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The Future of Monogamous Marriage From a Christian Perspective*

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It is quite apparent that monogamous marriage in this country is in a perilous state. Indeed, as the renowned Joseph Fletcher warned, "In the opinion of some, it is actually getting close to terminal illness."[1] Another interpreter, a psychiatrist who has spent a lifetime in the field of marriage and family therapy, states, "From where I sit, the picture of marriage and family in present-day society is a gloomy one."[2] Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University, recognized as one of the foremost educators of our time, was referred to in a recent *New York Times* article as seeing monogamous marriage and the family in a "desperate decline."[3]

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of the troubled condition of marriage is the divorce factor. For every three marriages performed in this country in 1972 there was one marriage terminated by divorce. Prof. Max Lerner of Brandeis University predicted in that year that "the national rate in the decades ahead will probably become one out of two."[4] Actually the rate was more accelerated than he could know because only four years later that proportion had almost been realized.[5] Vance Packard's startling prediction ten years ago may prove to be more realistic. On the basis of his very extensive survey of college students and young adults, reported in *The Sexual*

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*This essay was originally presented as a lecture in the University's Continuing Education program. In preparing it for publication I am greatly indebted to the editor, Charles K. Robinson, for his encouragement to expand this essay and his own contribution of helpful editorial revisions, especially on Paul and Jesus.

** Ed. note: James H. ("Jay") Phillips may not be personally known to many readers of the *Review*. He is, however, very "personally known" and gratefully remembered by hundreds of Duke undergraduate alumni who treasure "what" they learned—and perhaps even more from "whom" they learned. (See also Dr. Phillips' review article, "Religion and Human Sexuality" in Book Reviews section.

1. Harold H. Hart, ed., *Marriage: For and Against* (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1972), p. 189.

2. Nathan B. Ackerman in *ibid.*, p. 13.

3. "The Family in Transition: Challenge From Within," Nov. 27, 1977.

4. *Marriage: For and Against*, p. 98.

5. *Statistical Abstracts of the U.S.*, Bureau of the Census, 1976, p. 51.

Wilderness,[6] he concluded that the marriages made in the U.S. in the late 1960's have about a 50-50 chance of remaining nominally intact. I should add hopefully, however, that some authorities believe that the current rate is leveling off.

But even the current divorce rate does not tell the whole story. William J. Lederer[7] reports in *Marriage: For and Against* on a research project which used as test cases 601 couples, who on the average had been married 8.7 years. Husbands and wives were interviewed separately and confidentially. Here are several key questions they were asked with the author's corresponding conclusions:

> The first question was: "Do you love your spouse?"
>
> Only 11 percent of the sampling answered unhesitating, "Yes, I love my spouse."
>
> The next group, consisting of 12 percent of the total, delayed for considerable time, hemmed and hawed, and then said approximately, "Well, let's say we get along better than most."
>
> The largest segment, 43 percent, gave what Dr. Jackson called "defensive replies." For example, "I don't like Mary because she's mean and vindictive. But I appreciate the fact that she works hard at looking after the kids."
>
> The wife, Mary, said, "Harry and I have lots of arguments. He drives me and the kids crazy. But I can't deny he's a good provider and is generous with what he makes."
>
> Members of this group (the 43 percent), when required to list what they liked and what they disliked about their spouses, listed more bad characteristics that good.
>
> The remaining 34 percent frankly said that their marriages were unsatisfactory.
>
> All the couples—from the "happy" ones down to the outspokenly discontented—were asked the following as the last question: *If you could wave a magic wand which would divorce you and your spouse immediately, without inconvenience, without suffering to anyone in the family, without social censure or expense, would you wave the magic wand and get a divorce?*
>
> Almost three quarters of them answered in the affirmative in some degree.

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6. Vance Packard, *The Sexual Wilderness* (New York: David McKay Co., 1968), p. 284. Cf. Chs. 1-4 and especially Ch. 18.

7. Dr. Lederer is co-author, with Don D. Jackson, of *The Mirages of Marriage* (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 1969), which is considered by many psychiatrists and psychologists to be the most realistic and helpful work on marriage published in recent years. The research project referred to above was one of the results of a 4½ year study for the publication of this book.

> The survey concluded that over half of all married couples stay together, not because they love each other, but because divorce is too painful, difficult or expensive; and that three quarters of all married couples frequently and seriously think about divorce.[8]

Little wonder perhaps that Mervyn Cadwallader explodes:

> Contemporary marriage is a wretched institution. It spells the end of voluntary affection, of love freely given and joyously received. Beautiful romances are transmuted into dull marriages: eventually the relationship becomes constricting, corrosive, grinding and destructive. The beautiful love affair becomes a bitter contract.[9]

And one commentator, Kathrin Perutz, gives a less than subtle hint to her treatment as she entitles her book *Marriage is Hell!*

Are these commentaries accurate? Is marriage hell? Is it anachronistic? Is monogamous marriage on the way out? What are the marriage and family authorities saying? I can only summarize at this point, although I shall be documenting opinions later when I deal with specific subjects. The views of most of these authorities can be generalized as follows: They do not believe that marriage and the family are headed for extinction, but they are convinced that they are experiencing changes in terms of new forms, and many of them have gone beyond the role of social scientists and have become apologists, sometimes even zealots, in endorsing and prescribing those changes. For example, Herbert A. Otto, Chairman of the National Center for the Exploration of Human Potential, affirms with confidence:

> After five thousand years of human history, man is now at the point where he can create marriage and family possibilities uniquely suited to his time, place, and situation. It is my suggestion that the 'option to pluralism' offers a compelling challenge; namely, that we develop new forms of marriage and family which might conceivably add more warmth and intensity to human existence than we ever dreamed possible.[10]

Or as Sidney Jourard, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Florida, puts it:

> Polygyny, polyandry, homosexual marriages, permanent and temporary associations, anything that has been tried in any time and place represents a possible mode for existential exploration by men and women

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8. *Marriage: For and Against*, pp. 135-36.

9. Quoted from *Current*, February, 1967, in *The Family in Search of a Future*, by the editor, Herbert A. Otto (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), p. 3.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

> who dare to try some new design when the conventional pattern has died for them. Not to legitimize such experimentation and exploration is to make life in our [plural] society unlivable for an increasing proportion of the population.[11]

Alvin Toffler in *Future Shock* puts it more shockingly. Referring to the debate between extreme pessimists who predict the monogamous family's demise and optimists who argue that the family is at the beginning of a Golden Age he concludes that neither is likely but rather that the family "may break up, shatter, only to come together again in weird and novel ways."[12]

In order to bring this contemporary picture into focus on my topic, let me raise this question: What is the relation of the *Christian* tradition to this *cultural* phenomenon? As would be generally acknowledged, the Christian tradition has been largely responsible for, and supportive of, Western culture's monogamous family pattern. Indeed, to this tradition are attributed many of the faults in that pattern, and critics from all directions attack this tradition, especially its support of a patriarchal structure, its demands for permanence, and its claims for secual exclusivity.

Now, how shall those of us who are in the Christian tradition respond? Shall we concede the traditional monogamous family pattern to be anachronistic, and thereby accommodate the winds of change? Or shall we probe further the traditional Christian claims for the validity of monogamy, and firmly resist the advocates of change who assault its integrity? These questions are the main inquiry of this paper. It is hoped that a juxtaposition of opinions and convictions on these matters may help us come to grips with the vital issues and lay a basis for further reflection and response by readers beyond the scope of this paper.

First, let us consider the *patriarchal* structure of traditional monogamy. Here the Western family tradition, up until the modern age, had a tap root in the biblical tradition. "Since marriage was patriarchal—*i.e.,* father-centered—among the people of the Bible, the family was a community of persons, related by ties of marriage and kinship, and ruled by the authority of the father."[13] Marriage, by divine ordinance, was a covenant between two families and was maintained by its high sense of corporate responsibility, which in

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11. *Ibid.,* p. 46.

12. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, Bantam Books, 1971), p. 239.

13. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* Vol. II (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 240.

turn was sanctioned and supported directly by four of the Ten Commandments. A premium was placed upon female virginity before marriage; and adultery by the wife was a crime so serious that it warranted the death penalty. The central issue involving both virginity and adultery was the assurance to the husband that any male child born to him was his own, for the continuity of the blood line.

The woman's destiny was in truth—as Freud was later to reaffirm—tied to her anatomy and a barren womb was regarded as a curse. One recalls the poignant cry of Rachel, "Give me children, or I shall die!" Yet, while subordinate to her husband, the fruitful wife commanded respect and esteem in the family system. And in certain instances, she even commanded equal status with her husband: The Fifth Commandment required honor from her children—"Honor thy father and thy mother." And the proverbial wife who was "far more precious than jewels" and whose "children rise up and call her blessed" has come resounding down through the centuries as the female image most desired, *i.e.*, until mid-20th century! In this society children were cherished, female as well as male. It is a significant fact that there is not one shred of evidence that female infanticide was ever practiced, as it was in some other ancient societies—notably Canaanite and Roman.

These were the central features of the Israelite family system, a way of life which, with significant qualifications, has gained the plaudits of distinguished authorities, such as D. Sherwin Bailey, who comments that "in spite of manifest imperfections, the Jewish sexual ethic and conception of marriage and family life were never surpassed in antiquity, and were maintained with remarkable consistency.'[14] And most of these features passed into Christian practice.

It can be argued plausibly that the relative scarcity of teachings of Jesus on the family, in contrast to the proliferation of family references in the Old Testament, can be viewed as evidence of Jesus' *general* affirmation of this tradition, with several notable *exceptions* regarding adultery and divorce, which we shall refer to later. Though

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14. *Common Sense About Sexual Ethics: A Christian View* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 19. Dr. Bailey's two initial books, *The Mystery of Love and Marriage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) and *Sexual Relations in Christian Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), are widely regarded as creating a breakthrough toward a more sensitive and constructive Christian theological understanding of sexuality. Bailey's interpretation moves toward complementarity and coequality in a Christian view of the marriage relation.

remaining unmarried himself, Jesus in one of his most significant teachings endorsed the sanction of complementary coequality in marriage as the will of the Creator: "*God made* them male *and* female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall *become one* flesh. So they are no longer two but *one* flesh." (Mk. 10:6-8) This teaching was taken by the Church to preclude polygamy. But contemporary theological reflection has also seen in this teaching the key to the "one-flesh doctrine" of human sexuality. Bailey comments: "On the finite plane Man, the image or reflection of God, is found to be essentially a 'being-in-relation'—just as true human existence is essentially 'existence-in-community.' The 'adam' is not a single human individual, but a mysterious sexual duality of which man and woman are the relational poles." And he concludes significantly: "Here is the clue to the meaning of human sexuality."[15]

If we add to this salient teaching the illuminating and radical insight of St. Paul when he declared, "There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28)—a teaching set within the broader context of his treatment of freedom and equality in Christ—we have a significant biblical frame of reference that can provide a positive basis for ethics on human sexuality and man-woman relationship. It is, in my estimate, one of the great tragedies of history that neither teaching became a part of the legacy that formed the Western sexual tradition.

To the contrary, the Church, under the impact—note you well!—of non-biblical influences for the most part, became pro-celibate and anti-sexual in its teaching of a "higher" way. And the Church, even in its Protestant forms, perpetuated a patriarchal family system involving subordination of female under male—a system that has had lasting effects, many of them, admittedly, ill effects.[16]

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15. *Ibid.*, p. 80. Bailey's theological interpretation is supported by the sensitive nuances of the Hebrew language (*'adam*=humankind; *'ish*=male; *'ishshah*=female), especially as employed in the Priestly creation story. See Madelon (Micki) Nunn, "Christology or Male-olatry?" *The Duke Divinity School Review*, Vol. 42, no. 3 (Fall 1977), p. 147, n. 3.

16. This statement does not intend to minimize the gains to marriage from the Reformers' attack on the celibate ethic. For an illuminating treatment of these gains see "Theological Reflections on the Reformation and the Status of Women" by David C. Steinmetz, *The Duke Divinity School Review*, Vol. 41, no. 3 (Fall 1976), pp. 197-207. But in a footnote Prof. Steinmetz admits that Protestant theology taught "the subordination of women to men within the context of family and the home" while claiming that this theology moderated traditional practice—i.e., for Protestants—and formed inherently the rationale for women's eventual liberation.

St. Paul has been pointed to by many writers as the chief culprit. A writer in a *Newsweek* issue[17] quoted this passage from I Timothy 2:11-14: "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not decieved, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet, woman will be saved through bearing children." Then, the writer added: "Among today's liberated women, of course, St. Paul rates a high place on the list of all-time male chauvinists—and for good reason."

Admittedly, any honest and appropriate "defense" of Paul will be partly ambiguous. And unfortunately a full consideration of Pauline teachings relevant to our concerns here obviously cannot be undertaken in this essay; but a few observations may at least help us toward getting a realistic and fair perspective on Paul that is much needed.

In the first place, there has been a wide consensus among scholars that Paul is *not the author* of I Timothy. It is scarcely fair to Paul to hold him responsible for what later interpreters, such as the unknown author of I Timothy, have made of Paul's teaching. Secondly, while there is still legitimate room for debate concerning the authorship of Ephesians, we may in any case note the ironical fact that interpreters—mostly males—have over the centuries been more prone to emphasize "Wives, be subject to your husbands" (5:22), and have tended to neglect emphasis on "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church" (5:25) and "Let each one of you love his wife as himself" (5:33)!

Thirdly, we need to note that in the passages in I Corinthians in which Paul himself is indeed setting forth a *subordinate* role for women, Paul is not appealing to the authority of a revelation from Jesus Christ. Rather he appeals to his own personal right to prescribe standards for church life in the churches he has established (not unlike Wesley's prescriptions of rules for his societies!) and to other kinds of "authority" which are *not as such Christian:* "nature," "the (Old Testament) law" and "the traditions." Consider respectively:

> Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not *nature* itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering. (11:13-15)

17. November 2, 1970, p. 8.

> As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak but should be subordinate, *even as the law says.* (14:33b-34)
>
> I command you because you remember me in everything and maintain *the traditions* even as I have delivered them to you. But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. (11:2-3)

If these passages are viewed on their own terms and in their own context, it should be clear that in assigning a subordinate role to women Paul was neither claiming to express a directly Christian revelation nor prescribing binding legislation for all future time.

Finally, and most importantly, any over-arching perspective on Paul should focus on the point that at the center of Pauline theology is the *vision of a liberating community* of faith and love in which each person—male, female, husband, wife—has equal status before Christ and neighbor. Paul accordingly depicts a completely *co-equal* and *complementary* pattern of sexual relationship *as given by God* (I Cor. 7:3-4): "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and *likewise* the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; *likewise* the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does."[18] It is indeed striking to see that in the very midst of arguing from "the traditions" and the teachings of "nature," Paul feels constrained to remind his readers that "nevertheless" in the Christian understanding of man-woman relationships there is co-equality and *fully reciprocal interdependence* between male and female (I Cor. 11:11-12): "Nevertheless, *in the Lord* woman is not independent of man nor man of woman. For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are *from God.*"

Jesus expressed the view (Mk. 10:5) that the hardness of male hearts—contrary to the revelation of the will of God—lay behind the

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18. The theme of mutual rights in sexual relationships is a prominent one in current secular literature on sexuality, although it is likely that most authorities would be amazed to learn that, of all writers, St. Paul antidated them by nearly twenty centuries! The famed team Masters and Johnson in *The Pleasure Bond: A New Look at Sexuality and Commitment* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1974), describe this generation's progression in a knowledgeable husband's sexual responsibility from "doing something *to* his wife" to "doing something *for* her" sexually. But in their sexual therapy they insist upon one further step toward sexual fulfillment, namely, the *mutual* attitude of achieving fulfillment "with each other, not to or for each other." (Pp. 5-10) This book is highly recommended also for its emphasis upon the essential need of commitment and the benefits of fidelity in facilitating "the pleasure *bond*" in marriage.

Jewish law (Deut. 24:1) for divorce as a uniquely male privilege. Perhaps similarly the hardness of male hearts may have had something to do with the fact that over the centuries Paul has predominantly been seen as the vehicle of a divine revelation establishing once-and-for-all the rightful dominance of men over women. A more just view of Paul will recognize him as a man of his time who, in part, accommodated his teaching on man-woman relationship to his own inherited Jewish traditions and the existing conditions of society in the Roman world. But it will also more strongly contend that, through his understanding of and faith in Jesus Christ, Paul became a man beyond his time who has offered, for those with eyes to see, an *egalitarian vision of male-female complementarity as the gift of God in Christ*—a vision that may still lure us toward fulfillment.

With this biblical background, let me become contemporary and make a few observations about the relevance of this egalitarian vision to the diagnoses and prescriptions of several modern secular "prophets."

One of the sanest treatments of marriage, in terms of "the way it really is, was, and will be," is *The Future of Marriage* by Jessie Bernard, widely recognized as one of America's leading sociologists. "The what it is" is aptly summarized as his and her marriages, "His, not bad, and getting better: hers, not good, and badly in need of change." And she cites the evidence:

> Because we are so accustomed to the way in which marriage is structured in our society, it is hard for us to see how different the wife's marriage really is from the husband's, and how much worse. But, in fact, it is. There is a very considerable research literature reaching back over a generation which shows that: more wives than husbands report marital frustration and dissatisfactions; more report negative feelings; more wives than husbands report marital problems; more wives than husbands consider their marriages unhappy, have considered separation or divorce, have regretted their marriages; and fewer report positive companionship....Understandably, therefore, more wives than husbands seek marriage counseling; and more wives than husbands initiate divorce proceedings.[19]

This evidence propels her to her task: "So now to the first order of business: [the reader hears it as a shout!] To upgrade the wife's marriage." And that is what this book is all about.

And I am moved to say that I see nothing but full support from the biblical egalitarian vision for that! Equality, personhood, self-fulfillment,...these are all legitimate claims and concerns. And

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19. Jessie Bernard, *The Future of Marriage* (New York: World, 1972), pp. 26-27.

especially consistent with this egalitarian vision is Bernard's "shared-role pattern," which she prefers to "role-reversal," especially where children are involved. But she warns that it takes a considerable amount of sophistication to understand, let alone to accept, the logic and the justice of the shared-role ideology, and a considerable amount of goodwill to implement it. To the fear that this ideology would depolarize the sexes she provides this very interesting rejoinder:

> If we are thinking in terms of maleness and femaleness rather than masculinity and femininity, we have no cause for alarm. I am convinced that women and men are intrinsically so different that nothing we do will obliterate or even reduce the differences. I do not think men have to worry that women will become unsexed or women, that men will. In fact, the freer we become in allowing both sexes to be themselves, the more the fundamental and ineradicable differences will show up. I think that women will find maleness better than masculinity and men will find femaleness better than femininity.[20]

Though Jessie Bernard probably would be astounded at the comparison, I think this is a profound modern—secular, to be sure—exegetical treatment of the biblical text, "God made them male and female," and that her "shared-role ideology" is a practical implementation of becoming "one-flesh."

In many important respects, I think this can also be said about the O'Neill's best seller *Open Marriage.* (There are some exceptions to this over-all assessment. Several qualifications will be introduced later in this essay, and the most notable exception will be dealt with in the final section on the exclusivity of traditional monogamous marriage.) Contrary to a spate of current books that denigrate monogamous marriage, the O'Neills, after coming to grips with the question, "Why Save Marriage at All?" (the title of Chapter 1), reaffirm monogamy and proceed to build a model they call "open marriage," which "is expanded monogamy, retaining the fulfilling and rewarding aspects of an intimate in-depth relationship with another, yet eliminating the restrictions we were formerly led to believe were an integral part of monogamy."[21] especially intriguing is their concept and development of "synergy," which is defined as "one plus one equals more than two, that the sum of the parts working together is greater than the sum of the parts working

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20. *Ibid.*, pp. 255-56.

21. George and Nena O'Neill, *Open Marriage* (New York: M. Evans & Co., 1972), p. 43.

separately."[22] The following paragraph demonstrates the working of synergy. Open marriage is:

> a relationship in which the partners are committed to their own and to each other's growth. It is an honest and open relationship of intimacy and self-disclosure based on the equal freedom and identity of both partners. Supportive caring and increasing security in individual identities makes possible the sharing of self-growth with a meaningful other who encourages and anticipates his own and his mate's growth. It is a relationship that is flexible enough to allow for the change and that is constantly being renegotiated in the light of changing needs, consensus in decision-making....and openness to new possibilities for growth. Obviously, following this model often involves a departure, sometimes radical, from rigid conformity to the established husband-wife roles and is not easy to effect.[23]

Again, this is what I would call the biblical egalitarian vision in a new idiom! The intrinsic virtues of that vision reappear here: equal freedom within the context of interdependence; equal worth that assures individual identity and the satisfaction of essential personal needs, but a worth that is placed under a higher goal larger than either one's desires would command alone; and growth, both self and mutual, toward that goal that is supported by deep and persistent caring.

A major criticism, for me, of *Open Marriage* is that its focus is on the married couple *alone*. How to picture *children* within their model appears, by omission, to be of no concern. Neither does the role of the family within the larger context of *society* emerge as a matter of concern. Apparently the authors themselves were sensitive to these omissions, for in a later publication they had this to say:

> Children cannot be taught the value of supportive love and caring, responsibility, problem-solving, or decision-making skills unless the parents have first developed these qualities in their own relationship. The inadequacy of our organized institutions to instill these values and skills is only too apparent. Therefore, intimate, long-term relationships such as those of marriage and the family must provide them. ... Building from within strengthens the individual, the couple, and then the family unit, and thus the entire social structure, since the fundamental unit of society is the family. Whatever forms the family unit may take, its strength will still depend on the rewards gained from interpersonal relationships. It is in this sense that the individual and the married couple can become not only a

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22. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

23. "Open Marriage: the Conceptual Framework" in James and Lynn Smith, eds., *Beyond Monogamy: Recent Studies of Several Alternatives in Marriage* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974), p. 62.

> fulcrum for change but also a key factor leading to the strengthening of the social structure. ... It is hoped that open families can evolve to an open society and eventually to an open world.[24]

When I finished reading *Open Marriage* I exclaimed: "So help us *God*!" I only wish the O'Neills had said *that*, because what they envision in *Open Marriage* calls for rare wisdom, personal character and mutual growth that, in my estimate, *transcend mere human effort.* But still, I thank God for these modern, albeit secular, prophets who, in a confused time, see egalitarian visions for monogamous marriage and point the way. I, for one, have learned much from them; but what has especially excited me is that these writers are reaffirming—in a new idiom, to be sure—basic biblical values supportive of monogamous marriage in a time when the rejection of any and all biblical "norms" is taken for granted by many critics. Perhaps the popularity of *Open Marriage* should renew our faith in the persistence of some, at least, of the verities of past revelation and make us grateful for what appears as "secular rediscovery," after centuries of partial repression within official "Christendom."

Let us turn to the *second* feature of traditional monogamous marriage now under attack: the claim to *permanence.* I can—and must—treat this more briefly because a case for commitment to permanence has been partly made in our preceding reflections.

For many young people today the case for impermanence appears far more compelling. Many have experienced the trauma of the wrecked marriages of their own parents. To be sure, I have heard students from such homes declare their determination to make their own marriages succeed, in spite of their parents' failure, but they are the exception. The majority, either from experience or observation, find the current rate of marriage failure just one more strike against monogamous marriage.

But divorce is not the only compelling factor. There is a change in mood, in expectations. Whereas in the past the ideal was characterized largely by fixity, stability, security, these are the last things many young people seek today. According to Jessie Bernard, the motif of those who are "with it" is freedom. Consequently, many are turning to other directions. Increasing numbers do not see marriage as fitting into their life style at all and are opting for the single life. Most students who co-habit, I'm told by students, are not marriage-oriented in their co-habitation. Others turn toward "group

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24. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

marriage," which characterizes at least some of the current communes. Still others (usually males!) theorize about sequential or serial marriages, with a new mate to fulfill changing needs as life develops.

Some students who are more seriously oriented toward enduring commitment are intrigued by Margaret Mead's "Marriage in Two Steps," first published in a popular magazine in 1967. Let her explain:

> Such a marriage would be a licensed union in which two individuals would be committed to each other as individuals for as long as they wished to remain together, but not as future parents. As the first step, it would not include having children. In contrast, the second type of marriage, which I think of as parental marriage, would be explicitly directed toward the founding of a family.[25]

As she goes on to elaborate, the first step is designed to be exploratory and maturing. While commitment is called for, this step could be terminated easily. But every parental marriage would have as background a good individual marriage. "And as a parental marriage would take much longer to contract and would be based on a larger set of responsibilities, so also its disruption would be carried out much more slowly."[26]

She notes that her proposal has some similarities to Judge Lindsey's "companionate marriage" as it was proclaimed in the '20's. I remember well as a young boy the storm that was stirred in public and church circles by Lindsey, and I see by vivid contrast not even a ripple on the surface provoked by Mead's proposal! Such has been the change in the public mood.

Even the churches, traditionally the main source for public and legal resistance to divorce, are changing their position—and I think generally for the better. Most Protestant churches no longer interpret Jesus' stringent teachings on divorce (in the Jewish context of an exclusively male prerogative!) as legal proscriptions binding on church members. And I have been personally predicting for some time now that the Roman Catholic Church, for which divorce has been anathema—barring divorced members from communion—will increasingly be forced to place this subject on its agenda for debate and revision. Recent official actions have begun to confirm this expectation. One such action, approved by the Vatican, extends the traditional limited basis for annulments—i.e., finding so-called

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25. *The Family in Search of a Future*, p. 80.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

marriages invalid—to include "psychic irregularities, lack of due discretion, and plain immaturity."[27] In fact, Monsignor Stephen J. Kelleher, who served as Chairman of the Committee of the Canon Law Society of America (which authored "The American Procedural Norms" [on annulments], approved by the U.S. Bishops and the Pope), reported during the past year: "As things now stand, in some tribunals, a good canon lawyer can obtain an annulment for any person whose marriage has broken down."[28] But Monsignor Kelleher is highly critical of the tribunal process for "annulment" as "a dehumanizing process" and proceeds to counter the continuing proscription of the category of "divorce" by affirming its necessity:

> The only alternative to annulment is divorce. As a lawyer, I think a couple whose marriage ceases to be existentially alive should get a divorce and, if they desire, marry again.—The Church is out of order in forcing persons to submit to psychiatric examination or psychological tests under the threat of denying them the right to re-marry and to continue to receive Holy Communion.[29]

What, in essence, all this points to is that the churches are finding that legal proscriptions are not the solution to the human problems involved in marital breakdown, and that the mission of the churches in this area is to be expressed principally in preparation for marriage that leads to informed commitment, in educational and counselling services that strengthen good marriages and aid to those that are faltering, and finally, when marriages fail, to minister redemptively, making possible what one family scholar calls "realized forgiveness." Restoration of a sense of personal integrity is a deep need in the lives of the separated and divorced, whether or not they later enter into a new marriage—as in fact most do.

What the churches institutionally and Christians individually should do in the public sector toward influencing needed legal reforms is a matter for serious study and dialogue. Various proposals are now under public discussion: the establishment of specialized courts for divorce; no-fault divorce; "do it yourself" divorce; compulsory marriage counselling—these constitute a few. Should marriage be made easier, indeed easy, to terminate? This is an important question. A more permissive answer is certainly gaining

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27. *The Durham Morning Herald*, July 1974.

28. "Catholic Annulments: A Dehumanizing Process," *Commonweal*, Vol.CIV, no. 12 (June 10, 1977), p. 366. Msgr. Kelleher is also author of *Divorce and Remarriage for Catholics* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973).

29. *Ibid.*, p. 365.

ground. Some serious students say, "Yes, easier to terminate but made more difficult to enter upon." With discernment, they deplore the fact that it is easier in most states to secure a license for marriage than for driving. Their call is for family-life education in public schools from kindergarten through high school, in churches and even in college, though that is a bit *late*.

I have no blueprint to offer. But I am urging that churches and their members need to get involved in these issues much more than we have. While Christians may differ on precise interpretations of Jesus' stern teachings about divorce—some saying they constitute irrevocable law; others saying, not law but an ideal—it seems to me that there is a minimal Christian stand: that we take those teachings with deep concern, as Jesus certainly taught them; that we regard divorce as human failure; and that we reform and work beyond the current legal entanglements, that so often deepen emotional scars, toward humane procedures that foster renewal and new beginnings.

After much serious study, I am persuaded that we need to give far more attention to *prevention* than we have to the "cure," if we can call it that. I agree strongly with those who have pointed out that the fundamental defect in our legal system is that our present matrimonial statutes are concerned primarily with the rules of terminating, rather than preparing for and preserving a marriage. Far more appropriate is the cardinal principle underlying most of the standard college texts designed to prepare students for marriage: the principle of mutual commitment for making marriage succeed. That is the lesson to be understood, appreciated and applied.

In concluding our consideration of permanence in marriage, I remain convinced, while some may scoff, that there is a world of "common sense" (and also, implicitly, a trusting invocation of the grace of God beyond any merely "autonomous" human capabilities) in the old traditional vow: "to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth."

Now, let us turn to the *third* and final problem in this presentation. Perhaps no claim of traditional monogamous marriage has come under more acid attack than its claim to sexual *exclusivity*. From all directions we are engulfed by evidence that increasingly appears to make that claim a pious pretension: the evidence of sex researchers from Kinsey in 1948 to Morton Hunt[30] in

30. Morton Hunt, *Sexual Behavior in the 1970's* (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1974). Cf. Ch. 5.

the mid-seventies; daily "triangle" themes in movies, TV, magazines and paperbacks; the sensational accounts of mate-swapping ("wife-swapping" is "out" because of its chauvinistic ring!) and swinging (no longer hinted at in news releases but treated at length in scholarly books) with an estimated one-half to eight million couples involved.

It appears self-evident that extra-marital sex is on the increase with new and, to some, fascinating forms of expression. To raise the question of "why?" would demand attention to a complex of causes far beyond the scope of this essay. But I want to call attention to one source that is having increasingly persuasive influence among college students. That source is what many "authorities" are now saying in contrast to what most "authorities" used to say.

A review of the outstanding college texts on marriage and the family of only a decade ago will reveal, almost invariably, a "pro-bias" supporting fidelity in husband-wife relation. Today, there is a strong trend toward the opposite: a "pro-bias" justifying extramarital sex (rarely called "infidelity"—that's a loaded and "outdated" term)—referred to by Albert Ellis, a longtime crusader for sexual freedom, as "civilized adultery." Jessie Bernard admits this trend as a significant fact: "One of the most interesting indications of change now taking place is the apologia which is becoming fashionable among researchers in discussing extramarital relationships. It has now become the positive, functional aspects which are increasingly emphasized rather than, as in the past, the negative and dysfunctional aspects. ...The current trend seems sometimes to be, in fact, not only in the direction of tolerance but even, in some cases, of advocacy."[31]

A plethora of statements can be found from a number of writers. But for our purposes here the recent collection of essays, *Beyond Monogamy* (from which a few quotations have already been given) may, with a few exceptions, be taken as representative. The editors, James and Lynn Smith, who are co-directors of a Self-Actualization Laboratory, wrote the introduction and a chapter entitled, "The Incorporation of Extramarital Sex into the Marriage Relationship." I have selected the following quotations from the Introduction:

> The consequences [of "transmarital"—note the term!—permissiveness] for marriage are significant and dramatic. By eliminating or at least reducing the deceit associated with conventional adulterer's behavior and by transcending the intramarital demands of sexual exclusivity, and at the same time achieving new levels of candor and freedom about sexuality, the

31. *Beyond Monogamy*, pp. 149-150.

conjugal relationship can be transformed into something very different which may be more trying and challenging but also more rewarding and fulfilling.[32]

We remain more impressed with the way in which monogamous heterosexuality denies the multiplicity and latitude of sexual and interpersonal experience that are available to healthy and mature persons than with the dire warnings that sexual freedom will always and everywhere be twisted into sexual license and unchecked promiscuity. From an interpersonal point of view, living in a monogamous relationship is not unlike having sex with one's clothing on: it diminishes sensitivity and restricts movement.[33]

Monogamic marriage is, in its own macabre way, a legitimized and normalized form of emotional and erotic bondage, as evidenced by its obligatory character, intended as a matter of course to insure social and familial stability against the wild winds of sexual passion. Historical and social conditions, especially the current rate of divorce and the increasing frequency of extramarital sexual contacts, now suggest that this grand strategy may have backfired. ... There is the aching feeling abroad that something is wrong, not with marriage per se, but with the monogamic system of institutionalized customs and habits that has its prime expression in contemporary western culture. There is a recognition that monogamy pushes as many persons apart as it brings together and that this 'forsaking-all-others' and 'til-death-do-us-part' business is neither realistic nor humane.[34]

The increasing frequency and incidence of swinging and swapping (as forms of consensual adultery) could...be viewed not as evidence of the decline of western civilization or Christian morality through promiscuity and debauchery but as restless... attempts which presage a new era in sexual and interpersonal relationship.[35]

This permissive stance had already received expression in other widely-read sources. Let me refer to two examples. In *Open Marriage* the O'Neills redefined fidelity in broad terms[36] as "loyalty and faithfulness to growth, to integrity of self and respect for the other, not to a sexual and psychological bondage to each other," and they then proceeded to say that in a marriage

> in which each partner is secure in his own identity and trusts in the other, new possibilities for additional relationships exist, and open [as opposed to limited] love can expand to include others. ... These outside relationships may, of course, include sex. That is completely up to the partners involved. If partners in an open marriage do have outside sexual relationships, it is on the basis of their own internal relationship—that is, because they have

32. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
36. *Open Marriage*, pp. 256-57.

> experienced mature love, have real trust, and are able to expand themselves, to love and enjoy others, and to bring that love and pleasure back into their marriage, without jealousy. We are not recommending outside sex, but we are not saying that it should be avoided, either.

It is significant to note (perhaps not merely parenthetically) that Nena O'Neill, in a very recent syndicated series of five articles on marriage, "has done an about-face in her views on marital fidelity," according to the editor. In the second article, entitled "More People Choose Marital Fidelity,"[37] she concludes: "The ideal of equality for men and women has permeated every aspect of our relationship, and has become in turn an affirmation that sexual fidelity is to our advantage. *Sexual fidelity* as a *positive* and *personal choice* will always be more valuable than when we are cowed into it."

In the second example, Della and Rustum Roy's *Honest Sex* (which the authors claim to have written from a Christian perspective, and which for the most part, in my judgment, has considerable merit), the authors see as an extension of agape love the inclusion of a lonely person—especially a single woman or widow [one might wonder: why not also especially a single man or widower!]—into a co-marital relationship which would afford that person's fulfillment, including, if desired, sexual involvement. Indeed, they confidently declare, "Such relationships can serve as the vehicle of faithfulness to God."[38] For relevant critique of this ostensibly "Christian" position, one is not limited to the pronouncements of traditionally-oriented Christian theologians. Masters and Johnson have employed penetrating psychological insight in analysis and scathing judgment on this, and similar, "Christian justifications" of sexual "inclusiveness."[39]

Again, we raise the question, what should be the response of the Church, and of individual Christians, to this increasing contravention, both in theory and practice, of sexual exclusivity in marriage? The position of the Church has certainly been clear and strong. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" is probably the best known of the Commandments. Are there strong reasons for "holding the line?" My answers will be brief but pointed.

Many Christians would say that the teachings of Jesus make mandatory calling adultery what he called it: a sin against God's

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37. *The Durham Sun*, Nov. 29, 1977 (italics mine).

38. Roy, Della and Rustum, *Honext Sex: A Revolutionary New Sex Guide for the Now Generation of Christians* (New York: Signet Books, 1968), p. 121.

39. *Op. cit.*, pp. 187-191.

purposes for human sexuality. That Jesus was emphatic about this is clear. In fact, he was more emphatic than the traditional Jewish view of adultery. Jesus went beyond identifying adultery with the behavioral act and equated it with lustful intention. He placed his chief emphasis (perhaps as a reaction against the male-dominated ethos of his culture) on male, rather than female, sin. And he extended adultery to sexual relations (in act or intent) with any woman, not just "another man's" wife, as the traditional view interpreted the Commandment—a view that sanctioned the double standard of some sexual freedom for the husband and none for the wife. And finally, he taught within the context of his teachings on divorce that a man could commit adultery against his own wife and not simply against another husband's rights—another radical extension of the meaning.

I cannot see how the Church or any Christian could disavow or fail to take seriously these teachings without compromising Christian moral integrity. At the same time, these teachings should certainly be kept in proper perspective, as Jesus himself did. To make the Seventh Commandment the central one and to preach it negatively with stern "thou shalt nots"—and the Church has been guilty of this—is to misread him. It is noteworthy that Jesus was far more lenient with adultery than with spiritual pride, and that adulterers were among his followers, while religiously proud men were his enemies. And he proclaimed his primary mission as not to condemn but to save, to make life whole.

And this leads me to my second answer. The majority of authorities are commonly agreed that the function remaining distinctively and, in some ways, uniquely with marriage and the family is the affectional and volitional function; and that as life becomes more automated and impersonal, this function increases the continuing need, indeed, the imperative need, of marriage and the family. Furthermore, it is commonly agreed that this function makes central the factor of interpersonal relationship. The O'Neills declare that "the central problem in contemporary marriage is relationship."[40] If this is so—and I think unquestionably it is—then in marriage the paramount need is to utilize those means that enrich and deepen the one-to-one relationship and resist those attitudes and acts that erode and destroy it.

Let me quote to you two authorities who place the question of extramarital sex in striking contrast. From the O'Neills:

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40. *Beyond Monogamy*, p. 58.

> If outside companionships are to be more than casual ones, and might involve sex, then those relationships too should be approached with the same fidelity to mutual growth, and with the same measure of respect that you would show your partner in open marriage.[41]

A quotation in contrast is from Rollo May in reaction to "generalized love" as characterized by the free-sex movement. Such love:

> ends in something which is not fully personal because it does not fully discriminate. Distinctions involve willing and choosing, and to choose someone means not to choose someone else. ... But what of fidelity and the lasting quality of love? Erotic passion not only requires capacity to give one's self over to ... the power of the immediate experience. But it also requires that one take this event into one's own center, to mold and form one's self and the relationship [with another] on a new plane of consciousness which emerges out of the experience. This requires the element of will.[42]

These statements suggest the popular question so often raised by students: "Can you love—in a full, intimate sense, including sexual love—more than one person at a time?" The O'Neills say "Yes"; Rollo May says "No." It is at least suggestive, I think, to recall that the O'Neills are anthropologists and Rollo May is a practicing psychoanalyst.

Support for May's position comes, perhaps unexpectedly, from another significant secular source. Masters and Johnson conclude their treatment on "Extramarital Sex" as follows:

> It is true that when one partner finds satisfaction in extramarital relationship, this may turn a potentially destructive marital relationship into a cautious friendship, or a supportive 'acquaintanceship' and in that sense it is better than open marital warfare with all its attendant bitterness and destructiveness. But this *is not marriage in the sense of two human beings with full regard for each other,* sharing the wish to negotiate differences between them and developing mutual pleasures to the fullest extent possible. Making do in marriage is not fulfillment through marriage. Even if infidelity represents the first step in a positive direction—toward making do instead of making war—it is still a long distance away from the goal of becoming committed: true to oneself and loyal and vulnerable to one's partner.[43]

I believe the Christian answer to the question would be much closer to May and to Masters and Johnson rather than to the O'Neills,

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41. *Open Marriage,* p. 258.
42. Rollo May, *Love and Will* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), p. 279.
43. *Op. cit.,* p. 139.

not only because the affirmation of sexual exclusivity has a hard-nosed practicality about it (that is astonishingly overlooked by the O'Neills), but also because of the implied affirmation of a mysterious sexual duality, polarity or complementarily between husband and wife that finds its deepest needs fulfilled in the "one flesh" union of a one-to-one marriage relationship. This is the positive approach to the Christian claim of exclusive sexual fidelity.

What is the future of monogamous marriage from a Christian perspective? As we have seen, the current rate of marriage failures and other negative data constitute for some authorities compelling evidence for a pessimistic outlook or motivate others to advocate blueprints of extreme alternatives. My own reflections, on a more comprehensive basis that includes Christian insights as treated above, have led me increasingly to a primarily optimistic—or at least hopeful—position. Realistically there remain, of course, not only deep concerns, not only blatant causes for temporary pessimism, but also complex problems, for which there are no easy answers. But I am persuaded that there is a significant trend in attitudes toward a meaningful understanding and mutually-fulfilling realization of the (God-given) possibilities of monogamous marriage, which presents Christians and the Church with a unique opportunity. This trend consists of an increasing *correlation* of a great deal of *secular* research findings with authentic *Christian* teaching. If the distinctive cohesive factor that enables marital life not only to survive but to build toward fulfllment is *the quality of interpersonal relationships,* as many secular marriage authorities are urgently affirming,[44] then equality, commitment, fidelity and a dedication to marital success are not only imperative components of that quality, they are *inherent* components of our Christian faith. Hence, the way for cooperative endeavors between concerned secular and Christian marriage authorities toward strengthening our marriage system is widening. But more importantly, the Church has a distinctive function for its opportunity and responsibility in that it now has a reconstructed *positive biblical base* to provide a faith dynamic to this endeavor. In my view, this is the salient factor for hope, for even optimism.

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44. Cf., e.g., James Leslie McCary, *Freedom and Growth in Marriage* (Santa Barbara: Hamilton, 1975), especially Ch. 5.

"Valley of Shame"*

by H. Shelton Smith**
Professor Emeritus of American Religious Thought

Last January the Senate of the United States lost by death its most distinguished champion of human rights. Ever since 1948, when Hubert Humphrey electrified the Democratic Convention at Philadelphia, he had fervently pleaded with the nation to eradicate racial discrimination and grant equal rights to all Americans. That dramatic speech sparked the Dixiecrat revolt, but it also generated a legislative movement that culminated in the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Quite appropriately the Senator's last public message to America reiterated his favorite thirty-year theme. Failing health had prevented him from traveling to Atlanta to accept a special tribute from a conference which was to commemorate the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., the matchless crusader for human rights. Shortly before his death, however, Senator Humphrey had written an acceptance message to be read on that occasion. A former aid read that message at the famous Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta on the night of January 14th, while the Happy Warrior's body lay in state in the nation's Capitol Rotunda.

"Fourteen years ago," said the Senator, "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. shared with us his dream for America. That cherished dream of what our nation could and should be became our dream as well . . . . To be linked to Dr. King in the battle for equal rights is a distinct honor." Having cited several important achievements in civil rights, the Senator then added the following realistic words: "We must face the facts, for despite our progress, a huge valley of shame separates black and white America."[1]

That grave evaluation of our racial situation invites a serious question: Is it true? Not a few informed observers would agree with

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*An address given at the opening of Durham's "Human Relations Week," Feb. 12, 1978, at St. Joseph's A.M.E. Church.

**Ed. note: Divinity School and Graduate School alumni over several decades, who recall with appreciation—as well as fear and trembling—the "Happy Warrior of *Duke*," will be delighted to see herein that, while the flesh may grow weaker, the spirit and mind are still going strong! Dr. Smith was honored at the Convention of the North Carolina Council of Churches at Duke on May 2, 1978 with a special Citiation of Merit in recognition of his crucial role in promoting ecumenical relations and his long-continued battle for Christianly humane inter-racial relations in North Carolina.

Senator Humphrey. Furthermore, many black leaders suspect that a growing number of white leaders are losing their zeal for bridging the valley of shame. Indeed, the new executive director of the NAACP, Dr. Benjamin Hooks, recently said to a conference of prominent blacks: "You are not going to get the help from the white community that once you got."[2]

As we launch our Human Relations Week this Sunday afternoon, it is important to examine candidly the current status of human rights, especially in the South. But before addressing that subject directly, I want to indicate the ethical perspective that informs my exposition and evaluation.

For me, the biblical doctrine of the *imago Dei* is supremely important. According to that doctrine, God created all humankind in his image. From this basic doctrine, I derive the guiding principle, that all human beings are of equal worth in the sight of God, and are consequently entitled to equal rights in the human family.

Now let me explore the implications of the doctrine of the *imago Dei* with respect to human rights in three areas.

I

If there be any such thing as a human right, it is the right to work, the right to earn one's daily bread. In our work-ethic oriented society, to hold a job is a mark of responsible personhood, a badge of self-worth, and a means of human fulfillment. To put its meaning in popular jargon, to have a job is to be "somebody."

Yet we Americans are confronted with a melancholy fact: In the richest nation on the globe, some six million men and women are jobless, and probably several million of them will never get a steady job unless our economic system is radically transformed.

Shortly before his death, Senator Humphrey urged the passage of the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill, saying that it would "commit the government to full employment in a politically accountable manner that has never existed in the past." That bill has already been considerably weakened, but even if it could be adopted in its original form it would require five years to reduce the rate of unemployment to 4 percent.[3]

A further important fact is that joblessness is not distributed evenly. Its major victims are the poor and the powerless. "Black unemployment," for example, "has been about double the white rate for more than two decades [,] and recently the gap has widened. Since 1958, black teenage unemployment has never fallen below 25 percent."[4] In the slum areas of the inner cities, probably 50 percent of black teenagers are jobless.

Such chronic unemployment does far more than reduce the nation's economic growth. It undermines faith in the free enterprise system; it weakens political and social democracy; it pits whites against blacks in the marketplace; it strains family relations; it breeds crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, and other social pathologies. For all these reasons, the country must expand the job market or it will undergo a deepening economic and moral crisis.

II

Next to the right to work is the right to learn, the right to develop one's native, God-given talents. This is especially important in a democratic social order.

The Old South knew that if it was to keep the slaves in their subservient place, it must exclude them from the school house. Although the post-reconstruction South opened the school room to black children, it segregated them from white children. Finally, in 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized this anti-black dual system in *Plessy v. Ferguson.* From 1896 to 1954 the Plessy doctrine of "separate but equal" governed the educational policy of the South. The separatist part of the Plessy mandate was strictly enforced, but the equality part was never fulfilled by any southern state. Meanwhile, Jim Crow reigned supreme in all other public facilities. In some court rooms, white witnesses kissed one Bible, and black witnesses kissed another.

Fifty-eight years later, the Supreme Court in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) ruled that "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." The South raised an uproar. In March, 1956, one hundred U.S. Congressmen from the South, including nineteen Senators, issued a *Declaration of Constitutional Principles* in which they charged that the Brown decision was a "clear abuse of Judicial power," and they pledged themselves "to use all lawful means to bring about a reversal" of that decision.[5]

North Carolina and all the other states of the old Confederacy adopted various devices designed to prevent school desegregation, but all of them ultimately failed to preserve the Plessy policy. Hence, for some twenty years the desegregation movement gained momentum in the South.

In recent years, however, judicial roadblocks have largely halted the integrative process in the public schools in all sections of the nation. A highly significant example is the 1974 Detroit case, in which a bare majority of the Supreme Court, in *Bradley v. Milliken,* overturned the ruling of two lower courts which had authorized a metropolitan school system. Speaking for the majority, Chief Justice

Burger held that the disparate treatment of black children took place within the Detroit school system alone, and he therefore concluded that corrective measures "must be limited to that system."[6] The decision elated suburban whites, but it spread gloom among Detroit's school officials, who found it impossible to achieve significant desegregation within a city system that was nearly 70 percent black.

The Bradley ruling has already had far-reaching educational and racial effects. Legal efforts, as in Durham, to merge urban and suburban school systems have been defeated in many cities. Thus masses of blacks and poor whites have been bottled up in inner-city areas, where it will be increasingly difficult to provide the nation's most deprived children with a quality of education equal to that in the suburban communities.

The white academy movement is generating the spirit of racial separatism in many communities. In 1975, according to one report, some 3,500 white academies were operating in the South, with a total enrollment of 750,000.[7] Some of them are probably makeshift enterprises, but many others are believed to be academically superior to the public schools. Certainly the better so-called Christian academies are recruiting the children and youth of many middle-class white families, and thereby weakening the public school system. Would it not be a near miracle if these academies did not engender white racism? In any case, a white youth at Briarcrest Baptist High School (Memphis, Tenn.) probably expressed a common sentiment among his fellow students when he said: "I left the public schools to get away from blacks."[8]

III

A third fundamental human right, particularly in a democracy, is the right to equal participation in the political process. If this right is denied or abridged, the foundation of democratic government will be eroded.

Yet the post-reconstruction white South was determined to prevent most black citizens from sharing in the political activities of the region. Two of the most effective weapons used to disfranchise black people were the literacy test and the white primary.

North Carolina, for example, adopted a literacy test in 1900 with the avowed purpose of drastically limiting the black vote. Governor Charles B. Aycock is generally lauded for his advocacy of public education, but it should not be forgotten that he also ardently fought for a literacy requirement for voting. After that requirement became law, thousands of black citizens were cheated out of their suffrage

rights. Other southern states employed the same instrument with similar results. The late V.O. Key, Jr., the best historian of southern politics, was entirely right when he declared: "No matter from what direction one looks at it, the southern literacy test is a fraud and nothing more."[9]

Precisely when the white primary came into use seems uncertain, but by 1930 it was politically operative throughout the South. Unitl 1944, when the Supreme Court outlawed the white primary, that weapon proved highly effective in preventing blacks from voting in a crucial decision-making process.

Political white supremacy in the South suffered a fatal blow with the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. After that act became law, black voter registration increased dramatically. By 1975, more than 3.5 million blacks were registered voters. Significantly, Jimmy Carter would not be president today if black southerners had not voted for him in overwhelming numbers, for roughly 51 percent of the southern white vote went to Gerald Ford.

In recent years, an increasing number of black southerners have been winning state and local elections. Whereas only 565 got elected in 1970, that number rose to 1,652 in 1975. Of the latter number, 94 were state legislators. The black South is also beginning to contribute significantly to political leadership on the national level. Two prominent examples are Representative Barbara Jordan of Texas, brilliant keynote speaker at the last Democratic National Convention, and Andrew Young of Georgia, ambassador to United Nations. Nevertheless, black southerners by no means share equally with white southerners in holding elective offices. In 1975, they numbered only 2.1 percent of the South's elected officials, although black people comprised 17.8 percent of the region's voting-age population.[10]

This brief survey, therefore, leaves me with one firmly rooted conviction: although black southerners are making progress in some areas of human rights, they still have a long distance to go before sharing full equality with whites. Hence we of the white South must rededicate ourselves to the urgent task of eradicating the shameful valley that divides black and white people in our section of the nation. When the valley is removed, both races will walk side by side in equal dignity. And then will be fulfilled the magnificent dream of Martin Luther King, Jr.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Durham Morning Herald,* Jan. 15, 1978.
2. *New York Times,* Jan. 8, 1978.
3. Helen Ginsburg, "Jobs for All the Jobless," *Christianity and Crisis,* Jan. 16, 1978, p. 327.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 326.
5. *New York Times,* March 12, 1956, p. 19.
6. *New York Times,* July 26, 1974, p. 17.
7. *Time,* Dec. 15, 1975, p. 54.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York, 1949), p. 576.
10. Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, *The Transformation of Southern Politics* (New York, 1977), p. 51 (Tables 3-1 and 3-2).

The Negro Spiritual: Examination of Some Theological Concepts

by Preston L. Floyd
Duke M. Div. middler

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down,
yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
We hung up our harps upon the willows
in the midst thereof.
For there they that carried us away captive
required of us a song,
And they that wasted us
required of us mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

Psalm 137:1-4

With a few minor alterations, the lament above could easily be viewed as a passage from the annals of the Black experience. Of course, it tells of the Israelites seeming loss of inspiration during their captivity in Babylon, and it is most certain that bondage, in any form, is not conducive to singing, especially not "songs of Zion" or praise. Furthermore, one would be even less inspired to sing while in bondage in a "strange land." This, of course, was the condition of the slaves in America, as well as the "Children of Israel" in Babylon.

The Hebrew poet posed the query, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" After several hundred years of the Black presence in America, one wonders how the slaves were able to "sing the Lord's song in a strange land" under the mind-boggling oppression in which they existed daily. This phenomenon opposes rational explanation and appears to overshadow any simple statement of faith. While one seems lost for an answer as to "how," it is quite obvious that they did indeed sing, as evidenced by the numerous extant songs and song fragments that have been transmitted, orally and in writing, to posterity.

There has been voluminous work done on the spirituals; however, most of the work has centered on the spirituals as they relate to the social context from which they sprang or their musicality. But until recently, there has not been a great deal of study done that has focused strictly on the theological aspects of the spirituals. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine some of the theological concepts that appear in the spirituals.

However, an adequate analysis of the spirituals could not be attempted without speaking, even if briefly, of the historical or social milieu to which their nascence is attributed. This paper will begin with a few observations on the African heritage of the slaves before turning to the significance of Christianity in the context of American slavery. The paper will then consider the theological implications of the development of spirituals, illustrated by some specific examples.

It is the contention of the writer that any phenomenon being considered at a particular point in time must be viewed as a gestalt that has been formed or affected, directly or vicariously, in some small way by all that has gone before it. Thus, one could not properly speak of history as it relates to the spirituals or the originators of the spirituals, without beginning in Africa.

What is Africa to me;
Copper sun or scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?
One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?

—Countee Cullen

It is now considered general knowledge that Egypt was the "cradle of civilization." However, few know or care to know that the Egyptians were a race made up of an intermixing of many racial stocks, Semitic nomads from the east, groups from the north and Ethiopians, of dark and light extraction, from the south.[1] Even more importantly, there was very strong Ethiopian influence in the government of Egypt, both male and female.[2] As Lerone Bennett observes, ". . . the beginning was an African as well as Asian achievement."[3]

There were many powerful states in ancient Africa with highly sophisticated economic systems based on manufacturing and international commerce, as well as agriculture. These states also had various forms of centralized governments and maintained armies of professional soldiers. Ghana, Mali and Songhay were three such states.[4]

Many of these states evolved into greater centers of education and culture. For instance, Timbuktu drew to its doors Moslem youth to study law and surgery at the University of Sankore, as well as North African and European scholars who came to confer with erudite historians and authors of the black empire.

Consequently, the Africans also had an intellectually appealing *weltanschauung* much akin to contemporary "process philosophies." Africans viewed "being" as constantly in flux or process, not static, and spoke of the essence of entities "in terms of force or energy rather than matter."[6]

For the Africans, the quintessence of religion was life itself. They believed in a creator, who is the high God, and whose "life-force" is a component of all existing things. Subordinate to God the creator, they believed there was "a pantheon of lesser gods identified sometimes with terrestrial objects."[7] There was a definite belief in life after death; the Africans held that the "life force," which was a part of the nature of the supreme God, present in each individual, persisted in existence subsequent to the individual's earthly life.[8]

From this world the slaves came, bearing the tradition of numberless tribes and racial extractions—Mandingos, Ashantis, Fantins, Ibos, Efiks, Yorubas, etc.—from the West Coast of Africa spanning about three thousand miles.[9] To the shores of America this people of such rich heritage came via the bloody Middle Passage, which still stands as one of the darkest spots in the history of human civilization and cruelest acts of "man's inhumanity to man," to be sold on auction blocks like farm animals. The slavetraders sought to strip the slaves of all vestiges of African culture and destroy social cohesion by separating members of the same tribes or families. Once the slaves were on the plantations, the slaveholders continued to maintain stringent vigilance over their activities.[10]

Some slaves were soon introduced to Christianity via baptism. History records that the Anglicans began baptizing slaves at the very inception of slavery in the colonies during the seventeenth century. However, there was opposition to the baptism, for fear this would serve as sanction for manumission. Of course, this was rectified by a law that made it clear that baptism did not change the status of a slave.[11]

Systematic proselytizing did not begin until the eighteenth century, at which time various denominations began their attempts to Christianize the slaves and many slaves responded warmly to the attempts. Some scholars hold that this ready response was the result of the slaves' African heritage. However, Dr. E. Franklin Frazier contends that the slaves responded warmly because Christianity offered the slaves a "new basis of social cohesion."[12] It is the position of this paper that it was possibly a combination of both, because, in spite of the efforts of the slavetraders and slaveholders to strip the slaves of their cultural ancestry, psychology has taught us that this is not accomplished that easily. (Not to speak of the story of Kunta Kinte in *Roots* by Alex Haley.)

In many instances, the slaveowners not only allowed this Christianizing, but encouraged it, because they felt this would make the slave more content with his condition. Of course, many of the preachers who preached to the slaves were very selective in their use of the Scripture. They used such passages as the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, as well as certain biblical stories.[13] There was a definite avoidance of those passages that would make the slaves more sensitive to the injustices, or aware of the biblical injunctions against the injustices they were suffering.

In spite of this, ". . . Blacks were able to see themselves and the powers of a liberating God in the stories and models of Moses, Daniel, Joshua, the three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace, John and Jesus."[14] Therefore, the slaves discovered in Christianity a new outlook on life in general and on themselves specifically. Of course, what the slave had done, inadvertently, was to adapt "the Christian religion to his psychological and social needs,"[15] without consciously distorting the meaning of the Scriptures. Nowhere is this more evident than in the spirituals.

Dr. Mays observe that "The creation of the spirituals was hardly an accident in Negro life. It was a creation born of necessity in order that the slave might more adequately adjust himself to the new conditions in the new world."[16] The writer tends to agree that it was this and a little more, for often the spirituals aided the slaves in rebelling against conditions or in adjusting conditions to their own needs.

O black slave singer, gone, forgot, unfamed
You—you alone, of all the long, long line
Of those who've sung untaught, unknown, unnamed,
Have stretched out upward, seeking the divine.

. . . You sang far better than you knew;
The songs that for your listeners'
Hungry hearts sufficed
Still live, — but more than this to you belongs:
You sang a race from wood and stone to Christ.

—James Weldon Johnson

The spirituals to be examined in this work were not chosen on the basis of any particular theological concepts they seemed to exemplify. Rather, the more familiar ones were chosen on the basis of the writer's personal preference, and the less familiar ones were chosen for the very reason that they are rare and do not often appear in print, thus giving the writer a chance to develop his own interpretation.

Dr. Mays, in his book *The Negro's God,* argues that the spirituals are basically compensatory; that is, they neutralize or offset the evil effects of slavery by dealing with or singing about a time and place where this evil will not exist. Of course, there are many spirituals which on surface would support such a notion. However, the interpreter must be careful about making judgments on the surface or superficial appearance, because the slave narratives are full of stories of the dualistic existence of the slave. One "life" was displayed before massa in the field and the "big house," while another was seen at night or in the clandestine meetings in the slave quarters. Moreover, there are numerous spirituals, the first two examined below being most notable, that openly defy the idea of a "compensatory pattern."

Joshua Fit de Battle ob Jericho

Refrain: *Joshua fit de battle ob Jericho,*
Jericho, Jericho.
Joshua fit de battle ob Jericho,
An' de walls come tumblin' down.

Verses: *You may talk about your king ob Gideon,*
You may talk about your man ob Saul,
But dere's none like good ol' Joshua
At the battle ob Jericho.

Up to de walls ob Jericho,
He marched with spear in han',
Go blow dem ram horns, Joshua cried,
'Cause de battle am in my han'.

Then the lam' ram sheep horns began to blow,
An de trumpets began to soun',
Joshua commanded dem chillun to shout,
An' de walls come tumblin' down.

There is nothing in this spiritual that could be clearly and truthfully considered compensatory. This song recounts the biblical saga of Joshua's leading the Israelites against Jericho and by the power of God conquering the city. The slave had a way of paraphrasing biblical stories or recasting them in slave vernacular, and it is the stance of the writer that this definitely indicates that in some way the slave is saying, "This is my story," or I can identify with this. Thus, in the spirituals, God is seen as a warrior or the strength of a warrior. There is evidently some hope or belief that as God helped Joshua break down the walls of Jericho, he would also help the slave break down the walls of slavery and oppression. It might be added that with the driving percussive beat and up tempo with which this

spiritual is sung, the song would certainly give those singing it the feeling of being able to conquer.

In the next spiritual it is easily inferred that God was viewed as a liberator who was not only against human bondage, but would do something about it.

Go Down Moses

Refrain: *Go down Moses,*
Way down in Egyptland,
Tell ol' Pharoah,
"Let my people go!"

Verses: *When Israel was in Egyptland,*
Let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my peopel go!

"Thus spoke the Lord," bold Moses said,
"Let my people go!
If not I'll smite your first-born dead.
Let my people go!"

The constant repeating of "Let my people go!" with the use of the possessive pronoun "my" seems to indicate that slaves definitely recognized themselves as the children or people of God and that their Father would certainly not let them suffer in bondage forever, but in his own time, as with the Israelites in Egypt, he would deliver them.

Also there is a strong belief exhibited here, and in countless other spirituals, that even though God is powerful he is equally personal. Indeed, he communicates with his own and he will draw close to one, if one will draw close to him.

One would have to agree with Dr. Mays' observation that the spirituals project the idea that God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and also that God is not only the creator of heaven and earth, but he is the sovereign ruler of both.[18] There are very few spirituals that incorporate all of these concepts so well in a few stanzas as does the one entitled, "God is a God."

Refrain: *God is a God! God don't never change!*
God is a God! An' He always will be God!

Verses: *He made the sun to shine by day,*
He made the sun to show the way,
He made the stars to show their light,
He made the moon to shine by night, sayin'

The earth his footstool an' heav'n his throne,
The whole creation all his own,

His love and power will prevail,
His promises will never fail, sayin'

The title itself, "God is a God," which is the first phrase in the refrain, speaks very clearly of the omnipotence of God. As many old black worshippers today in a moment of ecstasy might be heard to say, "God is God right by Himself" or "He is my all in all." The above spiritual projects the same idea, that God is sovereign Lord, and what is more, His status is established eternally. "An' He always will be God." Just as God's rule is founded eternally, so is His love. And He can be trusted in spite of all else, because "His promises will never fail."

The following spiritual demonstrates the slaves' strong belief that God is indeed omniscient. Also, he calls for righteousness with stringent exactitude and none can evade God's righteous judgment.

No Hiding Place

Refrain: *There's no hiding place down here,*
There's no hiding place down here.

Verses: *Went to the rock to hide my face,*
Rocks cried out, "No hiding place,"
There's no hiding place down here.

Boatmen, boatman, row one side,
Can't get to heaven 'gainst wind and tide,
There's no hiding place down here.

Sinner man, sinner man, better repent,
God's going to call you to judgment.
There's no hiding place down here.

It is the writer's contention that the idea of "judgment" appears extensively in the spirituals because the slaves were daily experiencing judgment, usually with punishment at the hands of their masters. Thus, the thought of the "terrible day of the Lord" was even more awe-inspiring or fear-provoking. In examining this spiritual, one cannot help but realize that the idea of "no hiding place" was driven home for the slaves by the fact that they were plagued with "high visibility"; due to their skin color, it was impossible for them to run away and be able to blend into the larger community. So, indeed, for slaves there was "no hiding place down here."

A most interesting phenomenon is what the slaves believed about Jesus as disclosed by the spirituals. It had been argued in years past that the slaves did not believe in the "incarnation" of Jesus. However,

nothing could be further from the truth; in fact, it would be very difficult to find a corpus of Christian literature which manifests such unapologetic acceptance of the "incarnation" as does the body of Negro spirituals. For the slaves, Jesus was truly "Emmanuel — God with us."

Come Down

Refrain: *Come down, Come down, my Lord!*
Come down, Way down in Egyptland.

Verses: *Jesus Christ, He died for me,*
Way down in Egyptland;
Jesus Christ, He set me free,
Way down in Egyptland.

Born of God I know I am,
Way down in Egyptland;
I'm purchased by the dying Lamb,
Way down in Egyptland.

Peter walked upon the sea,
Way down in Egyptland;
And Jesus told him, "Come to me,"
Way down in Egyptland.

While it is evident from the most perfunctory investigation of this spiritual that "Egyptland" is synonomous with slavery, one cannot help but be intrigued with the way this spiritual blends an Old Testament saga with a new Testament phenomenon, Jesus. This is a strong identification of Jesus with the liberating God of the Old Testament, which is a lucid demonstration of a belief in the "incarnation." Also, it would be ludicrous for one to ask Jesus to "Come down in Egyptland" if one did not believe that his presence would make a difference.

This spiritual also discloses a definite belief in the "Atonement." "Born of God I know I am...I'm purchased by the dying Lamb." There are numerous other spirituals that affirm Jesus as "God in flesh," as well as the "suffering servant." Finally, one notices that these two views of Jesus are used interchangeably in many spirituals. As James Cone wittily observes, "It is safe to assume that black slaves did not know about the proceedings at Nicea and Chalcedon."[17]

The next spiritual adds a little levity, yet reveals several interesting points.

My Good Lord's Done Been Here

Refrain: *Oh, my Good Lord's done been here!*
Blessed my soul and gone away.
My Good Lord's done been here!
Blessed my soul and gone away.

Verses: *When I get up in Heaven*
And all my work is done,
Goin' a sit down by Sister Mary
And chatter with the darling Son.

Hold up the Baptist finger,
Hold up the Baptist hand.
When I get up in Heaven
Goin' a join the Baptist Band.

You may be a white man,
White as the driftin' snow,
If your soul ain't been converted,
To Hell you're sure to go.

First, it is quite apparent that there is no single theme, neither does the refrain relate in any logical manner with the verses. However, this is not unusual, given the way some of the spirituals were composed. For instance, sitting around in a social gathering or at a religious meeting, someone could have started singing the refrain above and then several people in the room could have joined in, adding new verses in the same rhythmic scheme without regard for unity of theme.

Nonetheless, verse one reveals that the slaves not only viewed heaven as a place where human toil would end,[18] but also as a place where they would "be somebody" and would be able to "sit down by Sister Mary and chatter with the darling Son."

Verse two gives great credibility to the idea of strong allegiance along denominational lines, which was said to exist among the slaves. Of course, this adamant denominational allegiance was another way for the slaves to affirm themselves as persons rather than property.

Finally, verse three supports the notion, previously mentioned, that the slaves believed in the ultimate righteousness and impartiality of God. In this world "Whiteness" is often equated with "rightness" or worth; however, the slaves are saying in this song that righteousness, as evidenced by conversion, is God's only criterion for judgment.

The Black experience in America has been dubious at best and apparently hopeless at worst. But in spite of this, the Black Christian, slave and free, has—through an inexplicably transcendent faith[19] in a caring and liberating God—shown forth a remarkable capacity to "sing the Lord's song in a strange land."

O Black and unknown bards of long ago,
How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?
How, in your darkness, did you come to know
The power and beauty of the minstrel's lyre?
Who first from midst his bonds lifted his eyes?
Who first from out the still watch, lone and long,
Feeling the ancient faiths of prophets rise
Within his dark-kept soul, burst into song?
Heart of what slave poured out such melody
As "Steal Away to Jesus"? On its strains
His spirit must have nightly floated free,
Though still about his hands he felt his chains.
Who heard Great "Jordan roll"? Whose starward eye
Saw chariot "swing low"? And who was he
That breathed that comforting, melodic sigh,
"Nobody knows de trouble I see?"

James Weldon Johnson

FOOTNOTES

1. John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1967), p. 3.
2. *Ibid,* p. 7.
3. Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower* (New York: Penguin Press, 1976), p. 5.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
10. E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1974), p. 10.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
14. Latta K. Thomas, *Biblical Faith and the Black American* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976), p. 17.
15. Frazier, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
16. Benjamin E. Mays, *The Negro's God* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 19.
17. James H. Cone, *Spirituals and the Blues* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), p. 47.
18. Mays, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
19. Charles L. Helton, "The Tragic in Black Historical Experience," *The Duke Divinity School Review*, Vol. 38, no. 2 (Spring 1973), pp. 78-87.

The 'Wisdom' of John Updike

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Most critics dealing with John Updike's novels and short stories have noted his religious interest. Rachel Burchard, for example, views Updike as searching "for religious definitions to fit the present."[1] John Hill believes that the theme of Updike's novels is the "quest for belief."[2] And Alice and Kenneth Hamilton in their controversial book *The Elements of John Updike* understand Updike to give an "unambiguous" and "Christian" answer to the question: "Does the universe, blindly ruled by chance, run downward into death; or does it follow the commands of a Living God whose Will for it is life?"[3] Rabbit Angstrom, perhaps Updike's best known character, has been labeled a "religious sufferer," an "absurd man as saint," and a person in "search for God."[4] Both the Hamiltons and S.A. Zylstra have written on the parabolic nature of Updike's fictive world, while Daniel Morrissey has noted the "subtle religious perspective" of Updike's works.[5]

In spite of the fact that a religious undercurrent is widely recognized in Updike's novels and short stories, determining its precise nature has proven bothersome. Richard Fisher is not alone in concluding "...it is difficult to see exactly what Updike wants to say about it [religion]."[6] Although the Hamiltons have found Updike unambiguous in his historic Christian perspective, others have wondered whether the theological position which the Hamiltons have uncovered "is specifically Updike's or whether it belongs jointly to him and the Hamiltons."[7] John Aldridge, who has, perhaps, been the most critical of the Hamilton's work, believes that they have created an "imaginary writer who in certain particulars is very much like Updike, but who resembles far more strikingly Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, St. John of the Cross, and the prophet Isaiah."[8] At the opposite end of the critical spectrum from that of the Hamiltons, Wayne Falke has located Updike's hope for redemption purely in the secular. Falke concludes: "Updike's fiction is calling for a humanism that has little justification in theology. Its elements are rather simple: joy, love, warm family ties, beauty in our lives, social justice."[9] What Falke ignores in this statement is Updike's belief that without the divine presence (or at least its "blessing"), life's simple values prove vacant.

Updike is not straightforwardly "Christian" in his portrayal of human life and its meaning, but neither is he "non-religious" in his approach. Perhaps his fictional world's religious perspective is best suggested by Updike himself who wrote these words concerning Robert Frost's poetry: "While there is nothing in his vision as grotesque and ungainly as the God of orthodox theology, yet his poems at their eloquent best provide the vague sense of reassurance which this God at His best provided."[10] Neither an advocate of orthodoxy nor of rationalism, Updike is not a sectarian or a secularist. His humanistic vision reflects a marginal but vital religious belief. It is the nature of this belief which is the focus of this essay.

I. A CAREFUL OBSERVATION OF LIFE ITSELF

Christian and secular-humanistic models serve as foils in Updike's fiction to his observations on life's meaning. Neither Zimmerman, the high school principal in *The Centaur* who criticizes George Caldwell's teaching for slightly "humanistic values," nor The Reverend March, whose faith is intact but baked to "an enduring hardness," have anything to offer Caldwell in his search for ways to live with dignity in the midst of life's uncertainty (pp. 86, 176).[11] Similarly, Jack Eccles, the humanist minister, and Fritz Kruppenbach, the orthodox Lutheran clergyman, prove in *Rabbit, Run* to be unhelpful to Harry in his quest. Eccles' God remains merely theoretical and salvation is reduced by him to a matter of good works. Kruppenbach's belief in Christ causes him to reject Eccles' "decency and busyness" as "nothing," but his faith proves equally sterile, not allowing him to muster any compassion for "one childish husband leaving one childish wife" (p. 143).

It is not in these caricatures of our contemporary approaches to life's meaning, but in a renewed dedication to the complexity and ambiguity of life itself, that Updike has discovered faint lines pointing to life's mystery. Sensing the current shallowness both of a directly "religious" mode of existence, and of a carefully reasoned, but foundationless, "ethical" stance, Updike has become an explorer of the "aesthetic" possibilities of life. He has attempted to give voice in his fiction to the world "as he sees it, unamended and whole."[12] Not wishing, in his own words, to make his fiction "any clearer than life," Updike has refused to resolve fully the tension he has observed between the value and the vanity of creation.[13] Lacking any direct and clear supernatural verification as to life's purpose or meaning, and sensing the vacuousness of the professional do-gooder's life without such knowledge, Updike has turned his attention to a careful and

common sense observation of life itself, in the hope of discovering some sure place on which to root his own existence.

What has Updike seen? Critics have concluded that he is a "chronicler of American anxiety," a prophet in "our stainless steel wilderness" showing "the sadness and emptiness of American life."[14] On the one hand, Updike observes man doomed to die and threatened by oblivion, and yet he finds "moments that shine, and joy."[15] One critic has concluded that Updike writes of the ways we exist "with dignity and honor in an enigmatic universe."[16] In our oftentimes drab existences, and without denying that very drabness, Updike seeks to "keep a fertile space open."[17] In the majority of his fiction, Updike's characters are peeled away, "exposing a pulp of indecision, a core of wonder."[18] With descriptions such as these, Updike's critics have viewed his fictive world as presenting to the reader "a distinguished balancing act over a void, a major image of precarious life being true to itself."[19]

II. ECCLESIASTES AS AN ANALOGUE

In seeking to understand the exact religious nature of Updike's continuing "balancing act over a void" an analogue can perhaps be useful. There is always the danger in such an approach of imposing an interpretative design upon a body of fiction, not letting the novels and stories reveal their own patterns of meaning. But Updike has himself suggested such a procedure in at least two ways. In his interview in the *Paris Review* Updike allows that there are in his fiction"certain basic hormonies, certain congruences with prototypes in the Western consciousness" that he is happy to accept.[20] For example, he agrees with a critic that there are illuminating parallels between his book *Couples* and the *Don Juan* legend, though the similarities were unintended. Secondly, in his novels and short stories, Updike has consistently set the stage for understanding what is to follow by providing his readers an interpretive key in the nature of an epigraph, usually taken from religious sources. It is one such epigraph that is useful for our purposes.

In *Museums and Women and Other Stories*, Updike prefaces his collection by quoting Ecclesiastes 3:11-13:

> He has made everything beautiful in its time; Also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.
>
> I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live;

> Also that it is God's gift to man that every one should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil.

Here, in the writing of that unknown Hebrew sage (designated in the text only by the term "Qoheleth," meaning "the preacher—the Ecclesiastic"—thus the name of the book), we are given an interpretative guide, one with "certain basic harmonies," or parallels, with Updike's stories. The epigraph can serve as a key to comprehending the theological center of this collection of stories, as well as of the Updike corpus more generally. For Updike stands in the tradition of this Old Testament wisdom writer, observing life carefully, debunking those who would naively categorize it, chronicling both its vanity and its mystery, but nevertheless affirming, however tentatively, its real value as the divine creation.

Museums and Women was not the first occasion in which Updike has made explicit reference to Qoheleth's writing. In his first novel, *The Poorhouse Fair,* the narrator (Updike?) comments:

> Today was not the day for talk of bad health. As the Preacher saith, to everhing there is a season and a time to every purpose under Heaven. This way the day intended for rejoicing (p. 80, Knopf).

But the rain that had come threatening the poorhouse's annual fair had made rejoicing problematic, and it was impossible to know what God willed for the hours ahead. Again, in *Rabbit Redux,* Babe, the black singer in Jimbo's Friendly Lounge, sings "in a voice that is no woman's voice at all and no man's, is merely human, the words of Ecclesiastes. A time to be born, a time to die. A time to gather up stones, a time to cast stones away." The narrator reflects: "Yes. The Lord's last word. There is no other word, not really" (p. 115).

To these direct references might be added the allusion to Ecclesiastes found in *Rabbit, Run.* In that book, Eccles, the ecclesiastic, is perhaps meant as a parody on the original Preacher, refusing to rest in the preciousness of the divine creation. More like a social worker than a priest, and having lost his faith in God, Eccles specializes in counseling, seeking to help people adjust to their situations. But where the original Preacher pointed out the vanity of our toil, Eccles tells Rabbit: "We must work for forgiveness; we must *earn* the right to see the thing behind everything" (p. 234). Both Qoheleth and Eccles counsel man to: "Be a good husband. A good father. Love what you have left" (p. 233). But their motivations for such action are different. Eccles would have us attempt to master life; Qoheleth realizes the need to respond gratefully to it.

It is not in the direct citations or indrect alusions, however, that the case for Ecclesiastes as an analogue to Updike's corpus of fiction

depends. These are but indicators. The validity of the suggestion rests in the overall congruence of their worldviews. In particular, one notes the following similarities. Updike, like Qoheleth, (A) focuses on the pseudowisemen of his age who seek to *work* at mastering (manipulating) life. Again as with Qoheleth, Updike (B) portrays the wiseman as one who recogizes life's vanity. Given death as man's limiter, given the seeming indifference of the universe, given God's silence—man's toil is mere busyness. Nevertheless, despite the uncertainty, Updike, like Qoheleth, (C) affirms the gift of life as being from God. Our lot, therefore, is to enjoy God's creation while we can.

A. Today's Pseudo-Wisemen

> I said to myself, 'I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge' (Ec. 1:16, RSV).

A wisdom motif is prominent throughout the Updike corpus. From the neon owl on a signboard which advertises pretzels (*The Centaur*), to Jimmy, the Mouseketeer, who reduces Socrates' aphorism "Know thyself" to a self-help slogan (*Rabbit, Run*), to young Richard Maples' collection of Batman cards ("Your Lover Just Called"), parodies on our contemporary sources of wisdom are scattered throughout Updike's works. Beyond these humorous referents, Updike also creates a succession of characters who are thought wise by contemporary standards, but who nevertheless lack real understanding. Bech, the writer, amidst a fever of self-importance, is honoured by the Bulgarians though his writing has been a failure for a decade ("The Bulgarian Poetess"). Tothero, the derelict ex-basketball coach ("*Tot*" means "dead" in German) who once led Rabbit's high school team to victory, now embodies the final product of his philosophy—the sacredness of achievement (*Rabbit, Run*). Reverend Pedrick, the "businessman's" minister who preaches that Jesus offers us *present security*, four-and-a-half percent compounded every quarter!" (*Couples*, p. 26); Eccles; and Reverend Dobson, who tells young David Kern that heaven can be compared to "the way the goodness Abraham Lincoln did lives after him" (*Pigeon Feathers*, p. 95), equally betray to their listeners the vacuousness of their wisdom. Joey, the advertising man who seeks a life of pleasure but who doubts its wisdom (*Of The Farm*); Conner, the administrator of a poorhouse who superimposes his sterile theories on his rightfully antagonistic wards (*The Poorhouse Fair*); Ken Whitman, the scientist who is an expert in photosynthesis, but who is

nevertheless further away from knowing life's mystery than his less educated neighbors (*Couples*)—the list could be expanded.

Working at life in order to wrest some meaning from it, these characters in Updike's novels and stories seek life's significance in pleasure, wisdom, possessions, success, or decency. But together, they betray the vanity of such an approach. Life does not yield its secrets to our manipulations. As Ken Whitman reflects:

> He thought of photosynthesis and it appeared to him there was a tedious deep flirtatiousness in nature that withheld her secrets while the church burned astronomers and children died of leukemia. That she yielded by whim, wantonly, to those who courted her offhand, with a careless ardor, he, Ken lacked. The *b-b-bitch* (*Couples*, p. 106).

B. Life's Vanity

> Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun (Ec. 2:11, RSV).

In an interview in *Life* magazine in 1966, Updike commented:

> My novels are all about the search for useful work....So many people these days have to sell things they don't believe in, and have jobs that defy describing. It's so different from the time when men even took their names from the work they did—carpenter, farmer, fisher. A man has to build his life outward from a job he can do. Once he finds one he's got eight hours of the day licked, and if he sleeps eight more, he's two-thirds golden.[21]

Although useful work might be the goal of much of Updike's fiction, such involvement is shown to be increasingly problematic in our technological world. As Rabbit recognizes while watching on the six o'clock news the astronauts' work at landing on the moon: "They keep mentioning Columbus but...it's the exact opposite: Columbus flew blind and hit something, these guys see exactly where they're aiming and it's a big round nothing" (*Rabbit Redux* p. 28). Yet, most in American society refuse to recognize that their lives' efforts are directed toward "a big round nothing." It is for this reason that Updike has become in his fiction "less a maker than a dismantler." D. J. Enright, who coined this apt description, wonders if such an "anatomist" shouldn't have smething more to show at the end of (his stories) than "a stripped skeleton and a bucket of waste flesh and blood."[22] But this is to miss Updike's vision. Given life's mystery, and given our penchant in America to reduce it to a variety of mistakenly straightforward programs, Updike has sought to give voice to the sham.

Rabbit knows enough about life's possibilities to see that they all lead to dead ends (*Rabbit, Run*). Bech realizes that poetry and love (the "*Roman*" and the "romance") are merely "twin attempts to make the best of a bad job" (*Bech: A Book*, p. 145). *The Poorhouse Fair* reflects the total boredom and passivity most people face, whether old or young. Ace Anderson must drown his meaninglessness by dancing ("Ace in the Hole"). Jerry Conant realizes the emptiness of his affair with Sally Mathias apart from some "blessing" being given to it from above. And such blessing remains absent (*Marry Me*). As Updike has stated in an interview:

> My books feed, I suppose, on some kind of perverse relish in the fact that there are insolvable problems. There is no reconciliation between the inner, intimate appetites and the external consolations of life. You want to live forever, you want to have endless wealth, you have an endless avarice for conquests, crave endless freedom really, and yet, despite the aggressive desires, something within us expects no menace.[23]

Updike's fiction, like Qoheleth's work, exposes with biting effect those *menaces* to our vain desires. Chief among these are (1) death's ubiquity, (2) life's mystery, and above all (3) God's silence.

(1) Death's Ubiquity

> For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity (Ec. 3:19, RSV).

Updike understands the central fact of existence to be death itself.[24] In his short story, "The Blessed Man of Boston, My Grandmother's Thimble, and Fanning Island," Updike makes use of Pascal's allegory concerning "a number of men in chains, and all condemned to death..." Viewing one after another of their fellow inmates executed each day, these prisoners look on with sorrow and no hope, realizing that this is their fate as well. Pascal concludes with these words: "C'est l'image de la condition des hommes" (It is the image of the condition of man) (*Pigeon Feathers*, pp. 165-166).

Some in the Updike corpus try to forestall death, like the poorhouse's administrator, Conner, whose promotions are tied up with the longevity of his wards. Others seek vainly to minimize it, like George Kern who responds to his son's fear of death by cavalierly saying:

> Is the kid worried about death? Don't give it a thought, David. I'll be lucky if I live till tomorrow, and I'm not worried. If they'd taken a buckshot gun and shot me in the cradle I'd be better off....Hell, I think death is a wonderful thing" (*Pigeon Feathers*, p. 99).

Still others come to accept it. George Caldwell, in *The Centaur,* who transfers his fear of death at various times to his family, his school, and his farm, knows he is not ready to die. Even "a ninety-nine-year-old Chinaman with tuberculosis, gonorrhea, syphilis, and toothache" is not ready to die, he says. But as the book proceeds, George comes to the painful, but paradoxically joyful conclusion, that only "in giving his life to others" can he enter into total freedom (p. 220). From a fear of death, he turns to embrace life on its way to the grave.

George is the exception, however. More typically in Updike's writings, death's imminence is almost compulsively feared by his characters. "Bech Panics" for "his death gnawed inside him" (*Bech: A Book,* p. 126). All Mrs. Robinson can do, in *Of The Farm,* is smash several plates on the kitchen floor "to remind us that she was there," as her son says. "She's afraid we'll forget her. It's a fear people have when they're her age" (p. 86f., Knopf). The young divinity student who watches the beach in "Lifeguard" thinks "young as I am...I wake at odd hours and in the shuddering darkness and silence feel my death rushing toward me like an express train" (*Pigeon Feathers,* p. 148). In the story "The Dark" death is compared to being trapped in a locked room (*The Music School,* pp. 152-156). In *Marry Me,* Jerry Conant is obsessed with death, as is Piet Hanema in *Couples.* At one point in the book, for example, Piet dreams, reciting an endless litany of death:

> The Chinese knife across the eye. The electric chair dustless in the tiled room. The earthquake that snaps cathedral rafters....The knotted silk cord. The commando's piano wire. The crab in the intestine. The chicken bone in the windpipe. The slippery winter road....The limp-limbed infant smothered in his crib. The rotting kidney turning the skin golden (p. 273).

The narrator comments that "revolving terror (scoops) the shell of him thin" until Piet awakens his wife and asks her to help him forget this obsession (p. 273). But forgetting death's ever present reality proves difficult for Piet amid such reminders as the aborton of his unborn child, the death of John F. Kennedy, and the terminal cancer of John Ong. As in Updike's other novels, death provides the continuing backdrop to the events of life.

(2) Life's Mystery

> For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun? (Ec. 6:12, RSV)

For Updike, life presents itself to man as a surd seeking comprehension: It seems to have "no seasons, only changes of weather" (*Rabbit Redux*, p. 171). Wanting to capture the seasons, but reduced to chronicling the changes in weather, Updike's fiction reflects in its pages the mystery of creation.

Seasonal references are scattered throughout Updike's work, as might be expected of a careful observer of life's ways. When Rabbit flees at the end of *Rabbit, Run*, for example, it is both literally and symbolically down Summer Street. The narrator says Rabbit came to the curb and stepped down, wanting "to travel to the next patch of snow" (p. 255). Rabbit is moving toward the winter of his life. By the time of *Rabbit Redux*, he has weathered a great deal more and it is now, both figuratively and actually, the end of autumn. "Be November pretty soon," he apologizes as his wife shivers in his arms as the novel closes (p. 349). In *Couples*, the chapter headings reveal a similar concern for nature's cycle. Once the reader is "(Welcomed) to Tarbox," he observes the residents skating on "Thin Ice," hoping for that "Breakthrough" when "It's Spring Again."

Updike's interest in life's pattern is apparent not only in his references to the seasons, however. It is also made evident through his fascination with the differing stages of man's life. Updike writes of youth (particularly his youth in small town Pennsylvania) and of old age (using his grandfather as a model, for example, in *The Poorhouse Fair*). And increasingly, he has concentrated on life's midpoint, the summer that is turning to autumn all too quickly.[25] Joey Robinson in *Of The Farm*, is thirty-five, at the midpoint of his life, as is Rabbit Angstrom, Piet Hanema, and Jerry Conant. The Reverend Mr. Thomas Marshfield is slightly older at forty-one and George Caldwell has a teenage son, but they too live in the middle of their allotted days.

The problem each of these men face is the seeming indifference, if not outright hostility, of the universe around them. It is not simply that time is passing, but that its meaning is proving elusive. What can be held onto as significant? Using his observations of the sea as a parable of man's general inability to comprehend life's mystery, Updike writes:

> All I expect is that once into my blindly spun web of words the thing itself will break: make an entry and an account of itself. Not declare what it will do. This is no mystery; we are old friends. I can observe. Not cast its vote with mine, and make a decree; I have no hope of this. The session has lasted too long. I wish it to yield only on the point of its identity. What is it? Its breadth, its glitter, its greenness and sameness balk me. *What is it?* If I knew, I could say ("The Sea's Green Sameness," *Museums and Women*, p. 141).[26]

Lacking any sure knowledge of life, Updike's characters often seem paralyzed. Hook, for example, can only stand motionless at the end of *The Poorhouse Fair* "groping after the fitfull shadow of the advice he must [wants to] impart to Conner, as a bond between them and as a testament to endure his dying in the world. What was it?" (p. 185, Knopf) In *Marry Me,* Ruth Conant and Sally Mathias both want Ruth's husband, Jerry, to decide whether he is going to divorce Ruth in order to marry Sally. But Jerry cannot. He is waiting for a revelation, a "blessing" from above (pp. 53, 190, Knopf). As he tells Ruth: "'Men don't like to make decisions, they want God or women to make them'" (p. 286, Knopf). Believing that man is not able to make firm decisions, given life's ambiguity, Updike consistently ends his novels on an ambiguous note. Interestingly too, in his short stories, Updike has tended increasingly in the direction of "still-life paintings," cameo observations on life devoid of any real plot or character development (compare the collection in *Pigeon Feathers* with *Museums and Women,* for example). Life's significance eludes Updike; though in portraying something of its resonance he suggests such meaning is not nonexistent—merely hidden.

(3) God's Silence

> I have seen the business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end (Ec. 3:10-11, RSV).

In *Rabbit Redux,* Peggy tells Harry (Rabbit), "Living is a compromise between doing what *you* want and doing what *other* people want." To which he responds, "What about what poor God wants?" (p. 102) Unfortunately, what God wants is an unanswerable question for Rabbit, just as it is through most of the Updike corpus, and this radically qualifies his characters' judgments on life. For example, we find Rabbit in *Rabbit, Run* seeking God on a mountain top. He thinks, "It seems plain standing here that if there is this floor there is a ceiling, that the true space in which we live is upward space." Rabbit's thoughts turn to death and he seeks some evidence of God's favor. But the narrator comments, "Silence blasts him." Terrified by this void, Harry turns to his lover, Ruth, for some assurance: "Put your arms around me" (p. 96).

In *Rabbit Redux,* Janice tells her husband:

> It's the year nineteen sixty-nine and there's no reason for two mature people to smother each other to death simply out of inertia. I'm searching for a valid identity and I suggest you do the same (p. 98).

But Rabbit can only continue to do nothing, given his inability to know what God would have him to do. Jerry Conant, in *Marry Me,* reacts similarly. Unwilling to either get a divorce or end his affair with Sally Mathias, he is told by Richard Mathias, her husband:

> But for Chrissakes, Jerry, you should've either broken it off or run off with her. You've put that woman through hell....Well you have to pick. In our society you have to pick (p. 14, Knopf).

But Jerry cannot, for as he has already told his wife, Ruth, "I've been waiting I suppose for God to do something" (p. 171, Knopf). Peter Caldwell in *The Centaur* and Joey Robinson in *Of The Farm* seem equally paralyzed. Must they, like Chiron in *The Centaur,* "wander forever beneath the blank gaze of the Gods" (p. 219)?

Weary of searching, some turn cynically away from God, their vision being redirected to earth. Conner, for example, openly belittles Hook's belief in God, saying that visions of God can be chemically induced (*The Poorhouse Fair,* pp. 114-115, Knopf). Ruth Conant is similarly skeptical of her husband's faith (*Marry Me*). For Freddy Thorne, the agnostic dentist in *Couples,* the only God that exists is "Big Man Death" (p. 387). Unable to live consistently with such a fatalistic posture, however, he turns to others for consolation. After all, "People are the only thing people have left since God packed up." And Freddy continues, "By people I mean sex" (p. 155).

The Reverend Marshfield is unlike Conner, Ruth, or Freddy, in that he still believes in a God; but he is "the utterly *absconditus Deus*" (p. 255). Marshfield is like Jerry Conant, Piet Hanema, Harry Angstrom, Peter Caldwell in this regard. As with these other Updike characters, Marshfield's response is to make a substitute "God," something more tangible and real, out of women. Marshfield writes in his diary:

> I told Jamie Ray, giving myself the pleasure of confession, how in my despair and bewilderment at being unable to fuck Frankie, I prayed God for the power to have an erection; I begged Him to be my accomplice in adultery, and believe that, had not events intervened, the prayer would have been answered. Our God is a fertility God (p. 237).

Marshfield continues in his diary, accidentally writing "ompotent," for "impotent." He notices his mistake and adds the footnote:

> Dear Me. My suggestion of omnipotence in impotence reminded me of Meister Eckhardt, with his cyclical assertions that Everything is God, that all things merge so that everything is nothing, that god is nothing. The triumphant atheism of mysticism. Give me Thomistic degrees instead. There is *something,* dammit. Damn It? (p. 240).

That "something" is a succession of lovers which he fears might damn him. As he reflects on his life in which adultery has become all-consuming, he asks, "God, the sadness of Creation! Is it ours, or Thine?" (p. 242) The question is largely rhetorical, but not entirely. God's role in human affairs, given his apparent absence, is indiscernible.

The majority of Updike's characters are vitally interested in, perhaps even obsessed by, the need to know God. But increasingly as each novel has been written, Updike's characters have found such knowledge perplexing. In varying degrees they are like Freddy Thorne commenting on Jesus' miracle at Cana:

> Christ. I'd love to believe it...any of it. Just the littlest bit of it. Just one lousy barrel of water turned into wine. Just half a barrel. A quart. I'll even settle for a pint (p. 156).

Given the absence of any such clear revelation of God's presence today, and given man's subsequent turning to the human—to sexuality—for assurance as to his significance, true belief is shown to be more and more problematic. From *The Poorhouse Fair,* Updike's first novel, to *Marry Me,* his latest, the reader senses that man's reaction to God's silence is making faith even more tenuous. For Hook, "There is no goodness without belief. There is nothing but busy'ness" (*The Poorhouse Fair,* p. 116, Knopf). And in Updike's subsequent novels and stories, it is increasingly "busy-ness," not "belief" which seems the order of the day. Where the narrator can conclude *Rabbit, Run* by saying, "...He runs. Ah: Runs. Runs" (p. 255). In *Rabbit Redux* the hopefulness of "Ah: Runs" has been exposed to be a chasing after wind. Life's futility is all too apparent in the pages of Updike's works.

C. The Gift of Life

> Behold, what I have seen to be good and to be fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life which God has given him, for this is his lot. Every man also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and find enjoyment in his toil—this is the gift of God (Ec. 5:18-19, RSV).

In a situation where death cancels out what small gains have accrued in life, where the universe denies man any real insight into its meaning, and where God is known only as a presence which remains silent, it is easy to despair. But there is also another possible response, one which Updike portrays in certain of his works. In some of his novels and short stories there is reflected a sense of assurance

concerning life, despite life's problematics. At times, Updike's positive affirmations are extremely tenuous, as in "The Carol Sing" which concludes:

> Why do we? Come every year sure as the solstice to carol these antiquities that if you listened to the words would break your heart. Silence, darkness, Jesus, angels. Better I suppose to sing than to listen" (*Museums and Women*, p. 127).

But in other of his works, Updike forthrightly portrays life's paradoxical joy.

In *The Centaur*, for example, Peter is able, despite his present situation, to recall his father, George Caldwell, listening to the laughter coming from the saloon and saying to his son, "All joy belongs to the Lord." Peter realizes it was "half a joke" but also, by implication, half true. For George,

> Wherever in the filth and confusion and misery, a soul felt joy, there the Lord came and claimed it as his own; into barrooms and brothels and classrooms and alleys slippery with spittle....Wherever a moment of joy was felt, there the Lord stole and added to His enduring domain. And all the rest, all that was not joy, fell away, precipitated, dross that had never been. He thought of his wife's joy in the land and Pop Kramer's joy in the newspaper and his son's joy in the future....Only goodness lives. But it does live (p. 220).

From an obsession with death, George is able to return to an appreciation of the gift of life and to his role in sustaining that gift for his family.

This awareness that life is to be enjoyed as a gift from God is mediated in various ways. For David Kern, it comes in observing the colored patterns of pigeon wings (*Pigeon Feathers*); for Joey Robinson, in noting the patterns of rain on the window (He says, "A physical sense of ulterior mercy overswept me") (*Of the Farm*, p. 80). For Rabbit, his insight into life's gift comes on the golf course; for Hook, through the stars, those "points of light arranged at random, to give the night sky adornment" (p. 114, Knopf). The list could be extended. The key to discovering the value of existence in each of these cases is the recognition that life is a gift granted to us. It is in innocence, rather than through attempted mastery, that man discovers life's unfolding Grace-fulness.[27] "There is a color," suggests Updike, "a quiet but tireless goodness that things at rest, like a brick wall or a small stone seem to affirm. A wordless reassurance these things are pressing to give."[28]

Some of Updike's characters like Hook, in *the Poorhouse Fair*, discover life's "goodness." Others, such as Conner, do not, trying instead futilely to arrange the stars "geometrically," or so they "Spell out a thought-provoking sentence" (p. 114, Knopf). Life takes on

meaning for John Nordholm in "The Happiest I've Been," as two different friends trust him enough to fall asleep beside him, and in "Friends From Philadelphia," where the reader realizes John will be surprised by the gift of a bottle of *Chateau Mouton-Rothschild* 1937 (*The Same Door*, pp. 175, 18). Man's lot is to enjoy life as it unfolds. But others fail to understand the need for such a receptive posture toward life. Like Clayton Clayton, they see "competition as the spine of the universe" ("Who Made Yellow Roses Yellow?" [*The Same Door*, p. 76]).

Throughout Updike's writing, one observes his belief that life cannot be reduced to a formula. The husband in the story "Wife-Wooing" is taught this lesson as his program for seducing his wife ends in failure. It is instead his wife's unexpected gift of herself in bed the following night that produces ecstasy. Swimming offers a further parable in this regard. As the divinity student in the story "Lifeguard" reflects, "We struggle and thrash and drown; we succumb, even in despair, and float, and are saved" (*Pigeon Feathers*, p. 147).

That life presents itself to man as a gift to be received is a spiritual truth. For Updike, though God may seem silent, he does provide those who are receptive indirect communication through his creation. In his story "Packed Dirt, Church-Going, A Dying Cat, A Traded Car," Updike suggests through David Kern's reminiscences that existence remains in God's gracious hands. David describes his insights into life's meaning as "supernatural mail." The events of his day "had the signature: decisive but illegible" (*Pigeon Feathers*, pp. 174, 172). In *The Centaur*, Peter and George Caldwell have a similar recognition as they drive in a snowstorm:

> What an eloquent silence reigns! Olinger under the vast violet dome of the storm-struck night sky becomes yet one more Bethlehem. Behind a glowing window the infant God squalls. Out of zero all has come to birth (p. 179).

And to give yet a third example, Hook responds to Conner's cynical question concerning evidence for God's existence by saying, "There is what of Cre-ation I can see..." (*The Poorhouse Fair*, p. 112, Knopf).

It is with fragile threads of argument such as these that certain of Updike's characters are able to hold on to life's meaning. They might hope for more—indeed Harry Angstrom, George Caldwell, and Piet Hanema all seem at times to have lost their grasp on such a tenuous mooring, and perhaps the Reverend Marshfield and Jerry Conant do—but as Mrs. Smith tells Rabbit:

> That's what you have, Harry: life. It's a strange gift and I don't know how we're supposed to use it, but I know it's the only gift we get and I know it's a good one (*Rabbit, Run*, p. 187).

Such is the limit of man's knowledge of his present situation. We could wish for more, but even small joys are not to be despised.

III. CONCLUSION

Criticism of Updike's writing need not gravitate in the direction of either Christian orthodoxy or secular humanism. For Updike has provided his readers, both through direct references and by the overall shape of his fiction, an alternate interpretive approach. In a way that parallels both consciously and unconsciously the wisdom writers of Old Testament times, Updike has turned to creation in his search for life's meaning. Limiting himself to careful observations of life as lived, albeit in fictive form, Updike has proven, in Granville Hicks' phrase, to be "a most redoubtable explorer of the mysteries of the commonplace."[29] As he has portrayed contemporary existence, he has revealed its pretentiousness, even while suggesting its divine basis.

The Hebrew wiseman, Qoheleth, used the medium of a "king-fiction" to expose in his day the vanity of working to achieve riches, pleasure, or wisdom. In an analogous way, John Updike has used in our day the short story and novel to give voice to the pretentiousness and hollowness of contemporary attempts to manipulate life to one's desires. Aware of the intransigence of life's qualifiers, death being the chief, Updike, like Qoheleth, has sought some firm ground on which to build man's life. As with the Hebrew writer, he has found it, not in the word of God proclaimed by the prophets or clergy, but in God's still small voice resident in creation. Here in life's everyday experiences—in one's work, past memories, relationships, and love—man discovers clues to life's ongoingness. If one cannot master life's mystery, he can at least perceive sufficient truth from it to gain some skill in the "art of steering" (Prov. 1:5) through the course of his days. For John Updike, the god of the churches is silent; but this same God has not left himself without witness through his created order.

FOOTNOTES

1. Rachel C. Burchard, *John Updike: Yea Sayings* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 2.

2. John S. Hill, "Quest For Belief: Theme in the Novels of John Updike," *Southern Humanities Review* 3 (September 1969): 166.

3. Alice and Kenneth Hamilton, *The Elements of John Updike* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 249.

4. Lewis Lawson, "Rabbit Angstrom As A Religious Sufferer," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42 (June 1974):232-46. David Galloway, "The Absurd Man As Saint: The Novels of John Updike," *Modern Fiction Studies* 10 (Summer

1964): 111-27; Robert Detweiler, *Four Spiritual Crises in Mid-Century American Fiction* (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 1963), p. 22.

5. Hamiltons, *op. cit.*, p. 248; S.A. Zylatra, "John Updike and the Parabolic Nature of the World," *Soundings* 56 (Fall 1973) :323-37; Daniel Morrissey, review of *A Month of Sundays*, by John Updike, in *Commonweal*, 6 June 1965, pp. 187-88.

6. Richard E. Fisher, "John Updike: Theme and Form in the Gardens of Epiphanies," *Moderna Språk* 56 (Fall 1962) :259.

7. Arlin G. Meyer, "The Theology of John Updike," *The Cresset* 34 (October 1971) :24.

8. John Aldridge, "An Askew Halo for John Updike," *Saturday Review*, 27 June 1970, p. 25.

9. Wayne Falke, "Rabbit Redux: Time/Order/God," *Modern Fiction Studies* 20 (Spring 1974):61, 65.

10. John Updike, "Why Robert Frost Should Receive the Nobel Prize," *Assorted Prose* (New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 30.

11. Page citations to Updike's works will be given in the text and are from the Fawcett Crest Book editions unless otherwise noted.

12. Guy Davenport, "Novels With Masks," *National Review* 14 (9 April 1963) :288.

13. John Updike quoted in Guerin La Course, "The Innocence of John Updike," *Commonweal*, 8 February 1963, p. 513.

14. Morrissey, review of *A Month of Sundays*, p. 187; Alfred Klauser, "Steel Wilderness," *Christian Century*, 22 February 1961, p. 246.

15. Granville Hicks, "Mysteries of the Commonplace," *Saturday Review*, 17 March 1962, p. 21.

16. Joseph Waldmeir, "It's the Going That's Important, Not the Getting There: Rabbit's Questing Non-Quest," *Modern Fiction Studies* 20 (Spring 1974) :13.

17. Richard Gilman, "A Distinguished Image of Precarious Life," *Commonweal*, 28 October 1960, p. 128.

18. Jack De Bellis, "The Group and John Updike," *Sewanee Review*, 72 (Summer 1964) :534.

19. Gilman, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

20. Charles Samuels, "The Art of Fiction, XLIII: John Updike," *Paris Review* 45 (Winter 1968) :105.

21. John Updike, quoted in Jane Howard, "Can A Nice Novelist Finish First?" *Life*, 4 November 1966, p. 82.

22. D. J. Enright, "Updike's Ups and Downs," *Holiday*, November 1965, p. 162.

23. Frank Gado, *First Person* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1973), p. 92.

24. The best description of Updike's thematic treatment of death is Joyce B. Markle, *Fighters and Lovers: Theme in the Novels of John Updike* (New York: New York University Press, 1973).

25. Cf. Updike's extended poem entitled "Midpoint," which takes an inventory of his life at the end of his thirty-fifth year. John Updike, *Midpoint and Other Poems* (New York: Knopf, 1969).

26. Cf. "The Blessed Man of Boston, My Grandmother's Thimble, and Fanning Island," *Pigeon Feathers*, p. 167: "Details. Details are the giant's fingers. He seizes the stick and strips the bark and shows, burning beneath, the moist white wood of joy. For I thought that this story, fully told, would become without my willing it a happy story, a story full of joy; had my powers been greater, we would know. As it is, you, like me, must take it on faith."

27. Cf. Fisher, "Garden of Epiphanies," p. 258; La Course, *op. cit.*

28. La Course, *op. cit.*, p. 514.

29. Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

The Psychotherapeutic Situation in Theological Perspectives

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Since the dawn of recordable history man has been fascinated and perplexed with human actions, thoughts and motivation. The classic words of Delphic and Socratic wisdom: "Know thyself," "The unexamined life is not worth living," have captivated and challenged human reflection, prompting both an individualistic and a collective search for human truth. The mystery of human life and human spirit has been both elevated and debased, the shift frequently being relative to man's interest in and interpretation of the Divine Spirit. Thus during the Reformation, the Holy Spirit was all, while the human spirit was considered a prostrate helpless endowment that, apart from election by the Divine Spirit, had no ultimate individual or corporate worth. If he was to escape being pejoratively stamped a humanist, the religious person had to subdue any "rational creativity"—or at least appear to do so! Human creative propensities working to reform the religious institutions were viewed as divinely ordained. But human initiative in secular activities was viewed askance and was accused of evoking human rebellion against the created order of things as religious perceived.

The widespread consequence of this has been a *dualistic* perception of creaturely life and a dichotomously split two-level interpretation of reality: to each its own! Such a serious duality is especially noted in the segment of human life that has to do with *conflict* and the wide gamut of human *affects*. This either/or split is mirrored in the writings of notable and well-intentioned theologians of our day and is certainly present among a large segment of writers and thinkers in the modern behavioral sciences of our century. It is thus that John Hick, in his monumental work on theodicy, can write about hope as follows: "Christian hope is not parallel to secular hope but is the extrapolation of Christian faith into the future."[1] Likewise, in a whole book by Ezra Stotland which is devoted to the "psychology of hope," one notices a lack of any eschatological parameters. In *Theology After Freud* Peter Homans vividly reveals the fact that a certain level of suspiciousness exists between the two disciplines dealing with the human spirit:

> An investigation of the relation between theology and psychology has never been of special interest to either theologians or psychologists. Theological

> studies express only modest concern for the forms of personal and social life and, in so doing, give occasional attention to psychology. But, when the theologian's more considered methodological discussions move to materials outside classic kerygmatic and doctrinal sources for assistance and a fresh perspective, they usually turn to philosophy and historiography, even to literature, rather than to, say, psychology or sociology. And when psychologists from time to time reflect on matters beyond the limits of their own imperatives to scientific rigor, they,too, turn to philosophy, history, and occasionally to literature, but never to theology.[2]

Thus one may well appreciate Albert C. Outler's attempts, in *Psychotherapy and the Christian Message,* to "relate psychotherapy and Christianity in valid synthesis and productive alliance."[3] But even in Outler's sensitive and insightful treatment one may still note the presence of a certain duality that needs synthesis.

The present paper will undertake, in a preliminary and somewhat tentative fashion, to move toward a more synthetic perspective. The development will be threefold:

I. A commentary on the evolution of psychotherapy as a human activity
II. Psychotherapy and the psychoanalytic situation as viewed from a responsible and informed Christian position.
III. The theological implication of therapy and psychoanalysis, and its relationship to the Christian eschatological interpretation of this life and the life to come

I

Though the term "psychotherapy" is a contemporary term for a specific interpersonal activity, the phenomenon has not been initiated in modern times.• One could say that a therapeutic relationship has always existed when two of the following individuals have met: 1) a person in distress who has subjectively realized a level of stress in himself which cannot be alleviated by the person himself at that specific time, and 2) another being who is willing to be present, to care, to empathically listen and to venture an opinion or act in a way that is judged to be in the best interest of the distressed individual reaching out to him.

According to this conception, one could say that a parent-child relationship would have, in its long history, frequent serious moments when a therapeutic-type bond becomes a significant mode of relating. Indeed, in such early parent-child relational matrix is embedded not only models of a therapeutic bond but also those of love and faith. Parental consistency, the necessity to set limits and to say "No" at specific junctures, and the institution of deprivation, either as punishment or for the sake of promoting the child's ability

to wait and to tolerate the tension of such a state—all are important postures which are later woven into responsible adult relationships.

What modern psychotherapy seems to do is to recreate a similar kind of relational atmosphere in which, when aberrant early interpersonal relations have occurred, they can be reactivated for the sake of a better resolution and integration. In reality, what is required in both the early patient-child setting and the therapeutic situation are a few basic ingredients: the presence of a sense of trust between two persons, a certain level of maturity, and an ability, in the person whose help is sought, to give and empathize.

From the above, it is obvious that such interpersonal activities are not phenomena that got started in the last century; rather they had their origin in the quite unsophisticated lives of our ancient ancestors. However, modern psychotherapy, as a distinctive methodological discipline, has arisen in the context of what may be broadly referred to as the modern scientific enterprise, and needs to be understood against this background.

Beginning with Kepler and Galileo, and gaining major momentum with Newton (who rather unlike most of those who would follow in his train, regarded his theological contributions as more important than his scientific works!), science established its credentials in the manifest fruits of ever-accelerating achievements: "unravelling the secrets of nature" and increasing human "power to control nature." Science was methodologically independent of theology—Laplace's famous remark: "I had no need of that hypothesis!"

Thus, the scientific enterprise shared in and principally contributed to the rise of secularism in the modern period: the pervasive dualistic assumption that religious and theological realities (if indeed there be any) have no relevance for the understanding of ordinary human life, which can and ought to function in complete autonomy. It should be noted that theology and religion, insofar as themselves positing and supporting dualisms, were not without complicity in these developments.

From the self-congratulatory ethos of manifest achievement it took only the distortion of understandable pride into inordinate *hubris* to produce the eletist cultural phenomenon of "all-sufficient" Scientism: There is no true knowledge other than scientific knowledge and no real power other than application of scientific technique! (Scientism was a major, though not the only factor contributing to the split—within the "secular"—between the sciences and the humanities.)

The ever-accelerating expansion of scientific achievement produced—and required—ever-increasing specialization and sub-specialization with the accompanying distortion of compartmentalization in knowledge and practice. The bonds which loosely joined the many "sciences" into "science" were basically those of common (though variably applicable) methodological assumptions and commitments. Many scientists (and many more non-scientist interpreters of science) were also joined by bonds of common faith-assumption and faith-commitment which affirmed so-called "Scientific Determinism" as an all-embracing world-view.

For Christians, it should be possible—if indeed we believe in a living God who is concerned for man and at work in human history—to see in the modern scientific enterprise special gifts of divine grace, even though these gifts—like all gifts of grace—are subject to tragic and sinful human distortion. If Scientistic autonomy-claims are not indeed to have the last word, it should be possible for Christians to see in the history of scientific discovery the guidance and empowerment of divine revelation.

Psychotherapy, as a methodologically-conscious discipline, took root and grew on the soil of the modern scientific enterprise. Its development, therefore, not surprisingly, reflects in special ways the generalized features and assessments sketched above.

However, psychotherapy has of necessity been an integrative "interdisciplinary discipline," drawing in manifold ways upon a variety of special disciplines. In development of theoretical frameworks, and even more in practice, psychotherapy has had to be an art as well as a science, requiring personal sensitivity and creative insight. Some theoretical models, including those of Freud, have included deterministic assumptions—along with other assumptions which could not be interpreted and applied deterministically. But more adequate developments of theory have come to include what has always been requisite in practice: recognition of the freedom of the unique individual.

Freud's basic discovery of the psychoanalytic method opened the way for the emergence of psychotherapy, in its various forms, from a poorly defined (yet ageless and real) modality of help, to a respectable field of human therapeutic endeavor with a secure place in the medical sciences. It should surely be possible for the Christian to see in the emergence and refinement of a helping discipline which has greatly enriched the interpersonal and intrapersonal life of man, a more than human disclosure; a gift of divine grace.

This is not, however, to ignore the fact that psychotherapy can pose questions and issues for Christian interpretation. For example,

discovery of the presence of an unconscious mind and of mental functions which could account for myriad forms of aberrant and normal human functioning in the waking state has sometimes been claimed to require the conclusion that such phenomena as religious faith, agape love, and relationship with God are merely illusory. It is indeed true that an appropriate understanding of these will frequently defy reductionistic explanations using only the yardsticks of motivational and conflict parameters. But the emergence of psychotherapy does pose a challenge to those for whom the life of faith and eschatological hope is central and foundation.

Among the significant questions posed by psychotherapy, we may note the following: What constitutes a responsible Christian and religious position toward the discipline of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis? Are there deeper religious truths implicit in the therapeutic relationship of an analyst with his analysand? By a focus on this human and unique interpersonal therapeutic relationship, could one derive theological insights about the moral order of the created world? Are human illness and emotional life-crisis to be viewed exclusively as isolated, "mechanical" and unfortunate life events, or do they have a larger, howbeit mysterious, theological and religious eschatological significance for the life of that person and for those around him?

II

Among the scientific disciplines in our time, the behavioral sciences constitute the youngest and, so far, the most inexact disciplines. The past decades have witnessed a proliferation in specific behavioral trends and schools. The neurological-medical model constitutes one polarity, while the psychoanalytic-psychological model of mental functioning stands at the other end. However, it is this very diversity which has resulted in a much-needed balanced understanding of the mental functioning of man; there now is recognition that both the vegetative-organic substratum of the brain and the "functional"-affective mental operation are equally present. One could say that a major advancement in the expansive field of human mentation and emotion was the differentiation and separation of the field from a predominantly philosophical plane to a position where more concrete measuring methodologies could be applied; this is not to imply that the medical model has a higher level of certitude and authenticity than rigorous and critical theological-philosophical assessments.

A veiw which sees human conflicts and emotions as not merely synonymous with ethical discord had inevitably to emerge. In the

many preceding years, the religious establishment was the guardian of the insane; all it seemed to do was to chain, exhort, exorcise and pray for souls. For these sick persons, reformation had to come, not from within the ranks of the ordained but from a totally different source, that of the behavioral-neurological sciences. A discipline that did not align itself consciously to any ethical institution was thus divinely destined to usher in a new dimension in the alleviation of human suffering. The immediate response in ethical camps was inevitably to be that of suspicion.

It is of interest to note that in such a breakthrough, the "secular" pioneers (i.e. Freud) were more effective than those who wanted immediately to interpret the newly-acquired insights in a religious context. In psychosomatic medicine, current advancements in bereavement, attachment and separation are, like psychotherapy itself, truly based on the secular and non-religious approach of Freud rather than on that of Jung or other religious interpreters. Jung's religious disposition, though leaving its lasting imprint on significant aspects of our understanding of man's unconscious, has not been as heuristic to subsequent developments in the behavioral sciences.

The establishment of psychiatry as a medical discipline has been a major achievement by 20th-century man. Psychiatry would not have made its unique contribution to medicine had the discipline been left in the academic sphere of philosophy, theology or anthropology. The needed humanization of medicine and the seeing of man as a holistic psychosomatic gestalt have been major contemporary happenings. For Christian faith, the important thing to keep in perspective in all of this is the recognition that such an evolution is an integral divine revelation and not the result of mere human effort and determination. In a larger sense, psychiatry is a contemporary phenomenon to bring humanness to an increasingly complex and mechanized health delivery establishment.

It is imperative that the Christian faith realize the fact that the last one hundred years have witnessed some significant major uncoverings as to the nature and operation of the human mind and brain. What is demanded of the Christian psychotherapist is not the adoption of certain theological or philosophical attitudes for assimilation and *practical* utilization of these findings, but rather a new professional stance. One could refer to this new needed stance as that of a "responsible Christian professional attitude." By this is not meant an evangelical reinterpretation of major behavioral scientific findings (*a la* Paul Tournier, the famous Swiss psychiatrist) but a more responsibly comprehensive and religiously mature position.

The writer of this paper would summarize and define this position as follows:

> We live in a created universe where a beneficent loving Creator "desires" to have creatures turn to Him with the utmost free will, with the greatest freedom from compulsivity to do so. He has created a world equipped with natural laws that secure consistency and predictability. A whole new world has been revealed to exist within man himself, a world that is made of a conscious and an unconscious strata and of complex numbers of human drives. The human condition is influenced by a number of "natural occurrences," including specific childhood happenings that affect later life adaptations, even the ability to live and act in faith. This is not to be interpreted deterministically but rather tragically. Yet, through the discerning knowledge of the Creator, human *tragedy can mysteriously be transformed.* During this earthly life, humans are given opportunities, through revelation, to unravel the secrets of the created order of things, including the order of inner psychic life.
>
> The responsibility of a person endeavoring to alleviate or unravel the workings of this inner world of man requires that such a helping person employ the ardent utilization of his human best in mastering revealed scientific truth and, in so doing, adopt a posture of reflective commitment. This means a realization that what he now knows as truth is partial, and hence he anticipates that a better understanding is feasible through further subsequent discoveries, even if the sources of these discoveries be secular. He realizes well that all scientifically-disclosed truths are ultimately part of the enabling Creator's plan to let humans participate in the process of revelation.

Thus, a responsible Christian behavioral scientist is one who dedicates his energies to a deeper understanding of the uncovered order of things in his field, masters the funded knowledge in his area of work, and does not sift or omit theories merely because they might seem to contradict his prior formulation of religious ideologies. This certainly implies that an open critical mind is to be utilized constantly. The responsible Christian professional will also be keenly aware that human sin enters any field of scholarship and study when the attainment of perfect mastery of the field becomes the ultimate concern of the investigator and when the professional becomes dulled to the higher and more ultimate meaning of the acquired knowledge. In short, human sin is born when the professional sees what he masters and uncovers, not as the gift of divine grace, but as mere human aggressive endeavoring.

Christian faith demands of science not a mixing of Christian theology with scientific findings, conclusions or methodologies but a more comprehensive reinterpretation of verified scientific findings and adoption of a posture with an eschatological vector. This will be the focus in the concluding part of this paper.

III

In our century, a major and significant contemporary phenomenon in aiding the helping and healing enterprises of man is the initiation, cultivation and refinement of a human interpersonal technique called psychotherapy. The terms has had such wide and varied usage that its deeper ethical and theological perspectives could conceivably be overlooked. The phenomenon, in essence, consists of two humans, hitherto unknown to each other, who establish a relationship in hope that the relationship will lead to better and happier life.

The basic features of this unique relationship are the following assumptions: 1) Human life and experiences are real events which are worthy of being recalled and examined. 2) Potentiality for change, better personality integration, and the assimilation of more adaptive life style are possible at any point in a person's life-span. 3) One human being ("professional") is able to subjugate and control his/her own idiosyncrasies and personal biases and thus deal with another's life-crises with objectivity and reverence. 4) The re-examination of one's life with its varied neurotic defensive styles and a clearer understanding of one's motivations and the nature of conflicts could result in their mastery and, in essence, their reversal. 5) The experiences of a person, whether these experiences be real interpesonal relationships or the personal world of fantasies, wishes, dreams, impulses, phobias, etc., are all real and all important and, as such, are to be handled with the utmost human respect and reverence. This posture maintains, for example, that an individual is unique and is to be respected, and that his suffering and pain are real despite instances in which, when objectively viewed, no major life events can logically be discerned to account for this pain. In such a position, the dictum: "It is not real; it is all in your head!" has no meaning.

In all of the above, the reverence for reality and the seriousness and weight of human experience stand out clearly. Equally evident is the fact that the therapeutic relationship and activity are limited to two dimensions: one human is dealing with another. This lacks the third dimension: a person's relationship with the Creator. This third vector is what modern psychotherapy (in its more ceonventional and reserved forms) has, rightly or wrongly, persistently left out of its domain, yet it is evident that modern therapy has serious ethical and religious implications. Such therapeutic activity basically asserts the *possibility of human healing* and the *importance of the future* and makes a concerted effort to allow this future to be more meaningful and less conflict-laden. In this sense, then, it has an *eschatological* component, though this may not be readily evident.

The possibility for a better life, more meaningful relationships, less conflict in human enterprises—all these *can* happen. What should be noted in addition is the fact that failure in all such integration and attainment of wholeness can and does occur, and at times (more frequent than are acknowledged) unerring prediction for outcome is not possible. Surprises and incidents of the unexpected are also in evidence; anyone who has worked with depressed patients can attest to the occurrence of suicides among those for whom such a destiny was not suspected as a distinct possibility and, likewise, of personal growth and recovery in those for whom a progressive institutional deterioration was predicted.

There are a number of emerging life and ethical principles that should be asserted as a result of the above-noted phenomenologies. One is that human life is complex and that the healing of souls does not follow strict and predictable directions. Second, healing can occur at all junctures of life and under varied adverse life conditions. A third principle is that the most adverse of life's crises cannot deplete totally the ingredient of healing-capacity that resides in man, but may, on the contrary, prove to have significance in better subsequent human integration and growth.

At a higher theological level, one would wonder if the human phenomenon referred to as psychotherapy is not but a dim and imperfect vision of a far more sublime and perfect original. The psychotherapeutic experience, though a unique encounter, is a very circumscribed and limited one. Though the relationship is based on respect for human life and the seriousness of the world of human feelings, yet there are numerous life situations in which the therapist does not want to get involved. The setting of "therapeutic goals" is, in itself, a sanctioned form of setting limits. It is almost as if the therapist is proclaiming: "I can't do or be everything for you." Though this has positive implications for the growth of the person seeking his help, yet it also demonstrates the limitations of this human relationship. Basically Freud is correct when he states:

> The analytic relationship is based on a love of truth—that is, on a recognition of reality—and that it precludes any kind of sham or deceit.
>
> The business of the analysis is to secure the best possible psychological conditions for the functions of the ego; with that it has discharged its task.[4]

The goal for attainment of the "best possible psychological conditions" is, to some significant extent, a form of limiting human involvement, therapeutic as this may be. The "analytic situation" is a facilitating therapeutic technique; the analyst's definition of "reality" is a circumscribed one; and both should be clearly viewed in

this way. The error that is frequently committed by analysis as a discipline and by psychoanalysts as practitioners is making such techniques into life philsophies and religious credos.

There are life crises and life realities where human therapeutic intervention will demand actual involvement, and, though a therapist does not (and frequently should not) become personally involved, yet he should at least be aware, as mentioned above, that his definition of reality is circumscribed and limited. The "care" of a human being in his totality is more an ideal than a human reality. Though man does and should attempt to care for others in a total way, such caring inevitably falls short. Only a "Divine Therapist" can satisfy totally. This is significantly captured by Hick:

> . . .a psychotherapist [tries] to empower a patient to be himself and to cease frustrating his own desires, to face reality and accept his proper place in the affections and respect of others. The Divine Therapist has perfect knowledge of each human heart, is infinitely wise in the healing of its ills, has unbounded love for the patient and unlimited time to devote to him. It remains theoretically possible that He will fail; but He will never cease to try, and we may (as it seems to me) have a full practical certainty that sooner or later He will succeed.[5]

To make a Christian interpretation of psychotherapy is not to introduce theological and philsophical insights, formulations and principles into the practice of what is basically a "human process" but to view the discipline itself as a tool, though an imprecise one, designed by a benevolent Creator to alleviate human distress and suffering. In the life to come, the human and this partial helper will be done away with because the divine and perfect Therapist will be readily accessible to those who seek Him.

FOOTNOTES

1. John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (Glasgow: Collins-World, 1966), p. 381.
2. Peter Homans, *Theology After Freud* (Indianapolis/New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), Introduction.
3. Albert C. Outler, *Psychotherapy and the Christian Message* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 7.
4. Sigmund Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth, 1964), Vol. 23, p. 248.
5. Hick, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

Toward Personal Perfection*

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TOWARD THE POSSIBILITY

Perfect personhood could be real-ized only in a unique individual: a person. Every person is a unique individual, but a perfect person, if there ever were one, would be unique in another order of uniqueness. This person could appropriately be called "the Individual."

The Individual could "be" perfect only by having become perfect: the one in whom personalness became perfected in a unique historical process of personalizing-change. This developmental process of becoming would, as personal, be the Individual's achievement; hence the outcome of perfection could in this sense be attributed to the Individual.

However, the personal achievement could not be simply an autonomous "self-change." The Individual would be dependent—as all people are—upon being affected by other realities, including other agents. But the quite extraordinary outcome of perfection would suggest that a suprahuman Agent was somehow involved in this process and that the role of the human Individual would lie principally in a quite extraordinary exercise of responsive capacity-to-be-affected by the higher persuasively-personalizing Agency.

If such were the case, the Individual's life would involve a radical renunciation of any autonomous endeavor toward decisive self-change and any ultimate claim to self-achievement. The Individual would know, whether others did or not, that the achievement came from the agency of the higher Agent in a gift of capacity and responsibility uniquely given and uniquely received.

The perfection of personhood in the Individual would—whatever the specificities—consist in the complete achievement of maximal possible human persuasively-personalizing-capacity to

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*Ed. note: The Reverend T. Ronald Vaughan—M. Div. 1971, M.A. 1974—recently shared with me the reflections presented here under the title, "Toward the Reality," which stimulated me in turn to write the reflections here entitled, "Toward the Possibility."

elicit personal change in ways maximally effective and beneficial for affecting the unique personalization of other individuals in dependent responsiveness to the higher Agent of personal change, with the desire and intention that this personalizing-capacity become, insofar as possible, effective for all. The Individual would thus be the Individual-for-all.

In order for this perfecting of personalizing-capacity to become finally complete, the Individual would have to experience and surmount (not autonomously, but rather through sustained responsiveness to the higher Agent) the maximal possible crises of challenge to his or her developing capacity.

The Individual would be either female or male: of the two—which would be essentially irrelevant to the possibility of becoming personally perfect, though perhaps contingently relevant to historical contexts. The Individual's own mode of sexuality (male or female) would be one of a number of particularities of the Individual as a person (not "personalness in general") which could not have a universal or ultimate significance. (For example, if the Individual were a woman, any woman—or man—who saw in that particular fact a "universal" or "ultimate" significance would have mis-seen.)

Universal significance could be found, however, in the possibility of seeing the Individual-for-all as presenting and exemplifying in one actual human life a mode of personalization appropriate as a goal for all human life: personalization as relational *inter*personalization which, renouncing illusions of ultimate "autonomy," would support and enhance the uniqueness of each individual through ultimate dependence upon the higher Agent. Ultimate significance could be found in the possibility of relationally-receiving as a gift the perfect personalizing-capacity of the Individual-for-each as the perfect agent of personalizing-change: the one in and through whom the higher Agent could effect individual personal transformation toward the goal for all human life.

The Individual's desire and intention to reach out to each and all would not be capable of fulfillment through the Individual as a finite human being. But the human persuasively-personalizing-capacity perfected in the Individual would be able to reach out to all through the relationally-mediating agency of the higher Agent, and would be able even to perfect another...if any one—or even every one—were, in the processes of personal change, willing to receive and, despite all setbacks, go on receiving the gift...all the way to the culmination.

All these things would, if actual, no doubt be a "mystery." But then, all human change is—perhaps—a mystery.

Would personal perfection mean attainment of a "static state," immune from further change? Not if life is life.

The end of personal change would mean not the end of change, but rather the beginning of life in which change would never hurt, but only and always bring new fulfillment. If the crucial issues of personal change were finally *settled,* so that the *inter*relational outreach of one's personhood had become *only* personalizing and in no way depersonalizing, since one was now *undistractably* willing in all things *to be affected by* the higher Agent through the Individual: one would then be "ready"—the first time—for fulness of *life* as fully *shared.*

One *would be* always "still" open to involvement in changing contexts moving toward new horizons with new and changing experience and accomplishment, all shared in new and changing concreteness of relationships discovered and rediscovered in joy:

gifted from the One "whose will it is TO GIVE,"
enduringly Living One,
ever new Giving One,
Presence in all change.

TOWARD THE REALITY

Jesus, the unique agent, had talked about personal change, capacity for change, and agents of change. He had said that people had variable types of hearts and talents or capacities. He had spoken of lives as "fields" into which capacity-engendering ways of thinking-feeling-acting were to be introduced like "seed." He said that some lives were of the sort that the seed could root, expand, and stimulate change. In other lives the results would be like young, untended plants, soon to wither and die. He said it was hard to tell, initially, about results, but he taught that his agents were to broadcast the seed nevertheless. He said that responses were often unpredictable, and that the "Spirit" of change blew "where it pleased." But he also said that the capacities for positive results were sometimes apparent, and that there was then needful only a wise capacity-assessing agent to "reap" them. In the same way, negative results could sometimes be foreseen; hence his saying that his agents should not "cast their pearls before swine." He had prefaced this injunction with words about being "wise," seemingly meaning some kind of insight about capacity in others which would guide the agent in how to proceed. Jesus gave hints toward a description of how change took place, but kept acknowledgment of mystery firmly ensconced. The kingdom of God is like a small, hardly noticeable "pinch of leaven," which—however mysteriously—shall finally, beyond human understanding, somehow "leaven the whole loaf."

The agency of Jesus continued through the Church as an agency of change. His agents used their own thinking-feeling-acting as change-engendering: "Be ye imitators of me." They also used objects—"consider the lilies"—and concepts—"God is love"—to elicit change. These agents had themselves been changed in their thinking-feeling-acting. "I was the chief of sinners," one had said.

Another thing about them was that they were aware of the continuing need to change and spoke of the process as "pressing on," "growing in grace," "adding to," etc. They viewed life as an education, "a trial," "a race," a dynamic process. They saw the absolute norms of thinking-feeling-acting in Jesus. To think as he thought ("mind of Christ"), feel as he felt ("love of Christ"), act as he acted ("went about doing good") seemed to them to be the accomplishments par excellence of life. Jesus was such an exceptional agent that they applied to him names indicative of the reverence and awe in which he was held: "Christ," "Son of God," "Lord," "Savior." As such, as the Absolute, he could command change. They, as agents, could only command it in his name, and then labor to facilitate it. They viewed Jesus as the initiator and sustainer of change in their own lives: "What Jesus began with us," "the author and finisher of..." They even talked of him as "always with them," "perfecting" the continuing change. He was the ever-present capacity-engendering "Lord" who "opened hearts" and then effected change. He was Capacity itself sharing itself and perfecting itself in the lives of others. What had happened and was happening in their lives they felt necessary for the lives of all others, hence their preaching of the gospel "to all the world." The burden of preaching was to offer the capacity-gift, "gospel," which offered new and expanded prior capacities in persons. Persons were free to do with the gift what they would: they could "accept" or "harden their hearts." It was an individual choice. But mystery was also attributed to the how of change. They referred constantly to "the Holy Spirit," "The Spirit of Christ." Even this mystery operated in conjunction with individual freedom, for the "Spirit" of change could be "quenched" or "resisted." Responses to their gospel, in Jesus' name, were not predictable. Sometimes harlots were more receptive than priests.

The gift of new capacity seemed somehow limitless: "I can do all things through Christ." It rearranged thinking: "We are the body of Christ." It rearranged feeling: "We love because he first loved us." It rearranged acting: "Do all as unto the Lord." The change was vectoral, leading toward perfection: "You are to be perfect." The latter was always before, perhaps fully accomplishable only in the next life: "*Then* we shall be like Him."

Book Reviews

RELIGION AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

by James H. Phillips

This is the title of a course which I taught for a number of years with undergraduates before retiring in May 1977. Ministers in counselling situations and directors of Christian education (as well as anyone in position to recommend books to senior high or college age yourth or their parents) might, I thought, find some help in brief reviews of five books which I have found most valuable to students in developing a sound view of human sexuality from a Judaic-Christian perspective. Other references were required or recommended when more specific aspects were treated (such as premarital pregnancy, abortion, sex in marital relationships, extra-marital sex behavior, monogamous marriage vs. alternative life-styles, etc.). But the books reviewed here were selected primarily to provide a background in terms of basic knowledge and understanding which would enable students to develop a new, or reevaluate their old, religious-moral frame of reference for the decision-making process when confronted with specific issues of human sexuality.

One of the best sources for illuminating a biblical background for this course was William G. Cole's *Sex and Love in the Bible* (Brown Book Co., Farmingdale, N.Y., 1959, 473 pp., $6.50), which is, I assume, well known by many ministers because of its long-standing availability. Study of this book can help to modify the popular but often misleading and misused "proof-text" approach, because it deals with sex and love in the cultural context of the times, not only that of the Israelites and early Christians, but of their respective neighboring cultures as well. In this sense it affords an enriching and broadening knowledge of how to study the Bible, while also contributing to an understanding of the biblical views of sex and love within their historical contexts. The titles of the first chapters also reflect an indispensable theological orientation: Divine Love and Human Love in the Old Testament (chs. 1 and 2), with these designations repeated for New Testament teachings (chs. 3 and 4). Later chapters deal with more specific subjects, such as premarital sex, homosexuality, etc. This book could well merit a course in itself. Unfortunately it is not available in paperback. The other four books used in the course are available in paperback.

(Parenthetically, a new book which I wish I had had available as a follow-up of Cole's more general treatment is *Sexuality, the Bible and Science* by Stephen Sapp (Fortress, 1977, 140 pp., $8.25). Dr. Sapp was a graduate instructor in the Department of Religion for several years, and as a colleague of mine taught sections of this same course. His book is his doctoral dissertation, accepted virtually unrevised for publication! It contains, in my opinion, the best available current critical description and analysis of biblical scholars' interpretative treatments of the significant portions of Scripture bearing on this subject. I am happy to report that it will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the *Review*.)

Finding sources that represent comprehensive Jewish, Catholic and Protestant views, respectively, of human sexuality is an impossible venture because of the varying viewpoints of these traditions. The following selections were admittedly somewhat

arbitrary, but each was selected with several criteria in mind: its readability and appeal to students being confronted, likely for the first time, with a study of each tradition; the author's authoritative representation of a significant spectrum within his tradition; and a treatment that not only informed but stimulated critical reaction and further inquiry.

Choosing a Sex Ethic: A Jewish Inquiry, by Eugene B. Borowitz (Schocken, 1970, 182 pp., $2.45), a rabbi and professor in the Jewish Institute of Religion at Hebrew Union in New York City, proved to be one of the favorites of each class. Its primary appeal was elicited by an extraordinarily perceptive description and objective examination of four dominant ethical positions on human sexuality in our society today, namely, "healthy orgasm" (recreational sex as an end in itself), "mutual consent," "love," and "marriage," with premarital sex as the focal point of concern. As background for this treatment, his chapter on "The Jewish Experience" is especially illuminating as he develops a kaleidoscopic view of Jewish sexual customs from the earliest legislation of biblical and later rabbinic times down to modern times. Dr. Borowitz, after impressive objectivity, reveals with equally impressive subjectivity his own position in the final chapter, "Speaking Personally," which can be succinctly represented by his own words (p. 113): "Thus, the most ethical form of human relationship I know is love-for-life. Its appropriate social and religious structure is the monogamous marriage."

Selecting sources reflecting, respectively, Catholic and Protestant thought on human sexuality was especially difficult. But I had one additional criterion, not needed for presenting a Jewish perspective, namely, looking for sources that would present a positive Christian view which might be able to counteract the strongly negative sexual impressions often associated with Christian preaching and teaching, which I found dominating the outlook of many students reared in the Catholic or Protestant fundamentalist traditions. The following two books served this purpose well: *Sex: Thoughts for Contemporary Christians*, edited by Michael J. Taylor, S.J. (Doubleday, 1973, 240 pp., $1.45) and *The Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution*, by David R. Mace (Abingdon, 1970, 142 pp., $2.50).

The first book is an anthology of articles previously published and therefore has no developing theme. In fact, it has a range of subjects that makes it a significant resource for a number of specific problems, e.g., "Premarital sexuality," "Sex and the Single Catholic," "Pornography," and "The Homosexual and the Church." However, the topics and authors (all well-known and highly-respected in Catholic circles) of several of the beginning chapters provide some clues to the content and quality of the basic treatment of human sexuality in this anthology: "Body and Soul: A Preface to the Discussion" by Robert J. O'Connell, S.J.; "Sex and the Modern Christian" by Eugene C. Kennedy, M.M.; "A Sex to Love With" by Andrew M. Greeley; and "Sexuality and Sin: A Current Appraisal" by Charles E. Curran. This book gained the following plaudit by a reviewer in *Commonweal*, a popular Catholic weekly: "All in all, the best Christian book on sex I've read in a long time."

It is my estimate that this book demands and merits reflective reading and that it is best discussed in a classroom setting with a knowledgeable and skillful leader. This is especially needed in considering the article "Sexuality and Jesus" by Thomas F. Driver, one of several non-Catholic contributors. (Duke graduates will be interested in knowing that Driver is a fellow-alumnus.) Currently he is Paul Tillich Professor of Theology and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Driver's main concern is that, since the Gospels are silent on the specific topic of Jesus' own sexuality, an heritical "Docetic" Christ has arisen and persisted in the traditional image of Christ as an asexual figure, thereby denigrating the basic Hebraic conviction (which Jesus clearly shared, Mk 10:5-9) that human sexuality in its God-intended

functions is part of the essential goodness of God's creation. One of the serious by-products of this persistence is that it has provoked the literary license of a number of notable modern authors.

The following paragraph (pp. 54-55) points to the problem and this consequence: "Most of so-called Christendom still labors under the assumption that, for a Christian, sexuality stands as a barrier in the way of salvation. Nowadays we meet this mainly in its inverted (actually its older) form: namely, the exaltation of sex into a condition of spiritual blessedness. D. H. Lawrence would blast Jesus out of His neutrality regarding sex. He would make Jesus a sensual lover in order to make Him a savior. Norman Mailer and others make the quest for the 'good orgasm' into a religious quest. William Inge, like Hollywood in its heyday, makes the reconciliations of the bed the end-all in human relationships. Aphrodite and Priapus have as many worshippers among us as ever they did at Corinth and Rome." Driver's analysis is exciting and his resolution suggestive (p. 55): "I am simply urging that we see the Jesus of the Gospels not isolated from sexuality, even in his own figure, but as refusing to sanction its religious status," i.e., as presented by the fertility cults of his day. This article will be regarded as startling and even shocking by many Christians who, in my opinion, are the very ones who should read and reflect upon its message.

The book by Mace has been a popular best seller. It will be of interest to Methodists to learn that Dr. Mace began his career in his native England as a Methodist minister. He continued his training in counselling, then came to this country and identified himself with the Society of Friends, already having established himself as an internationally known authority on marriage and family guidance. Several years ago he retired from his position as Professor of Family Sociology at the Behavioral Sciences Center of Bowman Gray School of Medicine (Wake Forest University), but he is still active and much beloved in the North Carolina Family Life Council and in national professional circles of marriage and family counselling.

There are several outstanding appeals of this book to students: first, due to its simple, direct literary style it expedites both reading and understanding; secondly, the content and its development convey the impression to the reader that he/she is the benefactor of wide-ranging scholarship and in-depth counselling experience. Hence, the simple style by no means implies simplistic content. Although one might wish that Mace had developed his subjects at greater length, the basic appeal and merit of the book is its informing content. This is especially true of chapters 2 and 3.

The second chapter, "Sex in the Christian Tradition," guides the reader from early Church views of human sexuality through sex in medieval thought to the views of Luther and Calvin. The traditional legacy is primarily an anti-sexual one, which continues to cause problems for many Christians even today. But readers learn, most perhaps for the first time, that this *negative* view was the consequence of hellenistic influences upon early Church fathers, especially St. Augustine; hence its stance was "not only unbiblical but also anti-biblical." This chapter, juxtaposed against the first one, "Sex in the Bible," provides perspective for the reader's understanding, and the way is cleared for a *positive* reconstruction in the final chapter.

Before reaching that point, however, the third chapter presents a clear description of the factors contributing to "The Sexual Revolution," which has motivated a "new quest for meaning." This movement presents to the Church and Christians an unprecedented opportunity and responsibility, which Mace develops in his final chapter "The Christian Response." The presentation of varying alternatives, with Mace's own position clearly stated, offers fertile ground for productive discussion. As an *introductory source*, this is a *first choice*, not only for young people but also for adults who need a positive Christian view of their own sexuality. Mace's insistence upon "back to the Bible" as the primary source for this positive understanding should

have a universal appeal to Christians. (Mace acknowledges his indebtedness to D. Sherwin Bailey's classic historical treatment in *Sexual Relations in Christian Thought.* In fact, Mace dedicates his book to Bailey.)

Finally, as a climactic study for the first half of the course, it was my aim to choose a source that would demonstrate the imperative need of an informed and dedicated personal Christian value frame of reference for confronting specific sexual issues. My choice was Peter A. Bertocci's *Sex, Love and the Person* (Sheed and Ward, 1967, 173 pp., $12.95). Dr. Bertocci has held the Borden Parker Bowne Chair of Philosophy at Boston University since 1953. His eminence is further signified by an impressive number of honors and appointments — e.g., Fulbright research scholar twice; a Guggenheim Fellowship; elected president of both the Metaphysical Society of America and the American Theological Society in 1963.

This book is for maturing persons, demanding an open mind, ready to come to grips with *profound* questions, which the author frequently raises in a sharp, probing and incisive manner. "The basic contention" is set for the reader in the preface (p. 10) "...these questions [about sex, love, and marriage] cannot be answered without thinking about related issues. We cannot know what the place of sex in the life of a person ought to be without asking: What values make for the growth of creative personality? This is a large question... But nothing less can be called sex *education* and no more far-reaching question faces any person. The six chapters that follow are attempts to set sex, love, marriage, and home in relation to the total life of a person."

After a treatment of the essence of true marriage in the first chapter—"Marriage: Holy Wedlock or Unholy Deadlock?"—Bertocci proceeds in chapters 2 and 3 to develop the means of a personal Christian "symphony of values" without which "we can give no concrete meaning to the words person, maturity and love" (p. 63). But this value system is "an unfinished symphony" demanding conscious efforts to grow. "It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the specific value-patterns that keep persons growing or prevent their growth.... Our thesis is that in our day it has become all the more important for us to become aware and articulate about the kind of human being we ought to become. Decisions about particular issues, such as sex and marriage, cannot be adequate unless we keep the person as a whole, and persons-in-relation, in mind." (p. 71).

Having established this thesis, Bertocci, in the remaining section—chapters4-6—seeks a policy that "should govern our thinking and acting about sex [especially premarital sex] if its own value is to be enhanced and if it is to be a creative factor in the unfinished symphony of value" (p. 71).

Most young persons, subjected to a bewildering variety of cultural "signs" and "norms," are understandably confused about sexual ethics. Those who are open to an in-depth Christian study that points to the enhancement and creativity of their sexual gifts—rather than relying upon the weakening traditional legalism of much preaching and teaching—will find in this book an exciting venture in constructing a sound, reliable, responsible base for a personal sexual ethic. For those young people, parents, counselors, and ministers who are increasingly permissive regarding sexual mores, especially permarital sex that expresses "love"—in current usage, a word loaded with ambiguity and seductive rationalization—this book demands a responsible level of rebuttal or the option of a re-examination of personal and societal values.

It was hopefully assumed that, after individual reflective reading and class discussions of these five books, students would be better prepared for decision-making as they confronted crucial specific problems and possibilities in their experience of human sexuality. This assumption, I am pleased to report, was often confirmed.

The Debate About the Bible: Inerrancy Versus Infallibility. Stephen T. Davis. Westminster. 1977. 149 pp. $5.45.

This short, but very interesting, book is written by an evangelical Christian basically to other evangelical Christians. The purpose of the writing is to discuss the problems involved with the idea that the Bible is infallible and inerrant. To some these terms are synonymous, but Davis argues that they are not. And he pleads with his fellow evangelicals not to label anyone who does not affirm both as beyond the evangelical fold. His basic argument is that he is himself a dedicated and committed evangelical, but he does not believe that the Bible is inerrant.

To some readers of this *Review* this book may not at first seem to be of any relevance. But apart from the intra-fraternal debate reflected in this work there are some very interesting and important points with which we all must wrestle. If indeed the Bible is the basis for our faith, how does one approach this collection of books? What kind of authority is it? How does one distinguish and separate the cultural "container" from the timeless Truth? This particular book does not answer all the problems, but it is a helpful and stimulating work in this area. And it is interesting that Professor Davis is not a Biblical scholar but a philsopher.

The major issue of this book is the distinction between the belief on the one hand that the Bible is inerrant, i.e., that it contains *no error at all;* and the other point of view (that of the author) that the Bible is the "only infallible rule of faith and practice." The key to understanding is "faith and practice."

Davis discusses initially the arguments espoused for inerrancy and some of the problems encountered in such a claim. Several theories by leaders of that particular viewpoint are presented.

There are three basic arguments, according to the author, for inerrancy: the Biblical argument, i.e., that the Bible itself claims to be inerrant; the epistemological argument, i.e., that unless the Bible is inerrant there is no real foundation upon which to base one's faith; and what he calls the "slippery slide" argument, that unless one believes in inerrancy, that person will probably or likely reject the major Biblical themes and teachings. Each of these positions is presented and discussed by Davis.

After this discussion of the viewpoints and arguments of those who argue for inerrancy, there is then presented the author's case against inerrancy and for infallibility. While he believes that the Bible is infallible in matters of faith and practice, Davis nevertheless also finds a place in his system for human reason and a historical-critical study of the Bible. He warns, however, against becoming so caught up in these areas that one misses the real message of the Bible. His comment here is worth quoting: "Furthermore, the *exclusive* concern with critical issues in many of today's graduate schools of religion seems to me to have produced a whole cadre of technically skilled Biblical scholars who seem unable or unwilling to let the Bible speak to modern men and women on the issues to which it addresses itself" (p. 117).

In the concluding chapter there is a clear appeal for a faith that issues in practice. It is not enough simply to have correct theological orthodoxy; faith must have a behavioral side as well. And he concludes with a reiteration of his own conviction that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. He defines that idea in this way: "The whole Bible, when correctly interpreted, leads those who believe and obey into the religious truth that sets people free; the Bible can and does lead people to a knowledge of God as he has revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ" (p. 138).

The present reviewer found this book to be engaging and thought-provoking. It is recommended for

reading by all who claim to acknowledge the authority of the Bible. The time is really ripe for a full discussion of the problems associated with Biblical authority, inspiration, and revelation against the background of the critical age.

—James M. Efird

Wilberforce. John Pollock. St. Martin's Press. 1978. xvi, 368 pp. $16.95.

William Wilberforce (1759-1833) is deservedly remembered on both sides of the Atlantic as probably the major figure in bringing about the abolition of Britain's slave trade, and thus pointing the way for eventual abolition by the United States of America.

A personal note should here be introduced. This reviewer was born and educated in Kingston-upon-Hull, where Wilberforce was regarded as one of her very greatest sons, and on numerous occasions toured his home in High Street, with its grisly slaving relics, and startlingly lifelike wax figure of Wilberforce at his desk. In later years he carried on some research in the records at Wilberforce House, and led the introductory prayer at the civic bicentenary celebration of his birth in that historic building. It is understandable, therefore, that he approached this volume with more than normal interest—and a very critical eye.

A really good biography of Wilberforce has long been needed, one that can offer solid documentation to the scholar, one that is unbiased and unsentimental in its approach, and one that is written so that it can hold the attention of the reader. All this is fulfilled by the present volume.

An important feature of the book is that the author portrays his subject as a whole man, with his contradictions and personal foibles. The crusade against slavery and the slave trade furnishes the dominant theme, and new insights are brought to this story, but Mr. Pollock helps us to visualize the manner in which Wilberforce's views of the Christian religion dominated both this campaign and his other political, philanthropic, and religious interests, taking us behind the scenes by means of many hundreds of personal letters.

Included briefly, of course, is his relationship with John Wesley, and a short quotation from Wesley's encouraging letter written within a few days of his death. "...unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you..." This could be expected. What perhaps could not be expected was a later mention of the annuity which Wilberforce furnished to Charles Wesley's widow, "which shamed the Methodist body into raising another."

Many such glimpses along little-trodden paths of history remain tantalizing glimpses only, perhaps to be followed up by other historians and biographers. Yet this was necessary because of the need to maintain perspective when working through a huge mass of little-known manuscript material which Mr. Pollock has accumulated in his researches in dozens of libraries on both sides of the Atlantic—he makes a special note of indebtedness to the Perkins Library of Duke University, with over six hundred relevant items, including 94 Wilberforce letters. This solid documentation forms a major strength of the volume, though the erudition is presented so unobtrusively than one is apt to think "How interesting!" rather than "How learned!"

The volume is well organized and attractively produced, with a coloured portrait of Wilberforce as a frontispiece, a dozen other illustrations scattered through the narrative, and a folding genealogical table inserted before the notes, bibliography, and index. My major criticism is the difficulty of checking the sources and other notes without any relevant page-references in the headlines, the only clue being chapter

headings and the numbered cues. Nevertheless, if you are an intelligent persons who seeks an authoritative and perceptive biography of Wilberforce, and one which it is a pleasure to read, this is the book.

—Frank Baker

Yeshiva. Chaim Grade. Bobbs-Merrill. 1976. pp. i-xiv, 1-387. $12.50. *Masters and Disciples.* Chaim Grade. Bobbs-Merrill, 1977. pp. i-xi, 1-399. $15.

I would like to draw the attention of readers of the *Review* to this novel in two parts by Chaim Grade, one of the very greatest Yiddish writers of our time. These works, which have only recently been translated, vividly depict Jewish life in Lithuania between World War I and World War II. The two books, more than any other works that I have read in the field of Jewish studies, reveal the quality and nature of life under the Torah. They enable non-Jews to enter imaginatively and sensitively into that life, and are invaluable for an understanding of Judaism. Grade writers with the scope and detail of a Tolstoy. These books deserve to be widely known and read. I would urge readers to suggest their purchase by public libraries wherever they are not already available.

—W. D. Davies