



WORD AND PRESENCE: A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY, by Ian Cairns. International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992. Pp. 320.

Cairns' commentary on Deuteronomy is a new addition to the International Theological Commentary series. The intended audience for this series is “ministers and Christian educators.” The series offers a theological interpretation for the Christian community for which New Testament is canon as well. It also aspires to be international in character.

In our age, especially, a commentary on the Bible must transcend the parochialism of Western civilization and be sensitive to issues that are the special problems of persons who live outside of the “Christian” West, issues such as race relations, personal survival and fulfillment, liberation, revolution, famine, tyranny, disease, war, the poor, and religion and state. (ix)

It is unclear whether this sensitivity to so-called non-western issues is meant primarily to challenge the “western” reader to broaden his/her perspective, or to speak to the “non-western” reader for whom traditional scholarship has been lacking in relevance. While Cairns is from New Zealand, he has taught theology in Indonesia for twenty years. So he speaks as a westerner cognizant of a non-western milieu. Cairns points out such theological implications as concern for the poor and oppressed and recognition of the universality of the message.

Cairns' book is quite readable whether one reads straight through or reads individual sections. One of the great assets of the book is Cairns' rejection of the sometimes tedious verse-by-verse model often employed by commentaries. Rather, he deals with a whole unit or pericope at a time, focusing on individual words and phrases as needed.

He includes helpful cross-references to the parallel “JE” material in Exodus-Numbers, bringing to the reader's attention significant differences, especially where these are theologically important. He is repetitive, but that is desirable in a commentary, which is most often not read cover to cover. Cairns' book neatly and clearly summarizes widely-held views of the text.

Word and Presence succeeds in addressing ministers and Christian educators. This is neither an academic tome nor a bold new proposal. Yet it assumes the reader is interested in what serious biblical scholarship has to offer. Cairns summarizes and explains clearly for the reader past and current biblical scholarship on Deuteronomy. This scholarship represents widely held (if not universally accepted) views on Deuteronomy. Thus Cairns does not include many minority opinions or recent re-evaluations of long-standing consensus, such as views on the documentary hypothesis. Consequently, the book gives the impression of greater consensus in scholarship than actually exists.

While not an academic tome, neither is this commentary meant for the uninitiated

layperson. Cairns presupposes knowledge and acceptance of redaction criticism and the source-critical categories of JEDP. In the book's introduction, Cairns concisely explains Noth's proposal of a Deuteronomistic history (Deuteronomy-2 Kings). Cairns also explains the significance of Josiah's reform for Deuteronomy. He accepts the thesis that the completion of the core of the book should be dated to the time of Josiah. This 7th-century core is framed by two stages of additional material.

Cairns does not commit himself to specific dates on this material. He does presuppose that Deuteronomy addresses a people in crisis and more than once refers to "the exilic generation addressed by the Deuteronomist." References to an exilic setting appear throughout the book. He identifies a festival/liturgical setting as the origin for much of the material.

Cairns' distinctive contribution lies in his reflections on the meaning of Deuteronomy "for us here today," i.e., for the Christian Church today. These are insights appropriate for the preacher or parish teacher. Unfortunately, at times his modern applications seem disruptive to the text and parenthetical in tone. Cairns is most effective theologically in his discussion of the theology of Deuteronomy. He writes clearly, providing useful explanations of and background material on the biblical texts as well as a solid interpretation of this biblical theology. Cairns' discussion of the biblical text itself provides enough material and insight for the intelligent reader to make the connections with a contemporary environment. Hence, at times the author's suggestions for current application seem almost unnecessary.

The theology of Deuteronomy, as Cairns sees it, focuses on covenant, obedience, and grace. In fact, "Covenant and Grace" might have been a more apt title for his book, as these are the recurrent themes of his exposition. God's covenant with Israel is emphasized as basic to an understanding of Deuteronomy. Cairns provides useful Ancient Near Eastern background on covenant as an expression of relationship between king and vassal.

Cairns' frequent use of the term "grace" presupposes a fairly general definition—grace referring to a gift from God, free (unearned), for the good of the recipients. He sees the law itself as grace because it is a gift from God for the good of the people. This is an appropriate definition of "grace" but differs from a Lutheran understanding in which a definite distinction is made between grace and law. For Cairns all good things from God are "grace." He writes,

The passage concludes with a reiteration of the solemn reminder that grace is not automatic. *Its purpose* is to evoke loving *obedience*. (264, reviewer's emphasis)

Cairns is not averse to arguing with Deuteronomy when he disagrees with its theology. This is certainly preferable to an uncritical apologetic for the theology of Deuteronomy or an attempt to distort the text to fit one's own theology. An example of this is in his comments on Deuteronomy 7 concerning the destruction of Canaanites. He comments,

We can respect the religious zeal that motivates the Deuteronomists. Yet at the same time, we need to acknowledge that their recipe for attaining pure religion is wrong. The "enemy" is not to be "eliminated" but transformed by goodwill (Matt. 5:43-45).

At this point, then, the OT does not address us directly. We should not imitate the attitude to opposition advocated here. Yet the Deuteronomists' zeal for the honor of God's name is something that should inspire us. (92)

For the pastor, preacher, and Christian educator this commentary provides a readable resource on the background and theology of the book of Deuteronomy.

Sarah Dille
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

EZRA – NEHEMIAH, by Mark A. Throntveit. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox, 1992. Pp. 144.

Ezra-Nehemiah has long been a testing ground for different critical approaches and techniques. The commentary literature in previous generations was largely taken up with questions of the redactional history of the book, the order of Ezra and Nehemiah, how many trips were made, the authenticity and source of the Aramaic materials, the trustworthiness of the historical data presented in the book, and the book's contribution to critical study in other areas of the canon, particularly in reference to pentateuchal questions. All of these issues are important and must be considered, but often commentaries preoccupied with such questions provide minimal help regarding what the book is itself about. Genetic or historical inquiry into the ideology of the putative underlying documents has often resulted in a comparative neglect of the ideology and literary character of the text in its present form.

In the last decade and a half a spate of fine commentaries has appeared on Ezra-

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Nehemiah: Williamson (Word), Blenkinsopp (OT Library), Kidner (Tyndale), McConville (Daily Study Bible), Clines (New Century), and Gunneweg (KAT). Throntveit readily acknowledges his debt to these writers. To these volumes should now be added the recent monographs by T. Eskenazi (*In an Age of Prose*, 1988) and K. Hoglund (*Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 1992), both of which appeared after Throntveit's volume went to press. These volumes by and large represent a recovery from the excesses of critical study in previous generations and show a renewed interest in more synchronic questions. For this reason they are generally more helpful in explaining what the book of Ezra-Nehemiah is about and in providing insight valuable for preaching and teaching.

Now we must add yet another exemplary commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah to the list. In keeping with the goal of the Interpretation series, Mark Throntveit has kept the needs of teachers and preachers to the fore in his work. In line with many recent interpreters Throntveit dissociates Chronicles from Ezra-Nehemiah and treats the book without reading it through the eyes of Chronicles. Though not neglecting critical questions, Throntveit has avoided getting bogged down in these issues, preferring to emphasize the theological and literary character of the narrative. He focuses on larger narrative units, proceeding more or less paragraph by paragraph through the book instead of the more traditional verse by verse orientation.

Throntveit excels in describing the literary structures within the smaller incidents and stories that make up the larger narrative; he concentrates on chiasmus and concentricity as devices for structuring the stories and speeches. Much that used to be regarded as the grist for diachronic analysis of sources and compositional history becomes in his approach evidence of a finely contrived story. Throntveit describes the narrative as ordered on theological grounds rather than historical or chronological sequence (21-22). Each pericope is discussed from the vantage of its narrative structure and theological implications.

Throntveit does not engage in much re-ordering of the text as was so common in earlier generations of commentaries. For example, he does not relocate Neh 8, finding its location a part of the overall literary structure of the book. Only in the instance of Neh 5 does Throntveit find material he regards as out of position both in terms of a historical and literary reading (3, 122-24); Throntveit argues (as have others) that Neh 5 would properly follow Neh 13. Relocating this material is somewhat inconsistent with the literary method Throntveit has followed in the remainder of the book. Nevertheless, he still seeks to understand why the compiler arranged his material as he did in the present form of the text (124).

The book is characterized throughout by many helpful insights; beyond that, it is simply enjoyable reading. The reviewer particularly appreciated Throntveit's helpfulness on the theological value of the long lists in Ezra 2 and Neh 7 (18-19), the less than optimistic ending to the book (125-26), and the bearing of the book on Christian life and faith today (throughout)—though this short list scarcely does justice to the amount of genuinely insightful material in the volume. It is a superb resource for readers who want to know Ezra-Nehemiah better.

Raymond B. Dillard
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

WALKING BETWEEN THE TIMES: PAUL'S MORAL REASONING, by J. Paul Sampley. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991. Pp. 128.

This book attempts to bring together what too often has been held apart—Paul's theology and his ethics. J. Paul Sampley contends that Paul's moral reasoning was grounded in the way he understood the action of God in the world.

In the first two chapters, Sampley describes Paul's understanding of God's eschatological action in Christ. Paul tells the story of divine triumph: Christ's triumph over the power of evil and God's ultimate vindication. The eschatological victory of God has already entered human history for individual believers in the death and resur-

rection of Christ. In him God has "broken sin's power and already has begun the new creation in the midst of the old world whose present form is passing away" (9). God's power to free humanity from the power of sin is God's grace. Divine grace creates human space (39). God's grace provides a new beginning, a moment of possibility, for the individual believer. Building on 2 Cor 5:14-15, Sampley writes: "Saying that Christ died for all people means that Christ's death

is God's grace presented as a call to each individual, as an occasion for that individual to trust God and to be freed from the power of sin" (16). Christ's death "delineates the beginning of faith" (18).

God's grace in Christ and God as judge at the end of time are the two major motifs in Paul's account of God. If grace begins the faith journey, divine judgment waits at the end. God the judge assesses the believer's earthly career to see what he or she has made of the possibility for growth. The significance of God for moral reasoning, then, is that God both provides the possibility for moral action and the final evaluation of behavior.

There is something missing in Sampley's account of Paul's theology. While he does not intend to write a complete Pauline theology, we need to know more than he tells us about God in the Pauline letters. Clearly, Paul's references to the Holy Spirit receive too little attention, since Sampley merely assigns to the Spirit the role of *assisting* in moral deliberation (87) and not causing participation in the reality of the crucified Son of God (cf. Gal 4:6).

Of even greater consequence, however, Sampley does not tell us what difference Christ crucified makes for God. Since a metaphor of power and control—God's triumph—pervades his presentation of Paul's thought, Sampley does not tell the story of God through Paul's theology of the cross. What would moral reasoning be like if it began with God in the crucified Christ (1 Cor 1-2), or with the God who sends God's Son into human sin (Gal 4:4-5; Rom 8:3)? Christ is more than "the place of contact where God engaged the world" (40). Christ is God's self-emptying and life-giving love for the world. Therefore, Paul's moral reasoning, which does arise from his theology (Sampley is certainly correct on this point), must be other than he describes it. With Paul there is more talk of God shaping reality than opening space for human possibility. God through the Spirit *is* conforming us into the image of his Son (cf. Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18). Moral reasoning in the Pauline epistles takes seriously the self-giving of God in the crucified one through the Spirit.

So much for theology (chapters 1-2). As Sampley moves from Paul's understanding of God to the apostle's moral reasoning (chapters 3-12), a suspicion arises. Has the author answered a fundamental question which deserves open consideration? *Who* walks between the times? *Who* reasons morally? Sampley assumes the answer is the individual believer and not the community. We learn to describe Pauline moral reasoning by charting the course of the individual's growth in faith and love. Using nautical imagery (found also in Greco-Roman philosophic treatment of moral progress), Sampley identifies the life-course of the individual as the concern of moral reasoning:

Between their new birth and their maturity or adulthood, the faithful must navigate at their own pace and with their own grace-bestowed gifts, with love, respect, consolation, and encouragement for each other. Accurate self-assessment distinctly defines one's own location in the journey from infancy to maturity of faith and provides a clear point of reckoning from which one can seek not only to grow but also to engage lovingly and supportively with others as they traverse the same general course. (52)

In Sampley's defense, it must be noted that he emphasizes community as the context out of which the individual grows. Nevertheless, the individual self is the subject of both walking and reasoning and, despite Sampley's denials, is ontologically prior to the community. Given the

tension between individual and community inherent in this scheme, the main problem for ethical discourse is to establish balance between individual rights and the community's good. This balance is achieved by toleration, self-assessment, and the ideal limit of individualism—love. Sampley's commitment to

individualism comes across most clearly when he thinks of love as *limitation* of the self (62). A more accurate account of Pauline moral reasoning would emerge if love were understood not as limitation but as creation of the self.

Sampley's method of moving from the Pauline epistles to theology and ethics awards the individual self a privileged position. What is a letter and what good is studying the Pauline letters? "Ancient letters such as Paul's epistles can be fruitfully studied for what they disclose about the *author's assumptions and understandings*" (emphasis added, p. 1). Sampley follows in a tradition of romantic interpretation, for which the primary purpose of examining Paul's letters is to discover the thoughts which come into language in them. This method assumes and promotes the individual self, since the objects of Sampley's interest are, on the one hand, Paul's "self" set free by God's grace and, on the other, the contemporary believer, who discovers that Paul's thought world opens new possibilities for individual existence.

This is a clear and coherent book, worth reading if one wishes to discover connections between a theology of divine triumph, an ethic of individual progress, and the method of romantic interpretation. Readers will have to turn elsewhere, however, if they seek the moral reasoning Paul's letters create in communities which think of God not as victor but as the crucified one.

David Fredrickson
Luther Northwestern Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota

THE BIBLE AS A PROBLEM FOR CHRISTIANITY, by Robert P. Carroll. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991. Pp. 176.

Robert Carroll feels there is room for a book about the Bible's more negative aspects, and *The Bible as a Problem for Christianity* is such a book. His concern is with the ideological manipulation of the Bible whose long history has seen many radical changes in meanings and uses. Like all literature that is treated as sacred, the Bible has been manipulated in dangerous and oppressive ways.

Carroll's thesis is that it is not just the use of the Bible that creates problems, but also some of the substantive things in the Bible itself. When the Bible is treated as the divine word, exempt from criticism, then eyes are blinded to the truth. "The Bible contains some appalling practices of an uncivilized nature and nobody should treat these as normative" (5). Carroll hopes that the book should be seen as part of our past and as a contributor to the good and bad things about modern European society rather than have it be misunderstood to the point of idolatry.

In the first chapter, the rationale for critical biblical study is argued effectively. It is very reminiscent of a seminary course in historical/form criticism. Carroll argues that when someone

paraphrases the Bible, they explain nothing but merely repeat what the text is imagined to say. Reading the Bible is only half the task with the other half being the engagement of the critical method. It is important to see “the setting of that accurate account in its historical forms and period and the evaluation of it in terms of where we are now” (32). Any thoughtful reader will find the Bible problematic without critical analysis.

Key to this problem is God and the question of God’s existence. Carroll’s discussion of the hiddenness of God is based on our own namby-pamby understanding of God having made God seemingly impotent. “Yahweh, the character in many a stirring tale, became the eternal One without body, parts or passions. There is the heart of the problem constituted by the Bible for Christianity” (40). This contradiction of omnipotent God and God watered down for our palates and many other such contradictions in the Bible pose problems for theologians in Carroll’s thinking. They cannot reconcile the particularism of the historical Jesus and the universalism of God’s everlasting reign of freedom and fulfillment. Carroll states that “a God who hides himself may not be the most obvious image for a theology of revelation to use!”(57).

From this point, Carroll begins his diatribe on the intricate problems connected with the phrase “biblical Christianity.” He

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states that this phrase is a grotesque product of the human imagination—a chimera—that requires different “readings” because the literal readings of ancient texts have given way to cultural changes. The complaint here is that we engage in selectivity and in the process pick the laws we approve and ignore the ones which do not appeal to us. The whole discussion seems like a seminary “writings” course. For example:

The world of the text approach to reading the Bible is one of the best ways of reading such a literary production as the Bible. It resolves the insoluble problems of trying to relate the text to history, especially to the historical characters represented in the text. For example, the biblical Nebuchadrezzar is very different from what is known about the historical Babylonian emperor, just as the biblical Pontius Pilate is rather different from what little we know about the Roman procurator of Judaea who shared the same name....We know the technique from modern writing, where “faction” combines fiction and fact....(101)

As the author continues to discuss the problem of biblical reading, he takes exception to Luther’s notion of the sermon. Carroll states that Luther had the thesis that the ideals of Scripture could not be put into practice because of his ideology of “faith versus good works.” Carroll favors “interim ethics” for sermon interpretation because he believes that it is possible to be open enough to read the Gospels and to respond to them in life-changing ways.

I had remembered from my seminary days that Luther is credited with the phrase “Sola Scriptura.” Therefore, I struggle with Carroll’s statement about Luther’s idea that it is difficult to respond to Scripture in daily living. After a cursory search to find such a statement made by Luther I decided Carroll had taken it out of context. In fact, Luther states in the Large Catechism, “at least believe the Scriptures. They will not lie to you, and they know your flesh better than you yourself do....” (455.76).

This is a provocative and engrossing book. However, I find two major flaws with it.

First, the author claims that he writes for the non-expert rather than for scholars. It is true that the book is without lengthy footnotes and other trappings of a scholarly work but the language and treatment of the material presupposes a working knowledge of biblical study. Carroll quotes philosophers and uses terms like “transcendental,” “Septuagint,” “Gnostic,” “Qoheleth,” etc., as though they were common vocabulary. Common for someone who has studied at seminary, perhaps, but not for the average member of a congregation.

Second, as noted in the discussion about Luther, there is a very deep sense as one reads that the argument is shaky at best. At almost every turn red flags seem to go up and the reader wants to say, “Yes, but...” On page 80, Carroll speaks about Matthew 5:32; 19:3-9. “Divorce is forbidden..., though the exception clause suggests a rethinking of the absoluteness of that prohibition. Here the Gospels are more in line with the Qumran than with the Hebrew Bible...[another] simple contradiction.” Yes, but a student of the Bible realizes that the thrust of the Matthew text is that Jesus was responding to the injustice of those who hide behind the law for their own ends rather than looking to God’s end: care for each other and partnership in marriage.

These arguments are not the ways that Carroll views the Bible in reality. He does feel that the Bible is *not* hostile to theology but is the first stage in the development of a sound, critical theology. He also thinks the Bible should be read as a collection of books and the reader should be prepared to tolerate contradiction. Perhaps this author has taken on a task too large and too formidable and tried to accomplish it in too short a space. Perhaps the language needs to be softened and simplified for a lay reader.

What has been presented is a rendition of the abuses of the Bible when it is read in a fundamentalist, uncritical, and egocentric way. *The Bible as a Problem for Christianity* is well worth reading for its encapsulation of such a history of reading the Bible. However, be prepared to say “Yes, but...”

Sharon Israel
Rockingham Lutheran Parish
Harrisonburg, Virginia

FROM APOCALYPSE TO GENESIS: ECOLOGY, FEMINISM AND CHRISTIANITY,
by Anne Primavesi. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991. Pp. 336. \$14.95 (paper).

The title of British theologian Anne Primavesi’s book is arresting on two counts. First, it suggests a dramatic reversal of traditional Christian dogmatics, which begin at the Beginning and end at the End. Instead, Primavesi begins with the apocalypse now: a present day of ecological judgment that we experience around us in such various and nefarious ways as acid rain, a diminishing ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, and deforestation. From this present apocalypse she moves to an “uncommon” interpretation of Genesis 1-3, which lays the theological groundwork for a Christian eco-praxis that takes seriously the interconnections between human, natural, and divine life in the power of the Spirit. Her book concludes where the Scriptures begin: with an English translation of Genesis 1-3 eloquently rendered by Mary Phil Korsak.

Second, the title of Primavesi’s book signals a conversation between three unlikely

partners: ecology, feminism, and Christian theology. Seeing these three in the same subtitle would be enough to put off many readers. Christians committed to the environment might find overt feminist sentiments suspect. Feminists committed to the environment might chafe under stated Christian sensibilities. Environmentalists like Lynn White, Jr., in his much-published, much-discussed essay “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” have charged the Christian tradition with the theological sanctioning of ecological oppression. Any conversation between ecology, feminism, and Christian theology promises to be volatile. Yet, behind Primavesi’s moral and spiritual commitment to the interconnectedness of the whole of life: animal, vegetable, mineral, human, and divine, is an intellectual commitment to the integrity of a conversation (however difficult!) for the sake of the life of the planet.

This phrase, “the life of the planet,” is deliberately emphasized and strongly juxtaposed to another phrase, deliberately excised and forcefully countered throughout the book: “the life of the species.” Exclusive focus on the human species, species-centrism, on the part of Christian theologians, feminists, or even environmentalists, is consistently critiqued. To the degree that it has focused solely on what God has done “for us men and for our salvation,” traditional Christian theology has contributed to the ongoing oppression of both women and nature.

Much of this work has been done before. Susan Griffin has argued eloquently the connection between the domination of women and the domination of nature in *Woman and Nature*. In *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Gerda Lerner has shown how the patriarchal religions of Judaism and Christianity replaced matriarchal goddess religions which had vastly more gracious practices regarding both women and nature. Primavesi carefully records these prior conversations in thirty pages of endnotes. But where much of this prior conversation pointed to post-Christian conclusions, banishing the offending patriarchy forever from the spiritual universe, Primavesi returns to the beginning: the story of the creation itself, recorded in the book of Genesis, and poses the question: Is it possible to read Genesis as anything other than a story of human sin and divine salvation?

The possibility of posing and addressing the question is carefully laid out. At the outset Primavesi establishes a constructive and critical agenda. First, in a constructive move, she gives an outline of an ecological paradigm, a contemporary model for Christian thinking about the interrelatedness and interdependence of creation. Second, in a critical move, she offers a thorough-going critique of the dominant hierarchical paradigm of Christianity and western society. Primavesi’s final task attempts a radical re-reading of Genesis 1-3 in light of an ecological paradigm. Before she tackles Genesis, however, she has defined terms; identified the features of an ecological paradigm; discussed language, metaphor, and canon; and documented a dominant tradition within Christianity which has engaged hierarchy, an almost exclusive concern for human sin and divine salvation, and a pervasive Christo-monism

which has diminished and truncated the working of the third person of the Trinity.

Has Primavesi decided the results of her investigation of Genesis at the outset? I think not; she has only been clearer than most exegetes about her theological presuppositions. Discarding standard interpretations of Genesis which read its principals as either archetypes or prototypes of humankind, Primavesi finds instead a parable of survival and sustenance. Genesis does nothing more—and nothing less!—than show people who inhabited the rough landscape of

Palestine what they needed for survival. Noting the predominance throughout the passage of the Hebrew cognate for both “eat” and “food”, *’kl*, Primavesi suggests that the primary concern of the passage is not sin, but sustenance. The curses of God in Genesis show negatively the interconnectedness that would be required in the struggle for survival in a harsh desert landscape, as well as reveal the longing for harmony between God, humans, and the natural world. Sin, embodied in the story of Cain and Abel, is the failure to recognize and to respect this interconnectedness.

Primavesi’s interpretation is suggestive and provocative; her plea for renewed attention to the Spirit as a dynamic force in a continuing creation is well taken. Those who applaud her tenacity in working within the Christian tradition may well be uncomfortable with her theological imagination. But others who have been starving in the post-Christian landscape often inhabited by environmentalists and eco-feminists will welcome the theological sustenance this work provides.

Martha Ellen Stortz
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Berkeley, California

RECONSTRUCTING THE COMMON GOOD: THEOLOGY AND THE SOCIAL ORDER, by Gary J. Dorrien. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990. Pp. 222.

Dorrien explores the legacy of modern Christian socialism by engaging the works of five twentieth-century theologians: Walter Rauschenbusch, Paul Tillich, Jürgen Moltmann, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and José Míguez Bonino. In a separate chapter for each theologian he offers a clear, informative, and fair description of their religious socialism and a critical analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. Dorrien focuses on the kind of socialism espoused and for what reasons.

In the “Introduction” and first chapter, “Theology and the Democratic Faith,” Dorrien presents the type of socialism that serves as his critical standard. He holds up a decentralized, democratic form of market socialism rather than a highly centralized, authoritarian state socialism of government ownership and control. He made his sustained argument for that position in an earlier book, *The Democratic Socialist Vision*, and therefore in the present book refers only summarily to this vision. He couples his distinction between socialisms with a distinction between liberal democratic traditions. Drawing upon the work of C. B. Macpherson and Robert Dahl, Dorrien views liberal democratic tradition as torn between two conflicting visions of what a good society should be. The classic liberal vision assigns the right to property a higher value than the right to democratic self-government. A counter liberal democratic tradition going back to the later writings of John Stuart Mill ascribes to the right to democratic self-government a superior position to the right to property. Dorrien thinks that both property rights and state power must be held democratically accountable and that this principle of democratic accountability is deeply rooted in North American political culture.

Dorrien strives to resurrect Rauschenbusch and his social gospel legacy from the deadly (and unfair according to Dorrien’s reading) cri-

ticisms leveled by the Niebuhrs, W. A. Visser't Hooft, and John Bennett. Contrary to these standard critiques, Dorrien argues that Rauschenbusch had profound understandings of sin and evil and of the transcendence of the Kingdom of God even as the Kingdom also comes to earth. Despite Rauschenbusch's defective biblical exegesis, cultural conservatism, and evolutionary optimism, he was an important precursor of modern democratic socialism.

Tillich conceives a "theology" of religious socialism with his conceptualizations of *kairos* and a theonomous culture. Tillich's prophetic religion utters both a "no" and a "yes" to culture, a rejection of the identification of religion with culture as well as an obligation for religion to be culturally engaged as an agent of cultural transformation. Dorrien chastises Tillich for his silence about religious socialism after coming to the United States. Prophetic faith makes the case despite formidable obstacles.

Throughout all of his works Moltmann advances theological arguments for democratic socialism. Moltmann sticks to his arguments even though liberation theologians, who have otherwise found inspiration in his cruciform theology of hope, often criticize "democratic" discourses as cooptative mechanisms in Latin America. Dorrien's major criticism of Moltmann is with his neo-orthodox theological method that refuses to begin with human suffering as liberationists do.

Dorrien lauds Gutiérrez's innovative theological methodology: theology as a second act of reflection on liberating praxis. While modern progressivist theologies address Enlightenment problematics like historical criticism and science which distinguish believers and nonbelievers, liberation theologies address third world problems like economic oppression which distinguish persons and nonpersons. Even though Gutiérrez sounds a socialist note, Dorrien criticizes him for being "surprisingly vague" regarding even a basic socialist remedy. This criticism introduces the best part of Dorrien's book, the conflict among liberation theologies over the issue of faith and ideology.

Protestant liberation theologian Míguez Bonino combines a narrative of Latin American history with an economic dependency theory and concludes that Latin American underdevelopment is the dark side of Northern development and modernization. Dorrien suggests that Míguez Bonino's one-dimensional dependency analysis should be more multicausal. Furthermore, Dorrien chastises Míguez Bonino for ignoring the democratic socialist vision which holds a place for some forms of modernization.

In his last chapter, "Toward a Theopraxis of the Common Good," Dorrien looks at the historical limitations of democratic socialism and augments it with feminist, racial, ecological, and international insights. Disappointingly, he does not integrate his previous chapters into this last one. He also fails to engage the resurgent North American, primarily Roman Catholic, discourse on the common good. Furthermore, he harbors a problematic background assumption throughout the book that "a new consensus is emerging in the [North American] churches in which the priority of a common praxis is assumed, rather than the priority of confessional creeds" (173). Finally, he couples this assumption with an instrumentalist view of *religious* socialism. Religious faith supplies the democratic socialist tradition with "a valuable moral language and a crucial insistence on the limiting realities of human sinfulness...[and] a language of faith for social objectives that are attainable but not seen" (15). Dorrien has sandwiched layers of nourishment between two rather stale slices of white bread.

Gary M. Simpson
Luther Northwestern Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota

DIVINE REVELATION: OUR MORAL RELATION WITH GOD, by Kern R. Trembath.
New York: Oxford University, 1991. Pp. 240.

In *Divine Revelation*, Kern Trembath intends “to suggest a theory of divine revelation that is both intellectually coherent and distinctively Christian at the same time” (84). Trembath undertakes this task because of his “uneasiness with most traditional theories of revelation” (167), arising

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from a sense that such theories are not sufficiently critical. However, his intention is not to reject traditional theories and experiences of revelation, but rather “to enrich, and perhaps to renew, what the Christian tradition has handed on to us” (13-14) by giving a more clear and critical account of “what revelation must be in order for it to do what the Christian tradition has insisted that it does” (7). In other words, Trembath intends to provide the conditions of the possibility for the Christian experience of revelation by means of critical (i.e., transcendental) reflection upon that experience. This is what Trembath, following McBrien, claims that the Christian theological tradition has always done. “I take it as a given that theology is the systematic and reasoned effort to come to terms with, and to express, the church’s experience with God” (53).

Trembath begins his critical engagement with divine revelation as handed on in the Christian tradition with a discussion of contemporary theories of revelation, beginning with traditional “divergence” theories of revelation in Abraham, Henry, Barth, and Packer (Chapter 1), followed by modern “convergence” theories of revelation in Dulles, Macquarrie, O’Collins, Ramsey, and Polanyi (Chapter 2). These two sets of theories reveal the two Christian traditions with which Trembath identifies himself. The first is the American evangelical tradition, which Trembath criticizes and seems to reject for arbitrarily stipulating some given thing (i.e., Jesus, the Bible, miracles, etc.) as revelation without giving universally available criteria for how it knows this to be true. The second is the “centrist catholic tradition” (77) which Trembath affirms for insisting that divine revelation is essential to the constitution and existence of human beings. Trembath clearly situates his own constructive theory in the latter tradition, over against the former, seeking only to bring greater clarity to its understanding of revelation.

In the second half of the book Trembath presents his own understanding of divine revelation, following the order of experience of revelation in the Christian tradition, which first discloses ourselves to us and then tells us about God who is our ground and our savior (11). The major thesis of these chapters consists in presenting what Trembath takes “to lie behind traditional notions of revelation, offering an outline of how we know we are in the presence of persons and, by careful extension, the personal God” (69). Following Ian T. Ramsey, Trembath argues that the subjective personal self discloses itself by means of expressions that can be observed by others. We know we are in the presence of persons by our moral response to such personal self-expressions, for they make a moral claim on us. However, according to Trembath,

human beings universally respond to the universe as though it were the expression of a person, even though no identifiable human being is present, by means of their moral intentionality. The universal intentionality of knowing, loving, and hoping must therefore be grounded in the fact that the universe is the personal self-expression of God, which Christians acknowledge when they confess that God is the creator. All three forms of human moral intentionality have goodness as their object, for it is axiomatic for Trembath that “goodness beckons enduringly” (29). Therefore, “the ultimate content of divine revelation, and thus the universal expression of it as well, is the goodness within which all that is distinctively human is rooted” (130).

However, to be moral implies giving expression in community. Every act of human moral self-expression presupposes the self-disclosure of God, and the community constituted by the expressions of knowing, loving, and hoping is “the most tangible medium of divine revelation” (141). Moreover, since the moral expression of goodness is the goal God intends for human life, the content of divine revelation must also be “expressed goodness” (141). If this is true, then it must be granted that it is at least possible for a human life actually to express all the goodness God intended us to express in our creation: hence the Christian confession that Jesus is the concrete expression of the goodness given to and intended for human beings by God is rendered comprehensible. And this means that “to be human is to be the divinely constituted vehicle of God’s presence”

(158), since what is true of Jesus is true for all humanity. Stated another way, “human beings are the self-expressions of God” (157) because God has become human.

What then is divine revelation? Trembath leaves the reader with at least seven distinct definitions, several of which stand in tension with one another. On the one hand, the universe is the personal self-expression of God (64); on the other hand, it is the concrete intention to see certain events as revelation which is revelation (112). On the one hand, human moral expression is a response to divine revelation, which is its ground; on the other hand, morally expressed goodness is divine revelation itself. The key to all of these definitions is goodness: all the goodness expressed in the human and material world discloses and reveals the God who is the source and goal of all goodness. “To those whose hearts incline them to the pursuit, revelation reveals because goodness beckons them to itself, not as an abstract or lifeless thing, but instead as the ultimate Personal Goodness of reality whom believers call God” (143).

Trembath presents his attempt to identify human moral life as both the target and norm of all revelation as new, but it really harkens back to the Deists of the enlightenment (i.e., Locke and Toland), and especially to Kant. Despite his protestations to the contrary (152), Trembath’s christology of Jesus as the concrete expression of all that God intends for human moral life is difficult to distinguish from Kant’s understanding of Jesus as the perfect teacher and example of the archetype of moral reason of a person well pleasing to God. Indeed, it is difficult to understand why Trembath does not explicitly deal with Kant, as well as with the theological tradition which responded to him (i.e., Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Herrmann, Harnack, etc.), for it is in this tradition that he most clearly stands.

Randall C. Zachman
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

ON MORAL GROUNDS: THE ART/ SCIENCE OF ETHICS, by Daniel C. Maguire and A. Nicholas Fagnoli. New York: Crossroad, 1991. Pp. 204. \$21.95.

An election year, perhaps more so than “normal” times, provides opportunity for individuals, communities, and even the nation to do much needed and often neglected reflection on their character: What *kind* of a person am I? What do we *value* as a community, and why? What sort of a nation is this, and what do we want it to become? The method for ethical reflection offered by Maguire and Fagnoli provides much food for thought to anyone concerned with how ethical choices shape and reflect human character on an individual and social basis.

The first of the book’s five major sections, “The Foundations of Morality,” sets the groundwork for the rest of the work by offering definitions of key terms and a few central assumptions. “Ethics,” for example, “is the art/science that seeks to bring sensitivity and method to the discussion of moral values” (34). And “*moral* simply means *what befits or does not befit persons as persons*. The term can also refer to behavior that enhances and respects the value of the good earth” (8). The reason that human beings are concerned about moral questions at all is captured in the “foundational moral experience” or FME: all moral thought and language expresses the “experience of the value of persons and/or their environment” (9), an experience that begins in our affections and emotions. “It is in feeling that the roots of morality are found and nourished. *The foundational moral experience is an affective response to value*” (19), although it proceeds from the level of feeling to involve reason and intellect as well.

It is noteworthy that from the outset Maguire and Fagnoli place affectivity and a concern for the environment at the center of their discussion. The former is dealt with throughout the book with thoroughness and substantive insight, and comprises one of the book’s strongest points. The latter, however, by virtue of the sparse treatment it receives, seems virtually to be tacked on like a ribbon of political correctness. While many readers, including myself, may think that morality does and ought to include dimensions beyond the strictly human, the

authors posit such a position without nearly enough explanation or justification to support it.

With their foundation laid in part one, Maguire and Fagnoli move into the best portion of their work. Designed to help its readers to become more thorough in their ethical reflection, and more “sensitive to the myriad dimensions of moral meaning in our lives” (4), the bulk of the book (parts 2 and 3) presents a revised version of Maguire’s “wheel model” of ethical method, first advanced in his *The Moral Choice* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978; New York: Harper and Row, 1979). The wheel’s “hub” represents a basic set of “reality revealing questions” whose purpose is to “uncover the moral situation in all its complexity” (42). Since “moral judgment always stands within the web of a particular context...[and] no human behavior can be judged uncontextually and outside of its actual relations,” it is crucial for the moral agent to ask such questions as “What?” (what exactly is at issue? what definitions are being used here?), “Why and How?” (means and ends), “Foreseeable consequences and viable alternatives?” and so on.

The “spokes” of the wheel, in turn, represent the multitude of factors that come to bear on our evaluation or moral assessment of the situation. Once again affectivity plays an important part, and is particularly well explored, as are the “spokes” of “creative imagination,” “tragedy,” and “comedy.” These factors, along with reason and analysis, moral principles, individual and

group experience, and authority, all come to bear to varying degrees on how we react to—and act in—a moral situation. The relationships between the various spokes can be quite complex, and it may be that several of them come into play simultaneously and even subconsciously. Or it may be that some do not apply at all in a given case. Moreover, many moral decisions are immediate and on-the-spot matters of conscience (discussed in part 4), when time simply does not allow for reflection. “Conscience, however, is always nourished in reflection, and ethics, as a reflective way of knowing moral value, is one of its sources” (139).

Maguire and Fagnoli appropriately and adeptly season their work with this kind of realistic qualification and nuance (and part 5 cautions against the “hazards and pitfalls” of moral reflection and discourse). It is a book thoroughly concerned with the “real world,” as is evidenced by the spectrum of timely issues used as examples (AIDS, the Gulf War, the Iran-Contra scandal, in addition to the “usuals” of abortion, homosexuality, and the like), and by repeated allusions to how their ethical method could be adapted and applied to business and other professional contexts.

The book itself would be good to use in a context where it could be juxtaposed with other ethical models (its emphasis on character ethics makes a nice contrast with teleological and deontological systems), or with such thinkers as Kierkegaard, James Gustafson, or Stanley Hauerwas—perhaps a college ethics course, or an adult forum. Study questions follow each section of the book, and it includes a general bibliography and glossary of key terms. While the rhetorical flow of the book is not consistently smooth and engaging, its ideas are compelling and the issues it raises are often provocative. Most importantly, it values and encourages completeness and sensitivity in moral awareness, reflection, and decision-making—crucial dimensions of character in an age of unique moral challenge and opportunity.

Christopher Johnson
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

THE DIVINE GOOD: MODERN MORAL THEORY AND THE NECESSITY OF GOD,
by Franklin I. Gamwell. San Francisco: Harper, 1990. Pp. 223. \$30.00.

Can we be good without God? This great philosophical question has traditionally been answered negatively. A traditional theological response includes several dimensions. God himself provides the ground for moral good, either in his very being, or, as the Reformers preferred, in the declarations of his will. Through revela-

tion, God enlightens the human mind as to the nature of the good. God gives grace which overcomes human sinfulness in justification. And God gives his children the strength to live out a Christian ethic when they are powerless to do so on their own.

In the last century, however, philosophical ethicists have set about the task of developing a non-theological basis for morality. From the modern point of view, the pre-modern perspective, which wedded morality and religion, is hopelessly authoritarian. The modern spirit, however, involves a repudiation of authoritarianism and an affirmation of autonomy. Thus, modernity

appears to require cutting morality free of God: “the consensus in modern philosophical ethics is that [a commitment to modernity] is necessarily a flight from theistic belief” (8).

For this reason, the relation of God and ethics is critical both theologically and ethically. The viability of theistic belief is at stake, for most philosophical ethicists today consider it virtually a given that morality must and can operate successfully without religion. Gamwell’s work, a fine piece of philosophical theology, takes on this contemporary assumption. He argues, negatively, that modern philosophical ethics is flawed in its most basic claims and, positively, that God provides the grounds for moral claims.

As his foil, Gamwell primarily discusses Kant along with two who work in his wake, Alasdair MacIntyre and Karl-Otto Apel. Kant’s ethic, argues Gamwell, provided the impetus for modern philosophical ethics with its segregation of morality and God. Initially this is surprising, for Kant is well known for positing God’s existence as the ground of morality. But as its premise, Kant’s argument for God affirms a ground for moral claims that is independent of God. Thus Kant in effect made God superfluous to morality, not fundamental to it. Modern philosophers, judging Kant a success in demolishing the traditional theistic arguments but a failure in his own moral argument, conclude that God cannot be proved by human thought. Ethics, if it is possible at all, must be a non-theological ethics.

How then should ethics be grounded? Kant’s approach was radically nonteleological (that is, the good is in no way dependent on the results or goals of action). A deontological (duty-based and *a priori*) ethic like Kant’s, argues Gamwell, is essentially empty. All ethics must be teleological, oriented to a purpose or goal.

MacIntyre and Apel present other options. Both differ from Kant in that they are teleological and he is not. But they share with him a fundamental assumption: the ground of moral claims is independent of a metaphysical reality like God. MacIntyre seeks to build his ethic on empirical grounds. But this enterprise fails for lack of rationally necessary, transcendental standards for judging empirical observations. Apel tries to develop a transcendental ethic without metaphysics. This ethic is based on the commitment to a community of persons as an end to be pursued. But it collapses for its lack of principles that can be used to adjudicate competing interests and claims within that community.

In a chapter that stands between his discussions of Kant and Apel, Gamwell pauses to provide epistemological support for his claim that ethics should employ some rationally necessary foundations for thinking. Many today claim that we must think without foundations at all since all communication is radically conditioned by its linguistic environment. But Gamwell claims that nonfoundational denials of transcendental principles assume such principles and are therefore self-refuting. This argument, though it goes against the grain of much current thought, is persuasive.

Gamwell’s recourse is to a metaphysical foundation for ethics. (He means by *metaphysics* not Kant’s sense, but the traditional sense—an inquiry into reality as such.) The metaphysic he uses is Whitehead’s; like process theologians generally, Gamwell considers the classical view of God incoherent. In the final chapters, he sharpens his concept of *God* and then shows how this metaphysic provides a foundation for ethics. He asserts, adapting the Reformers’ point, that God’s “will” is the standard of good: “the good is maximal divine creativity because this is the abiding character of what God ‘wills’” (183).

Gamwell's volume is a fine piece of scholarship. Its overall scheme is exceptionally well organized. The flow of thought from initial premise to final conclusion is clear. In summary:

a philosopher asserts either that there is no ground for moral claims...or that there is....If [the former], then the position is *amoralism*. If one asserts that there is a ground for moral claims, then one asserts either that this ground is not teleological or that [it is]....If [the former], then the position is *nonteleology* (e.g., Kant). If one asserts that it is teleological, then one asserts either that there is not a transcendental telos or that there is....If [the former], then the position is *empirical teleology* (e.g., MacIntyre). If one asserts that there is a transcendental telos, then one asserts either that this telos is not metaphysical or that [it is] . . . If [the former], then the position is *hermeneutical teleology* (e.g., Apel). If one asserts that it is metaphysical, then the position is *metaphysical teleology*. (155-156)

And metaphysical teleology, of course, is Gamwell's view.

Particularly noteworthy is his chapter defending the transcendental project. In a day when thinkers in so many fields are asserting that all communication is radically dependent on local conditions, I consider it welcome. His basic point is that the denial of *a priori* principles of thought presupposes the very principles it denies—an effective argument.

This discussion, however, is a summary and awaits fuller elaboration. This will annoy some. Indeed, this summary character is true of much of the volume. Since Gamwell raises many philosophical issues he cannot pause to discuss, some readers will itch to debate him along the way. Yet Gamwell stays focused on his concern for moral theory, and thus gives his volume a kind of coherence and unity that is easy to like.

Gamwell's commitment to a Whiteheadian metaphysic will displease some. Many who hold more traditional views of God believe that process theologians tend to exaggerate the static character of God as God is understood in classical theism. Nevertheless, even for those with more traditional sympathies, Gamwell's courageous and insightful affirmation of the linkage between morality and God is, in my view, very helpful.

Gamwell addresses his themes at the intersection of philosophical theology and philosophical ethics. Thus he assumes in his readers a high level of philosophical expertise, both in terms of content and of style. Those who lack a solid background in these fields should be forewarned. For those who do possess interest in these areas, on the other hand, Gamwell's work provides many rich dividends. It is a significant, original contribution of great importance both in ethics and in theology. Can we be good without God? This question is of abiding importance in theology and in ministry.

David K. Clark
Bethel Theological Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota