



CHRIST IN SACRED SPEECH: THE MEANING OF LITURGICAL LANGUAGE, by Gail Ramshaw-Schmidt. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986. Pp. 131. \$9.95 (paper).

Christ in Sacred Speech: The Meaning of Liturgical Language is organized by what we say in liturgy and the things (time, space, objects, God) about which we speak. In a way the subtitle is misleading. For most of us there would not be much to our worship without words, so when we talk about speech in worship we are primarily speaking directly about worship. Really the book is not about “meaning” as much as it is about “doing.” The action of liturgy is done in the words. Our speech then is absolutely crucial. As a book about worship this book is significant. It is clear and easy to read. In the discussions of language, worship is given a clearer shape and what we say there takes on a larger importance.

To begin to look at worship and liturgy we need a touchstone, a sample par excellence. In *Christ in Sacred Speech* there are two parts of the discussion that stand out as those kinds of examples—touchstones for what worship and liturgy, the context of liturgical language, are about.

The first touchstone I want to discuss is in chapter 8, “Sacred Speech about objects.” It is at the distribution of the elements in the Lord’s Supper that we find what Ramshaw-Schmidt calls the purest liturgical speech, right at the center of our weekly worship. Those phrases, “The body of Christ...” and “The blood of Christ...,” are not found in our worship as whole sentences but are the purest liturgical language. They are “the words of faith. Language used strangely” (87). That assertion seems to me to be absolutely right and, as she writes it, crystal clear.

Those are surely some of the simplest and yet most profound words of faith. They are pure examples of liturgical language. They function as declaration and revelation—theophany—of God and God’s acts. They are purest proclamation. But for Ramshaw-Schmidt they belong in the category of metaphorical rhetoric; that is her definition and classification of liturgical speech. Rhetoric is “language used to persuade” (4). I am uncomfortable, however, with this classification. Somehow God’s self-revelation and our declaration of it seem to have a different status, not persuasive, but declarative and proclamatory. But certainly those phrases are liturgical speech at a pure level and at the center of worship.

The response of praise, confession, and offering that we make to those words, our “Amen,” completes the act of worship. There, with those words of revelation followed by response, we have worship, we have liturgy (def. 13), in the simplest and purest and highest form. Around them we build all the rest of our worship. We gather biblical images that extend the revelation and response and build our worship with them. The church has done that over the ages. Ramshaw-Schmidt is right on target when she discusses worship itself.

The second touchstone is her discussion in chapter 10, “Learning Sacred Speech.” We learn sacred speech as we worship. It begins with the two-year-old saying “Amen,” a primal confession of faith, “truly,” “surely.” That does not happen in education classes and is not the same as cognitive learning, rather it happens in worship. The simple things, the simple words, the

elements of faith—these are learned by all the baptized as they worship. It is there that God’s revelation becomes part of our lives, deep inside our emotions, forming who we are. Worship is for all the baptized. The two-year-old, the forty-year-old and the ninety-year-old—all grow in their Christian lives at worship, as they hear theophany and respond to it. We all grow in faith as we learn the language of faith. We progress from the “Amen” to the Creeds, from the gospels to the epistles, and back at the end of life to “Amen.”

Speech is important in worship just as it is important in life. And as in life, the most important things are said and done in the simplest words. The pure words lead us deeper into faith. Ramshaw-Schmidt clearly captures that dimension of worship.

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THE CRITICAL YEARS: THE YOUNG ADULT SEARCH FOR A FAITH TO LIVE BY,
by Sharon Parks. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. Pp. 245. \$15.95.

I expected something different. I expected another book from the emerging interdisciplinary field of faith development, a combination of developmental psychology and faith formation. I expected a book that would focus specifically on issues of religious faith development in the college years, preferably with a lot of practical helps that could be applied in my own work as a church college chaplain. What I got was much more.

Sharon Parks, associate professor of developmental psychology and faith education at the Harvard University Divinity School, has written a book which brings those two fields into sharp focus on the period of young adulthood, particularly as experienced in the “institution of preference” for young adults in American culture, higher education. In so doing Parks expands the understanding of faith, argues for a distinct stage in faith development between adolescence and adulthood, and urges the university to a more inclusive understanding of its role in both faith and development.

One of Parks’ most helpful contributions is her reconsideration of the word faith. She seeks to free it from its “too facile equation with religion and belief,” and reconnect it with “trust, meaning, and truth” (10). The activity of faith is elaborated as “meaning-making,” the activity of composing and being composed by meaning. Reflecting on Richard R. Niebuhr’s metaphors of faith as “shipwreck, gladness, and amazement” (Chapter 2), Parks identifies faith development as a matter of concern not just in areas considered religious, but those we call secular as well.

Chapter 3 provides a very helpful overview of the work of developmental theorists (Piaget, Erikson, Kegan, Gilligan, Fowler, Perry), especially in tracing the psychological processes at work in faith. Chapter 4 develops in detail a model of the journey toward mature adult faith and clarifies “the intimate relationship between cognitive development and the development of affect, community, and faith” (44).

Parks’ own contribution to developmental theory is laid out in Chapter 5. She identifies a distinct young adult stage of development that is characterized by probing commitment, fragile inner-dependence, and ideologically compatible groupings (mentoring). The faith of this stage is

one of both promise and vulnerability, powered by a vision of the ideal and a need for security.

Chapter 6 goes beyond the description of the formal structures of the stages of human development and considers the formative power of the images or content of those structures. Parks gives a powerful argument for imagination as essentially vital to faith and the young adult imagination as the power of adult faith. She goes on in Chapter 7 to identify the vocation of higher education as the informing and nurturing of the young adult imagination (132). The academy, says Parks, is a “community of imagination” and the professor serves as a “spiritual guide” (174).

Finally Parks examines the larger cultural milieu in which both the young adult and the academy dwell. It is in this last chapter that the religious community is directly addressed. Parks suggests that a consciousness of the needs of the young adult may serve “to reawaken religion to its deepest vocation,” the revealing of “a consciousness of being created for and beckoned into faithful participation in the delight, demands, and sacred mystery of the everyday” (199).

I had expected a book with a rather narrow focus on the development of religious faith in college population. In the

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acknowledgments, Parks states that the book is shaped by her conviction of the interdependence of all life (ix). That concern for interdependence has served to expand the discussion to the benefit of both the academy and the religious community. But most of all, this broad vision of the dynamics of faith development will serve the young adults who are its subject.

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PEOPLE IN PAIN: GUIDELINES FOR PASTORAL CARE, by Wayne E. Gates and Charles E. Gates. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985. Pp. 152. \$8.95 (paper).

This book has been especially helpful to me since I started a support group for people with chronic pain. The group decided to call itself the “Pain Management” group. Helpful material was hard to find until this book arrived. It fits the bill beautifully.

Crammed with facts and figures, the book supplies much helpful information to those of us relating to people with sometimes almost unbearable pain. It was surprising to learn that some ninety million Americans experience chronic pain and this suggests a much overlooked area of ministry. The book focuses particularly well on the perception of pain that many have and the behaviors that result from extreme physical discomfort.

Readers will appreciate the ways the authors describe to fashion a life that “outwits, outmaneuvers, and out-prays the power of pain to dominate life.” These include the sensible use of medication, exercise and prayer. Pastors, students of pastoral care and counselors are all members of the helping vocations which assist people—themselves included—to lead rich and satisfying lives. This book is very suggestive on ways to do that for people suffering with pain.

The authors—one a counselor and one a physician—have managed to put together a piece of writing that speaks to the whole person, interrelating medical understandings of pain with its psychological and spiritual dimensions. Occasionally the book is a little heavy on the medical

aspects and terms, but the useful appendices on drug names and pain-relevant terms overcome any readability problems. The medical dimension adds credence to the authors' constant plea for realism in dealing with pain.

Early in the book the authors cite a memorable Okinawan proverb:

Pain makes you think,
Thought makes you wise,
Wisdom makes pain bearable. (19)

This book contains much realistic thought and wisdom for responding to the needs of those suffering from pain.

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BANDITS, PROPHETS, AND MESSIAHS: POPULAR MOVEMENTS IN THE TIME OF JESUS, by Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson. Minneapolis; Winston, 1985. Pp. 271. \$28.85.

THE WORLD THAT SHAPED THE NEW TESTAMENT, by Calvin J. Roetzel. Atlanta: John Knox, 1985. Pp. 120. \$11.95 (paper).

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN ITS SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, by John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch. Library of Early Christianity. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986. Pp. 194. \$18.95.

Anyone who reads Adolf Deissmann's turn of the century *Light from the Ancient East* is still fascinated by the excitement that breathes from its pages as the numerous discoveries from papyri and inscriptions are masterfully made to illumine Christianity from its cultural environment. That gem still bears rereading and sparkles amid a subsequent host of "introductions" presenting "historical background" for the student of the New Testament. Unfortunately, many of these studies are either dated for one reason or another—too simplistic allegiance to the excesses of the comparative religions

school of the 19th century; the now familiar schema of the development (read "decay") of early Christianity from pristine Jewish beginnings to the institutionalized formulations fostered by the move to the Gentile world and patterns of Greco-Roman culture and thought—or have been eclipsed by the devotion to careful reading and elucidation of texts of the form and redaction critics.

More recently, interest in the New Testament environment has been rekindled, sparked in part by new questions of setting posed by these same redactional studies, and partly by recent work in Jewish studies such as Victor Tcherikover's *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (1970) and Martin Hengel's *Judaism and Hellenism* (1974). Such documentation of a thoroughly hellenized Palestine in the first century C.E. has called for an abandoning of the old syntheses and a rewriting of the history of first century Palestine. These developments have been enhanced by perspectives from other disciplines, particularly that of the social historian, which have

brought both new evidence and new ways of evaluating the old.

Fundamental to all of these studies is the conviction that knowledge and appreciation of the social context of early Christianity as the formative period of the New Testament is essential for our understanding of these sacred texts and of the faith convictions of those who wrote them. As Calvin Roetzel puts it:

When viewed in its natural setting it is easier to grasp the dynamic character of the New Testament itself...to appreciate this environment on its own terms, and not merely as an expendable background whose only purpose is to display early Christianity to best advantage. This world was far more than background, it was also the homeground and foreground of the early church. (vii)

Its particular social-historical setting is the very fabric of early Christian experience and its delineation a key to reading and understanding the record of Christian proclamation of Jesus as the Christ.

Each of these three books shares in this conviction and thereby adds appreciably to our understanding of this witness. Benefited by the continuing new evidence of archeological and historical research but most particularly by the fresh insights of the social historian, they are further alike in that they synthesize the results of numerous technical studies and present them in a form very readable for a nonspecialist audience. Together they evidence two important results of modern studies of first century Palestine, each calling for a cautious use of older “introductions”: (1) the overwhelming diversity of the first-century Judaism to which Christian origins belong, and (2) the pervasive hellenistic influence in the Mediterranean world (Roetzel, vii).

Although all include a brief introductory historical and political survey—Alexander the Great and his successors, the Maccabean revolt, the arrival of Rome—each of the books has its own distinct interest and scope which will appeal to different readers. Stambaugh and Balch aim to sketch the societies of the Greco-Roman world in which the early Christian movement took root and spread, to understand those communities “as they believed, thought and acted then and there” (9). Thus although they include a chapter on Palestinian society, the remaining chapters on mobility and mission, the ancient economy, city life, and Christianity in the cities of the Roman Empire combine to place primary emphasis on the broader Greco-Roman world and culture. Accordingly, this book will especially interest those readers seeking insight into the church in its missionary expansion beyond Palestine (e.g., the Pauline corpus). Of particular interest in this connection is the presentation of the social setting which accompanied and characterized the Christian mission in the Greco-Roman world and the comparison of the numerous organizational aspects of early Christian communities with their counterparts in the pagan world.

The book is copious in the diverse topics it covers, readily noting points of scholarly disagreement, e.g., in the evaluation of the economic impact of slavery, or on the question of whether Jewish officials had the authority to exercise capital punishment. However, since it marshals and juxtaposes evidence on the social environment ranging from the early to the late Roman Empire, caution must be used in applying all details to the more narrow context of the New Testa-

ment writings. One could wish also for a more extended and clear discussion of the social setting (“ecology”) of Jesus’ ministry. Witness two sentences from that section: “The simple rural ecological context of the Jesus movement has been somewhat overdrawn” (104). “Nevertheless, the Jesus movement was socially located in the rural village culture alienated from Greco-Roman cities” (106). But who cannot resonate to the familiar when the roots of economic crisis in the first century are traced to the fact that while “the basis of the ancient economy was agricultural...the basis of Greek and Roman civilization was urban” (74).

As the title suggests, Roetzel’s work focuses more precisely on Palestine and upon those factors most apparently and directly related to aspects of the origins and characteristics of the New Testament literature and its message. Thus its chapters on forms of Jewish and hellenistic religious expression; on those institutions of society seen to be formative of Palestinian life, most importantly the temple and the synagogue, but also the Greek city-state and hellenistic ideas of kingship; on the religious and social impact of notions of evil and the role of holy or charismatic figures; and finally on methods of interpretation of sacred texts operative in the various communities contemporary with the formative period of the New Testament are its unique interest and contribution.

The Palestinian environment is sketched as the arena of the “shaping of the Christian consciousness” (vii) in such a way as to enable the religious and social issues out of which the New Testament emerged, together with the life and death questions of God, justice and power in the midst of a diverse society, to come alive and impress us with their contemporary reality and urgency. The reader cannot help being caught up in a dialog with the lives and crucial witness of those who wrote the New Testament.

The volume by Horsley and Hanson is the most focused and in some respects the most provocative of the three. Relying primarily on a careful reading of Josephus, the authors analyze the significant movements and their leaders culminating in the Jewish War (66-70 C.E.) and the destruction of the temple. They characterize the predominate picture in scholarly literature of a single organized Jewish resistance movement, usually encompassed with the term “Zealot,” as a “historical fiction.” Instead, making comparative use of recent social historical studies, they argue for the Palestinian peasantry as the primary dynamic force in those movements leading up to the Jewish War (xiii-xvii).

The chapters of the book present a typology of the distinct pivotal periods and groups: social bandits; royal pretenders and messiah figures; prophets and prophetic movements; the so-called Fourth philosophy of Josephus; the Sicarii; and Zealots. Each of these groups is distinguished carefully by social setting along with helpful reference to relevant gospel details. The term “Zealot,” they assert on the basis of their reading of Josephus, can only be applied legitimately to that body of peasants who, forced by the advancing Roman armies to abandon their homes and lands and become “bandits,” form a revolutionary coalition within the city of Jerusalem at the beginning of the War (67-68 C.E.). They note thus the irony in that it was precisely the tactics of the Roman armies in driving the peasants from their homes which effectively escalated and supported the opposition and the revolt. Particularly suggestive is the book’s concluding comment that it was also precisely this Roman extermination of a large section of the peasant population that had as its effect the ending of a similar “peasant movement” started by Jesus of Nazareth and occasioning the development of a quite different,

urban brand of community in the areas outside of Palestine in the years following the Jewish War.

The argument is clearly and persuasively done, albeit with a certain romanticism at times about peasant movements, shown in the authors' desire to be critical of written sources which reflect the aristocratic viewpoint of the "ruling and literary groups" (xxii). For example, though expressing a very negative evaluation of Josephus whom they characterize as duplicitous in his support of the Romans, the authors are at the same time

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ready to accept at face value what in his writings is seen to describe the peasants and their attitudes and actions.

These books, each with its distinct focus, enhance our understanding of the social environment of the New Testament community as it proclaimed its conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ, and illumine this confession as its answer to questions of life and meaning in a world, then as now, fractured and in need of healing. As they help us to comprehend our own experiences and questions in their similarity and differences, works such as these are a crucial resource for our continuing commitment to hearing and speaking the Word of God in our own time.

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RESPONSIBLE FAITH: CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF 20TH-CENTURY QUESTIONS, by Hans Schwarz. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. Pp. 448. \$23.95.

In *Responsible Faith: Christian Theology in the Light of 20th-Century Questions* Hans Schwarz has written a one-volume compendium of Christian doctrine that is evangelical in spirit and catholic in breadth. Eschewing the team approach, Schwarz assumes for himself the task—common to all believers—of "mastering" the Christian faith, "if not in every detail, then at least in its general outline" (9). While obviously concerned to be faithful to the what of Christian faith, Schwarz is not less concerned to address the questions "why" and "what difference does it make" in representing what Christians today believe. Given these dogmatic and apologetic goals, *Responsible Faith* is a concise, yet encyclopedic guide to contemporary Christian faith. Unfortunately, *Responsible Faith* also reads like a concise encyclopedia.

By way of prolegomena Schwarz opens his volume with brief, but informative chapters on theology, revelation, and Scripture. After establishing the eschatological context of revelation and asserting the limits of rational perception, Schwarz proceeds to explicate the Christian faith under the classical Trinitarian headings of "The God Who Acts," "The Christ Who Saves," and "The Spirit Who Empowers." In expounding the doctrine of God, Schwarz stays close to biblical and confessional sources. While charting the philosophical shifts of the modern era, Schwarz also contends for the enduring meaningfulness of ancient creed in contemporary faith. His elaboration of the Second Article is no less adroit. After a masterful summary of the many twists and turns in the quest for the historical Jesus, Schwarz combines patristic insight with historical-critical research to achieve a christology that is at once faithful and reflective. The section on the

Spirit centers on the church's potential as guardian of the past, heart of the present, and reminder of the future.

In the course of his trek from First through Third Article Schwarz negotiates theology's traditional quagmires with a judiciously light step. On the question of human freedom versus divine sovereignty, he insists on the primacy of grace in overcoming the totally depraving power of sin, while also arguing, from Augustine and Luther, that "there is still a possibility for moral goodness in humanity" (166). In a section on the cosmic Christ, Schwarz contends for the universally salvific will of God in Christ without falling into universalism. On the basis of the early church's affirmation that there could still be salvation for those who had not encountered Christ in their lifetime on earth, Schwarz holds to a similar hope for those "millions of people who have died since Christ's sojourn on earth without ever having known about him, or those who have known about him in such a distorted way that no appropriate response to him was possible" (256). In the particular case of the Jewish people, Schwarz reckons them "both an enigma to us and also a source of inspiration and hope" (338). After reviewing the Reformed, Lutheran, and Catholic approaches to the Eucharist, Schwarz concludes that "with different conceptual tools each of these views attempt to assert the actual presence of Christ in the sacrament" (369).

Virtually all the chapters in *Responsible Faith* bear the marks of its author's pro-

leptic theology and thoroughgoing ecumenism. Typifying the 20th century as an era dominated by eschatological hopes and expectations (376), Schwarz repeatedly affirms the unique opportunity Christianity has for giving direction and meaning to this epoch's aspirations. By his thorough familiarity with the confessional legacy of both Western and Eastern Christianity, Schwarz successfully broadens his argument for the primacy of the Judeo-Christian tradition in guiding modern humanity beyond holocaust to deeper meaning.

Responsible Faith will make a handy reference work for the pastor or seminarian looking for a contemporary overview of Christian theology. But for a deep engagement of Christian thinking with current culture, look elsewhere. For a book ostensibly devoted to "Christian Theology in Light of 20th-Century Questions," Schwarz devotes precious little time or space to developing just what those questions are. After acknowledging the challenge presented to Christian faith by scientific materialism and Marxist dialectic (14), Schwarz does not go on to explore either the depth or the potential of those formidable challengers. Similarly, *Responsible Faith* is almost completely devoid of reference to contemporary arts and letters. Aside from the Scripture references, the only poetry quoted is from two hymns, one of which is "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Nietzsche and Freud get one reference each, while Kafka, Camus, and Sartre go without mention, although Ralph Cudworth (his real name!) bridges several pages (105f.). For all the care taken and solid substance included, *Responsible Faith*, when read from cover to cover, leaves the reader with the impression that theology is dry, dull stuff indeed.

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REVELATION AND THEOLOGY: THE GOSPEL AS NARRATED PROMISE, by Ronald F. Thiemann. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985. Pp. 198. \$23.95.

A friend of mine speaks of some wooden theologies as “see-the-duck, shoot-the-duck, the-duck-is-dead.” The duck in question is modern theology which has lost the doctrine of revelation or has fallen upon an unsavory form for the doctrine, and when Thiemann is done, the duck is indeed dead. The question which remains is: why would one want to shoot this duck?

It takes us a while to figure out why Thiemann so wrings his hands over the modern doctrine of revelation. It turns out that his reasons are dual. Upfront, he is certain that modern doctrines of revelation depend on the epistemological foundationalism which is so widely discredited these days; they attempt to understand revelation through a notion of non-inferential intuition and use that notion to provide a theoretical justification for Christian belief. Thiemann agrees with those who argue that intuitive, non-inferential beliefs are incoherent. But Thiemann’s position arises not simply out of the failure of foundationalism, but also out of a religious-theological concern: he charges that modern doctrines of revelation have lost sight of the absolute priority of God’s gracious reality (what Thiemann speaks of as God’s prevenience). Theology has to find some way to articulate the absolute priority of God’s gracious reality without falling into the fatal flaw of foundationalism or reducing theology to anthropology (as Feuerbach does).

The problem is oddly drawn, since it presupposes that there are Christians, and indeed, theologians, out there who continue in their belief and continue to reflect on it *without* crediting God’s prevenience. Who are these people, and why do they bother with Christianity? Thiemann believes that the theologians among them have been seduced by the currents of modern epistemology into formulations which undercut God’s priority. One might debate with him on this point. After all, the selection of foils by which he makes his point is odd (Locke, Schleier-

macher, and Torrance, who are guilty of apologetic, foundationalist attempts to justify the possibility of revelation; and Gordon Kaufman, Charles Wood and David Kelsey, whom Thiemann faults, in different ways, for doing without a doctrine of revelation). Probably Thiemann overstates his sweeping characterization of modern theology (his analysis of Schleiermacher, for instance, suffers from the common inversion of the abstract and the concrete despite his intention).

What kind of a religious mistake would prompt these theologians to let their theologies lose sight of the absolute priority of God’s grace? Once we peer under the critique of foundationalism, we soon discover a deeper concern: the critique of works-righteousness. Thiemann suspects that the whole of modern theology is Pelagian because it holds God’s prevenience captive to our autonomous theological decisions (68) and he intends to play Augustine against it. When we follow him through his own version of revelation, organized around the notion of “narrated promise,” we soon realize that Thiemann intends to follow the old Lutheran habit of accusing everyone else of works-righteousness. Even Augustine, it turns out, suffers from works-righteousness (47).

Once Thiemann has his two-sided problem in mind, he marches through his critique chapter by chapter and turns to three chapters of constructive, “descriptive theology.” The construction hopes to retrieve the notion of revelation without an appeal to foundationalist

justification. That is, he would rebuild a revelation-centered theology which appeals to a “holistic” (one would say, internal) justification, first by showing that Christian belief in God’s prevenience is intelligible, then by showing that such belief corresponds to biblical witness (aptness), and finally by arguing that Christians have warrants to claim their belief to be true. In each of these steps Thiemann builds on the view that an idea of “narrated promise” can protect the priority of God (as promiser) over the hearing of promise and to our conceptual frameworks. A theology which responds to God as promiser can avoid the Pelagian and works-righteous risks which Thiemann finds everywhere, even apparently in someone like Barth. After he ties his concern for promise to the Reformers and rejects the view that God is a *causally* prior agent, Thiemann endeavors to show that every element of gospel can fit under the category of promise. By the time he is through, no other category for theology will do.

There is a disturbing intolerance for other positions in Thiemann’s project. We have seen a hint of it in his sense for the problematic. His rejection of a causal understanding for divine prevenience, however, is a perfect case of Thiemann’s methodological intolerance. According to Thiemann, both the modern doctrine of revelation and pre-reformation theologies attempt to locate the divine initiative as causally prior to human reception. Such a causal relation, he tells us, runs two risks: it either makes humans utterly passive, or, if it does not, it finally derails God’s priority. If humans actively initiate a response to God in their freedom, then God’s grace loses its priority. Thiemann does not want humans to be utterly passive either; hence he wants to recast the entire story of theology away from the causal mistake.

The either/or makes it clear that Thiemann thinks that theology, both in its classic causal frame and in its modern dress, is Pelagian and needs a dose of Augustine. In this reading of the tradition, however, even Augustine turns out to be dangerously Pelagian! Thiemann believes that the operating-cooperating grace pattern of Augustine and Thomas actually allows too much human initiative; he quotes approvingly the remark of Robert Jenson, that such a pattern is a works-righteousness structure (97). Such scholarship is not only historically inaccurate, but offensively pre-ecumenical in character. Does Thiemann really believe all these other Christians and Christian theologians dispute the priority of God’s grace in Christian life? Is it only these few Lutherans who have gotten grace right? When one finishes Thiemann’s piece, one senses that only the Lutheran doctrine of grace, centered on the category of promise, and only Thiemann’s retrieval of it through that family of currents known as the Yale theology, can provide an alternative to the classic causal conceptions and the foundationalist epistemologies of

post-Enlightenment doctrines of revelation. And that only such a reconceptualizing can avoid works-righteousness.

What generates Thiemann’s intolerance? Is it that finally he is a pre-ecumenical Lutheran, one who responds to theological difference by questioning the genuineness of others’ Christian convictions? Is he so persuaded of the dangers of foundationalism that he must part company with the entire cast of modern theologians? Or is it his exclusive appeal to internal grounds to justify the truth of Christian belief, characteristic of many Yale theologians, which so biases Thiemann’s project toward intolerance? My colleague, Bruce Marshall, a Lutheran from the same Yale theological tradition as Thiemann, seems to fault Thiemann’s brand of Lutheranism and not Yale (see Marshall’s fine review in the AAR Christology *Newsletter* VI/2 [June, 1986]).

My preference is to blame the so-called “Yale theology” more fully. It seems to me that any theology which simultaneously tries to escape Feuerbach and defend itself only by internal appeals runs the risk of intolerance.

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THE MESSAGE OF JOB: A THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY, by Daniel Simundson.
Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. Pp. 159. \$9.95 (paper).

In this valuable work Simundson brings the biblical text of Job into a lively conversation with our world today. With his skills as a biblical scholar, Simundson leads the reader through the difficult text of the book of Job. Using his skills as a theologian, he exposes the many important and complex theological issues in this rich biblical story. Finally, with his skills as a pastoral counselor, Simundson lays bare the many important pastoral care issues the author(s) of the book of Job sought to address. Simundson, in this short but powerful book, makes it possible for the ancient insights of the author(s) of Job to speak with clarity and authority to all who wrestle with the questions of human suffering and faith in God within our world today. Simundson begins by focusing on two important questions the text raises. The first is, “Does Job deserve this?” Job and his counselors believe in the doctrine of retribution. Their understanding of pain and suffering is based on the belief that “God will reward the righteous and punish the wicked—within this life” (13). The text reveals that Job is “blameless” in God’s eyes (1:8). Job cannot believe he deserves his suffering. Job’s friends eventually end up trying to prove that he does.

Simundson sees the “book of Job written as a response to the common human reaction to suffering, the impulse to seek the cause of the suffering in the sufferer” (14). Job’s friends, who rush to his side, upon hearing his claim of innocence, are soon causing more pain as they attack him for threatening their nice, simple doctrine of retribution. Job’s counselors are so threatened by Job that they become more concerned about protecting their understanding of God than they are about listening to Job’s pain and understanding his complaint.

The second question, “Why should Job repent?”, takes us to the end of the book. It identifies Job’s repentance (42:6) as a key for understanding and interpreting this story. Were Job’s counselors right? What does Job repent of? Simundson points to a number of possible interpretations and questions. If Job is “blameless,” what must Job repent of? With these two key questions Simundson prepares the reader to enter into the difficult text of the book of Job.

The remainder of the book is structured in an interesting and helpful way. Each major section of the text is examined to lift up important textual issues, significant themes and the variety of ways a particular section has been interpreted. The second part of each chapter is entitled “Theological and Pastoral Implications.” Here Simundson reflects on and summarizes the questions and issues the biblical section has raised. This structure allows Simundson to unfold the biblical text for the reader’s greater understanding. The second part allows the reader to enter into conversation with the ancient

author regarding the experience of suffering and the attempt to respond to one who is hurting.

What drives our continuous wrestling with questions about God and suffering is the search for a nice tidy answer. The book of Job fights against one such answer, the doctrine of retribution. Neither the book of Job nor Simundson's work attempts to replace one answer with another concerning the experience of suffering. It is in the conversation between Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu that some understanding of the relationship between suffering and God is to be discovered. Simundson, too, is content to leave the tensions and ambiguities of the biblical text unresolved because

...on a subject as complicated as the meaning of human suffering, there is no simple solution, and our poet never meant to suggest one. We may be left with contradictions, ambiguities, unanswered questions, and illogical conclusions simply because of the nature of the question. (26)

As Simundson highlights the important theological issues one is forced to reflect on the continued presence of the doctrine of retribution in popular religious thought. One notices that neither Job nor his friends question the doctrine of God's omnipotence, but instead debate whether God is just. Maybe God's use of power is a key to understanding suffering. Finally, one is struck by the inadequacy of all intellectual answers about suffering. Job was not satisfied by the answers his counselors tried to give for his suffering. Answers were not what Job needed at all

...God's presence was what Job needed, that he now knew that God was there even in his suffering, and that the miseries in his life were not evidence of God's abandonment. The message is that God is present in our suffering. Not that God answers all our questions. (147)

From a pastoral care viewpoint, this book is full of insights. One witnesses the tendency to take the words of the sufferer too seriously (57). One sees the counselors getting lost in intellectualizing and protecting their doctrine of God, rather than caring for the one who is suffering. One sees the carnage a rigid doctrine of retribution can cause. The most interesting insight reveals how even good answers to the problem of suffering can be bad answers at the wrong time. Simundson is right that "[t]here is a great danger in pronouncing meaning on someone else's suffering" (70). This work and the Old Testament book it is based upon are guides to help one deal with suffering and a sufferer.

This book is a gift to anyone who wants to learn more about the book of Job. It will provide a map to guide you through this wonderfully intense and complex Old Testament book. It is also a gift for the way it raises theological questions and issues to the surface. Its greatest strength is how it brings the message of Job to life for those who seek to care for people who suffer and ponder the questions their suffering brings with it. In his commentary, Simundson deepens our understanding of the many dimensions of suffering and faith in God.

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PROPHETIC VOICE FOR THE KINGDOM: THE IMPACT OF ALVIN DANIEL MATTSON UPON THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE AUGUSTANA SYNOD,

by Gregory Lee Jackson. Rock Island: Augustana Historical Society, 1986. Pp. 239. \$19.95.

A. D. Mattson (1895-1970) was Professor of Sociology and Ethics at Augustana Seminary, Rock Island, from 1931 through 1965, and he chaired the Commission on Moral and Social Problems of the Augustana Lutheran Church from 1937 to 1962. He had an enormous impact upon his students, and he was the most important figure in giving vitality and shape to the social consciousness that was characteristic of the Augustana Church.

In this book the author provides sketches of Mattson's early years, his education (including considerable attention to his time at Yale), teaching style, writings, activities, travels, and influence. Mattson is presented not only as the vigorous champion of social justice he was known to be (the public Mattson) but

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also as a warm and winsome person who genuinely affected his students and countless others in the church who had been accustomed to "Lutheran quietism" (a term he often used as a reproach); he directed them to their own Scriptures to discover the call of God to seek justice. In his classes, writings, and activities he championed the causes of organized labor, racial justice, and peace (even pacifism), and he urged clergy and congregations to be involved in both rural and urban issues.

Mattson seemed to many of us who knew him to have a profound and convincing simplicity when he spoke on moral and public issues. Yet we know that he was also a complex man, and facets of his complexities emerge from Jackson's treatment. On the one hand, Mattson was the social prophet and critic of "priestly" religion and ministry. On the other hand, he was the custodian of canon law, since he taught the required course at the seminary on church administration and polity and wrote the standard text in the field for the Augustana Church. Again, on the one hand, he could be highly critical of pietistic, other-worldly religiosity; but on the other, he had lively interests in parapsychology, the psychology of religion, and the writings of Teilhard de Chardin. And finally, while his emphases on racial justice and the rights of organized labor would seem to direct his efforts primarily toward the urban scene, he was a nationally recognized leader in addressing issues in rural life and rural ministry, taught a course in rural sociology (beginning in 1938), and wrote a fine book on town and country churches.

One way to interpret Mattson—and it is perhaps too common—is to portray him as an idiosyncratic figure, even a "maverick" (which Martin Marty calls him in his commendation on the dust jacket of the book). And Jackson's book might reinforce that interpretation, for it concentrates more on the man than upon his context. But there are items mentioned by the author concerning that context that should be underscored, and when they are, Mattson emerges more clearly as a forceful and dynamic leader for his times and church than as a voice crying in a barren wilderness. Three such items can be highlighted here. First, when Mattson came upon the scene in the early 1930s, the Augustana Synod was deeply affected by two traditions—orthodoxy and the pietistic legacy of C. O. Rosenius. The latter had a moralistic emphasis on both personal and social responsibility, addressing "social ills" through the years. While orthodoxy reigned in the seminary in the early part of the twentieth century, the moral emphasis had been no stranger to the congregations, and Mattson was able to pick up on it. Second, in 1923 Nathan Söderblom

traveled widely in the U.S., lectured at key institutions (even speaking at the dedication of the new seminary buildings), and preached in various congregations. He was received enthusiastically. Then in 1925 he convened the Life and Work Conference (Stockholm) and invited Augustana leaders to attend. This event established new ecumenical contacts, and its emphasis on the social responsibility of the churches affected the Augustana leadership. Third, with the death of Conrad Lindberg (dean and professor of systematic theology) in 1930, the era of orthodoxy at the seminary was over, and the new professors (Conrad Bergendoff, Eric Wahlstrom, Carl Anderson, and Mattson) fostered the use of biblical criticism and new theological resources from Europe (primarily Sweden) and America. All this is to say that when Mattson arrived, the ground was fertile, and Mattson and his colleagues provided masterful theological leadership. To be sure, Mattson in particular had his opponents and (as Jackson documents well) had to tough it out. But Mattson was also able to gain wide support—which speaks of his ability to lead—and over the years he affected the synod and particularly his students (some 1,100) profoundly.

There are statements in the book that are inaccurate. For example, W. A. Passavant was not an “Augustana patriarch” (27), but a General Council pastor (more appropriately Jackson calls him “Augustana’s friend and benefactor” as well [10]). And the following statement is intolerable: “Augustana pastors were ordained without having heard of Luther’s Two Kingdom doctrine” (50)! Surely Augustana Seminary students were introduced to it through courses in church history and systematics, and those of us who had Mattson as a teacher can attest that he too spoke of the doctrine. In fact he spoke of it positively, for he found in it a resource for speaking of the rule of God in society, but he was critical of those who abused it in order to contend that the church should have nothing to do with the social and political order.

There are other points where one may beg to differ with the author as well. But generally this book provides a very readable and sensitive introduction to the life and work of a fascinating person. For those of us who had “A. D.” as a teacher and mentor, the book occasions a visit with a dear friend. For those who never knew him, the book sheds light on a significant personality, era, and tradition of Lutheranism in America. Adding to its value, the book also contains a reprinted version of Mattson’s 1960 Knobel-Miller lectures on *The Social Responsibility of Christians*.

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JESUS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD, by G. R. Beasley-Murray. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. Pp. 446. \$29.95.

In this voluminous contribution Beasley-Murray sets before himself the task of clarifying the identity and self-understanding of Jesus by means of a fresh examination of the one area pervading the testimony of the gospels to Jesus—namely, the teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God.

Following eight chapters in which the author treats the Old Testament and early Jewish background of the themes of theophany, the Kingdom of God, and the Day of the Lord, Beasley-Murray turns his attention to an exhaustive exegetical discussion of Jesus’ explication of the Kingdom of God in his sayings, parables, and discourses. The biblical material is neatly, if

artificially, divided into six chapters.

Chapters 9 and 10 concern themselves with those sayings and parables of Jesus which bespeak the coming of the Kingdom of God in the present, i.e., in the present ministry of Jesus. While one may well quibble with the author's identification and delineation of particular texts as emphasizing exclusively—or even primarily—the present implosion of the Kingdom in the ministry of Jesus, the point made by the author is neither controvertible nor surprising: the gospels bear witness to the fact that the Kingdom of God dawns in and through the words and deeds of Jesus. What is startling is Beasley-Murray's uncompromising insistence that this conviction roots not in the post-Easter theological reflection of the early church but rather in the messianic self-consciousness of Jesus himself. Throughout these pages—as well as those of the next two chapters dealing with the eschatological dimensions of the future Kingdom—the author steadfastly maintains that the sayings and parables of Jesus as portrayed in the gospels are little if at all affected by the kerygmatic tradition of the early church. If the followers of Jesus only belatedly conceptualized him as the eschatological criterion for present and future divine sovereignty, the fact remains that that awareness was inherent in his teaching and, most importantly, was constitutive of Jesus' own self-realization.

Chapters 13 and 14 pursue the argument along the same vein, respectively treating Jesus' sayings on the Son of Man and the Parousia. While somewhat more cautious in his acknowledgement of the redactional influences of the various gospel writers, the author nevertheless takes great pains to demonstrate the essential harmony of the primitive tradition as well as the notion that these sayings too provide a lense through which one can examine the self-understanding of Jesus. The sayings regarding the passion, death, and resurrection of the Son of Man, for example, cannot only be regarded as the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus but also as indicators of his awareness of his own role as inaugurator and criterion of the Kingdom of God. Likewise Jesus was cognizant of the soteriological significance of his death and of his future parousia.

The presuppositional axis around which Beasley-Murray's argument revolves consists of the conviction that the gospel accounts of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom and the Christological statements derived from them stem not from the faith of the early church but rather from the self-consciousness of Jesus himself. The author's underlying orientation to the biblical texts in part accounts for the length of the book and the astonishing amount of space dedicated to detailed critical notes and references. Frequently navigating against the prevailing currents of critical opinion, the author found it necessary first to re-establish (or reconstruct) the sayings and defend them as authentic historical declarations of Jesus before finally drawing conclusions relative to their import to the question of Jesus' identity.

Paradoxically, this procedure signals both the strength and the weakness of the tome. Its strength lies in the meticulous examination of the various texts. The breadth of critical research coupled with the author's own lively exegetical work frequently sheds new interpretive light on the teachings of Jesus. For this reason the book makes for worthwhile reading and is a valuable reference for research and preaching. Just as frequently, however, the author's idiosyncratic insistence on the historical authenticity of Jesus' teachings—generally understood as unrefracted and largely unaffected by the faith of the early church or the gospel writers—serves to raise more questions about Jesus' identity and self-understanding than it answers. The Christological

problem raised by the assumption of a messianic self-consciousness of Jesus is not addressed; the lack of a tradition of self-attestation to the title of Messiah on the part of Jesus fares little better. Further, some of the author's interpretation simply strains the fabric of credibility, particularly when he treats the predictions of the passion, Jesus' understanding of the meaning of his death, and the parousia.

Beasley-Murray prefaces his work with the remark, "The twentieth century has been marked from its outset, and is likely so to continue to its close, by an uncertainty as to who Jesus was" (x). In his attempt to resolve this uncertainty, the author has taken another step along the time-worn path of "life of Jesus" research and theology whereby the results of historical reconstruction of Jesus' life and teaching serve to sustain and substantiate the content of faith—in this instance the church's faith in the soteriological significance of the person, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Beasley-Murray believes that the content of this faith can be traced directly back to the teachings of Jesus and he attempts to conclusively demonstrate that conviction. But, while in many respects instructive and helpful, the effort fails. One doubts if any such approach could ever succeed; the gospels simply do not serve as historical sources in that sense. The evidence relative to the self-understanding of the Jesus of the gospels remains enigmatic because the gospels themselves are concerned to witness to the Christ of faith rather than the Christ of history.

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JOHN, by Robert Kysar. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. Pp. 333. \$14.95 (paper).

Robert Kysar, well known to Johannine students from his previous works on John (*The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel*, Augsburg, 1975; *John, the Maverick Gospel*, John Knox, 1976; *The Scandal of Lent: Themes for Lenten Preaching in the Gospel of John*, Augsburg, 1982; and *John's Story of Jesus*, Fortress, 1984), has here contributed a significant volume in the Augsburg Commentary Series (ACNT). The series claims to avoid the "heavy use of technical terms," and is written for "laypeople, students, and pastors." Naturally, this limitation makes the task of preparing a thorough-going commentary on St. John's Gospel a very difficult matter, for John is heavy with theology and loaded with critical and historical questions. Kysar has done a splendid job of dealing with numerous technical, exegetical questions in language understandable—in most cases—by lay persons, while not neglecting to explain the key theological issues. The text is ex-

plained section by section, and an excellent summary at the end of each section enhances the interpretation.

The characteristics of the author's literary style in this Gospel are identified as symbolism, ambiguous meanings of words, irony, and the misunderstanding of the hearer as a means of further revelation. As to symbolism, a couple of examples will indicate Kysar's position. In 6:16 darkness "is a deliberate Johannine symbolism, suggesting that the disciples are immersed in the darkness of the world" (93). In connection with the Nicodemus story in chapter

3, he says “more likely is that water here stands for the truth revealed in Christ, and later interpreters justifiably identified it with Baptism” (53). (The use of ambiguous words is seen in examples on pages 95, 283, 290, etc., and irony on pages 176 and 207. Examples of the use of misunderstanding as an avenue of further revelation can be seen in examples on pages 52, 64, 127, and 175.)

Kysar accepts the common understanding today that the sources for the Gospel are the “signs source,” the “sayings source,” and the “oral source.” This leads him to see a 3-fold development of the Gospel as (1) when the Christians are in the synagogue (40-70 A.D.), (2) when Christians split with the Jews in the synagogue (70-80 A.D.), and (3) when an independent Christian community has developed but was already plagued with internal conflicts and theological divisions (80-100 A.D.).

Concerning the authorship, he believes that the author definitely was not an apostle, and that the author’s identity is lost in anonymity.

This commentary shows a heavy dependence on Raymond Brown’s classic work, and most modern commentators will admit that dependence. Kysar uses the other “Johannine B’s” (Barrett, Bultmann, and Borgen), as well as Schnackenburg. The author is to be commended for introducing the results of modern archeological research, without at the same time becoming too technical for the untrained reader. He also gives a careful and clear summary of the few textual variants (with transliterations of the Greek words). Any study of John’s Gospel will have to analyze three basic textual problems: 7:53-8:11, the pericope on adultery; 5:3b-4, the stirring of the water; and 1:13, whether singular (thus applying to the virgin birth) or plural (thus referring to every believer). Regarding the first, Kysar regards the pericope as authentic, “an isolated and homeless pericope...a free-floating tradition eventually inserted at this point in the Fourth Gospel as an illustration of 7:24, to help answer the question of the attitude toward sin, especially adultery....Taken as a whole, it is still another instance of the radical acceptance of sinners on the part of Jesus” (134).

Concerning the second, the stirring of the water, the author agrees with most modern text critics (and therefore also with our newer translations) and places it in a footnote, saying it is “clearly a later addition, according to nearly all textual critics” (76). The attempt of some later manuscripts to make 1:13 refer in the singular to the virgin birth is not sustained by the best manuscripts, and Kysar is perhaps correct in referring the passage to all believers and not discussing the matter further.

As is true in all of the ACNT volumes, the biblical texts are not printed, so the reader is expected to have a copy of the Scripture alongside as this commentary is used. The comments on the texts are extremely useful and a diligent reader will profit much from this aid.

One could ask whether the “I am” (*ego eimi*) statements are not more of a key to the understanding of John’s Gospel than is here suggested. Kysar passes them by, saying that they are “revelatory,” which, of course, all sayings of Jesus are.

Kysar’s theological position is faithfully biblical and is shown by the following examples. His definition of faith is “personal relationship with Jesus Christ” (60). He says “John is profoundly realistic regarding the depravity of humanity” (56). “This is the basis of John’s Christology—the Father and the Son function as a single unity” (81).

To understand his position further, I give several longer quotations that clearly reveal theological understanding and John’s theological purpose:

Throughout the gospel he will stress that knowing who Jesus is so that one can properly believe in him, necessitates

knowing where he is from, and to where he will return. (27)

He states both sides of the issue of the responsibility for faith—divine election and human decision...(202). It is the gospel which offers forgiveness and hence causes humans to judge themselves by their response. (305)

Pilate is humanity, in the sense that there can be no believing response to Christ that does not surrender the securities of this world. (285)

John's Christology for all its explorations of various motifs, stands finally on the radical claim that Jesus is none other than the divine ultimate reality.(307)

In summary, this volume will be a helpful guide to the understanding of the Gospel of John, and will become one of the substantial volumes in the Augsburg New Testament Commentary series. Your money will be well spent on a volume of such lasting value! Not only buy it, but regularly use it in your study of St. John, and you will be greatly enriched! Kysar has done an excellent job.

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