ethics:

This reader's reaction to the piece on "God and America's Future" is largely one of bafflement. The experience of reading it was like swimming in the wake of a squid, as I recall some American review of a German theological work put it: "One can get the general direction, but the going is very murky." There are many insightful and jolting statements, certainly much that upsets conventional wisdom about the reaction of religion in American life, but on the whole this reviewer was not persuaded, if indeed he perceived the main drift of the argument.

The essay attempts to restate a theology of liberation that would show how "religion can fulfill promises for release." The description of God's nature and will makes use of highly anthropomorphic imagery. To be sure, anthropomorphic language is all there is to go by in describing the divine and the transcendent. But to speak so blithely and certainly of God as a "nomadic deity," who does not "clutch at himself," as having "many faces," as one who "opens himself to emotional involvement and suffering," may be quite too anthropomorphic. Moreover, there is a curious kind of theodicy in this essay. God "allows to evil" its "enigmatic power" to take people unaware. There are "horrors he has unleashed in our path." Is God then the active cause of the evils from which he calls mankind to be liberated?

The authors' Christology, too, is a curious one. Whatever may be one's views of the credibility of the miracles attributed to Jesus, the inference from this essay is that Jesus was a magic-worker, with infinite power, who was oddly sparing in his use of it. "Jesus's driving the money-changers out of the temple and his flaunting of the religious establishment are trivial incidents as compared to the reforms he might have guaranteed had he unleashed his full power." Well, then, might he have overthrown the oppressive Roman rule and liberated its Jewish victims, if he had really let loose?

The essay intends to relate liberation theology to the American experience and America's future. The American Revolution is cited, but its evidence gives doubtful support to a main point defended: that the liberating and protesting political actions taken against oppressors, ranging "from nonviolent resistance and civil

disobedience to armed insurrection are always treacherous, risky, and sometimes self-defeating." Yes, to be sure, but the major American experience of the Civil War (which is not mentioned) is evidence to the contrary. Would we have known liberation for the slave and reconciliation of the nation had we not gone to the tragic and cruel necessity of taking up arms and going to war?

The authors are more on target when they suggest what ethics or life-style should be derived from liberation theology. They point up, although not as sharply or cogently as they might, the two sides of freedom. In the classical Lutheran sense, as set forth in Martin Luther's "On Christian Liberty," Christian freedom is always freedom *from* and freedom *for*. In our own day, liberation theology has stressed the former: freedom from the oppressions of racism, colonial imperialism, and so forth. The authors are sensitive to the more subtle forms of tyranny from which America needs to be released. Possessed as we are by our possessions, Americans need liberation from "an enslaving dependence on stimulants and luxuries."

By and large, though, the connotation of the word "freedom" in Mr. Middle America's ears is only the negative one: freedom from. "I am a free man. Nobody can push me around." Yet, even as he pledges allegiance to one nation "with liberty and justice for all," he often neglects the obligatory side of freedom: one is freed from tyrannies in order to serve the neighbor in love, to secure justice. The Christian implication of liberation theology for America today, to this observer, is that God's call is both to a freedom from materialism and affluence so often rationalized in the rhetoric of "free enterprise," and, more importantly, to a freedom for action that closes the gap between our wealth and the Third World's poverty. If in 1776 a Declaration of Independence was a needed political expression of the ethics of liberation, in 1977 the most needful expression of that ethic is a Declaration of Interdependence, with actions, in both foreign and domestic policy, suited to that declaration.

HERBERT O. EDWARDS, Associate Professor of Black Church Studies:

This Bicentennial year has called forth a number of attempts to reinterpret America's past, to analyze our present situation, and to make projections concerning the future. No one questions the pervasive character of secularity in today's society, but all seem

agreed that, since America was founded by persons with some real sense of a Divine Presence, it is still legitimate and necessary to call attention to our religious heritage.

Indeed, Professors Roth and Sontag suggest that, more often than not, the projected American ideal of granting individual liberty for its citizens at home, and spreading the idea of individual liberty abroad, was informed by religious convictions. Given the fact that our hopes have been thwarted by powers beyond ourselves, and given the fact that there was such a close connection between our hopes and our religious convictions, theologies of liberation must help us today to understand the limits we face, what it falls to government to promote, and what must be left to the individual.

In the first place, we must recognize that a goodly part of the present problem is traceable to the nature of reality and of God. It may be that reality simply cannot be expected to accommodate "liberation for all," from "all unnecessary oppressive forms." Perhaps God will only support and crown with success limited kinds of revolutionary thrusts such as the American Revolution. If that is true, then theologians of liberation should exercise extreme caution in urging open protest and rebellion against oppression.

Further, only limited use should be made of the American Revolution as a liberating paradigm. The limits of that effort should be accepted; the methods chosen must not become normative, however. "We may concur with the early colonists that violence is even justified religiously if honest and prayerful deliberations convince us that more restrained courses of action only play into the hands of tyrannizing forces. Short of such considerations, however, armed force remains a questionable means from a Christian perspective" (xx).

Christians and Christian theologians need to understand that it is not possible to expect or to guarantee success in eliminating injustice. Our great expectations concerning liberation efforts, therefore, need to be tempered by the awareness of the ever-present character of evil, which can turn our noble dreams into ashes in our mouths.

Our people are not really bad. "No one consciously desired the problems which recently have affected us all" (xx). Part of the problem is that, "as we built on the accomplishments of the early founders of the country, and found so many dreams fulfilled, we came to take success, prosperity, and power for granted" (xx).

We are still wandering pilgrims but the West is closed; the open spaces are gone. Now "our wandering occurs largely in labyrinths of the soul."

"Today luxury abounds" (40). The early pilgrims struggled with little; we struggle with much. Someone has suggested that the present task of white theology is to help America's disappointed, disillusioned, and much distressed white middle class handle their grief in creative ways.

In sum and substance, it seems that Roth and Sontag have taken the position that those who are plagued by material success and prosperity and restlessness of soul can be encouraged to take heart by the knowledge that their plight is not unlike God's own.

Not only does God identify with them in their restless pilgrimage, He drives them on, beyond fixed borders, as He did their fathers. Indeed, God's authority is located in pressure that He applies to keep the future open for diversity. Inner renewal, spiritual renewal, is a necessary condition today for breaking through inhibiting conditions.

In the January, 1976, issue of *Interpretation,* Gardiner Taylor argued: "There is one great weakness in the American temper which is revealed from a reading of our past. It is the inability of the nation to sustain its energies and resources in the pursuit of a goal when that goal proves elusive and difficult to attain and when great cost, financial or psychological, is required and when prolonged individual sacrifice is demanded." ("Some Musing on a Nation 'Under God,'" p. 42).

There is another weakness in the white American temper which is exemplified by Roth and Sontag. When efforts fail to produce a closer degree of correspondence between the justice and equality to which we give lip service and the actual practice in the society, we are quite adept at shifting the responsibility to God.

It is clear that Roth and Sontag are not writing for the oppressed and the poor. For them luxury does not abound. For them, the restlessness in their souls does not come from a superfluity of goods. For them, the "new frontiers," the "future open spaces" to which God is calling them is to an alteration of the present structures to make them more just—for all.

Once again we see theologians coming to provide "aid and comfort" to unjust structures and their supporters. A genuine attempt on the part of liberation theology to begin with God's concern for the plight of the poor and oppressed is co-opted, or

at least tempered, by a "realism" which does not challenge and "God-talk" which does not disturb.

The use of the language of black and liberation theology—which emerges out of particular sociological settings, which carries perceptions, understandings, and aspirations which are integral to those settings—is illegitimate and imperialistic. The use of black and liberation theological language by white theologians without commitment to the structural changes commensurate with the demands of liberation theology is one of the worst possible forms of white racism's co-optative efforts. Such alleged praise is damning in the extreme.

What can be the possible motivation behind such efforts? To be all things to all persons? To reassure the victims of oppression that they have finally gotten their message across and they should consider that to be change enough in their situation? To reassure the community of oppressors that it is possible to incorporate what their victims are saying without any more substantive responses than confessions of *mea culpa* prior to going on with business as usual?

Frederick Herzog, Professor of Systematic Theology:

The Bicentennial has brought all kinds of critical evaluations of the "basic sources of authority in American life" (36). This particular contribution works with the thesis that since the '50s the authority "religious communities and God previously offered to underwrite our goals has largely dissolved" (36). The authors see this nation caught in spiritual malaise: "Our wandering now occurs largely in labyrinths of the soul, even when it is coupled with a frantic pacing up and down the globe" (39).

If I understand the purpose of the essay rightly, *part* of the authors' intention is to develop a liberation theology for *God and America's Future*. But where is theology rooted? The essay hardly makes clear the vast difference between America and the Church. I am not suggesting that theology should not pay attention to the nation of which it is also a part. But under the auspices of which logic does it make sense? The logic used in the essay is frightening.

Let me make the point clear by juxtaposing two statements. a) "Every American who can hear God's voice has a mission for the days ahead" (38). b) "We sometimes feel like 'strangers and exiles on the earth' as we face trials not of our own choosing"

(38). What I find "scary" is the easy transition from the secular to the spiritual, from an appeal to every American to the "strangers and exiles on earth" (cf. Heb. 11:13), which, I thought, was first of all how the early Christians saw themselves. I believe the vast difference somehow calls for explicit acknowledgment. The authors in this part of the essay, with the "strangers and exiles" remark, refer to "the romantic interpretation of American life" (40). Is it unfair altogether to think also of the essay as *a romantic interpretation of American life*?

No one has a corner on any theology, also not on what is called liberation theology. But there could be some kind of mutual understanding as to how liberation theology basically has been functioning. The way liberation theology has been done thus far shows up the authors' use of the term as largely a misappropriation of its intention: "As Americans look to the future, some part of national identity lies in framing theologies of liberation which state how religion can fulfill promises for release" (31). For all practical purposes, this is a call for a national theology. Isn't it only another way of promoting a civil religion? And thus ultimately another national ideology?

It is a humbling experience to have to think all along as one works through an article of this type that, in a weak moment, one has promised to evaluate it. I can only hope that before long also the authors will be struggling for a more careful use of the term liberation theology. In any case, I will try to study modesty in offering a few counterproposals.

(1) Liberation theology in the South emerged as the *poor* found a voice. Those of us who are using the term today were taught by the poor what liberation is—those poor who had hardly any national identity to be proud of. They were searching for human identity as—with the Bible in their hands—they wrested also from our lips the joyous cry of liberation. Today it needs saying—for who still thinks back that far?—that the poor who did this for us were black.*

(2) From this context emerges for us whites a tremendous struggle over the character of the *Church* in history. As a generality, it is of course not beside the point to claim: "A sound theology of liberation, then, should warn that the paths of protest—from nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience to armed

*See my article on "Doing Liberation Theology In the South," *NICM: Southern Regional Newsletter,* 1:2 (January, 1976), pp. 6f.

insurrection—are always treacherous, risky, and sometimes self-defeating" (32). But the impression is here not avoided that liberation theology invites people "off the bat" to some general activism. Rather, the first thing we learned was that through God in Christ the poor found a measure of human identity in a certain form of Church praxis. Those who are on the side of the rich and the powerful need to go through some radical consciousness-altering before they will understand what is happening. Simply to claim that God is on our side without consciousness-altering for me creates an untenable theological condition: "The liberating theme which Jesus communicates is that death, and every destructive force that contributes to it, is ultimately under the control of a God who loves and cares enough for human life to save it. This puts God basically 'on our side'" (33). "God is on our side" has been the theme song of most white theologies of the West for God knows how long. Liberation theology emerged as a determined effort to break the back of this kind of universalizing ideology.

(3) This is all to say that liberation theology emerged as a particular kind of *praxis*. Right away to jump to the liberation kerygma for America as a whole without the agonizing social analysis that makes one aware of the Church's complicity in injustice means to short-circuit the fundamental struggle of liberation theology. Christian theology always had to struggle primarily with the question of truth and untruth in the Church. Today it centers around the issue of justice. Unless culture finds liberation changes in the Church providing for greater justice, it will continue to show deaf ears to some broad message of liberation. The suspicion that liberation theology might only be the new ideology of the oppressor Church has been with us for a goodly while.

(4) It would be ungrateful for me if I were to give the impression that there were no relevant insights in the essay. My objection pertains to the logic that ties them together. At several points the authors suggest a clarity of approach that I do not see existing in that form in the authority bases to which they appeal. Jesus apparently was involved in a messy *justice* struggle within the sociopolitical structures of his day. I don't think it is enough to say Jesus left many of his followers confused and disillusioned: "Jesus is indeed a strange liberator. To embody so much power and to use it with such restraint for the fragile aim of love—no wonder that many of his followers became confused and disil-

lusioned" (33). To put all of this back on love *pure and simple* is to leave the present followers of Jesus even more confused and disillusioned. It is clear to me that in a brief essay one cannot say everything. But some things do need more careful articulation before one hastens on to other things.

(5) The transition from Jesus and God to our own course of action is simply not carefully enough stated. Jesus' struggle for justice may well point to God's *revolution*. Before really trying to discover what God is doing in the world, the authors refer us to our own successes in liberation: "Our successful liberation efforts, however, still rest on a judicious estimate of the odds and the best courses of action. Having promised people liberation in the ultimate case, God essentially frees us to find our own way in the world, to use the powers we have as best we can" (33-34). However beautiful the sound, it lacks clear theological ground.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke of "cheap grace." He did not mean to deny the significance of grace. Rather, he wanted to make grace all the more precious. Today we already are caught up in cheap liberation. The difficulties of grasping what God is doing in the world in terms of liberation are hardly seen in the essay. Sure, there are references to Jesus' remaining foolishness and a stumbling block. But this has to be prayed through theologically in regard to the tremendous price God is paying for liberation, and the price we have to pay for it—even if only in careful theological expression of the reasons for our participation in *God's* liberation.

John Roth and Frederick Sontag:

Responses to "God and America's Future" generate heat. Fortunately, Professors Beach, Edwards, and Herzog also shed light on our thinking. We are grateful for their vigor and insight. Although time and space permit no lengthy replies here, a few comments may move the dialogue ahead.

Professor Beach reports "bafflement," and he finds many of our ideas "curious." We sympathize, because the essay is part of a larger work-in-progress. Sections before and after set a context that is lacking as the article stands. Nonetheless, Professor Beach senses one central point very well: namely, that theologies of liberation are authentic to the degree that they honestly assess the power of God and Jesus over against forces which enslave and

slaughter. That analysis also requires reflection on how God himself is implicated in injustice.

History hardly suggests constant progress for the causes of human liberation. Is God doing the best he can, but his power is simply insufficient to make equality, justice, and love prevail? Or is God's power more substantial and more subtle, capable of transforming history, but used in creation and in relationship to human freedom so that burdens of liberty really do belong to men and women? Many other options exist, but our experience and religious perception incline us toward the second. Following Camus' suggestion—"man is not entirely to blame; it was not he who started history; nor is he entirely innocent, since he continues it"—we believe that a theology of liberation will ultimately be misleading ideology unless its hope takes account of the *co-responsibility* of God and human persons where injustice is concerned. Less realism makes liberation theology into opium for the people—quite different from the religious brand that Marx found a century ago, but just as deceptive.

Professor Edwards suggests that we speak treason if not racism, by giving the enemy "aid and comfort" with "a 'realism' which does not challenge and 'God-talk' which does not disturb." Here we arrive at another collage of problems. One of them is this: What counts as challenge and disturbance? If experience leaves it unclear that God—let alone people—works directly for human liberation in every time and place, that realization may be profoundly upsetting. It may demythologize and demystify some liberation theologies; it may intensify distress over the difficulty of obstacles encountered. It may challenge us to rethink the nature of God's support for any human enterprise, and thus drive home that we are dealing with a God who really does set us free—but perhaps more to struggle on our own than to succeed with divine assurance.

Does such an outlook ignore the oppressed and lend aid and comfort to oppressors? Not at all, unless it is deemed indispensable to convince people that God is for one side and against another. Again, history renders such partisanship precarious and problematic. So much so, in fact, that the real culprits are likely to be theologies of liberation that promise more than they deliver by claiming that God favors specific political-economic causes. Indeed it may be that religious aid and comfort for oppressors is avoided only when we discern God's commitment to freedom as

one which desires and even commands justice, equality, and love, but which will not underwrite their reality in history for us. Understanding that God leaves current liberation struggles as essentially human issues, we are impelled to live without illusion. We must weigh hopes and the odds against them, and use freedom to determine the courses we should follow.

In American society such deliberations need to assess the fact that luxury does abound. True, want and need are no strangers to the United States, but the image of America as an island of affluence in a sea of poverty still holds good. God's word judges the rich and middle-class, even as it encourages the poor. In turn, God waits for all of us to act. The ways we move determine whether we shall have business as usual, increased destruction, or greater chances for liberation. Religiously and theologically, the problem that faces churches and individuals alike is to clarify the kinds of liberation that are possible today and to implement the forms of teaching, preaching, and serving that will support them best by combining hope and realism.

Professor Herzog finds "frightening" logic in the essay. Specifically, he worries that we blur the distinction between American and Christian, state and church, and that we promote national theology, civil religion, and "ultimately another national ideology." Probably Herzog's fears cannot be put to rest, but let us try.

We do take the American scene seriously, and we think that theologies of liberation may clarify its problems and possibilities. We assume that the nation will be healthy to the degree that healthy religious faith is widespread in the land. We hold, too, that the health of religion depends on non-interference by the state. Our particular motivation is Christian, and we expect that our ideas will find a home in that community if anywhere. At the same time, we do not rule out the possibility that people outside of churches and outside of Christianity can be touched by liberation theologies. More importantly, God's voice is heard where it is heard. We do not presume that our theories set any boundaries on it.

We endorse Herzog's proposition that "no one has a corner on any theology, also not on what is called liberation theology." Many theologies of liberation are possible, thus rendering largely beside the point arguments as to whether one version fits some norm stipulated or established by precedent, and allegations that the language of one view co-opts another. In America's pluralistic

setting every theology is fallible, and none will be acceptable to everyone. Therefore, we have no aspirations for a national theology, but only for trying to develop one version of liberation theology that takes domestic problems seriously. Our hope is to facilitate self-criticism in America as a means to a more responsible role for the United States in the world. Surely that objective is a far cry from promotion of the civil religion and national ideology that Herzog seems to abhor.

Our position is that God directly favors the United States no more and no less than any other country, even though many Americans have thought differently. Thus, when we claim that God is "basically 'on our side,'" the point is anything but nationalistic. Rather, it underscores belief that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ reveal that God loves and cares enough for *human* life to redeem it from ultimate loss. We locate God's revolution in the promises communicated in Jesus. However, it strikes us that the complete fulfillment of them does not come in history, but only beyond death if at all. No doubt Professor Herzog will find this outlook inadequate: it is too universal and insufficiently occupied with "trying to discover what God is doing in the world."

What is God doing in the world? That is the question. People can give varied answers, but we see God's action in contemporary history as located primarily in disturbing challenges such as the one with which our article begins: "Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God" (I Pet. 2:16). That word, grounded in Christmas and Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost, and spoken to Christian and non-Christian, American and non-American, keeps all of us in God's hands even as it lets us live and die.

Professor Herzog is correct: there is a lot of cheap liberation offered today. It is much in evidence where people are led to believe that God is directly supporting/doing the work that is really left for men and women alone, where God is equated so much with the true, the good, and the beautiful that people are blinded to his darker side. As outlined in "God and America's Future," liberation is anything but cheap. It may be so costly as to elude us all, but that possibility makes liberating aims all the more precious and the struggle for them all the more important.

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Book Reviews

The Old Testament and the World. Walther Zimmerli. Translated by John Scullion, S. J. John Knox. 1976. 172 pp.

This excellent little work contains eleven lectures originally delivered in 1970 to the general academic community of Göttingen University, where Prof. Zimmerli was rector for several years (he is now emeritus). It is a primer of Old Testament theology. Although the perspective is the "world," the fundamental data of biblical theology are treated: creation, the role of humans upon earth, the People, the Land, worship, death and Life, Israel's hope, and law and gospel.

Zimmerli rightly distinguishes between the Greek *cosmos* (ordered, and even esthetic—"*cosmos* is the word which describes a woman's make-up and dress," p. 12) and the Hebrew world. The latter is "heaven and earth" (Gen. 1:1), the totality of creation in which man is the climax. However, he points out that "order" is a key word that has become important in recent research into the wisdom literature (Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes). Thus Zimmerli writes that "belief in an established order in which the wise man takes his place is to be seen too in the sayings about the life of the individual and in the admonitions which direct it" (p. 47). The reviewer is uneasy about this use of the category of order; it seems to be rather a modern way of controlling the diversities in life. In previous works, Zimmerli has consistently underscored the freedom and incomprehensibility of God. This is shown particularly in Job and Ecclesiastes, where it is made clear that the Lord "always keeps the last word for himself" (p. 52). Zimmerli was the first modern theologian to characterize wisdom theology as creation theology—and the "worldliness" of the Old Testament is particularly manifest in the wisdom literature.

The emphasis of this book is welcome because of the Christian tendency to "spiritualize" the biblical message. The Old Testament emphasis on *this* world, the here and now in which a relationship with the Lord is to be formed, is a needed ballast to the facile eschatology and talk about "heaven," which characterizes much Christian discourse. Both worlds, this and the next, must be kept together and the tension between the two in the biblical message is important for our day.

The essays in this work express ideas which Zimmerli has developed elsewhere in learned articles and commentaries that have gained wide acceptance. Thus they represent the fruit of mature scholarship, now available to the lay reader. The title of ch. 5 on the table of contents should read, "The People and its Enemies," and there is a garbled text on p. 79.

Roland E. Murphy

Biblical Backgrounds of the Middle East Conflict. Georgia Harkness and Charles F. Kraft. Abingdon. 1976. 208 pp. $7.95.

The basic ideological factor in the Middle East conflict is not to be found in the Bible, but in the book *The Jewish State* published in German in 1897 by the non-religious Hungarian Jew, Theodor Herzl. Though having lost his religion, Herzl felt compelled

to remain a Jew; so he conceived of Judaism as a nationality requiring a state in Palestine or elsewhere, and thus is considered the founder of political Zionism. The idea of using the Bible for arguments supporting the political Zionist position was mainly an afterthought brought in by more religious Jews who joined the movement. And this argument has been sold to an unfortunately large number of Christians, who are thus willing to identify the modern Palestinians with the ancient Canaanites and to justify the expulsion or liquidation of the former to make way for the Jews as somehow the will of God.

The late Professor Harkness was to a certain extent a victim of this fallacy, but she held the idea in an enlightened way that precluded the liquidation of Palestine and the Palestinians. Unfortunately she passed away before the book was finished. Her former colleague, Charles Kraft, took over and contributed the last four chapters. The first two of these chapters, 7 and 8, simply bring this layman's version of Biblical history onward from the United Kingdom through the New Testament period.

It is in the last two chapters that Kraft, a trained Biblical scholar, makes his contribution and gives the reader a sense of grappling with the thorny Palestine Problem as it exists today. In chapter 9, on Jerusalem, he shows by historical methodology that Jerusalem is just as much a holy city to Christians and Muslims as to Jews, and that the rights of all three religions must be preserved in any future settlement; also that Jerusalem is truly a holy city and hence should not be used as a pawn in big-power politics.

In the 10th and concluding chapter he presents an excellent summary of the "vastly complex situation" of today, with only one error, namely that Arab leaders urged the Palestinians to flee in 1948; most Arab leaders urged them to stay (cf. E. B. Childers, "The Other Exodus," *The Spectator,* May 12, 1961). He attempts to present a fair-minded and Christian point of view with justice to both sides so far as that is possible. As an appendix he presents verbatim two resolutions on the subject by the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. These are excellent expressions of a truly peace-loving Christian consensus. Would that some of this spirit could be caught by the combatants and the great powers that are involved in the conflict!

W. F. Stinespring

The New Testament Environment. Eduard Lohse. Translated by John E. Steely. Abingdon. 1976. 300 pp. $12.95 cloth, $6.95 paper.

This book by now Bishop Eduard Lohse was translated from the German work of exactly the same title (*Umwelt das Neuen Testament*) first published in 1971 (revised in 1974) as a supplement to the German commentary series *Das Neue Testament Deutsch.* Another supplementary volume of this series, W. G. Kümmel's *Theology of the New Testament,* has also been translated by Steely and published by Abingdon.

The New Testament Environment is, as the title implies, an introduction to the world of the New Testament. Part I treats the history of Judaism in the Hellenistic period, its religious and intellectual movements, and Jewish life and belief at the time of Christian origins. Part II deals succintly with the Roman Empire and the Hellenistic intellectual and religious currents of late antiquity. Thus the subject matter is exactly what one would expect to find in such a work.

In this case, finding what one expects to find is not a disappointment, for the book is intended to introduce the reader to a vast field of knowledge and inquiry. This it does rather well, precisely because Lohse does not fall prey to the temptation to supply too much detail, while at the same time providing the reader with sufficient data to allow him to form a coherent

picture of the general character of the Mediterranean world at the beginning of the Christian era. Perhaps less detailed and full an account than Reiche's *The New Testament Era,* particularly on the Jewish side, Lohse may nevertheless prove to be a more serviceable book for the American student or reader. Reiche's work is more in the genre of the New Testament *Zeitgeschichte* (which is precisely its original, German title), which like the German *Einleitung* (Introduction) is less a textbook for beginners than a compendium of necessary information. Lohse patiently explains who Philo and Josephus were; he also names and briefly characterizes the Jewish apocalyptic books dating from the beginning of the Christian era, the Roman emperors, and the principal Qumran documents.

Naturally, experts will find points of inadequacy or disagreement. Yet most will agree that Lohse is generally judicious and balanced in his handling of mooted issues. For example, although he maintains the now venerable view that Gnosticism is pre-Christian in origin, he is cautious in his claims about the character of the pre-Christian phenomenon, declining to commit himself to the Redeemer Myth theory or to rely too much on the admittedly ambiguous Mandean evidence.

The price of the paperback book ($6.95) may be an embarrassment to the publisher; it is printed in slightly disguised code form (no dollar mark or decimal) on the back cover. But, given the inflation in book prices of the past several years, if the price does not make the book a steal, it is at least not a rip-off!

D. Moody Smith

Jesus Through Many Eyes: Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament. Stephen Neill. Fortress. 1976. 214 pp. $5.50 paper.

For those persons who have been searching for a readable New Testament theology which is not directed primarily toward the learned persons of the world, the wait is over. Bishop Stephen Neill has written a New Testament theology which is designed basically for students who have little background in critical study, persons who are attempting to deepen their own understanding of New Testament teaching for use in schools and the Church, and for laypersons who are eager (and willing to pay the price) to deepen their own understanding of the New Testament and thus their faith.

The author's basic idea is that the "whole of the New Testament is theology," (p. 1) and that theology revolves around Jesus of Nazareth. The books of the New Testament were written in an attempt to remember and interpret Jesus in ways that would reflect the "authentic echo of his voice" (p. 4). No one person could fathom the entire meaning of this Person; therefore what is preserved for us are fragments of the whole passed on to us by different persons in different settings. Bishop Neill in his presentation touches upon each and every New Testament book because he feels that each one in its own way reflects something positive and meaningful about this Person around whom New Testament theology revolves.

The position taken in this book is that history and theology are not separate entities but are to be held together. "Theology has all too often been written as though it was something that grew by some spontaneous and purely intellectual process, and not directly out of the hopes and fears of men; history has been presented as a mere record of external events, without reference to any inner dynamic by which they may be controlled. We shall succeed in our enterprise only to the extent that we are able to hold the two together" (p. 9). Neill further argues that the New Testament writers were interested in history as history, and, while recognizing that the witness of the New Testament comes

to us from the early disciples, he nevertheless stresses that there can be some value and success in pressing beyond that faith "to inquire what it was, or rather who it was, that brought that faith into being— . . ." (p. 13). One can easily ascertain that this book is a positive attempt to set forth an understanding of the New Testament which is balanced between the Charybdis of historical scepticism and the Scylla of arid historicism, and it may be added that the author has succeeded admirably.

The method pursued in this presentation is that of examining the New Testament writings in a somewhat chronological order as to their date of writing and to delay any discussion of the central issue, namely Jesus, until the last. The author begins with a short chapter dealing with the "Earliest Church," turns to the Pauline letters, then to Mark's gospel (and I Peter). At this point he examines the writings which relate basically to the area of Jewish influence, namely Matthew, James, Hebrews, and Revelation. Luke's writings are examined, followed by a discussion of the Johannine literature (minus Revelation, of course). The remainder of the New Testament documents (II Peter, Jude, and the Pastoral Epistles) are presented in a very positive way, the author finding very positive aspects to these often neglected epistles.

The final chapter then attempts to find an underlying unity in the streams of tradition that have come down to us in these groups of New Testament proclamations. That unity is to be sought in the "event" (namely Jesus) which has given rise to these writings. Neill emphasizes that the central question that every New Testament theology must ultimately face is essentially this: "How near can we come to seeing him [Jesus] not just through the eyes of many beholders but as he was in the simple majesty of his historical existence?" (p. 164). In this chapter the author discusses some of the views on this matter which have been advocated in scholarly circles in this century and came to the conclusion that in spite of all the problems a great deal can be known about "what Jesus actually taught and what he thought about himself" (p. 170). Bishop Neill understands that there is and can be "continuity within discontinuity" and "discontinuity within continuity," and the understanding of that concept is very important in seeking to comprehend the meaning in the relationship between the old covenant and the new and between the good news preached *by* Jesus and that preached *about* Jesus. Such an understanding presupposes a faith commitment on the part of the learner, however.

It is the opinion of this reviewer that Bishop Neill's book will be of great value and usefulness to pastors and lay persons. It is well-written, balanced, and positive in its approach to the topic. There is also included a useful bibliography for further study. Whether one will agree with Neill at every point should not detract from the very positive service he has performed for many persons in this presentation of New Testament theology.

James M. Efird

A Marxist Looks at Jesus. Milan Machovec. Introduction by Peter Hebblethwaite. Fortress. 1976. 231 pp. $6.50 paper.

In his introduction Peter Hebblethwaite says that this book is a "minor but indispensable Marxist classic which will replace Kautsky as a study of Jesus." Van Harvey of the University of Pennsylvania has called it "an extraordinary book, as fine and sympathetic an overview of present-day scholarship about Jesus and the early church as any I know." Whether Machovec's work deserves such accolades the reader should himself decide. It is a book to be read and pondered, and this review will not spare the reader the trouble, and the intellectual stimulation, of actually reading it.

Machoveč has taken pains to familiarize himself, not only with the gospels, but with the important relevant works of twentieth-century scholarship. He is particularly indebted to Schweitzer and Bultmann, although he by no means simply reproduces their work. Neither does he, by brute force or sleight of hand, present Jesus as a proto-Marxist. He also knows that Jesus was not a Zealot. He was forceful but abjured violence.

Machoveč is primarily concerned with understanding Jesus as a historical figure, and to that end has chapters on the sources (i.e., the gospels), Judaism before Jesus, the message of Jesus, and the development of Christology. He fully understands the character of the gospels as religious documents, but believes that it is possible to derive from them an historical picture of Jesus. Like most New Testament scholars he sees the kingdom of God as the central theme of Jesus' preaching. In the eschatological tension between present and future is found the key to the right understanding (or demythologizing) of Jesus' apocalyptic eschatology. The eschatological thrust of Jesus' message, with its determinative influence upon the present, constitutes a crucial central element common to him and to true Marxism. Jesus' view of the coming kingdom does not include a socialist revolution, but it does imply a revolutionary upheaval of the old order. Machoveč thinks Jesus understood the kingdom's coming as the redemption and renewal of history, not its end.

To the surprise of some readers, Machoveč does not accept the widely held view that Jesus did not think of himself as the Messiah or Messiah-designate. He is, of course, aware that a number of scholars have taken this position. He himself has some extremely interesting ideas about how Jesus may have come to accept a messianic self-understanding and the role his disciples, especially Peter, played in the process. To Peter is also ascribed a primary role in the rise of faith in the resurrection. The Gospel of John is accorded an important place in the development of Christology, and Machoveč regards it as historically irreconcilable with the synoptics. Yet unlike some historians rooted in the liberal Christian tradition, he does not regard the Fourth Gospel as simply a theological or mystical fabrication with no meaningful relation to the Jesus of history. In a certain sense it may be seen as a representation of him.

The English title fails to convey an important aspect of the author's intent conveyed by the title of the German version from which it was translated: *Jesus für Atheisten.* The book is written to present Jesus to a Marxist audience rather than to allow Christians a peek at Jesus through Marxist eyes. Machoveč in fact believes that Marxists, as Marxists, have something to learn from Jesus. Perhaps Christians too can learn something of value to them from this sympathetic, knowledgeable, and insightful treatment.

D. Moody Smith

Has the Ecumenical Movement a Future? Willem Visser 't Hooft. John Knox. 1974. 97 pp. $5.50.

No person living today better deserves the title of "Mr. Ecumenic" than Willem Visser 't Hooft. He has served as general secretary of the World's Y.M.C.A., of the World Student Christian Federation, and (from 1939 to 1966) of the World Council of Churches. This little volume thus reflects the international, interdenominational, world, conciliar perspective rather than the local scene. But it abounds in wisdom, moderation, proportion—and hope.

A brief historical sketch divides modern ecumenical developments into four periods: 1910-1934, "various groups in search of a theme"; 1934-1948, the challenge of political involvement and "theological renais-

sance"; 1948-1960, a time of organization and integration; 1960-the future, a diffusion of priorities within as well as outside the Church. The remainder of the book wrestles with three central questions: "Is the ecumenical movement suffering from institutional paralysis? Should we replace mission as it has been practised up till now by a dialogue with the other religions? Should the ecumenical movement follow the agenda of the Church—or the agenda of the world?"

Visser 't Hooft offers more questions than answers. But they are the right questions, the critical questions, the questions that arise from popular misconceptions of the World Council. By acknowledging the grounds for some complaints, by reformulating others, the author brings the contemporary ecumenical scene into sharp, succinct, and relevant focus. By defining dialogue in six ways, two positive and four unacceptable, he clears away much widespread confusion about syncretism, paganism, evangelism. By affirming the inseparability of theology and Christian action he not only sees a future for the ecumenical movement, but makes it challenging and vital.

Creighton Lacy

Salvation Tomorrow. Stephen Neill. Abingdon. 1976. 150 pp. $3.95 paper.

If Visser 't Hooft personifies the ecumenical movement today, Stephen Neill uniquely represents the world mission of the church. He has been a missionary bishop in India, an executive of the World Council of Churches, a professor (in very active retirement) at Hamburg and Nairobi, and author of almost as many books as Kenneth Scott Latourette. These writings range from a definitive one-volume history of missions to Biblical studies (see Professor Efird's review above), psychological treatises (*Creative Tension* and *A Genuinely Human Existence*), and interpretations of *Anglicanism* and *Christian Holiness* (two *different* books!).

The current volume, subtitled "The originality of Jesus Christ and the world's religions," consists of the Chavasse Lectures at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, where the bishop now lives as Resident Scholar. These lectures move, concisely but incisively, from the perspectives of Edinburgh 1910 (the beginning of modern missions and ecumenics) to the central theological and methodological issues in proclaiming the gospel today and tomorrow. They keep clearly in mind "the careful distinction which Mott always drew between evangelization, the proclamation of the divine message, and conversion, the favourable response to man to that proclamation" (p. 1).

Precisely because he rejects neat labels and pigeon-holes, the bishop cannot be classified or typed. As this reviewer discovered from two delightful interviews in Nairobi (1971 and 1973), Neill shows persuasive streaks of theological and political conservatism. He has reservations about "reparations" based on guilt ("We can repent only of what we ourselves have done and of what we are"—p. 20); about crossing geographical or cultural lines without acknowledging the "covenant line" (which separates Christians from "those who have never been brought within the new covenant relationship between God and man established by Jesus Christ"—p. 62). He resents the demand that Christians alone should be tolerant when others (be they Muslims or Marxists) are not. He scorns fuzzy language and fuzzier thinking ("If everything is mission, nothing is mission"—p. 57). He questions whether all the positive contributions of colonialism need to be ignored in the rightful condemnation of subjugation and oppression. He asserts that a Black Theology which claims to be a remedy or substitute for "an alleged White Theology" may well be "as distorted and out of reality as that which it replaces" (p. 80). He suggests that much liberation theology

"seems to live in the world of the Old Testament rather than that of the New" (p. 81).

But when it comes to dialogue (carefully defined and explicated) and to other cultures, which he knows so deeply and so well, Neill sounds astonishingly "liberal"—though he sometimes masks — or contrasts — his own views by what is "generally accepted in ecumenical circles." "All religions bear witness at least in some measure to the presence and activity of God" (p. 28). "The Christian comes not to bring Christ but to find him" (p. 29). "A vertical ecumenism which does not find its outlet in active obedience becomes introverted and pietistic. A horizontal ecumenism which does not look upwards to its source becomes merely humanitarian without inspiration and without divine illumination" (p. 69). Yet when the chips are down, Stephen Neill moves gently to the "right": "Evangelization must accompany and not follow every step in the process of political and economic liberation" (p. 97), and "those who started out with the idea of social reform were singularly ineffective in bringing it about, and never got on to the preaching of the gospel. Those who started with a gospel of conversion, perhaps without intending it brought about a social revolution. . . ." (p. 84).

In short, this elder statesman of the Christian world is wise, moderate, temperate, faithful. In these few pages he sheds light not only on the critical field of missiology, but on the everlasting mission: "Every man has the *right* to have the gospel so presented to him that he may be able to understand it and in the light of that understanding accept or reject it" (p. 50).

Creighton Lacy

Christian Worship in Transition. James F. White. Abingdon. 1976. 160 pp. $6.75.

In a chapter entitled "Individuality and Liturgy" in *Christian Worship in Transition,* James White (Duke Ph.D., '60) notes that, "Most of the history of worship is anonymous." Unlike the history of doctrine, where theologies usually bear someone's name, liturgical developments most often occur anonymously and with intentional obscurity. Liturgy, the product of many hands, the work of the whole people of God, transcends individual contributors.

But when the history of post-war liturgical renewal is written, the name of James White will be there. Particularly for United Methodists, but also for the American Church as a whole, White has led the way with contributions to liturgical research and reform that are both scholarly and pastoral. In this book White surveys the decade of worship experimentation since Vatican II and speculates on where we should go from here.

Three of the book's eight essays appeared previously in various magazines. White is justifiably apologetic in his Preface for this duplication and makes the dubious claim that the book's chapters are more than a collection of unconnected essays and reworked articles. The essential coherence between the chapters is that they are all James White's work, that they are now available in one place, and that they are all of rather high quality.

The first chapter, "You Are Free—If," gave me the sneaking suspicion (reading between the lines) that White sensed that, in his encouragement of Protestant worship innovation, he had unintentionally created a monster. He seems to back off from some of his earlier enthusiasm for the unrestrained liturgical experimentation which he praised in *New Forms of Worship* (1970). Having given the permission to innovate, he now seems concerned that we use our freedom responsibly. "You are free (to experiment with the liturgy)—if you know what is essential and if you know what you are doing and why," he now says. After witnessing a flood of irresponsible experimentation, superficial

"celebrations," crudely worded "contemporary liturgies," and poorly structured services of worship which are little more than pep rallies for various causes, I think I know what White is concerned about. He seeks to give guidance in the use of our newly acquired freedom: "All that is required is a knowledge of the basic structure and the imagination to word it for our own situation." I am less optimistic than White about either the possession of sufficient "knowledge" or "imagination" on the part of the average local parish worship leaders. In his encouragement of continuing congregational worship experimentation, he does not take seriously enough the difficult task of successful ritual formation. While White gives us a masterful sketch of the essential elements in what he calls the "five basic types of Christian worship," I question whether the mere knowledge of these elements is enough to license congregational solo flights into the wild blue yonder of liturgical innovation. To recover a sense of historical continuity, theological substance, and linguistic clarity would be a radical innovation in the worship of most Protestant congregations, even if that recovery meant going back and singing the same song that the church used to sing before we forgot the old song and started writing new songs.

Chapter II, "Basics of Sacramental Theology," is a fine essay that interprets and builds upon the work of some of our best sacramental theologians even though his definition of a sacrament is a bit too broad and all encompassing for my tastes. If we call everything "sacramental," I suspect that we will end up with nothing being sacramental. Perhaps I am shell-shocked from recent encounters with that "irresponsible liturgical experimentation" that White bemoans.

Chapters II and IV were good when they appeared a year or so ago in worship periodicals and they are still excellent essays on the historical and cultural setting of Protestant worship. "Individuality and Liturgy," (Ch. V) is a quick romp through two thousand years of liturgical history with some worthwhile conclusions for today. Chapter VI, "Inside the Liturgical Establishment" consists of a newsy report on the work of denominational liturgical bureaucracies. "After Experimentation" (Ch. VII) extols the results of worship developments in the past decade in making us more "inclusive, imaginative, humanized, ecumenical, and socially responsible." I fear we have exchanged the "vague and lofty generalizations" that Dr. White criticizes in our older worship for these new vague and lofty generalizations which now plague contemporary worship. Unfortunately, this essay does not live up to its promise of suggesting, in any detailed way, what comes *after* experimentation.

The final chapter, "The Church Architecture of Change," is another reprint from a past article. White here defines the best architectural arrangement for the modern church as a "hollow cube" in which little is specified or stationary in order to insure maximum flexibility for changing worship settings. I agree with Robert Cushman's critical evaluation of this thesis when it first appeared. If the optimum architectural form for contemporary worship is indeed White's "hollow cube," then this is more an indictment of the vacuousness of our present faith dilemma than a cause for celebration.

The first four chapters of this book are required reading for my students at the Divinity School this semester. I mention this to underline the fact that this is a significant contribution to theological students and pastors who are concerned about worship. James White is to be recommended for his continuing interest in worship experimentation during this time of transition, even while many of us find ourselves more interested in conserving the essential values of our past which we fear a decade of worship

experimentation would too quickly and casually forget.

William Willimon

Word and Table: A Basic Pattern of Sunday Worship for United Methodists. Hoyt Hickman, ed. Abingdon. 1976. 80 pp. $2.50.

I doubt that it would be an overstatement for me to claim that *Word and Table* is the most significant liturgical event in the Methodist tradition since Wesley's *Sunday Service for Methodists in North America* in 1784. With the publication of this commentary on Sunday worship, United Methodist congregations have an opportunity to return to our rich heritage in worship, a heritage that is both Catholic and Evengelical. The services in our present *Book of Worship* (1965) merely revised the inherited forms (and problems) of the Reformation liturgies. *Word and Table* returns to a more inclusive reflection of early Christian patterns. Its emphasis is on a basic *pattern* (actions) for worship rather than authorized texts (words) for worship. Here is a new vision of a very old concept: that Christian worship is a corporate, sacramental action rather than a verbose clerical performance.

Word and Table briefly describes the biblical, historical and theological foundations of the new order of worship, noting its linking of word and sacrament, the differences between this new pattern and our former practices, and the practical problems of implementing this pattern in United Methodist congregations. Then we are given a step-by-step commentary on the service which succinctly describes what we are doing in each step, why we are doing it, and the many possible ways to do it. Any pastor who has backed away from liturgical reform because of a lack of liturgical knowledge will find a rich resource in this commentary. The book also contains a discussion of the Alternate Calendar and Lectionary (COCU) as well as the new ecumenical texts of the major liturgical readings and prayers (ICET).

The commentary may err in its failure to give more guidelines on the selection of materials and texts for the various parts of the pattern. It has a tendency to present the acts of the pattern as if they were isolated parts. I would have liked more attention given to the unity, direction, and movement of the total worship service. However, just by adhering to this basic pattern, most congregations will achieve more unity and direction in their worship than they have previously had.

I also regretted the exclusion of "The Lord's Supper: An Alternate Text," (1972) from *Word and Table.* While there is no need rigidly to adhere to the words of "The Alternate Text," it is the best example we United Methodists have of a full, well stated, unified service of worship within the *Word and Table* pattern. *Word and Table* should be read with a copy of "The Alternate Text" close at hand.

United Methodists owe a debt of thanks to the work of the Alternate Rituals Committee for the theologically and pastorally sound work that *Word and Table* represents. Its publication moves United Methodists firmly within the developing ecumenical consensus on the liturgy.

William Willimon

Ritual in a New Day: An Invitation. Hoyt Hickman, ed. Abingdon. 1976. 128 pp. $3.75.

In one sense, ritual (patterned, predictable, repetitious behavior) is "doing what comes naturally." As John Westerhoff often tells his classes in Liturgy and Education, "if you have to think about it while you are doing it, the ritual isn't helpful." That is true. The problem for us today is that many of our former rituals have broken down and we find ourselves plagued with the dis-ease of not hav-

ing adequate rituals to help us through the crises of contemporary life or to help express our faith. Changes in language, movement from a stable rural society to a mobile urban society, tensions on marriage, loneliness and isolation, crises of faith, have brought new tensions to old patterns. Therefore we find ourselves looking for new patterns, new rituals.

Ritual in a New Day: An Invitation is the latest production of the Alternate Rituals Project of the Section on Worship of the United Methodist Church. Its purpose is to provide alternate rituals that are more contemporary and ecumenical than those now available in *The Book of Worship* (1965). Here are rituals for Footwashing, Naming (at a Baptism, adoption or wedding), Dying (a counterpart to the old Last Rites), Divorce, and celebrations of Endings and Beginnings (Blessing a new home, installation of a new pastor, sending of a family to a different congregation).

I approached this book with some scepticism, having been disappointed by the shallowness of the *Ventures in Worship* (1970) variety of liturgical experimentation. *Ritual in a New Day* shows that we are learning from our earlier mistakes. While it asserts that our need for new rituals arises out of the nature of our contemporary cultural context, it does attempt to bring theological judgments to bear in its liturgical response to that context. The Introduction to the book leads one to believe that the only criterion for appropriate Christian ritual is the psychological and anthropological helpfulness of the ritual. But the discussions and forms of the rituals themselves show closer attention to theological and liturgical considerations. For instance, the Rituals With the Divorced, in spite of what you may suspect, show how a full liturgical act with kerygma, confession, forgiveness, oblation, etc., can be a helpful corrective to both our theological avoidance of the reality of divorce and our current misdirected "cheap grace" pastoral attempts to sustain divorced persons.

Ritual in a New Day is most successful in its discussions of the concrete pastoral problems that are encountered in using these new rites in local churches. The guidelines given for Footwashing and Ritual With the Dying show a keen pastoral sensivity that too many enthusiastic liturgical innovators have lacked. The tone of the book is not, "How can we think up some unusual new worship services?" but rather "How can we bring the resources of the Christian faith and its worship to bear upon the actual needs of people today?"

The service for the Introduction of a New Pastor is sorely needed by United Methodists and will be well received. The Footwashing service promises to be a popular worship resource for small groups, retreats, and special occasions in some churches. Before you turn off the idea of a Ritual With the Divorced (perhaps the most controversial part of the book), read the introductory discussion to the rite. You will see that this rite represents a far more important suggestion than just another ecclesiastical accommodation to the brokenness of contemporary culture. Fortunately, I think that statement holds true for the whole of *Ritual in a New Day* and its invitation to liturgical experimentation.

William Willimon