



**GILKEY ON TILlich**, by Langdon Gilkey. New York: Crossroad, 1990. Pp. 215.

My generation of theologians were little (mostly) boys when Paul Tillich, along with Karl Barth, was thrown out of Germany because of opposition to the Nazis. Tillich became a refugee in New York City. Barth went back home to Switzerland. It would have been, for both of them, apostasy to “sell out” and support Hitler as did some Lutheran theologians who signed the Ansbach statement, in dissent from the Barmen declaration. More than half a century later, we are no longer little boys, Tillich and Barth are long dead, and it seems right to us that support for Hitler was a clear case of apostasy. To name it as such cost Tillich and Barth their academic privileges.

Now some of my generation of theologians are charging that segments of the church in America are apostate and have indeed “sold out” to the culture, have betrayed the gospel, have been unfaithful. These allegations will not oblige the accusers to leave the country, resign their academic posts, or lose their church pensions, but the charge of apostasy is so serious in this post-Hitler age that the accusers have attracted large audiences. Ever since Hitler the theologians of this century have been wary of ascribing to Caesar what belongs only to God.

Tillich as the theologian of culture *par excellence* has frequently been suspected of giving more to the culture than was due. Unlike Barth, he experienced the American culture intimately, albeit from the perspective of a refugee. He was a widely respected, if rarely understood, intellectual. He was never really regarded as an American theologian, even though his influence on American theology has greatly exceeded that of Barth.

In this collection of essays by one of the deans of American theology, we have a thoroughly Americanized version of Tillich’s work. If this book were attended to, it would add even more zest and depth to the question regarding the alleged apostasy of American churches. Gilkey’s interpretation of Tillich for American audiences is deeply influenced by the thought of Gilkey’s other teacher, Reinhold Niebuhr, and by Augustine and Kierkegaard. Running throughout the chapters on ontology, reason and revelation, the method of correlation, God, Christ, Spirit, and the role of the theologian in contemporary society, Gilkey carries on a side conversation with Whitehead and process theology.

Professor Gilkey prepared this book for publication as he was about to retire from the University of Chicago’s Divinity School where Tillich spent the last years of his life and where the author has taught for nearly thirty years. It is both an “affectionate recollection of [Tillich] as a teacher and friend” and a thoroughly stimulating and refreshing analysis of Tillich’s thought from the 1920s in Germany through his career in the United States and up until his death twenty-five years ago. Here is a very readable introduction for American readers to both Tillich and Gilkey. Gilkey’s own application of Tillichean theology to American culture can be found in his *Society and the Sacred* (1981) and *Message and Existence* (1979). No one who digests Gilkey on Tillich can easily dismiss the claim that Tillich’s way of analyzing the Christian message in

conjunction with the American situation has enduring importance. Others—myself, for example—who have been reading and teaching Tillich for decades, will be obliged to reconsider some stock opinions.

Some of Gilkey's recollections are in the form of quotations of Tillich speaking in his thick German accent. For the most part, the themes developed in this book are derived from Tillich, but the accent is Gilkey's Americanized variations on those themes.

Against those who mistakenly think that Tillich "sets up" the questions of phil-

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osophy so that the Christian answers are all too neatly given by theology, Gilkey insists that the correlation is "mutually critical." Otherwise apart from the cultural criticisms, religion would be "characterized by 'supernatural' miracles, ecstasies, interventions, divine beings, and the absolute heteronomy of supernaturally authorized scriptures, dogmas and priestly hierarchies."

American Christianity needs the criticisms of the culture. Against those who wrongly suppose that Tillich's vision of reality, his ontology, is too static, too remote from history, change, and development, too indebted to Platonic essentialism, Gilkey reminds us that Tillich's ontology is one "in which process and becoming are the central aspects of being" and that "historical passage rather than timeless forms or static being constitutes the most fundamental notion," indeed "dynamic life and not rest are the basic symbols for God; the Spirit is in turn more fundamental than is Logos, and so on." And long before the deconstructionists undermined twentieth-century notions of an autonomous reason capable of establishing the facts, Tillich was insisting that what we have in the New Testament is not a collection of historical events independent of their reception by witnessing disciples. Tillich's "apologetic" theology does not, as some may suppose, try to establish faith on the basis of reason, but rather seeks to show that faith has its own reasons including a reasoned critique of "technical reason" which has often captured the intellects of American biblical scholars.

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**THE CHURCH'S BIBLE: ITS CONTEMPORARY AUTHORITY**, by Darrell Jodock.  
Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989. Pp. 173. \$12.95.

The question is: How can the Bible become an authority for people today? Fifteen years of wrestling with that question has led Jodock, a Lutheran pastor who now chairs the religion department at Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania, to propose a two-pronged answer, one part "functional," the other "material":

The functional answer, in brief, is that people in the church turn to the Bible because Christians have found and continue to find it useful to do so. (105)

The material answer addresses the question by underscoring the interlocking observations that the Bible mediates the presence of God and that it provides the language of faith. (114)

But before proposing his agenda for recovering the Bible's authority in the late twentieth century, Jodock outlines six answers to the question which have satisfied people in the past. First, the "rationalist" position actually undermines the Bible's authority. A product of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, this position pictures the universe as a grand self-running machine; it accords ultimate authority to human reason and largely rejects anything in the Scriptures, especially the miracles, that does not measure up. Thomas Jefferson's scissors-and-paste edition of the gospels, which retained only Jesus' moral teachings, is a prime example of deistic rationalism at work.

Second, the "supernaturalist" position marshals as much historical and archaeological evidence as possible to counter rationalist skepticism by proving that the Scriptures are indeed accurate on all counts, including the miracles, prophecies, and so-called apparent inconsistencies. The Missouri Synod's "inerrantists" are typical proponents of the supernaturalist position.

Third, the "evangelicalist" position emphasizes not the historicity of the biblical miracles, but the reality of the "inner miracle" which produces a conversion experience in individual readers. The "born again" movement, which tends to ignore

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the historical background of the biblical documents, relies largely on this kind of inner experience or personal awakening to authenticate the Spirit-inspired nature of the Scriptures.

Fourth, what Jodock calls the "ecclesial developmentalist" position regards the church as the concrete historical community which links Jesus and us. The Bible is the chief witness to the formative stages of that community's self-understanding and its unique role in the world. Friedrich Schleiermacher, Albrecht Ritschl, and to some extent Rudolf Bultmann represent the kind of historical theologians who could be slotted within this position.

Fifth, the "analogical developmentalist" position values the uncanny way the Scriptures express the truth about humankind and the world in which we live. It focuses not so much upon what is unique about the Christian experience in particular, as upon what is typical and characteristic about human experience in general. Today's process theologies which hold that "in the Scriptures we learn the truth about God, the world, and ourselves" (62) are examples of this position.

Sixth, the "dynamic humanist" position, like the "rationalist" position before it, actually denies the authority of the Bible and considers it the product of a bygone era. Like other great literature from the past, the Scriptures may symbolize human hopes and endeavors and so augment the social consciousness of the world, but they offer no definitive revelation for today. Ludwig Feuerbach may be considered a founder of this position, which is followed by most contemporary atheistic humanists.

Jodock recognizes that the rationalistic and humanistic positions are not valid options for Christians. The supernaturalistic and evangelicalistic positions operate with a static view of history and are the stock in trade of "conservative" churches. The ecclesial and analogical developmentalist positions reflect a more dynamic world view and are typical of more "liberal" theologies. None can claim to be *the* traditional theory and, claims Jodock, all have gone out of date and lost their impact.

A contemporary theory of biblical authority must now be fashioned for our postmodern age, says Jodock. The modern age, inaugurated with the rise of science and industrialism, was

marked by reliance on human reason, belief in progress, and unbridled optimism about human potential. That age ended with the two World Wars, the Holocaust, the threat of nuclear apocalypse, and the ideologies of Freud and Marx. The old confidence and optimism are long gone. Our postmodern age lacks any sense of divine transcendence, any overarching sense of direction, any consensus on human values. Now what is needed is a way of reading the Bible which will counter the feelings of divine absence and of human loneliness and disorientation by providing a revelation of God's presence and the establishment of human community.

Jodock proposes a process he calls "recontextualizing": We must use our imaginations to find the parallels between the settings of our own contemporary issues and the historical settings of the ancient biblical texts. This works best when we emphasize the Scriptures' kerygmatic and story-telling dimensions, rather than their doctrinal and ethical teachings. When this process is a shared activity within a supportive Christian community, says Jodock, the Bible will become an authority which strengthens that community. In sum:

The Bible's authority is honored most not when lofty claims are made in its behalf but when it is used in the community of faith and embodied in the daily lives of the community's members. (145)

The value of Jodock's proposal is that it recognizes honestly that many contemporary Christians, to say nothing of the prevailing secular mind-set, will not tolerate grandiose *a priori* claims about the Bible's authority. He meets that fact of life head on by challenging postmoderns to experience the Bible's relevance for themselves and to learn to appreciate both the diversity of its contents and the diversity of interpretations which fair-minded readers will produce. His "try it, you'll like it" approach allows the presence of God and the language of faith to grow on readers and thereby establish the text's own claim and authority.

Two caveats may be offered by way of

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critique: First, Jodock depends overly much on generalized "God talk" in a way that assumes his audience will allow that premise. Specific "Jesus talk" is conspicuous by its absence. But should not a program for reestablishing biblical authority within Christian communities focus especially on the particularity of Jesus? If what we need to know about God must be discovered by looking at Jesus, then that perspective should also color the way we read the Scriptures. But Jodock largely ignores that bias.

Second, while his program of "recontextualizing" is an excellent method for Bible study, nevertheless it positions the locus for authority outside of the text, in the ability of its interpreters correctly to decipher its historical context and their own contemporary contexts. Jodock could have taken a clue from his own preference for accenting the Bible's narrative character. "Story plays a role in building any human identity," he admits (139). So he could have explored how the Bible's literary, rhetorical, and narrative qualities establish its own inherent authority over readers. After all, there is something about a story that captivates its auditors, something nearly independent of its or their historical setting. This "inner quality" may finally prove more compelling, and therefore more authoritative, than any interpreter's ability to reconstruct contexts.

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**REFRAMING: A NEW METHOD IN PASTORAL CARE**, by Donald Capps. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990. Pp. 181.

This book describes a method of counseling. The author, a professor of pastoral theology at Princeton Seminary, believes that pastoral counseling has failed to come up with anything new in methodology of late, and therefore offers the method of “reframing.” Reframing, like many other techniques in pastoral counseling, is co-opted from the field of psychotherapy. Capps draws freely from the pioneer work of Bandler and Grindler as well as from Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch. These in turn drew from Viktor Frankl’s “paradoxical intention.”

Reframing is taking a new look at things. Out of this new look comes new behavior. But it is more than new—it is different. First order changes are changes along the same old way. Second order changes come from the *different* way. Second order changes are based on the belief that paradox and not rational order “portrays the cosmos.” Instead of rational proof, *trust* is the basis for security in paradox.

In contrast to the subtitle, reframing is not a *new* method in pastoral counseling. Those of us who have been in the field have used it over and over again. What is new is the labeling, systematizing, and developing of this method. (There are as many forms and expressions of reframing as there are diagrams in TA.) When I sense resistance in a counselee, for example, I have learned not to play into it. Rather than restraining someone who resists the restraint, push him or her further in the direction they wish to go! As Capps illustrates, rather than restraining the utopian, which rarely works, push him further into his utopia until he himself begins to express some misgivings. Instead of trying to point out the positive to the pessimist, push her further in looking at things pessimistically until she herself begins to point out the positive. In my own parlance I called this method, “doing it differently.” But a new label is good, since *relabeling* is an expression of reframing.

The method is particularly valuable to pastoral counseling, since reframing is inherent in religious faith. Faith leads to second order change since it is a different way of interpreting what is going on, providing a new context within which to function. As Capps says, “When did Jesus ever counsel a commonsensical (first order change) approach to human dilemmas?” Reframing allows the creative imagination, inspired by faith, to break through impasses—to overcome bondages and addictions. Trust provides a revolutionary approach in the face of paradox.

I am glad Capps wrote this book, but I believe he could have done a better job in presenting this method. His attempts to use

the Bible to illustrate examples of reframing was to this reviewer largely unconvincing. The method became the Procrustean bed upon which his selections of Scripture had to fit. His interpretation of the parable of the dishonest steward, for example, is tenuous if not precarious.

The biggest problem I had was with his extensive focus on the book of Job. Part of the

problem is probably due to the fact that I have long worked with the book of Job in the teaching of pastoral counseling, and Capps' interpretations are far different from mine. Besides being unimpressed by his presentation of Eliphaz as a supportive counselor, Bildad as a crisis counselor, and Zophar as an ethical value and meaning counselor, I was particularly turned off by his interpretation of God as a reframer. Building his argument primarily on one of the many descriptions from nature in the theophany, namely the ostrich, Capps presents God's speech as a call to Job to be a co-creator with God "in enabling the world to become what it was intended to be." To maintain this interpretation, Capps has to make Job's response of repentance something other than repentance regarding guilt or shame.

What was most amazing to me was his almost total omission of Elihu, the fourth counselor. It is in Elihu that we find several clear examples of reframing, providing the needed transition from the defensive Job after his conflict with the three friends and the Job open to the theophany.

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In contrast, I appreciated the way Capps used the lament psalms, with their desire for retaliation, as a way of helping people who are in bondage to a distortion of what it means to be Christian to break loose and respect themselves. "It is unChristian to allow others to break our spirits." Reframing, here, is emancipating.

In the author's presentation of this method the reader can get the impression that it is *the* method. This, of course, is a common failing of those who present something "new." In Edgar Jackson's words, this makes a *maxisystem* out of a *minisystem*. While Capps refers to other methods of counseling, it is usually to show where they are lacking. He alludes to a maxisystem, namely, faith in God, but he does not develop this. Instead, the emphasis is on reframing as the way. All methods are minisystems and have their integration in the mind of the pastoral counselor who in the awareness of the moment decides, consciously or subconsciously, which method to use.

Capps has a behaviorist emphasis, with little importance given to the relationship between counselor and counselee. This same de-emphasis is reflected in the discussion of the theophany where his focus is on the intellectual content of God's speech, while the impact on the total person in a religious experience is downplayed. This loss of wholism is obvious also in the author's neglect of the interpersonal dynamics between Job and his counselors. Their "intellectual presentations" are presented as largely uninfluenced by their defensiveness before Job's laments. Just as Western medicine is beginning to recognize the healing potential inherent in the relationship between physician and patient, pastoral counseling needs to reaffirm rather than de-emphasize its biblical heritage regarding the therapeutic influence of a caring relationship. Methods are important but they need to be placed in the context of total-person loving.

Capps' adaptation of reframing to *pastoral* counseling also leaves something to be desired. While he says that parish pastors, "given their regular engagement with biblical texts in their preaching and teaching, have a special aptitude for the method of reframing," he fails to show how this method can be used in conjunction with the specific resources of pastoral counseling. How can reframing be used as a resource for change in the pastor's use of prayer in counseling, for example, or in the dialogical use of God-talk, or in the use of Scripture as

devotional support, or in the use of commitment and the divine calling, or in the pastor's sharing of his or her spiritual insights?

While Capps says that second order change is fundamental to the gospel, he does not develop this theologically in the mental reframing that takes place in repentance and in the emancipation for renewal, for doing things differently—or, in the argot of reframing, the potential for second order change—that comes through receiving God's forgiveness through the redemptive work of Christ. While he says that "awareness of God and awareness of ourselves as paradox, is the theological core of pastoral counseling," he does not develop this thesis by showing this paradox in the divine and human natures of Christ, in the union of spiritual with material in the healing resources of the Sacrament, and in the communication of the Word of God through the human writers of Scripture. Nor does he develop the paradox in our awareness of ourselves as both sinner and justified (a saint) at the same time.

Reframing is an indigenous technique for pastoral counseling because of the specific theological base and religious resources of this ministry.

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**FINALLY COMES THE POET: DARING SPEECH FOR PROCLAMATION**, by Walter Brueggemann. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1989. Pp. 165.

Tommy Lasorda is reported to have said, "Never argue with people who buy ink by the gallon." *Finally Comes the Poet* is still another good book from the pen of Walter Brueggemann, who not only must

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buy ink by the gallon, but is also a scholar not easily argued with!

*Finally Comes the Poet* is a book about preaching for preachers. But unlike so much in the literature of preaching, it is not about techniques, methods, or rhetorical strategies for the pulpit. Instead, it is about the power of the preached word, which, Brueggemann asserts, comes from "closeness to those texts that know secrets that mediate life" (41):

...artistic speech voiced in the prophetic construal of the Bible is the primary trust of the church and its preaching. (7)

Brueggemann himself exemplifies the essential quality of the preaching he calls for—speaking what is already known, but so as to command the attention of the hearer as though she were hearing it for the first time.

Unlike so many theological books, *Finally Comes the Poet* is a page turner. Its allure lies as much in Brueggemann's splendid command of language as in the book's argument, powerful though that is. Brueggemann's gift lies in his capacity for vivid, though meticulous, expression. For example:

The Bible is our firm guarantee that in a world of technological naivete and ideological reductionism, prophetic construals of another world are still possible, still worth doing, still longingly received by those who live at the edge of despair, resignation, and conformity. Our preferred language is to call such speech prophetic, but we might also term it poetic. (4)

Brueggemann's basic argument, set down in an introduction, "Poetry in a Prose-Flattened World," is simple. The gospel has been tamed ("reduced") by modern listeners:

The gospel is too readily heard and taken for granted, as though it contained no unsettling news and no unwelcome threat....It is a truth that has been flattened, trivialized, and rendered inane. (1)

"Is there another way to speak?" he asks. The answer is yes:

In the sermon—and in the life of the church, more generally, I propose—we are to practice another way of communication that makes another shaping of life possible; unembarrassed about another rationality, not anxious about accommodating the reason of this age. (2)

This form of communication is what he depicts as the task of the poet: "To address the issue of a truth greatly reduced requires us to be *poets that speak against a prose world*" (4). Poetic, dramatic communication, he argues, is the kind given us in the text of the Bible. Only this form of speech has the generative power to summon and evoke new life. When the text of the Bible is allowed to speak in the community in this way, "when the preacher comes as a poet," the world is set loose toward healing.

Modern preaching, Brueggemann asserts, is bogged down in prose:

By prose I refer to a world that is organized in settled formulae, so that even pastoral prayers and love letters sound like memos. (3)

The church's pulpits are in desperate need of poetry:

By poetry, I do not mean rhyme, rhythm, or meter, but language that moves like Bob Gibson's fast ball, that jumps at the right moment, that breaks open old worlds with surprise, abrasion, and pace. Poetic speech is the only proclamation worth doing in a situation of reductionism, the only proclamation, I submit, that is worthy of the name *preaching*. (3)

Brueggemann follows with three chapters dealing with primary themes in the Christian life: forgiveness, communion, and obedience. These chapters are poetic in an aspect he does not address—they are tightly compressed, with a chapter's worth of substance in nearly every paragraph. Any employed preacher willing to work through them carefully will be rewarded with a treasure house full of homiletical materials.

The first chapter, "Numbness and Ache, The Strangeness of Healing," draws from texts



in Leviticus, Jeremiah, the gospels, Hebrews, and Iris Murdoch, to retrace the biblical drama of sin and forgiveness. Lutherans reading this chapter will find their theological formulas tested by Brueggemann's assertion of the necessity of reparations by the sinner to the neighbor who has been harmed, and by his depiction

of the costly offering as the point of entrance into the sacramental moment by which God resolves the residue of guilt after reparations have been made.

The second chapter, "Alienation and Rage, The Odd Invitation to Doxological Communion," draws from texts from the Psalms, Numbers, Hosea, Jeremiah, Job, Exodus, Isaiah, Judges, and Revelation, to rehearse the biblical invitation "to live in blessed communion":

One of the reasons people show up on Sunday morning is this inarticulate yearning and wishfulness for a lost communion. (43)

The reductions of modernity lead many to what Brueggemann describes as the practice of the "subjecting consciousness" which seduces them into being alone, or its opposite, the "uncritical objectivism" which assigns everything to God, and empties the self of dignity, worth, and authority:

In the midst of these reductions, the preacher is invited to speak in ways that open a world of conversation, communication, and communion. (49)

The third chapter, "Restlessness and Greed, Obedience for Missional Imagination," draws from texts in the gospels, Isaiah, Leviticus, Exodus, and the hymns of the church, to speak of God's purposes of freedom, justice, and equity for the world. Readers will find Brueggemann's study of the commandment, "Keep the Sabbath," to be a fresh and powerful rediscovery of this long-neglected module of the church's mind.

Brueggemann now moves to a fourth and concluding chapter, "Resistance and Relinquishment, A Permit for Freedom," in which he draws from texts in Daniel, Isaiah, and Luke, to speak of how:

Human persons are creatures, created and recreated, claimed and reclaimed, according to the power of the gospel. The actual preaching situation concerns the text made available to listening persons who are in a struggle with their very identity and personhood. (112)

The spine of my copy of *Finally Comes the Poet*, which I have had for nearly a year, shows extra wear at these thirty-one pages. He describes their intent as inviting us to "imagine ourselves afresh, to embrace fresh forms of obedience, and to enjoy fresh forms of freedom" (115). They are powerfully successful in this.

A bonus not to be overlooked is Brueggemann's extensive and chatty notation, with far-ranging suggestions for further reading, richly seasoned with personal comments.

Splendid though it is, *Finally Comes the Poet* is not perfect. I came to the end of the book

still hungry for something more on the nature of poetry, the work of the poet, and the crafting of language. It's all there, I admit, but implicitly. Sometimes I like things to be spelled out. For me, at least, this would have further strengthened an already-strong book.

Ironically, the same day I finished writing this review I had lunch with a friend who is a syndicated religion columnist for a chain of daily newspapers. He hears a lot of preachers. He unwittingly underscored everything Brueggemann says by his comment to the effect that too many preachers today are boring. Those who aren't, he said, work very, very hard at their preaching.

For the preacher willing to work, *Finally Comes the Poet* may turn out to be as good as fresh sweet corn.

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**FAITH AND WEALTH: A HISTORY OF EARLY CHRISTIAN IDEAS ON THE ORIGIN, SIGNIFICANCE, AND USE OF MONEY**, by Justo L. Gonzalez. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990. Pp. 240. \$19.95 (paper).

How did early Christian theologians understand the relationship of faith and wealth? Can their ideas further our contemporary discussions about the relationship? In *Faith and Wealth* Justo Gonzalez, prolific church historian (*The Story of Christianity*, vols. 1-2; *A History of Christian Thought*,

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vols. 1-3) sifts and presents the views of the most important early Christian thinkers on this gnarly subject. Gonzalez seeks to rectify what seems to him the "scant attention" scholars have paid to the "economic views of early Christians" (xi). On the contemporary scene liberation theology has reinvigorated such attention (xii). Thus he addresses both those who would minimize the historical importance of these teachings, and those who do not see the relevance of ancient views to current situations.

The book is organized in three parts. Part I, "Background," cogently provides context by summarizing non-Christian Greek, Roman, and Jewish views of wealth, and describing the Roman economy in the first to fifth centuries. In Greek discussion of the ideal state, Plato felt common property should predominate, while Aristotle favored private property; both rejected the idea that "acquisition of unlimited wealth is good" (6, 9). Later, mystical "individualism and interiorization" made the issue secondary in Philo and peripheral in Plotinus (14).

Roman writers saw common property as the ideal of a lost golden age; now private property was the best arrangement, "ownership in the full sense...[including] the right to use, to enjoy, and even to abuse one's own property," with the state defending these rights (15, 17). Jewish views, in contrast, posited God's ultimate ownership of the land, and property rights "limited by the rights of God, by the rights of the property itself, which must not be abused, and by the rights of the needy—the poor, the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow" (22). But inevitably the Roman view defined economic relations in the Roman imperial economy, with the

rich owning greater amounts of (non-taxed) land, small farmers losing land from onerous taxes, new conquests disappearing as a creator of income, and the military expanding to protect from barbarians and keep order (29, 33, 52, 54).

Part II, “Before Constantine,” examines views on faith and wealth in the New Testament, the Apostolic Fathers, and in theologians from the late second to the early fourth century. Developing an interpretation of *koinonia* from Acts (2, 4) and 2 Corinthians (8-9) as “a total sharing that includes the material as well as the spiritual” (83), Gonzalez concludes that these passages speak not “about a brief idyllic moment in the early life of the church or of something limited to the Jerusalem community but of something that, fully practiced or not, was still part of the self-understanding of the church—at least of the Pauline churches—everywhere” (86). Some scholars would dispute this, but the argument is suggestive. Gonzalez sees this attitude of *koinonia* as continuing into the “subapostolic church” in the *Didache* (94) and even into the Apologists (102-3). However, there is a new proviso: “while wealth as such was not condemned, wealth that was unavailable for the succor of the needy was considered a hindrance to the salvation of its owner” (103). Clement of Alexandria develops this idea, asserting that wealth, as part of God’s creation, is not evil in itself but must be used properly. He says “those among the rich will be saved who measure their possessions by their real need, consider the rest superfluous, and give it to the needy” (116). Cyprian declares “that almsgiving is a means to atone for sins committed after baptism,” an almsgiving still understood as sharing, *communicare*, *koinonia* (125-6). But Lactantius’s focus on the giver’s attitude helps absorb almsgiving into the emerging penitential system (136, 137).

In Part III, “Constantine and Beyond,” Gonzalez examines views developed after the advent of a Christian emperor. Citing a closer alignment of the church with the powerful (155-56), he interprets Donatism as a movement of social unrest and revolt against an imperial authority oppressing the north African poor (158-61). Similarly, at this time Egyptian monasticism arises, with its extremes of renunciation and communalism (161-65). With monasticism begin the “two ways” for Christians regarding faith and wealth: the way of the monastics, “including voluntary poverty and the commonality of goods”; and the way of most Christians, “for whom the connection between faith and wealth receded into the background” (166). The Cappadocians in a later but similar context attack the usury and greed of the rich (175, 177), teaching that the poor should be

helped for their own sakes as humans, not as a means for the rich to gain salvation (184). Gonzalez describes John Chrysostom’s harsh indictments of the rich, their greedy and unfeeling behavior insulting the very heart of “God’s purpose both in creation and in redemption, namely, human solidarity and communication,” putting “both the physical welfare of the poor and the salvation of the rich” at risk (209). This perspective, for Gonzalez, is the “fullest and most cohesive” in the early church (211). On the other hand Augustine is, for Gonzalez, disappointing. Augustine provides the helpful distinction between “use” and “enjoyment” of things, with “the proper use of things...for enjoying God” and not for enjoyment of the things themselves (216). But “Augustine’s concentration on life eternal and on the enjoyment of God means that at times the poor appear to be no more than stepping stones...toward the goal of salvation” (217). Yet Gonzalez gives inadequate evidence for this criticism.

Finally, in “Retrospect,” Gonzalez’s summary is that the early church condemned usury, valued created things (even wealth), held communal sharing as an ideal, exhorted that superfluous wealth be shared, and accepted private property but put severe limitations on it, always reminding Christians of its proper use (225-28). These are the central ideas Gonzalez derives from these theologians, for whom “these issues were indissolubly connected with the meaning of salvation” (233). How might we, in our post-Reformation context, view the relationship of the use of wealth to salvation? Gonzalez leaves us to ponder this.

*Faith and Wealth* is a good and useful study for its clear elaboration and analysis of texts in context in order to bring ancient and perhaps unfamiliar ideas into contemporary discussion. Some things could be improved, including more discussion of how creaturely fallenness affects the distribution and use of wealth (for example, Chrysostom’s and Augustine’s different views on this). But the strengths of the book outweigh these reservations. For in a world where capitalism and socialism influence individuals and nations, these often discomforting words from the past prompt us to wrestle with questions of economic justice and Christian faith in our time.

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**OUR NAMING OF GOD: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF GOD-TALK TODAY**, ed. by Carl E. Braaten. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989. Pp. 163. \$12.95.

One can only assume that conversation among the faculty at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago is spirited. The gregarious nature of that conversation is well illustrated in this book edited by Carl Braaten. The book claims to be the result of a year-long series of faculty conversations “lubricated by appropriate libations and snacks” (vii) centering around the timely theme of God-language. Indeed, this theme is pressing hard upon all the seminaries of our church, and it is becoming an increasingly pertinent concern in our parishes as well.

We are all fortunate that the Chicago faculty have agreed to share some of their thoughts with us in this collection of nine essays under the subtitle “Problems and Prospects of God-Talk Today.” However, to say that the discussion is lively and pertinent is one thing. To say that it is universally helpful and satisfying is quite another. For one thing the nine essays display such a wide divergence of opinion, going off in so many different directions, that one is left longing for a clearer map of the terrain. For another, while all of the essays are about God-language, the real issue seems to be: can we, may we, should we, must we call God “Father”? And about this there is always well-articulated opinion, even enlightenment; but in the end there is little consensus. Still, the overall results of these essays, read with or without libations and snacks, are worth chewing on, and, upon patient mastication, nourishing.

Consider the matter of divergent opinion. One reads the opening essay by Braaten, “The Problem of God-Language Today,” and comes away dazzled by the

closely reasoned arguments drawn from history and theology. And one is inclined to agree—practically forced to agree—that “Father” is a valid name for God and that the name really possesses no significant obstacle in its usage. “A further step of language analysis,”

Braaten asserts, “discloses that, in the cultic context of primitive Christianity, the ‘Father’ symbol loses its metaphorical load of meaning associated with patriarchy and masculine characteristics and begins to be used as a proper name together with Son and Holy Spirit” (32).

Not really so, Karen Bloomquist argues in an essay entitled “‘Let God Be God’: The Theological Necessity of Depatriarchalizing God.” Bloomquist says that men frequently fail to recognize what is at stake in the feminist challenge on the issue of God-language. She goes on to assert that patriarchy permeates society’s language and as such it must be challenged even in the area of God-language. “If God is symbolized as ‘Father,’ God concretized in terms of the human relationships of father and child. *At the same time*, this human relationship is consecrated into a pattern of the divine-human relationship, thereby giving fatherhood theonomous, sacramental depth” (48).

If Braaten and Bloomquist stake out the poles of the matter, then Franklin Sherman tries to mark the middle ground. Sherman notes that there are two contrasting modalities of God-language in his piece called “Reticence and Exuberance in Speaking of God.” He insists that religious language must be *evocative*; that is, it calls for a response from the hearer, creating a sense of awe, of reverence, of mystery, of noneverydayness (36). Because this is so, Sherman calls for reticence in the use of symbols, for some things (especially with reference to God) are better hinted at than stated directly. Hence—and here the middle ground is marked in a series of twelve propositions—“the term ‘Father’ is so deeply rooted in the usage of Jesus...that we cannot but give it the greatest possible deference....We cannot make the Lord’s Prayer read: ‘Our Father and Mother.’” At the same time, though, “‘Father’ cannot be, so to speak, the copyrighted Christian name for God; it cannot be that which uniquely distinguishes our conception of God....” Therefore, Sherman concludes his list, “however meaningful a term (i.e., ‘Father’) may be to oneself or to the traditions that we cherish, it may be better not to use it, or restrict its usage....Better, however,...surround it with a plenitude of other terms and symbols that will complement it and at the same time allow its distinctive contribution to be clear” (41-43).

In these three essays the reader gets the full gamut of opinion concerning our naming of God as Father. One cannot help but be informed, even stimulated, by all of this. But in the end one is left feeling either confused by the plethora of argument or confirmed in one’s predilections. The other essays in this book are surveys of the naming of God in the Bible, in the Trinity, in missiology, and in doxology. These latter essays do not so much argue as survey the various territories. And while none of the pieces dwells extensively on the term “Father,” each essay does get around to discussing the term and its appropriate—or inappropriate—place.

In the introductory essay Braaten notes that there are three different spheres, three different contexts where we speak of God: the ecclesial, the academic, and the secular. Jay Rochelle’s concluding essay deals with the first of these, doxology. Touching on areas of worship, eucharist, prayer, and preaching, Rochelle examines the use of God-language in a poetic and helpful way. “Therefore,” he observes, “in the corporate worship of the church, we consider proper and ordinary that naming of God which takes place in conscious memorial of the biblical witness to the One whom Jesus called Father, to Jesus himself, who is confessed as the *kyrios* and the Christ, and to the Spirit, who is present at creation and at incarnation and who testifies to the truth of Jesus’ mission” (132). This doxological conclusion doesn’t resolve any arguments; but it does give a thoughtful perspective on an issue which is pastoral as well as linguistic.

On balance, *Our Naming of God* is a book of some considerable value for those who speak of, to, and for God. Each essay is provocative and helpful in its way, even though diverse

plexity of this issue (and of theological faculties), we should expect none. It should be noted that while the matter of God the Father is abundantly addressed, none of the selections in the book deals with the knotty pronominal problem. Perhaps if the Chicago faculty were plied with another year's supply of libations and snacks, we would all garner some further insights into God's name and will for his(?) people.

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**AN AFRICAN TREE OF LIFE**, by Thomas G. Christensen. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990. Pp. 206. \$17.95 (paper).

Twenty years ago I preached at two Sunday morning worship services in Meiganga, Cameroon. Both services were in the same church, both were Lutheran, both were for the same parish. The first was French, the second was Gbaya. The service in French was proper, dignified, correct. It lasted one hour, after which people filed outside and chatted in whatever available shade they could find. A few white people were there, but most were black Cameroonians.

The second service was in Gbaya. The sanctuary was more than filled. People sat on the floor and leaned against the walls. the clothing on the women was a riot of color. Mothers nursed babies. Grandfathers held grandsons on their laps. There were no hymnbooks or worship manuals. They were not needed. The entire congregation was in motion. The responses and the refrains were incredibly beautiful and obviously effortless. The order of the liturgy was identical to that of the French service. But whereas it would never occur to me to use the word "life" to describe the first service, that word is the first that comes to mind when thinking of the second.

The author of *An African Tree of Life* was the one responsible for allowing the Gbaya liturgy to come into being. For years he purchased Gbaya musical instruments and learned to play them, recorded Gbaya folk songs, asked scores of village people questions such as "How would you say 'the gracious forgiveness of all your sins'?" Tom Christensen did not write the Gbaya liturgy. He did not tell the Gbaya Christians how they should construct it. He did not instruct them with basic principles with which to work. He allowed it to happen, allowed it to emerge from the village soil, from tribal singing, from the deepest realities of faith among Gbaya Christians. When the "new" Gbaya liturgy was introduced at a synod meeting, it did not have to be taught. It was already theirs.

Two decades after the introduction of the Gbaya liturgy, we have in this Orbis publication Tom Christensen's methodological program for his life work of being a Christian in two cultures, that of the United States and that of the Gbaya people in Cameroon and the Central African Republic. The book is No. 14 in the prestigious American Society of Missiology Series, which includes volumes by Charles Forman, Paul Knitter, Lamin Sanneh, and others. It is an extraordinarily important piece of work.

Christensen, Director of the École de Theologie, Meiganga, Cameroon, is convinced after

living closely with the Gbaya people that the task of being a missionary crossing cultural borders is always at the same time a “bringing to” and a “discovering of.” Jesus Christ was surely there before the arrival of any missionary. “The deep symbols that we share” are not rooted in the esoteric and the exotic but in the familiar and the everyday. The task is to work at Christianity being at the same time fully Christian and fully African in a Gbaya setting. That awareness does not make the missionary unimportant or unnecessary. It makes the work of the missionary more difficult and certainly more interesting.

The root metaphor is taken to be the soré tree, from which the title of the book comes. It is the Gbaya people themselves who, hearing the Jesus story, found themselves saying “Jesus is our soré-cool-thing.” This is not a sermon illustration. It is not an African preacher searching for something in the local culture to help convey a message from afar. It is Gbaya Christians say-

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ing in reality and in truth who Jesus is in their time and in their place.

The root metaphor of the soré tree is presented in “thick description,” a method from Clifford Geertz appropriated by the author. Anyone looking for snappy slogans or quick fixes on the cross-cultural cutting edge of today’s theological interests had better look elsewhere. Working through the delicately nuanced, finely textured stories and rituals and rites is not an easy task. Architect Mies van der Rohe is said to have observed that “God is in the details.” Whether true about architecture (and the reviewer’s opinion is that it is), it becomes clear in time to the reader of this exceptional piece that it is true about Gbaya Christians. Common meals, rituals and sacrifices, purification rites, tales and dances, the movement of waters and the place of words all contribute to the Gbaya naming of Jesus as “our soré-cool-thing.” The method of research is empirical. The convictions are cumulative. There is nothing ideological here. This is the real world.

Obviously, the one who concentrates on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, on the once-for-all character of the Christian revelation, will have many struggles. Is Christensen as open to critical reflection on Gbaya culture as he is to appreciative reflection? Would he endorse as positive an evaluation of American (his other culture) rituals and rites as he does of Gbaya rituals and rites? Why or why not? Are there dangerous, perhaps even “demonic,” elements in witchcraft which he is reluctant to talk about? Is “evil” as much on the move among the Gbaya as among Americans, and how does one identify and deal with it? How does “Jesus as our soré-cool-thing” work together with the universal Christian confession that God is triune, and how much does it matter? What is the nature and content of “transformation” when dealing with Christian faith and life across cultural borders? Does the fact that a symbol is “deep” and “shared” mean that it is somehow immune from the disease of sin which penetrates the entire order of creation?

The questions do not stop. But this is the point. Not through ideological commitments of the author, but through painstaking thick description of the Gbaya people, questions are pressed on the reader which make it obvious that shallow and superficial handling of cross-cultural and inter-faith issues will not do.

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**ORIGEN: THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF THE FIRST GREAT THEOLOGIAN**, by Henri Crouzel. Translated by A. S. Worrall. San Francisco: Harper & Row, year. Pp. 278. \$39.95.

This is a translation of a 1985 French work by the foremost scholar in the study of Origen alive today. Henri Crouzel's masterpiece comes after publishing ten previous volumes on aspects of Origen's life and thought, and this work is a summation of a lifetime of immersion in Origen's theology. Crouzel, a member of the Jesuit Order, teaches at the Institut Catholique in Toulouse, France, and at the Pontificia Università Gregoriana in Rome.

Origen, known as Adamantios—man of steel or diamond—is justly revered as one of the greatest theologians of antiquity. According to Eusebius he authored six thousand works, of which we know of eight hundred today. His prominence lay in his biblical exegesis and his zeal for the faith. His influence was enormous both in the East and West until Platonism went out of style with the revival of Aristotle late in twelfth century. He is credited with being the first to suggest that the Son of God was “of one substance” with the Father, a term which found its way into the Nicene Creed together with his suggestion that the Son was “begotten of the Father from all eternity.” Origen also coined the term *theotokos* (God-bearer) of the Virgin Mary, and was the first to suggest there was a communication of attributes between the human and divine in Christ. During the Renaissance his work inspired some of the greatest humanists, such as Pico de la Mirandola and Erasmus, and in recent years he has been the subject of increasing interest. My own

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appreciation for Origen developed while writing a graduate dissertation on *First Principles* and in attending a seminar on Origen given by the late Geoffrey Lampe at Cambridge University.

The work is organized into four parts. The first examines Origen's life, work, and character, and in this way sets the context for his major works. His life is divided into the Alexandrian period up to AD 231, and thereafter his Caesarean period until his death in AD 251. (Luther Northwestern students of archeology who have been digging at Caesarea since 1970 are still looking for artifacts which may be associated with him.) The last three parts are focussed on the main aspects of his teaching, biblical exegesis, spirituality and mysticism, and speculative theology.

Crouzel emphasizes the importance of reading Origen in his context and in relation to the theological speculation of his day. All too often Origen's critics have made a caricature of his teachings when they did not conform to later standards of orthodoxy. Thus, it is necessary to understand his emphasis on free will (which Erasmus enjoyed) in terms of his opposition to determinist structures of Gnosticism and Marcionism. His devotion to allegory and to a tri-partite exposition of every text has been criticized, yet at the time it saved Christianity for the educated. Indeed, even today his famous exposition of the Good Samaritan is repeated in many a pulpit, including that of Helmut Thielicke—we are the beaten man, the thieves are sin and Satan, the inn is the church, the Samaritan is Christ, and his full payment signifies justification by grace. Perhaps his most frequently criticized formulation is on the final restoration of all things (*apokatastasis*), which has been called universalism. Crouzel says it's not that simple. Origen was battling cheap grace on the one hand, where some Christians were living loose lives



confident that faith would save them. On the other hand, he tried to win over the educated pagans by suggesting that their ancestors would have another opportunity (i.e. harrowing of hell), but all would be saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

One facet of Origen which has always appealed to me, but has been the subject of criticism, is his tendency to find various interpretations of the text. Indeed, he wrote several commentaries on various books of Scripture because his mind had changed. "If anyone finds a better answer I am ready to accept it and to support his opinion." Since he offered competing options, some persons selected those which later ran afoul of orthodoxy, and so brought their author into disrepute. Crouzel points out that Origen was writing in a time of theological flux, and it is to his credit to have offered various possibilities of exegesis without insisting on any one being "correct." He calls it "research theology." Although Origen was posthumously condemned for being an espouser of "universalism," his later admirer, Gregory of Nyssa, was much more so, and he was canonized.

Origen was a textual critic *par excellence*. As with Luther much later, he placed him-

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self under the tutelage of a Jewish master to learn Hebrew. He firmly believed in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, almost a dictation theory, which was the primary impetus which led him into allegory. It was this insistence on the text which resulted in his massive *Hexapla* or comparison of six translations available at his time. It has been said that if all Scriptures were destroyed, Origen could probably have reproduced them from memory. But his allegory does not mean relativism. He clearly lays out the absolutes in his *First Principles*, which is his Rule of Faith, corresponding to the Apostles' Creed.

Crouzel's work is clearly an apologetic work, setting forth an attractive Origen. The author's massive familiarity with his subject makes this a work which will stand as the definitive Origen for many years. It is especially helpful in understanding the formative years of Christian theology in context, and being reluctant to label theologians as "heretical" too easily or quickly without first understanding their thought in context. I strongly recommend this significant work.

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