



**THE RESTORING WORD: PREACHING AS PASTORAL COMMUNICATION**, by J. Randall Nichols. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. Pp. 216. \$15.95.

It is ironic that a book about communication should be misleadingly named. Although insightful and helpful, Nichols' latest book is more about theology and therapy than it is about preaching.

Nichols, a practicing psychotherapist, does demonstrate in his book a keen eye for making connections between theology and what happens in counseling situations. This is helpful, for it seems that pastors too often are unable to give the language of faith to the struggles of our lives. Consequently, the faithful find that their faith may be only a Sunday morning affair of habit, rather than the restoring event it has the potential to be. More and more in our day, church and “God talk” are seen as irrelevant to the struggle of daily life. Those who have mastered the psychotherapeutic language, those who know the restoration which can be found in therapy—these are the ones who may turn to therapy as their new faith. Nichols spends most of his third and fourth chapters making the connections, linking the language of church with the language of the couch. Hence, for the pastor/therapist, giving permission to feel and explore those feelings is named blessing, reframing a crisis or conflict for a client becomes prophesying, and teaching new communication skills is the didache of our work as pastors. He makes a nice apology for the church as an equal in therapeutic renewal, mostly because his theology and therapy are so closely grounded in the healing of forgiveness, and it is his mastery of the language of both realms which allows him to “redeem” the church.

This business of language would seem to be just right for a conversation about preaching, and indeed, Nichols does make several excursions into preaching in these conversations. I appreciated this, for it is an elusive task to capture just what happens when the gospel is proclaimed and people are restored to hope and a sense of God's love for them. Nichols uses therapy as a metaphor for this healing, and it is an apt one. He also notes, correctly, that much modern preaching proclaims a “gospel” which defines and challenges people's needs, but does not go on to meet those needs in a way which allows people to heal. However, his answer to his insightful diagnosis of the problem of modern preaching is to preach sermons on pastoral topics. This is not sufficient.

I appreciate Nichols' call to face the pain of our people, but to say that, “our task is not really telling people that the gospel is true so much as helping them discover the whole truth about their lives” (9), is to rob us of the primary task of preaching, the proclamation of God's love for each and every one, in spite of and no matter what. This must be proclaimed, for it is the most difficult and most denied truth of our faith. It is a truth which we must hear over and over again, whether we choose to deny the beauty of God's creation in us, or because we arrogantly deny the limits of our humanity. It is hard to believe, and it is the preacher who is called to make this love a public event in the language and structure of the sermon week after week. When this

happens, and each of us as preachers prays that it might whenever we step into the pulpit, then the restoration and healing which Nichols very insightfully examines will occur.

His material is useful, to be sure. Part of our job as preachers is to name the gospel as it is needed this week. Nichols is an astute “reframer,” using his therapeutic terms, of the pain and struggle of the individual, congregation, nation, and globe. He can see the law at work in people’s lives, separating them from themselves, each other, and God. He has even made the connection between the

gospel in response to that law. He has not, however, made that last step to diagnose the text as sensitively. He does not accept the challenge to preach from the assigned liturgical texts and bring his diagnostic tools to bear within this limit. Every sermon must be pastoral, and if the gospel is given life in it, every sermon will be. But every sermon need not be topical to accomplish this. Nichols leaves this last connection unmade. He can and does make lovely units of theological and therapeutic language, but he does not do so well with Biblical language, the concrete language of life.

His material is useful in sermon preparation; in thinking about the congregation and their needs. His material is also useful in reviewing the healing and restoring power of the gospel. The gap lies in what to write down on the paper—the structure which will create the event of restoration, the language which will live and linger in the hearer, the integration of text and context which is our greatest challenge. Missing is the conviction that the gospel and the law are implicit in every text, and that the living Word of any text has the power to move people’s lives toward greater health and wholeness.

The book is worth reading for many reasons. Nichols is a sensitive therapist and pastor who, in chapters about therapy and the issues of people, is enlightening. This is not a “how to” book on pastoral preaching, but it will find its niche as a guide to thinking about pastoral issues in the parish and the language we use to name them.

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**OUT OF THE NIGHT, THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF VIETNAM VETERANS**, by William P. Mahedy. Ballantine Books, New York, 1986. Pp. 244. \$15.95.

War story: Siege of Khe San, 1968. Incoming artillery slams into our base and the bodies of our buddies. We huddle helpless in dark holes, filthy, short of food and ammo, many physically ill, more spiritually sick. The Gunny says, “We’ve been abandoned by Division, MAC-V, Washington, the American people, and God Almighty!” Later, the Gunny takes a direct hit from a North Vietnamese shell. The man who had declared us abandoned by God was found clutching a rosary in his dead hand.

Abandoned and yet embracing. Feeling the absence and reaching for the presence. Deep in the night, yearning for dawn. This sort of experience, argues Father William Mahedy, is the dark night of the soul described by St. John of the Cross and other Christian mystics who have

struggled with the absence of God, and this “dark night” best explains the spiritual journey of Vietnam vets.

Vets first entered this dark night in the horrors of combat and/or its aftermath where they discovered that war is not glorious or a holy quest, but unspeakably horrible and evil. Soon, contrary to the American civil religious mythology in which he had been steeped, the vet discovered that God was not on our side, our cause was probably not just, and we were not guaranteed a win because of Divine blessing and guidance. Worse, the veteran discovered the beast within, the killer animal, the murderous evil of his own heart. In all this, God appeared to be A.W.O.L.

The dark night deepened upon return to the USA when vets discovered themselves to be social Samaritans, objects of scorn, or leprous non-persons to be avoided and ignored. Churches participated in visiting the dark night on the vet, for they had either promoted the American civil religion of which the vet was now mightily disabused or agitated for the cause of the vet’s enemy, the North Vietnamese. Churches counselled draft evaders but ignored traumatized vets; many preached a convenient righteousness, the immorality of war, while committing another kind of immoral war on the vet—condemning him, refusing to absolve him, treating him as untouchable. Vets who had religious faith often lost it, but many have tried to struggle back to some truce with God. Father Mahedy seeks to explore the dynamics of that struggle, examine the American civil

religion found bankrupt in Vietnam, and critique the self-righteousness of the American left found equally wanting in Vietnam’s continuing aftermath.

*Out of the Night* is a thoughtful, moving, yet briskly paced book which deserves wide reading. Veterans and their families, pastors and others who seek to minister to vets, and anyone who was deeply involved in the issues of the war and its aftermath will profit from the sensible comfort and sage analyses Father Mahedy offers.

The book has several problems, however. Since it is the personal reflection of one man, a broader, more objective analysis of the spiritual struggles of Vietnam veterans awaits a writing. Second, the personal stories of veterans, often the most powerful sections of the book, are too few and cut short. This is a shame, since these testimonies often make Father Mahedy’s points more eloquently, simply, and forcefully than commentary. Third, Father Mahedy talks about “the failure of the military chaplaincy in Vietnam,” as if there were some total and thorough inadequacy in the spiritual care offered to those of us who served. This isn’t true. Many good chaplains (including two Lutheran chaplains who ministered to units with whom I served) struggled very hard to minister to the combat Marine, soldier, sailor and airman while experiencing their own spiritual struggles in a war zone. Their stories are no less heroic than those of combat vets, their failings no more sinister, and, as is the case for most of us combat vets, both are largely untold and unappreciated.

Perhaps the book’s main problem is the way it refers to “Vietnam veterans” or “the vets” as if everyone who went to Vietnam shares in this dark night or had common experiences of battle. Actually, most people who went to Vietnam never saw combat, and many who saw some didn’t see much. The small percentage of us who were involved in frequent direct combat have, by and large, readjusted to American society and lead productive lives. Veterans who stayed in

the military after the war seem to have had the fewest problems. Further work needs to be done, but it appears more and more that many who had serious problems during and after Vietnam had them in connection with other problems, such as a history of abuse, neglect, or alcoholism/addiction. Father Mahedy does not acknowledge this connection, nor does he report much on those whose spiritual journey was not at all a dark night—for example, the numbers of men who came to faith in Vietnam in combat or elsewhere.

The issue of Vietnam veterans and their struggles is not over, done, or dead, and it is not going to go away. The churches, including the Lutheran church, have yet to deal responsibly with vets. Perhaps this book will sensitize churches; I pray it will enable them to take action for effective ministry to vets. At least those who read Father Mahedy's reflections, despite his broad strokes, may be moved to hear us.

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**THE THEOLOGY OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER**, by Ernst Feil. Translated by Martin Rumscheidt. Philadelphia; Fortress Press, 1985. Pp. xxi + 246. \$21.95.

For persons who are intending a serious encounter with the theology and legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, there is no substitute for exposure to his primary writings. Imperative are; *The Communion of Saints, Act and Being, The Cost of Discipleship, Life Together, Christ the Center, Ethics, Letters and Papers from Prison*. Among secondary writings, two volumes are quite essential; Eberhard Bethge's biographical classic, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York; Harper and Row, 1970) and Ernst Feil's masterful commentary, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*.

Professor Feil, who teaches at the University of Munich, published the German edition in 1971, which emerged out of his doctoral dissertation under the Catholic Faculty at the University of Münster. He himself believed that his book was a logical theological corollary to Bethge's biography. So it is. The excellent translation by Martin Rumscheidt, professor of theology at the Atlantic School

of Theology in Halifax, Nova Scotia, makes available to English readers a first rate scholarly work which has provided for the past fifteen years an insightful and articulate instrument for Bonhoeffer students who read German.

Feil is convinced that the thematic key to Bonhoeffer's theological legacy, as well as to the interpretation of his life, is "Christ and the world come of age." Contrary to those interpreters who judge Bonhoeffer to have developed radical breaks or discontinuities in his thought, Feil contends that Christocentricity serves as a consistent, bedrock unity throughout. This point of view does not deny significant shifts or developments, but it does maintain that one can discern connecting links between the early and the late Bonhoeffer. Thus, the prominent phrases of *Letters and Papers from Prison*—world-come-of-age, religionless Christianity, non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts, Jesus as the man for others, holy worldliness—have their antecedents in earlier writings, and can be traced as motifs from *The Communion of Saints, Act*

*and Being*, and on.

In the first section of his book, Feil discusses “Bonhoeffer’s Hermeneutical Point of Departure: Theology in the Service of Christian Praxis.” He surveys the evolution of Bonhoeffer’s own understanding of theology, including the influence of Ecumenism and the Church Struggle in the unfolding process. He also gives a systematic summary of the hermeneutical implications of Bonhoeffer’s theology. Central here is the distinction between faith and theology, between *actus directus* and *actus reflectus*. The category of “concreteness” is extensively treated, especially in relation to reality, to revelation, and to command. Bonhoeffer’s theology is understood as being ethically oriented.

A second section of the book relates to “Jesus Christ the Center and Mediator.” Feil surveys Bonhoeffer’s Christology, carefully weaving his way through each of the major writings and eventually connecting the later versions of Christology to the world. Again and again, the foundational point is made that Christology is the guiding principle of Bonhoeffer’s theology.

A third and final section attends to “Religionless Christianity in a World Come of Age.” The clear and forthright way in which Feil deals with Bonhoeffer’s movement from a negative to a positive view of “the world” is emphatically brilliant. The impact on the writing of the Tegel prison letters by William Dilthey is delineated with precision.

This book is now sixteen years old from the date of its appearance in German. It can be hoped that Professor Feil will eventually publish an updated version, taking into account the contributions of Bonhoeffer scholarship in Germany, America, and other parts of the world during the past decade and a half, yet sifted through his own distinctive perceptions and insights.

Meanwhile, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* deserves a wide reading audience among those who continue to seek the contributions of the martyred theologian toward understanding God-in-Christ in relation to the world today.

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**WORKING THE ANGLES: THE SHAPE OF PASTORAL INTEGRITY**, by Eugene H. Peterson. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987. Pp. 137. \$7.95 (paper).

American pastors are abandoning their posts, left and right, and at an alarming rate. They are not leaving their churches and getting other jobs. Congregations still pay their salaries. Their names remain on the church stationery and they continue to appear in pulpits on Sundays. But they are abandoning their posts, their calling. They have gone whoring after other gods. What they do with their time under the guise of pastoral ministry hasn’t the remotest connection with what the church’s pastors have done for most of twenty centuries. (1)

So begins Eugene Peterson’s book; and it gets more acidic before it mellows. Listen:

The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers, and the shops they keep are churches.

They are preoccupied with shopkeeper's concerns—how to keep the customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods so that the customers will layout more money. Some of them are very good shopkeepers. They attract a lot of customers, pull in great sums of money, develop splendid reputations. Yet it is still shopkeeping; religious shopkeeping, to be sure, but shopkeeping all the same. (1)

Peterson is angry, by his own admission. Readers who are uncomfortable in the presence of anger can be glad that this is a book rather than a one-to-one conversation. It is easier to distance oneself from a book than from a person with sharp voice and fiery eyes.

Distance, however, is precisely what this book does not warrant. It deserves close attention by all who care about the state of pastoral ministry. Is Peterson, an active Presbyterian parish pastor, right? Even if they conclude that he is not, clergy and lay together would be edified by a vigorous and thoughtful discussion of this book.

Three aspects of pastoral ministry are essential to the call, claims Peterson—"so basic, so critical, that they determine the shape of everything else. The acts are praying, reading scripture and giving spiritual direction" (2). These three aspects are like angles which hold the lines of ministry together in a whole. (Hence the title: *Working the Angles*.) Without them pastoral ministry collapses into ecclesiastical shopkeeping.

By prayer, Peterson means more than a few "I need help!" sentences spoken Godward at strategic times of the day, or the sentences which follow the request: "Pastor, would you start us off with a little prayer?" Bible reading is not just "through the Bible in 500 days." Spiritual direction is something quite other than gratuitous advice from the pastor. Rather, all three acts are the practice of paying attention.

Always it is God to whom we are paying, or trying to pay, attention. The contexts, though, vary: in prayer the context is myself; in scripture it is the community of faith in history; in spiritual direction it is the person before me. (3)

Peterson calls for a practice of prayer which takes seriously the responsive nature of human life. Prayer is not some sort of reveille blown in the ear of God; it is our antiphonal response to the music of God, always there for those who have ears to hear. An apprenticeship in the Psalms and a return to sabbath keeping are critical for this practice of prayer. (By sabbath keeping, Peterson does *not* mean "day off." "A day off," he says, "is a bastard sabbath" (46).

Reading scripture: This, Peterson contends, is a different activity from mining the text for sermon and lecture material. One can be biblically literate and spiritually impoverished. Reading scripture means once again *hearing* it: "the primary practice of language is not in giving out information but being in relationship" (66). When pastors read scripture they are too often (Peterson would probably say, "almost always!") paying attention not to God but to their own need for an engaging sermon or stimulating Bible study.

Finally, the recovery of spiritual direction is the third element necessary for reclaiming the integrity of pastoral ministry. All readers who find fulfillment in pastoral conversation will find encouragement and affirmation in the concluding chapters of this book. Too many pastors have learned to devalue spiritual direction in favor of the higher profile work of parish program management. Several years of conversation with friends and colleagues revealed to Peterson that

what I call spiritual direction is what they are doing when they don't think they are doing anything important. It is what takes place in the corners, in the unscheduled parts of their day. It is offhand. And they do less of it than they otherwise might because they are so tightly scheduled, or so intently involved in completing a task or a project.

Peterson continues, expressing here some confidence in his clergy colleagues, by saying:

I think that a lot of pastors would do a lot more, both more consistently and more skillfully, if they realized how much more important it is than our teachers ever told us, and how large a place in pastoral ministry it always filled in earlier centuries.

Peterson acknowledges openly that these three “angles” of pastoral ministry

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are not the ones our culture is most willing to applaud. So should pastors play for the applause? “No!”, says Peterson. Pastoral ministry is a profession. That means that “we have an obligation beyond pleasing somebody: we are pursuing or shaping the very nature of reality, convinced that when we carry out our commitments we actually benefit people at a far deeper level than if we simply did what they asked of us” (7).

This book has provoked a variety of thoughts in me. One has been raised by reading William Muehl's trenchant, concise volume *Why Preach? Why Listen?* (Fortress, 1985) during the same days that I spent with Peterson. Muehl suggests that Christian preaching often overlooks or denies (to its peril) the God-given creative energies of human beings, energies which when held under suspicion in the church seek fulfillment in secular areas, thus leaving people under the false assumption that their creative energies are indeed secular.

I wonder if that phenomenon explains the “abandonment of pastoral vocation” which Peterson decries. Pastors, too, need (and not in an unhealthy sense) to exercise their creativity.

Thus, they enjoy creating church programs, managing “successful” congregations, overseeing organizations of vitality. Human beings want to do things of value. Pastors have “solved” for themselves the lay dilemma of wanting to be both religious and creative by using their creative energies to build church programs and organizations. It is not surprising.

But is it—to return to Peterson's concern—is it the call of Word and sacrament ministry?

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**MEANING AND MODERNITY: SOCIAL THEORY IN THE PRAGMATIC ATTITUDE**, by Eugene Rochberg-Halton. Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1986. Pp. 299. \$40.00/\$14.95 (paper).

Rochberg-Halton aims to set social theory on the right philosophical track by delineating

where it has gone wrong and what the consequences have been. His enemies are those who espouse modernistic and post-modernistic approaches to social theory; his friends are the pragmatists James, Dewey, Mead, and especially Peirce, along with others like Herman Melville and Lewis Mumford.

The modernists he attacks he calls Cartesians or nominalists. For them, signs are arbitrary conventions whose meaning resides, not in any connection with nature, but in the formal system in which they have their place. The culture resulting from nominalism “is one in which social life is viewed as based either on conventions themselves ultimately arbitrary or upon untouchable ‘natural’ laws reflecting a mechanical order of things” (234).

He sympathizes with the symbolic interactionists and structuralists against the positivists, in their recognition that values have significance in binding society together. However, he is unhappy with their emphasis on signs considered as divorced from real life, from the interpretive context of meaning in which they operate. For example, he criticizes Durkheim for making substance secondary to form in determining meaning, locating the significance of signs in their deep structure.

He likewise is critical of contemporary trends in semiotics, whose advocates he accuses of making a fetish of signs. He castigates Charles Morris, who is often considered the modern founder of semiotics, not only for his distortions of and failure to acknowledge his indebtedness to Peirce, but also for his reduction of Peirce’s theory of signs to nominalistic behaviorism. He accuses the post-modern deconstructionists, working from the perspective of Derrida, of aiming “at a level of discourse just over the horizon of comprehension” while providing only “formalistic abstractions” from their nominalistic perspectives (99-100). He deplors Eco’s making “the signification system an autonomous semiotic construct, existing independently of possible communicative acts” (102). To the contrary, meaning is found in the social dialogue of signs, “a dialogue be-

tween social self and social environment and internally between the interpretative spontaneity of the ‘I’ and the organized and internalized others comprising the ‘me’” (56).

Meaning as a continuous sign process is not reducible to subjective interpretation, but includes the “existential element of the situation.” Our experiences function as mediating signs. But the meaning, contrary to the nominalists, is part of the experience, and not mere convention or reducible to the subjective. It is found in the way signs function in promoting the growth (cultivation) of the community. Our experiences in the situation have an independent reality, having significance for the self, which is a “living, feeling, personalized, communicative sign-process oriented toward goals through self-control” (35). Thus he rejects the Cartesian dualisms of sign and nature (nature is itself a sign), subjective and objective, appearance and reality, matter and mind (both of which mediate meaning), individual and community.

The philosophical position he contrasts to modernism is pragmatism. “The root metaphor of the pragmatic temper is inquiry” (22), a “method of reflexion whose purpose is to render ideas clear,” showing their meaning in “future conceivable consequences,...whether ever actualized or not” (7). Inquiry is not something we bring to the situation, but is set by the situation (which includes both the problem and the inquirer). Out of inquiry emerge facts which, contrary to the positivists, have no absolute status, but are thoroughly perspectival and confirmed through the

process, subject to further interpretation in the community's self-corrective inquiry. He rejects both the foundationalists' attempts to find absolute truth from which to deduce further truth and the relativists' denial of truth. Truth operates in the inquiry, working through the community of inquirers as a correcting and correctible, regulating norm.

Inquiry is grounded in nature, which has produced humans with instincts which are the foundation of reason. These instincts about what is true both temper and are tempered by critical reason. Though given at the outset as indubitable, they develop through the interaction of the organisms with the situations they encounter. They guide conduct, leading to new ideas, hypotheses, explanations, feelings, and conduct. This interaction with nature is significant, such that "the self exists only and through communication" (136). The self is not a Cartesian given, but a transaction with the environment, mediated by signs. This sign-process is central to cultural formation and cultivation. "Through the cultivation of symbols we make intelligible the larger patterns of reasonableness, whether in rational, moral, or aesthetic forms. It is the task of cultivation to humanize these forms" (144).

In the last half of the book Rochberg-Halton applies his pragmatic attitude and concern with signs to concrete social issues, showing how meaning arises in human transaction with the environment. In this his stated goal is to reconcile two modern extremes: the extreme which removes the sign from the environment in which it functions for some purposes, which fails to see that the environment is a "socializing sign-complex" in dialogue with the self, and that which ignores the fact that persons essentially interact with their environment through the medium of signs. He illustrates his pragmatic approach by describing how human possessions, urban locations, and even money "are living signs, whose life consists in the transactions between person and thing. As living signs, objects must be cultivated to retain their significance; as cultivated objects, things can grow in significance over time and take on new layers of meaning" (170). The point here is that objects as signs mediate meaning in the concrete environment, where the self is in transaction with the object in community (e.g. an object such as a unique car or an event such as an extravagant feast can be a sign of an individual's uniqueness only as it is recognized as such by others). Objects, locations, institutions are signs of the self. "Objects can *objectify* the self. In telling us who we are, what we do, and who and what we might become, things can act as signs of the self and as role models for its continued cultivation" (150). The relation between self and environment is not to be understood in terms of signs over and above the objects, nor as an abstract, con-

ceptual project, but as a cultivated process where the relation is a "continuous, socializing, inference-making sign-complex" (164). Their significance "resides in the ways it makes an expressive, cohesive, and vital social life possible and practicable" (191).

Rochberg-Halton wants to reintroduce concerns for meaning and purpose into social theory. As such, he would replace theories which dichotomize subject and object, separate meaning and function, and isolate fact and value (which leads to the denigration of values to the inexpressible) with inquiry which rediscovers the cosmic self as part of a "living, cosmic language-game" (262). Through questioning the universe, the self discovers meaning and harmony in the environment, and ultimately allows the cosmic self to "express or inquire into the glory of the creation" (141). Inquiry transforms our existence, not by eliminating values, but by a

value-filled “realization of the larger [human] purpose,” where imagination is allowed and not shelved.

Rochberg-Halton, then, advocates humanistic bootstrapping. We can create the conditions which mediate meaning to our existence. We can transform our society and environment so that what exists more significantly helps us to realize our purposes and goals in improving our existence, not materialistically, but in a way that assists human growth (understood communally). He recognizes a transcendent “Necessity” which orders our purposeful striving, but for him this Necessity is merely “a universe of growing purpose,” a “necessity of freedom” (269).

Thus, for the Christian, Rochberg-Halton comes only part way. He insightfully points to the modern predicament where structure replaces content, hermeneutic displaces objective truth-communication, and values are sublimated because purportedly not objective. Yet he makes no room for the Word from beyond to penetrate human existence, to in grace free us, to assist us in conquering evil and providing meaning for our lives. He returns us to Medieval realism, but without appeal to the God whom the Medievals saw as the ground of reality and value. Thus, he perpetuates the myth that evolution means progress, that inquiry alone creates meaning, that human resolve, supplemented by “broadened craft and imagination” (265) is sufficient to realize human purpose and cultivate the person. Social theory cannot invoke God as an explanation, yet the centers of meaning it studies cannot be understood apart from the very God cast out by modernity.

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**RESPONSIBLE SCIENCE. THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON SOCIETY**, edited by Kevin B. Byrne. Nobel Conference XXI. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. Pp. xxii + 120. \$14.95.

Readers of this journal may be familiar with the Nobel Conferences held annually at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota. This volume records the 21st conference proceedings. Kevin Byrne, GAC Department of History, introduces the conference themes; five essays are each followed by brief portions of the original panel discussions; the volume concludes with a useful segment of the plenary panel discussion. The theme of the conference is indicated in the book’s title, although some subtitle phrasing should have indicated the panel’s primary concern with the biological sciences. The flavor of oral presentation, of polite disagreement, and of occasional failure of the panelists to truly engage each other are all the value and the risk of conference proceedings and of this book in particular.

The set of essays begins with Merritt Roe Smith’s “Technology, Industrialization, and the Idea of Progress in America,” an historical overview that “addresses the promises and pitfalls of viewing technology as the primary vehicle of social progress” (2). The argument is that the idea of progress is deeply rooted in American culture but that during the 19th century a shift in meaning occurred. Readers will probably vary widely in their response to Smith’s call for a recovery of the high moral principles that were part of the early Jeffersonian forma-

tions of the idea of progress, for therein is precisely a good part of the problem to which the entire conference is addressed.

One good consequence of a volume like this one is that it tends to provoke considerable bibliographic thought, both remembrance of books once read and queries of where and what to read next. This impulse is especially provoked by the second essay, Daniel J. Kevles' "Genetic Progress and Religious Authority: Historical Reflections." Kevles offers what is essentially history as a cautionary tale. Unfortunately, his notes do not provide much access to the growing body of literature dealing with the history of the life sciences and especially now the history of genetic research. The value in Kevles' essay, however, is the way in which it both documents and reminds us that tightly intermeshed with questions of authority and expertise are matters of social accountability and the vagaries of popular opinion, and that today as we face the possibility of a new eugenics, religious as well as scientific leaders are participants in an often capriciously shifting cultural milieu.

A quite different task is set in Salvador Luria's "The Single Artificer." Luria is the one Nobel laureate included in the conference, and his essay is an exposition and defense of the peculiar nature of science—science as a mode of understanding that is rational, in contrast to the unrational (art) and the irrational (humanities), and science as a mode of understanding that is different from as well as indifferent to any specific technology. This is not so much Luria's thesis as it is his premise, the basis on which he offers a variety of provocative asides and undeveloped corollaries, such as his observation that behind the popular criticism that scientific research be limited is a protest against socially structured injustices. Most provocative of all is what seems to be Luria's main point, that once we have acknowledged the problem of decision-making as societal, we find that our most commonly pervasive ethical systems are not adequate to deal with the issues.

Winston J. Brill's "The Impact of Biotechnology and the Future of Agriculture" is perhaps over-titled; it is in fact a clear and reasonable defense of the place of genetic engineering in today's U.S. agricultural economy. The essay is a good exercise in anticipating and answering the questions and criticisms of a concerned but sometimes misinformed public. Also helpful is the portion of the panel discussion included after the essay.

The format of the Nobel conferences has been to include at least one practicing theologian or ethicist. My personal experience with the conferences (I have attended about half a dozen) is that the theologian has had the least sympathetic role, often being cast as a foil to the arrogance of the scientific heroes and/or expressing an arcane language familiar to the conference's church-related sponsors but not necessarily meaningful to the conference's participants. In the case of J. Robert Nelson's "Mechanistic Mischief and Dualistic Dangers in a Scientific Society," add an awkwardness. He is disappointingly wordy in establishing common ground with the rest of the panel; he tries to address too much—too many parts of a big problem. The segment of panel discussion following Nelson's essay only increases this difficulty, for there seem to be not only many more parts but genuinely different problems that need to be addressed. Nevertheless, Nelson is clearly concerned with a very fundamental modern problem, which he labels "mechanistic" and which Christians have a special obligation to confront.

There is much worthwhile in this little book. The distribution and balance of the essay-topics is appropriate. Perhaps best of all, the topics and their intersections are all suggestive

rather than exhaustive. The volume, and the conference behind it, is to be understood as part of a conversation in which we all have a passionate human interest and in which we must keep talking. This volume is a good place either to enter into or to continue in that conversation.

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**THE ANOINTED COMMUNITY: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE JOHANNINE TRADITION**, by Gary Burge. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987. Pp. 269. \$19.95.

*The Anointed Community* is a revision of the author's doctoral dissertation which was completed under the supervision of I. H. Marshall. The book demonstrates that "the foremost feature of Johannine pneumatology was its christocentric basis" (xvi). Burge's thesis is not a new one. After reviewing the work of other scholars on Johannine pneumatology, he notes "the almost universal emphasis on christology and eschatology" (41). Where Burge moves beyond his predecessors is in his attempt to develop the thesis using the whole of John's gospel and 1 John, rather than centering his discussion on the Paraclete passages in John 14-16.

The contents of the book are presented thematically. The initial survey of research (Chap. 1) is followed by a discussion of the Spirit and christology (Chap. 2) in which Burge compares the Synoptic and Johannine portrayals of the Spirit in Jesus' baptism and ministry, concluding that John puts special emphasis on revelation and the interdependence of Christ and the Spirit. Chapter 3 focuses on the Spirit and eschatology shows that the giving of the Spirit on Easter evening (John 20:22) ties the Spirit to the cross, identifies the believer's experience of the Spirit with his experience of Jesus, and fulfills the promises made by Jesus in the Farewell Discourses. In his discussion of the Spirit and the sacraments (Chap. 4) Burge argues that John attempted to correct undue emphases on baptism and the Lord's Supper by stressing the experience of the Spirit in rebirth and the real presence of Jesus in the Spirit. The fifth chapter deals with the Spirit, mission, and "anamnesis" or remembrance. Burge notes the connections between persecution and spiritual aid in John and the Synoptics and suggests that the term "Paraclete" can best be understood against a juridical backdrop.

The methods of investigation accord with current trends in Johannine studies. Burge understands the gospel and first epistle of John as products of the same Christian community. (The book's title recalls 1 John 2:27.) He makes numerous comparisons between John and the synoptics, and works primarily with the present form of the gospel text while recognizing that the gospel may have been composed in stages.

Throughout the book Burge discusses an enormous amount of secondary literature, with references helpfully placed at the bottom of the page rather than at the end of the book. The sheer volume of secondary material included gives credibility to Burge's work, but will make the book ponderous for non-specialists to follow.

The book is marred by a couple of problems. First, the internal movement of the book is often unclear. For example, Burge begins the first chapter by saying that "New Testament scholarship has generally affirmed the conclusions of E. P. Scott given early in this century regarding the unimportance of the Spirit in Johannine theology" (3), yet he then provides a thirty-

nine page summary of research on the subject. Second, some of Burge's distinctions seem forced and are unconvincing. For example, he insists that in the synoptics Jesus' miracles reveal his *power* but in John they reveal his *glory* (81). Yet earlier on the same page he says that *glory* is manifested *in acts of power*.

The thesis that John's pneumatology is christocentric is convincing, but is not a new idea. Less compelling is the claim that Jesus' own experience of the Spirit presented the believing community with "a model to be emulated" (xvi). Burge rightly notes that in John Christians suffer as Jesus suffered (e.g. John 15:18) and are sent as Jesus was sent (20:21). Yet was Jesus' own reception of the Spirit an experience of "rebirth" as it is for Christians? Did the Spirit instruct Jesus in the same way that it instructs Jesus' followers?

The book provides a service by bringing together a large amount of material on Johannine pneumatology, yet specialists in Johannine studies may wonder what new ground has been gained. The needs of pastors and seminarians will be served better by more succinct treatments of the subject.

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**FREED TO LOVE: A PROCESS INTERPRETATION OF REDEMPTION**, by Norman Pittenger. Wilton, Connecticut: Morehouse-Barlow, 1987. 129 pp. \$8.95 (paper).

Perhaps no living American theologian can claim a longer, more prolific career than Norman Pittenger. With over fifty years of teaching and more than eighty books to his credit, he is one of the grand mentors of contemporary religious thought. Much of that effort, furthermore, has been devoted to weaving the categories of process thought throughout the fabric of Christian doctrine, particularly christology. In *Freed to Love* this strategy of "reconception" is applied to the meaning of redemption.

Pittenger sets the scene for his process reformulation by arguing that traditional theology is wrong in placing christology before soteriology, and in formulating atonement theory in meaningless, sub-Christian terms. A theology that speaks to our day must be appropriate (true to the apostolic witness) and intelligible (coherent and consistent). The best framework for such a theology is provided by process thought (Chap. 1).

In a process view of reality, the world is a dynamic becoming in which God acts persuasively, luring occasions to their fullest development and receiving the accumulated actualizations of the ongoing process. Jesus is the classic instance of this divine loving action, and Christians are to be "little Christs" in fostering harmony and intensity in the human community. However, this scheme is broken by "sin," the inability of persons to give themselves in love. Jesus delivers men and women from this captivity and moves them toward the image of God or the "amorization" process that God effects and intends for others to effect. A two-fold process, deliverance involves an objective aspect, as God sends lures into human life, and a subjective process, as persons respond to the divine prompting. In this work, Jesus is the culmination of the divine effort, bringing to focus the general presence and grace of God (Chap. 3).

The center of this focusing is the Cross. Again, Pittenger claims that traditional views of the Cross are pre-Christian, and argues that the divine self-giving is systemic to God's nature. Nevertheless, something significant did happen on the Cross. Through the act of love on behalf of the human race, God impressed upon persons the fact that God accepts them. This in turn removes the barriers that hinder fellowship with God, namely selfishness and misunderstanding. Persons are then turned toward God who receives new possibilities (our devotion) for restoring a relationship with us. Redemption is not a dual operation of justification followed by sanctification (as St. Paul implied), but a singular process in which justification is linked to sanctification (as the whole New Testament states). As well, forgiveness is not the obliteration of sins, but the divine acceptance of the sinner with the offer of divine help in reforming one's life. Insofar as it is the Cross that moves us to repentance and our own efforts that constitute that turning around, redemption involves both God's initiative and our reply (Chap. 5).

In the course of developing his main theme, Pittenger offers several side excursions: an historical sketch of atonement theory, outlining ten interpretations (Chap. 2); an apology for the "wideness of God's mercy," or the presence of God in such non-religious "incognitos" as morality, science and art (Chap. 4); a bid for liberation theology as the practical extension of redemption theory (Chap. 6); and a description of the church as the locus of redemption (Chap. 7). The book concludes with chapters on eucharistic worship and Christian prayer, and an afterword that addresses four questions frequently put to process theologians.

Pittenger's program of restating Christian doctrine in process terms has been a highly stimulating movement in contemporary theology. Not the least, it has raised many issues and prompted many questions. These concerns surface again in this latest Pittenger effort. For instance, just how faithful is process theology to the received theology of the church? Pittenger implies that his theology is "appropriate" or true to the apostolic witness, but also admits that he is saying "new things," and not merely saying things in a new way (109). What does he mean when he states that the ancient for-

mulas of the faith are factual but not literally true (48)? Given the primacy of process categories in his "reconstruction," it is puzzling to read that process is not a substitute for Christian faith or even a philosophical expression of that faith (32).

These problems are illustrated by Pittenger's estimate of the unique importance of Jesus. While he affirms that we cannot be saved apart from divine action, he denies this action was *exclusively* expressed in Jesus (50). In process understanding, redemptive possibilities exist outside of Jesus and the Cross. Not only that, Jesus is not the *sufficient* source of redemption. Salvation takes place not so much through God's action "to us" and "for us" declaring us righteous, as through God's action and the human response that *makes* us righteous, i.e., that turns us back to God or frees us up to love as God loves (43, 69-70). As in much of Pittenger's earlier writing, redemption is here presented as a synergistic process requiring the proper contribution of human nature for its completion. We can only wonder about the "generosity" (50) of such qualified grace to those alone who are spiritually in shape.

As a "modernist," Pittenger has struggled valiantly to make sense of Christianity in contemporary terms. His use of process thought has also lifted into focus the Abelardian emphasis on God's nature as love. In keeping with his belief that theology is an ever-changing,

ever-growing process, there is hope that some new conceptuality will emerge that captures the *agapeistic* heart of Christianity for this age. At the least, Pittenger has helped to plant some seeds for that theological harvest that future generations will have available to cultivate.

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**DID JESUS RISE FROM THE DEAD? THE RESURRECTION DEBATE**, by Gary Habermas and Antony G. N. Flew. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. Pp. 190. \$14.95.

This book is a record of a public debate between Habermas, a professor of apologetics and philosophy at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, and Flew, a distinguished British philosopher of religion, who has defended atheism in a number of his works. Appended to this record are responses from Wolfhart Pannenberg, Charles Hartshorne, James I. Packer, a conservative Christian theologian, and Habermas' final thoughts on the overall discussion.

The topic of the debate is not whether the Resurrection took place, but rather, whether it can be historically proven that it took place. Habermas tries to provide such a proof. His main argument may be stated as follows. The evidence in the New Testament consists of records and reports of eyewitness accounts of the Risen Christ. Of particular importance in this regard is what Paul says at I Corinthians 15, including a credal listing of eyewitnesses that Paul presumably received at the time of his conversion, three years or so after Jesus' death. The truth of this credal statement and of other reports of eyewitnesses could have easily been verified by checking with these eyewitnesses. Further, naturalistic accounts of how belief in Jesus' resurrection could have occurred all fail. Therefore, we can conclude on purely historical grounds that Jesus rose from the dead.

Flew's major objection to this derives from David Hume's famous discussion of miracles in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*:

First, that surviving relics from the past cannot be interpreted as historical evidence, except insofar as we presume that the same regularities obtained then as still obtain today; second, that in trying to determine what actually happened, historians must employ as criteria all their knowledge of what is probable or improbable; and third, that because the word miracle must be defined in terms of natural necessity and natural impossibility, the application of these criteria inevitably precludes proof of a miracle. (5)

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Simply stated, the concept of historical evidence precludes there being any evidence for a miracle. If we could prove the reality of the Resurrection on the basis of historical evidence, this would undercut the very presuppositions we would need to construct such a proof.

Another of Flew's objections turns on the fragmentary nature of the evidence Habermas cites: we do not have eyewitness evidence, only reports of eyewitness evidence. (The closest we have to an eyewitness account is Paul's, but here the text gives us reason to believe that this was

a mere subjective vision.) The eyewitnesses themselves are no longer available for interview or study; we know little or nothing about their psychological state when they reportedly saw Jesus. We do not know the full facts about the transmission of these reports, but we can tell by comparing the accounts of the Resurrection appearances that legend has elaborated on them to an uncertain degree. Admittedly we are unable to give a convincing naturalistic account because of these factors, but then neither are we in a position to conclude that Jesus rose from the dead. The greater initial probability that some naturalistic account is true requires that we first possess all the facts and then be able to use them to rule out all possible naturalistic accounts before we could conclude that Jesus rose

from the dead. But we simply do not know enough about what happened to do this. (At any rate, so Flew argues.)

The course of the discussion reveals that Habermas does not meet or even understand the force of Flew's objections. Habermas thinks he has presented conclusive evidence for the Resurrection—evidence which Flew seems to him to reject dogmatically. One source of difficulty here is that Habermas confuses established historical fact, scholarly opinion, and scholarly conjecture. Nor does he seem to distinguish eyewitness reports from *reports* of eyewitness reports. Even though he is well-versed in the opinions and conclusions of modern New Testament scholars, he does not understand that many of their conclusions are simply not strong enough evidence to prove the Resurrection. Flew's replies and counter-replies repeatedly hint at these flaws in Habermas' position, but to no avail.

As Pannenberg points out in his comments on the debate, Flew is ignorant of some of the relevant historical facts, and this weakens some of his responses to Habermas. Pannenberg and Packer bring in some additional insights that strengthen Habermas' position, but in the opinion of this writer, Flew's objections emerge essentially unscathed.

This book would have been considerably more balanced if a New Testament scholar of, say, a Bultmannian persuasion had contributed to it, and if the debate had been between Pannenberg and Flew. As it stands, it does not significantly contribute to the issue of the historicity of the Resurrection.

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