



DIRT, GREED, AND SEX: SEXUAL ETHICS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY, by L. William Countryman. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988. Pp. 304.

Those who set out to examine closely the biblical materials on human sexuality and attempt to relate these teachings carefully and systematically to contemporary life are rare. Writers on the sexual ethics of the Bible tend frequently to approach the texts preoccupied with contemporary concerns and conclusions that block objectivity and freshness of interpretation. Or they comment on the Scripture texts only in relation to the culture of the Ancient Near East, with little or no effort to connect such themes with contemporary morality. In *Dirt, Greed, and Sex*, L. William Countryman, Professor of New Testament at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, California, seeks to avoid both of these tendencies in his study of New Testament sexual ethics. He works to apply biblical materials to present society, but attempts first of all to understand the Bible as a product of its own time, for the people of God in a world far different from ours.

Countryman's thesis is that all significant New Testament texts dealing with sexual morality are expressions of two underlying principles—a purity ethic and a property ethic. This twofold sexual ethic was inherited from the Scriptures of Israel and transformed by the New Testament authors. The cardinal sin of the property ethic was greed, leading one to trespass on another's property. The fundamental offense of the purity ethic was impurity, uncleanness, or “dirt.” Adultery, for example, was primarily a property-related offense, since it was seen as the desire to possess another's sexual property. The prohibitions against homosexual acts, cross-dressing, and bestiality, however, belong entirely to the sphere of purity ethics—there was something “dirty” about these practices in ancient Israel. Countryman follows the cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas in viewing “dirt” as essentially disorder. Dirt is matter out of place in relation to a particular culture. It is what lies outside the system. It is perceived as not belonging to the society because it is unfamiliar, irregular, unhealthy, or otherwise objectionable. Cultures differ, of course, on what is dirty. In one culture pork may be dirty but not grasshoppers (Lev 11:7, 22), whereas in another culture grasshoppers are rejected but pork is eaten.

After investigating the purity law of ancient Israel in the Torah, particularly the two codes in Leviticus 11-16 and 17-26, and analyzing the way in which these regulations were received in first-century Judaism and earliest Christianity, he concludes that “with the possible exception of Jude and Revelation, all the [New Testament] documents that dealt with physical purity at all agreed in rejecting it as an authoritative ethic for Christians as such” (138). While the early Christians did not cease to be conscious of a distinction between clean and unclean, they did abolish the link between physical cleanness and divine favor. “All things are pure for the pure” (Titus 1:15). What this says to us today is that

if one wishes to assert that any given proscription is a part of Christian sexual ethics, one must justify that claim by showing that the act in question infringes some principle other than purity. Any claim that a given sexual act is wrong in and of itself will be found ultimately to represent either a lack of ethical analysis or a hidden purity claim. (241)

From the New Testament onward, all genuinely Christian ethics were understood not in terms of physical purity but in terms of purity of the heart, defined primar-

ily as willingness to respect and unwillingness to harm the neighbor. The principle of respect for sexual property replaced the purity ethic. “Property” refers to “something which is understood as an extension of the self, so that a violation of my property is a violation of my personhood” (147). Rape is thus a property violation, and “as there is nothing more precious to us than our humanness, there is no sexual sin more serious than rape” (248). Christians are to respect the sexual property of others and practice detachment from their own. According to Countryman,

the gospel allows no rule against the following, in and of themselves: masturbation, nonvaginal heterosexual intercourse, bestiality, polygamy, homosexual acts, or erotic art and literature. The Christian is free to be repelled by any or all of these and may continue to practice his or her own purity code in relation to them. What we are not free to do is impose our codes on others. Like all sexual acts, these may be genuinely wrong where they also involve an offense against the property of another, denial of the equality of women and men, or an idolatrous substitution of sex for the reign of God as the goal of human existence. (243-44)

In addition, children must be respected. Sexually, a child must be considered his or her own property.

While this book contributes to our understanding of some sexual practices in the Bible and prompts us to consider how our notions of sexuality may be shaped—more than we realize—by tradition and non-Christian philosophical currents, it is not recommended as a guide to sexual ethics today. Countryman’s thesis as such—that the biblical texts on sexuality reflect either a purity ethic or a property ethic—is not the problem. Indeed, his emphasis on property offers a refreshingly new way to look at the Scriptures, and is instructive in showing the harm caused by certain sexual attitudes and practices. His understanding of purity, however, is insufficient. To view certain elements of purity codes as relative to different cultures is valid, but to consider *all* proscriptions in such codes as forbidden only because they are “dirty” for that culture is to understand purity too narrowly. The prohibitions against incest, adultery, homosexual acts, and bestiality in Leviticus 18 and 20 are, to be sure, part of a holiness code based in part on a purity ethic. But the punishment for these sins is death, not washings, times of uncleanness, the offering of sacrifices, or even banishment from the community, as with most other offenses in the code. This points to a major difference in these matters, and indicates that the purity they are meant to preserve is something which issues from the character of God for all

cultures across time and national boundaries. The widespread expressions of divine disfavor toward such practices throughout the Hebrew-Christian scriptures and the almost unanimous opinion of Jews and Christians from the first century until quite recently support the intrinsic impurity of these practices.

The book also reveals the is/ought fallacy at work. After suggesting that, “at the present time, the church would perhaps be better advised not to solemnize marriages at the inception of the relationship itself, but to wait a period of some years before adding its blessing,” the author adds that this suggested solution “blurs the distinction between marriage and nonmarital sexual liaisons—a blurring demanded by the actual nature of marriage in our times...” (263). In other words, we must change the standard because people today are not living up to it. The “is” of present society becomes an “ought,” even though it is logically impossible to derive a normative statement from a statement of facts.

Rather than relying on *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, the pastor, teacher, student, and Christian layperson would do far better to study such authors as Richard Lovelace (*Homosexuality and the Church*), Stanley Grenz (*Sexual Ethics*), and Gordon Wenham (*The Book of Leviticus*).

Robert V. Rakestraw
Bethel Theological Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota

THE HISTORICAL JESUS: THE LIFE OF A MEDITERRANEAN PEASANT, by John Dominic Crossan. San Francisco: Harper, 1991. Pp. 544. \$30.00.

Crossan’s book consists of an introductory Overture and Prologue, three “Parts,” and several concluding appendices. After listing various Jesus traditions in the Overture and discussing his presuppositions and methodology in the Prologue, Crossan gives a sociological and anthropological analysis of the social and political events of Jesus’ day in “Brokered Empire” (chs. 1-4) and “Embattled Brokerage” (chs. 5-10). This then leads to his reconstruction of the historical Jesus in “Brokerless Kingdom” (chs. 11-17). In the first, and most important, appendix, Crossan lists the various Jesus traditions according to his dating of the sources as well as the number of sources in which the tradition is attested. Thus, “106 *Fasting and Wedding* [1/2]” refers to the 106th tradition in this list. It appears in the first or earliest strata of the tradition and is attested to by two different sources.

The Jesus that results from Crossan’s analysis is “a *peasant Jewish Cynic* [his italics]” who preached a non-eschatological kingdom of God which was egalitarian and non-patriarchal. He sees the title “Son of Man” as a creation of the early church (primarily the author of Mark) based upon Daniel 7:13. The Lord’s Supper was not a “Last Supper” because no explicit reference to the bread and wine being the body and blood of Christ is found in *Didache* 9-10. The Lord’s Supper is rather a symbol of the “open commensality” of the kingdom in which Jesus took the role of a female by taking, blessing, breaking and giving the bread at this meal. The Lord’s Prayer is judged to be inauthentic because its three-fold attestation (Matt, Luke, *Didache*) is not great enough and because it would assume that Jesus had enlisted disciples. Finally, the resurrection and nature miracles are seen as “credal statements about ecclesiastical authority.”

It is evident that Crossan’s reconstruction of the historical Jesus is quite radical. It is very

much like the products of the liberal quest for the historical Jesus written in the nineteenth century. The major difference involves his use of the technical terminology of present-day sociological and anthropological research. The results, however, are the same—a “secular” Jesus whose purpose is less directed to God than society, who uses no Christological titles, who sees no atonement in his death, and who is qualitatively no different from other men. Such a Jesus is predetermined from the outset because Crossan’s methodology is closed to the possibility of the supernatural. (It is strange that in his “Prologue” discussing presuppositions and methodology, this most important presupposition concerning openness or closedness toward the supernatural is not discussed.)

Other aspects of this work are also debatable. One involves Crossan’s evaluation of the primary sources available for the investigation of the historical Jesus. His three most important sources are: the Gospel of Thomas; a “Cross Gospel” which is hypothetically reconstructed from the Gospel of Peter; and the “Secret Gospel of Mark.” As Crossan himself admits, the latter is known only from a letter of Clement of Alexandria (150-215), which is in turn known only from a seventeenth-century fragment, which is known only from a photograph. It seems highly dubious to prefer such sources over Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John! The new way in which the criterion of attestation is used is also questionable. This, one of the most objective criteria for authenticity, is now defined as involving attestation by such hypothetical sources as the “Cross Gospel” and “The Secret Gospel of Mark” rather than Mark, Q, “M,” “L,” or John.

A final question that must be raised involves the relationship of the social sciences and historical research. Over half of this book is devoted to a discussion of recent research in the social sciences. But can the categories of behavior established by sociology and anthropology determine what could or could not have happened in history, as Crossan assumes? If so, does this not exclude the possibility of a really unique Jesus, a Jesus whose orientation is vertical (i.e., theological) and not just horizontal (i.e., sociological)? What if Jesus were one of a kind, a *sui generis*? It would seem that the establishment of what has happened in the past is the task of the his-

torian, who must be open to the possibility of events outside his or her normal experience. The social disciplines then build on the results of such historical research and seek to analyze and categorize the facts of history. Crossan essentially reverses this procedure and determines what could or could not have occurred in history, i.e., in the life of Jesus, by means of his sociological categories.

This book is an example of how the old quest for the historical Jesus is still alive. The errors of the past quest which made of Jesus an image of the investigator are repeated. Crossan is well aware of the errors in the old quest, but he repeats them nonetheless. A Jesus who advocates egalitarian commonality, deliverance from demonic imperialism (i.e., colonialism), institutes an inclusive meal of open commensality, etc., is more a reflection of the author than the Jesus of the first century. For those closed to the supernatural, the Jesus of the quest (whether in the nineteenth, twentieth, or twenty-first century) will always be a stranger and an enigma. The Christ of faith, i.e., the Jesus of the gospel, can never have essential continuity with the non-supernatural Jesus of such a quest.

Robert H. Stein

Bethel Theological Seminary
St Paul, Minnesota

DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE IN THE EARLY CHURCH, by Stuart G. Hall. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992. Pp. 262.

In the early centuries of its existence the church grew not only in number and in influence, but also in its understanding of itself, its mission and its beliefs. The theological controversies, particularly in the fourth and fifth centuries, underwent involved philosophical as well as historical developments. To write a book on the formation of Christianity in this period, from the second generation of believers to the Council of Chalcedon in 451, is an arduous task. To write such a history in a short 245 pages and still create a work which is thorough yet understandable and interesting is a testimony to the expertise and capability of the author. Such is the case with Stuart Hall's *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church*.

The book is divided into twenty-two chapters, the first eleven dealing with the period before Constantine. Chapter 1 places the nascent church in its historical setting, giving very brief descriptions of the societal and political environment of the Roman Empire and paying particular attention to the secular religious setting. Early relations between church and state are touched upon here, including a discussion of the problem of the extent and legal basis of persecution. The next two chapters are concerned with the church as an organization, including mission, membership, rituals, and offices. The emergence of various teachers and movements of the second century are described next: the "unorthodox"—Marcion, the gnostics, the Montanists; and the "apologetic"—Justin, et. al.

The chronicle continues with chapters on the careers and contributions of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyprian, and the Alexandrians Clement and Origen; they also discuss significant ecclesiastical developments, e.g., the increasing authority of bishops (particularly in Rome and other important cities), various doctrinal disputes, and the persecutions of the second and third centuries.

Chapter 12 begins the story of the era when Christianity became the favored, and eventually the official, religion of the empire. Here, and in the next four chapters, the great persecution of 303-13, the rise to power of Constantine, and the progressive intertwining of the affairs of church and state which began in this period is described, as well as the fervent trinitarian and christological battles. A break from the accounts of the theological conflicts and councils comes in chapter 17 with a portrayal of the rise of monasticism and accounts of the lives of Jerome, Rufinus, John Chrysostom, and Augustine. Chapters 20-21 take up the christological issues again and report on the achievements of the Councils of Ephesus (431, 449) and Chalcedon. A final chapter summarizes and comments on the important developments of the period and reconnects the

theological controversies with their early (NT) roots and modern ramifications.

This is a student-friendly book. Many of the section/chapter headings focus on important personalities. The chapters themselves are short and the author has chosen a format without

footnotes or endnotes. These last two characteristics have their drawbacks, of course. At times the condensation necessary to keep the descriptions brief seemed to result either in a bit too much generalization and not enough specific data (e.g., on the variations and developments in the meaning and practice of baptism and the eucharist during this period) or in a lack of clarity (this occurred rarely, primarily in the sections dealing with the theological conflicts and events of the fourth and fifth centuries, admittedly complex situations). The absence of notes can be frustrating for more advanced students and scholars who would like to know the reasons and sources for certain of the author's interpretations and statements. One could also imagine a helpful map and a chart or two (names/dates) in an appendix. Yet I think that the benefits for classroom use in particular outweigh these problems, for the student is provided with an introduction which touches all the pertinent issues in a responsible, accurate manner, but somehow manages to avoid the pitfalls of being boring and/or hopelessly confusing. In fairness to Hall, he does provide helpful information throughout the book in parenthetical form including dates, translation of terms, some references to primary sources and their locations in Stevenson's *A New Eusebius and Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, and the location of previous discussions within his text. At the end of the book he also provides a list of works for further reading, both on the general subject of the book as well as on the topics of the individual chapters—these are short, but well chosen, up to date, and annotated. And beyond the data Hall also describes briefly the history and current state of research on particular topics (e.g., Bauer on heresy [ch.4]; the relationship of the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople [ch. 16]) and is not afraid to offer his own opinions where he disagrees with the consensus. Interspersed in the text as well are references that show how the issues of the ancient period are still a part of the Church today. Conversely the author also informs present issues by the circumstances of this period. For example there are several brief but positive mentions of the role of women in early Christianity and their repression in accordance with the society at large (especially p. 174); Hall is cursory yet sympathetic toward this issue, seemingly constrained by the introductory and limited nature of his book.

This book would function best as an introductory text in an undergraduate, seminary, or church setting where there is an instructor to help clarify and ensure comprehension of the particularly complicated points, where the primary sources can themselves be read and discussed, and where the suggested readings can be tailored and supplemented for the particular emphases of a class or the needs of individual students. I applaud Hall's effort in making such an excellent tool available.

Nancy Pardee
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH, by Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P. Nashville: Abingdon, 1990. Pp. 464.

If an individual, church group, or college or seminary class wishes to buy only one book as a study of Christian spirituality, both Protestant and Catholic, this is one volume which should be considered. Many important movements, along with their founders and reformers, have been presented in historical order in this very usable collection. These include the early church, western monastic life, the mendicants, *Devotio Moderna*, and Ignatian, Carmelite, major

Protestant, and black spiritualities as well as the feminine dimension in spirituality (devotion to Mary and the influence of women in the Middle Ages).

Of course, a one-volume work has to sacrifice some subjects. Unfortunately the editors decided that, except for brief references under the early church, the very im-

portant category of Orthodox spirituality had to be omitted. This is particularly sad since this tradition offers a balance to western theology and the spiritual life. Also missing is the down-to-earth spirituality of the Quakers who are particularly important today since they have always connected contemplation to apostolic action, an approach beginning to be seen as important by some who have traditionally emphasized either one or the other. Benedict and his rule, doubtless the most influential in western monasticism, have been allotted a page and a half, and Augustine's contributions have been confined to Augustinian monasticism. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and Eckhart could not be included.

In addition to generally good writing, the book's greatest asset is its combination of history and/or theology with a practicum for each section. Thus the reader is not only given information and theory, but an opportunity to experience, in a group setting, a means of devotion appropriate to the subject.

No one can read the text carefully without seeing how the theology and practice of Christian spirituality has changed through time and responded to varying circumstances. From the days when men and women moved to the desert because they thought Christianity, as a state religion, had become too easy and cheap, the reader moves to leaders like Basil, concerned with building a hospital and a hostel for victims of an earthquake and Augustine who insisted that monasteries be in urban areas. Another move outward is made when the mendicant orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans, decide to go wherever they are needed, renouncing the wealth which many orders had gained, and creating orders for laity.

Laity continued to find a religious discipline and an effective way to serve others through participation in Geert Groote's *Devotio Moderna* and other completely lay groups in the late Middle Ages. Then heresies began to abound, and the hierarchical church became afraid and restrictive. It was not until the sixteenth century when Luther's "priesthood of all believers" was embraced and the followers of Ignatius of Loyola founded Marian Congregations or Sodalties that laity had the freedom, once again, to assist the church and serve others in its name as they endeavored to live and grow in the Spirit. All through these fifteen hundred years and in the five hundred that followed, one reads over and over the word, "reform." It becomes obvious that the great spiritual leaders recognized the perennial need of reevaluation and necessary redirection in human ways of following God.

The origin of the book actually was a series of addresses with practicums given by invited scholars to the Washington (D. C.) Theological Consortium, beginning in 1985. The authors of each section were appropriately chosen for their expertise. This naturally has produced essays with varied emphases in theology, history, and/or the pieties of discipline, devotion, and apostolic action.

Luther's spirituality is presented by Bengt Hoffman, Professor Emeritus in Ethics at Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary. He deals with both scholastic theology and Lutheran pietism. Luther's balance between cognitive understanding of God and the affective experience

of God are presented clearly. So too is Luther's important understanding of the relationship of "God *for* us" and "God *in* us."

I have personally used this book in teaching both college and graduate school courses. Unfortunately the exigencies of time necessitated the omission or shortening of the practicums. In a church setting, where a group could choose to cover a few subjects in two or three month's time, the practicum could be extremely valuable and should not be omitted, since actual participation is doubtless the most effective way of appreciating the worship of other Christians. To facilitate this, it would sometimes be helpful to bring in someone who knows that tradition well.

Grace Adolphsen Brame
Villanova University and Chestnut Hill College
Pennsylvania

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JESUS THE CHRIST, by Brennan Hill. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991. Pp. 308. \$14.95.

Professor Brennan Hill states in the introduction to his book, "There is a need for more resources that can bring the best of modern scholarship on Jesus Christ to students in a 'user-friendly' fashion" (1). He successfully accomplishes this task.

The strengths of the book are fourfold. First, the author writes with clarity and eloquence about a topic that can all too easily become garbled, unintelligible, and strapped with vocabulary that often relegates it to the realm of experts. Second, the reader is constantly challenged to synthesize the material and information that has been put forth by the author.

The third strength of the book is perhaps its greatest. Three very distinct, serious, and contemporary challenges to traditional christology within the larger discussion are presented. He addresses Jesus' unique mission to and respect for women; he invites questions concerning the nurture and care of creation based on his fresh christological perspective; and finally, he closes the book on the theme of Jesus Christ as liberator. His chapter on liberation perspectives in modern Catholic theology is an excellent study of the topic, as well as a witness to Hill's willingness to go beyond the traditionally safe path in regard to traditional Catholic christology.

Finally, one should note the author's mastery of a wide range of topics and historical information and his clear elucidation of the differing approaches to this information in past and present scholarship.

Anyone who has ever been a student knows what it is like to be overwhelmed by new information, vocabulary, names, dates, and types of interpretation. The new student of christology will also feel this way. Whether it be an undergraduate, a lay leader, or an adult in a church sponsored course, christology can be very confusing. Hill manages to make it less so. For example, in the excellent background information which he provides in the very first chapter of the book, the reader is introduced to the places that Jesus knew—Nazareth, Galilee, Palestine—and to the people Jesus knew—Romans, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots. What might have been only a jumble of groups and towns becomes instead a clear and useful arena in which we see the historical Jesus move in his life's ministry.

He is equally successful in explaining the various approaches to the study of Jesus Christ.

He discusses source, form, and redaction criticism as well as the literary method, the liberation approach, and the feminist perspective. Again, the reader is given a clear picture of the analytical options and is also afforded the luxury of a concise introduction to how some great theologians have wrestled with the question of the relationship between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

The greatest contribution that this book makes to the christological discussion lies in its creative yet faithful linkage of contemporary questions to the person of Jesus Christ. This is done in connection with the question, "How did Jesus treat women?" The author claims that Jesus was an advocate for women, and that although he never went so far as to discredit the hierarchical culture into which he was born, he did refuse to treat women as property or servants, but rather as equals.

The author also takes issue with those who claim that the work of the early church was performed only by male apostles.

The disciple model consisting of both sexes, seems to be the one followed in the early communities....This sending forth of women disciples to teach had no precedent in Jesus' time. Jesus' choice of women followers was indeed one of the most radical moves that he made in his career. (114)

Hill is very clear where he stands on the status of women with Jesus, but he makes no clear statements regarding his view on the role of women in the church today. He is less cautious and more creative when he writes about the contemporary struggle to unite the life and work of Jesus Christ to the impending destruction of our planet and its creatures. He is quick to point to the separation between spiritual and scientific realities that occurred as a result of the enlightenment. He is equally strong in his critique of those who would make the

Christ of creation into a "galactic" Christ, reminding us that each step we take in claiming Christ for all creation must be solidly rooted in the Jesus of history.

Rather than focusing on the historical Jesus as a man of nature, a saint of simple non-destructive living, Hill recognizes that the resurrection is the place to begin the dialogue between our environmental concerns and our faith. He identifies three ecological implications in the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

First of all, the resurrection affirms the sacredness of the physical, of materiality. The resurrection also discloses God's power over death and destruction. Finally, the resurrection experiences portray a solidarity among Jesus and his followers, a bonding in the Spirit that seems to transform them from fearful, on-the-run persons into an inspired and dauntless community of disciples. (146)

Rooting ecological concerns in the resurrection provides a hopeful paradigm for us all.
Mary Elise Lowe
St. Paul, Minnesota

CONSTRUCTING A PUBLIC THEOLOGY: THE CHURCH IN A PLURALISTIC CULTURE, by Ronald F. Thiemann. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991. Pp. 176.

In the introduction to *Constructing a Public Theology*, Ronald F. Thiemann presents three situations: a pastor is asked to counsel a mother and her pregnant daughter who disagree on whether the daughter should have an abortion; the vice-chair of the church council in a multiethnic congregation must preside over a meeting that responds to the discord occasioned by the council president's political activities; a pastor seeks an appropriate role with parishioners who refuse corrective surgery for their newborn diagnosed with Downs syndrome. Thiemann uses these cases and the moral dilemmas they present to call for a public theology in a pluralistic culture where people no longer agree on the beliefs and principles that guide our moral reasoning nor how to apply them in specific situations.

In this book of ten essays, most of them published elsewhere (one in *Word & World* in 1983), Thiemann looks toward a public theology that is grounded in the biblical narrative and the practices of the Christian community, one that addresses issues of public significance from the standpoint of faith. The piety that informs these essays is that of the Christian who says, "I believe that I may understand." Public theology, as Thiemann understands it, begins not with radical doubt about the meaning of human existence, but with the assumption that questions of an ultimate nature "have been answered positively by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ" (22).

Assuming an authentic Christian faith as the basis for a public theology does not lead Thiemann to argue for Christian hegemony in the shaping of public policy or the constructing of "a new Christendom." Neither does he advocate a "benign moral relativism." He does not long for a less pluralistic culture; in fact, he is particularly eloquent about both the realities and the moral benefits of pluralism and finds it "corrosive" only when special interest groups pursue their political aims without reference to the common good.

Thiemann distinguishes his position from that of other theologians engaged in conversation about public theology, and, in doing so, offers a brief survey of some prominent themes in the discussion. He fears that David Tracy's emphasis on philosophical argument and metaphysics will undercut the distinctive voice of Christian theology. He is concerned by Stanley Hauerwas's attacks on liberalism as "the politics that know not God" and by George Lindbeck's pessimism about postmodern culture and skepticism about the possibility of Christian involvement in public life. Thiemann acknowledges the contribution that Alasdair MacIntyre has made to his thinking, particularly in *Beyond Virtue*, but disagrees with him emphatically that the contemporary inability to reach moral consensus can only dictate a retreat to local communities:

If the virtues and values crucial to our common life are being maintained within

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local communities, including communities of faith, then for that very reason we are under obligation to enter the public debate, using those moral resources, not to dominate, but to contribute to those conversations that will determine the policies that will shape our common human future. (36)

Thiemann's theological creativity is evident in the variety of essays in the volume. In "Radiance and Obscurity in Biblical Narratives," he denies that, in light of multiple interpretations of the text, ethical interpretation can be based on nothing other than personal preference in the face of multiple interpretations, and he sets aside the false hope that one unambiguous response can be wrung from the text. In "The Unnamed Woman at Bethany," he reinforces that double theme by pointing to the variety of responses to Jesus' ministry and to his own conviction that Scripture promises a "followable" narrative, invitation rather than coercion, and "texts that are inherently ambiguous and patient of multiple readings" (71). In "Karl Barth and the Task of Constructing a Public Theology," Thiemann interprets Barth's theology as particularly applicable to the development of public theology. After a long introduction devoted to Lutheran and Reformed Church disagreements over the Barmen Declaration, Thiemann points to Barth not as one who eschews any relationship between church and culture, but rather an *eternal* covenant between them. In Barth's insistence on the knowledge of God as indirect, says Thiemann, "a space is opened that can only be filled by the imaginative act of the theologian" (88). There is an essay about worship and public responsibility and two concluding discussions about theological education and religious studies and their implications for a public theology.

Two of the essays, "I have Heard the Cry of My People" and "Piety, Narrative, and Christian Identity," were originally addressed to Lutheran audiences. In the first Thiemann offers an interpretation of Lutheran theology that promotes concern for social justice: "We seek justice freely because we have been freely justified" (110). In the latter he insists on narrative that reflects the temporal nature of theology as a crucial category in uniting theory and practice in the Christian community.

This is not a book about strategy. Thiemann does not return, except obliquely, to the cases he presents in the introduction. He does not set forth a single way to understand church/state relations. "The church," he says, "cannot escape the inevitable ambiguity of the concreteness of its own life and that of its nation" (41). Finally, he does not address at great length the fragmentation of Christian perspectives on public issues evident to both insiders and outsiders, although he implies a lot and does not make it difficult to read between the lines.

I mention what Thiemann doesn't do not to suggest a lack in this particular volume but to forestall false expectations. I find the book intellectually satisfying and emotionally provocative. This is a hopeful book. It stirs the longing that is always within me that theology be an essential component of public life. I would like it to be impossible for us to proceed as a nation without calling in theologians just as we call in economists or politicians or sociologists—not to say "yes" or "no" to policies that have already been formulated, but to say in the beginning stages, "We can offer some ways to think about these things. We have questions to ask and stories to tell." Thiemann offers a multifaceted vision of how this might be possible.

Mary Farrell Bednarowski
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities
New Brighton, Minnesota

THE DESCENT OF GOD: DIVINE SUFFERING IN HISTORY AND THEOLOGY, by Joseph M. Hallman. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991. Pp. 150.

There is increasing recognition that Christian faith entails recognition of the suffering of

God. In *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford, 1988) Paul Fiddes has gathered supporting witnesses as diverse as Barth, Moltmann, and Hartshorne. Terence Fretheim's *The Suffering of God* (Fortress,

1984) has made the case regarding the Old Testament witness. And in his widely cited *God and Human Suffering* (Augsburg, 1986) Douglas John Hall has written evocatively of how God works to transform us by entering into our suffering. Now Joseph Hallman has contributed a helpful historical voice to this growing choir.

Hallman does not back down from the conviction that somehow Christian theology must affirm the suffering of God. There is a clear theological agenda driving this study. But it is most helpful that he does not back away from the complexity of the historical material. He is looking for a suffering God in the patristic texts and finding support in what he acknowledges is only a "minority of writers" (xii). But in many majority figures Hallman can point to painful struggles to find a way somehow to affirm the biblical witness to a God who descends, suffers, and dies.

Thus it is not some general world view or doctrine of God which is decisive here, but rather nothing less than the reality of the incarnation. Hallman cites Tertullian: "The Platonic objection that because God cannot change God cannot become human lies behind the Marcionite argument against Jesus' full humanity" (63). And he states succinctly the importance of the two-nature Chalcedonian christology "lest the God who became human in Jesus did not really come at all (Arius) or did not become fully human (Apollinaris)" (79).

In five highly compressed chapters Hallman leads the reader on a whirlwind tour of the Greek philosophers, the Alexandrian response, the God of the Latins, the Orthodox response to the Arians, and Hilary of Poitiers and St. Augustine. The structure of the discussion works back and forth between the biblical witness to the suffering God, on the one hand, and the unyielding Greek philosophical affirmation of the superiority of immutability on the other. (Happily, he does at least briefly consider "immutability proof texts," 20-22, and acknowledges that "if one appreciates the greatness of the minds of Greek philosophers, it is no wonder that their view of God remained fundamentally unchallenged by Christian theologians in the West through the Middle Ages up to and including the Reformation" (127).

Some of the theological struggles will be familiar: God's impassibility is protected because God's suffering is useful, salvific, and freely chosen (*Ad Theopompum*), God suffers only in a happy way and cannot become less or more (Tertullian), the kenosis is merely of divine form, not nature (Hilary), God judges without a feeling of anger and does so eternally, not as a temporal response (Augustine). Throughout, Hallman discerns the rising shadow of logical contradiction, though he does not offer a full scale discussion of logical criteria.

In his final chapter Hallman suggests that it is "easy to understand how the distancing of God from the cosmos and from human affairs in the theological tradition prepared the way for the Enlightenment, the rise of modern science, deism, secularism and modern atheism" (127). He is convinced that "the Christian tradition has always needed a different philosophical point of departure" (*ibid.*) and so turns to Hegel and Whitehead, who within idealistic and empirical traditions respectively "elucidate the basic Christian intuition concerning incarnation, that the reality of God is perfection in change" (*ibid.*). With this he places his study on the ongoing theological agenda, acknowledging of Hegel and Whitehead that "their theologies are far from

perfect and need further study and development” (145).

This book does not itself take up that further theological work, but it has prepared for that effort by the cumulative effect of the historical review. As one sets about that further work, it will be important to bear in mind regarding Hallman’s newer philosophical resources (are they “points of departure”?) (1) the differences between the strongly monistic cast of Hegel’s thought and the strongly dualistic cast of Whitehead’s, and (2) the similarity in their work in that a general metaphysical commitment seems to be the controlling force. Strangely, this seems to represent something of a retreat from the particularity of the “God who descends.” It is to be hoped that current theological reflection concerning the suffering God will learn what can be well taught by Hegel and Whitehead,

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but that the “first order” testimonies of the reality of relationship with God will be the central resource in this effort.

Paul R. Sponheim
Luther Northwestern Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota

THE ELIADE GUIDE TO WORLD RELIGIONS, ed. by Mircea Eliade and Ioan P. Couliano. San Francisco: Harper, 1991. Pp. 316. \$22.95.

In some ways this is an odd book, but it has its use nonetheless.

Apparently this book in some form was initially conceived by Eliade himself. He desired to have a one-volume condensation of his three-volume *History of Religious Ideas*. He was not able to get at the task until early 1986, shortly before his death in April of that year. By that time about all that had been completed was the decision for its present arrangement: thirty-three religions or groupings of associated religions (such as African or North American religions) arranged in alphabetical order. These descriptive essays, running from 3 to 30 or more pages, which comprise the bulk of the book, are supplemented by a 42-page index partially annotated. It is therefore handy as a reference for a wide range of religious phenomena. As for the essays themselves, there is no obvious or consistent arrangement of the material within each essay just as there is no obvious criterion for the selection in the first place. Of course, it may not be by accident that over a third of the entries, made up of mainly short essays and therefore less than a third of the bulk, is devoted to Indo-European religious traditions, a particular favorite in Eliade’s work. Despite these imponderables, there is useful material summing up a wide range of religious data. Perhaps as helpful as anything are the up-to-date selective bibliographies at the end of each chapter.

As already indicated, it is somewhat of an odd book. It is not clear what the book is trying to accomplish, other than to provide data, and necessarily of a very sketchy kind, that might be accomplished by a good one-volume encyclopedia of religions. The essays themselves do not show anything that I could discern as distinctively Eliadian in character. The reason for that seems clear. <|>Ioan Couliano, in the event of Eliade’s death, took over the responsibility to see that the essays were written. And the materials on which they were based were not just Eliade’s

own work mentioned above, but probably even more so the lengthy articles by numerous people appearing in the multi-volume *Encyclopedia of Religions* of which Eliade had been the editor-in-chief.

To be sure, in the introduction Couliano attempts to give a methodological rationale for the work which goes under the fancy name of “cognitive methodology.” But as far as I could see, the methodology was invisible throughout the book save for its enunciation in the introduction. Perhaps there is one exception. In the discussion of trinity and christology in the essay on “Christian Religion” there is a strained effort to make the argument that these doctrines can be reduced in all their forms to simple genetic rules, perhaps not unlike the generative linguistics of Noam Chomsky or the pre-given structure of logic in Levi-Strauss’s work. So we read, “We can say that Jesus Christ is part of a multidimensional *fractal* that evolves according to certain rules.... [W]e might treat these rules as binary.” This argument is intended to help clarify what all the ancient controversies were about. In any case, this “cognitive methodology” accounts for the commonalities that run throughout the religions by virtue of a pre-existing logic or system of relations that exists in the human mind. This system is *a priori*, autonomous, and not merely the reflection or refraction of some other level of reality—biological, economic, or whatever—or perhaps these rather are refractions of the system? To some degree this way of stating things reflects Eliade’s interest in the imaginative worlds of symbols that form sometimes elaborate networks in his writing. But Couliano seems to reduce this to a manipulable technique—something Eliade never did to my knowledge. And so, the presumed “importance” served by this “guide to religion,” according to Couliano, is that by means of the “transformations” of “religion [which] acts like `software’ or a `program’ within

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human society,” we might be able to “reprogram” the “impending future of societies or social groups.” Well, best wishes! Fortunately, as already said, this manipulative agenda, save for the one exception I noted above, was mercifully absent from the text of the essays.

Other than this I do not have much to say. The essays are for the most part useful in giving basic information, though in some cases it may be too sketchy to be really useful. The longer essays in particular generally provide a helpful thumbnail sketch of the traditions being treated. Perhaps the most important use of this book will be to tempt the inquiring person (for instance, someone interested in “North American Religions”) to seek out further information in those areas that intrigue or attract one’s interest, perhaps beginning with one or more of the suggestions given in the short bibliographies attached to each essay.

This book can be useful to have in church libraries.

Paul Varo Martinson
Luther Northwestern Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota

WORK IN THE SPIRIT: TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF WORK, by Miroslav Volf. New York: Oxford University, 1991. Pp. 272.

Considering a traditional doctrine of vocation “both inapplicable to modern societies and

theologically inadequate” (xvii), Miroslav Volf argues for theological reflections on human work pneumatologically based; he contends such correlates better to contemporary life and livelihoods *and* more appropriately reflects Christian teaching and experience. His argument establishing a need for such theological reflection is persuasive and the text offers an engaging conversation concerning the meaning of work, the many crises which arise through both work and inadequate understandings of its place in human life, and a spirit-based theology of work.

In a rather lengthy analysis of the “contemporary world of work,” Volf identifies a gradual transformation of work coinciding with shifts in society’s chief fields of work: agricultural, industrial, and information/service. Recognizing each successive period augments rather than replaces its precursor, Volf prudently examines these strands which are woven into the basic garment of work in today’s world. He argues this rapid transformation generated a “crisis of work” which surfaces now in the predominance of negative attitudes toward work and severe unemployment; concomitant are issues of discrimination, dehumanization, and worker exploitation—all of which find a place in a vicious circle where work alienates persons from themselves, their community, and God.

Returning to his doctoral dissertation theme analyzing and giving theological evaluation of Marx’s understanding of work, Volf laces the present text with a helpful recapitulation of the basic and formative social theories of Karl Marx compared to those of Adam Smith. Because Volf’s book is as much a rationale for as a proposal of theological reflection on work, this discussion well serves readers by offering a background comparison of models whose basic tenets continue to dominate economic life and thought today. Volf’s analysis of these does not argue for or against either as a whole, but traces aspects of each one’s theories which bear significant impact on understanding work.

Having explored the changes in work and attitudes towards work, and having assessed dominant theories of work in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Volf turns, in the second half of his text, to the heart of his purpose: he contends that the “ultimate significance of work” and its “fundamental meaning” rest in an understanding of God’s gifting humanity with clear purpose and a variety of abilities which enable the fulfillment of that purpose. He writes,

The Spirit of God calls, endows, and empowers Christians to work in their various vocations. The charismatic nature of all Christian activity is the *theological* basis for a pneumatological understanding of work....The significance and meaning of Christians’ work lie in their cooperation with God in the anticipation of the eschatological *transformatio mundi*. (113, 117)

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Insofar as one agrees that the “new heaven and new earth” of God’s reign are the ends to which the Spirit works, this sense of cooperation with God by human beings surely invests human action with profound meaning and importance. But one may wonder if mundane jobs with incidental tasks can be assumed into this ordering. Although all too briefly, Volf addresses this concern maintaining that when considered as an exercising of the Spirit’s gifts, “ordinary” work has “fundamentally the same dignity” (125) as any other work.

This conceptualizing of work without hierarchical valuations is one of the few aspects of Luther’s notion of vocation Volf wishes to retain. He extols the linking Luther made of

Christians and work, regardless of their stations in life and further appreciates the greater value thus ascribed to work. Still, Volf says,

The way Luther (and especially later Lutheranism) developed and applied this basic insight is, however, problematic. Luther's notion of vocation has serious limitations, both in terms of its applicability to modern work, and in its theological persuasiveness.... (107)

Volf contends that Luther's view (and thus he writes the "dominant Protestant doctrine of vocation") has six major flaws:

- (1) it is indifferent toward alienation in work;
- (2) the differentiation between spiritual and external callings leaves dangerous ambiguity and confusion;
- (3) its emphasis on serving in one's 'station' might lead easily to an ennobling of dehumanizing work;
- (4) its understanding of external vocation affirms a 'singleness and static nature' inapplicable today;
- (5) it has no room for the now common circumstance of having more than one employment at a given time;
- (6) it too narrowly defines work as employment or one's primary involvement in life. (106-9)

Clearly, some of these evaluate Luther's writings without adequate analysis of the limits of their intended use. All the same, in this critique Volf identifies several solid reasons for, minimally a rewriting of the doctrine of vocation, and more boldly a reconsidering of how one thinks theologically about work.

Once he brings the reader through these arguments for a new and radically different approach to the place of work in Christian life and teaching, Volf posits a compact excursus on the forms of work (employment, leisure, and worship) and their purposes, concluding the book with an analysis of "alienation" in work. He explains this to be "a significant discrepancy between what work should be as a fundamental dimension of human existence and how it is actually performed and experienced by workers" (157). Here he draws "the implications of the pneumatological understanding of work for the seamy underside of the modern world of work" (157).

Even as he exposit these difficulties and explores the painful realities of life in a broken world, Volf maintains that the One who inspires the work and gifts humans with abilities and purpose will also reform these aspects of the sin-laden universe. He writes,

The presence of the Spirit of the resurrected Christ in the whole of creation, and in particular in those who acknowledge Christ's lordship, gives hope that work also *can* be transformed in ever greater correspondence to the ideal. (168)

Ultimately, Volf's well-founded contention is that good work is that for which a person is gifted. It is not enough, though, to be skilled and highly functional; one ought also to experience

a joy in doing one's work to benefit self *and* community. With sufficient theological reflection, this joy could be nurtured in the lives of Christians today through clear proclamation that human work is work in cooperation with God, aiming toward the new creation. When persons begin to see such value in their activity, work will again be invested with a greater share of positive energies and productivity will be measured in terms other than financial bottom lines.

Work in the Spirit is a valuable contribution to a conversation meaningful in the church today. Volf offers it as an attempt to "establish a broad theological framework for much-needed detailed theological and ethical reflection on the problem of work"

(7). It is hoped this first word will inspire a lengthier discussion. To those for whom late-twentieth century society challenges *status quo* theology, working through the book should invite just that.

Joanne Elise Engquist
Faith Lutheran Church
Windham, Maine

MINISTRY WITH FAMILIES IN FLUX: THE CHURCH AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF LIFE, by Richard P. Olson and Joe H. Leonard, Jr. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990. Pp. 192. \$12.95 (paper).

A woman recently asked her pastor, "What does our church think of divorce? How will the church support my family if my husband and I decide to separate?"

Later that same day a father asked the pastor, "How does the church feel about my son living with his girlfriend? Will the church support them?"

How should the pastor answer these questions? How will we answer these questions when they are asked of us? Questions like these are questions that we as clergy and church staff need to be ready to answer. They are questions being asked of us more and more.

Families are changing. The two parent, three children families which represented the great majority of families in our society in the early and middle decades are being rapidly replaced by single parent families, two career couples, singles, child free families, blended families, non-marital families, commuter marriages, cross-cultural families. Families are changing and as they change, they look to their congregations for support and guidance. How will we as church leaders support these new "families"? Does our theology even allow us to care for these families which do not quite fit the created order given in Genesis?

Richard P. Olson and Joe H. Leonard believe that our theology does allow us to support these new families. According to the authors, our theology understands God to be a loving God who continues to create and redeem.

The Bible portrays a God who is continually creating and redeeming, who constantly surprises us by doing new things and resurrecting new life and power into the world...Christians believe that the future toward which God is calling them is always new. It may well be that these insights apply to the family. Pastor

theologian Herbert Anderson writes (*The Family and Pastoral Care*, Fortress Press 1984, pp. 31-32), "God is not finished with the family. As institution it continues to participate in the changing character of all reality....The future of the family is thus open not just in response to the diversity of needs but because God is acting to make something new." (17-18)

Ministry with Families in Flux is written to help church leaders care for the new families which God is continually creating. It is a book written out of the conviction that caring for these families is essential for their life and for the life of the church. "Our belief is that the church can vitally serve the wide diversity of family types yet to come. We believe this will be a marvelous extension of the church. In turn changing families will enrich the life of the church immeasurably" (3).

Ministry with Families in Flux discusses many contemporary families. Included among them are: two career families, unemployed families, single parent families, blended families, interreligious families, families with disabled members, child free families, adoptive foster families and singles. Each discussion begins with a description of the family and the joys and problems this family may experience. The discussion then gives a theological response by answering the question, "How does Scripture respond to this family?" Finally, each discussion concludes with examples of how churches have ministered to this family and offers practical suggestions for church leaders who will respond and care. For example, the chapter on child free families begins with a discussion on the joys and sorrows of being voluntarily or involuntarily free of children. It tells of the freedom that this couple may have in terms of career and time and it tells of the exclusion that this couple may feel if the community in which they belong are pronatalist. The chapter then looks at the child free family theolog-

ically. It states that a man or woman does have worth in the eyes of God without being a mother or father and that a marital relationship does have worth and dignity without children. The chapter concludes by describing a program developed by Central Christian Church in Wichita, Kansas called "Stepping Stones," which brings child free families together for support and encouragement. It gives practical suggestions to congregations, suggestions like exploring with youth the issues of optional parenthood or visiting with young married couples about how one makes decisions about parenthood.

As one who works with families, I found this book to be insightful and challenging. It opened my eyes to the needs and particularities of contemporary families and it called me to be diligent in making sure that congregational worship and programming is inclusive and supportive of all who participate. *Ministry with Families in Flux* also allowed me to look at my own family, to recognize our joys and sorrows and to recognize what a gift family is. This book is worthwhile reading. It will excite church leaders for ministry to the families God has created and is creating.

David A. Wangaard
Trinity Lutheran Church
Moorhead, Minnesota

MINISTRY WITH THE POWER OF JESUS, by Scott W. Gustafson. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick, 1991. Pp. 174. \$14.95 (paper).

In *Ministry with the Power of Jesus*, Scott Gustafson challenges the church to rethink its doctrine of ministry and arrive at a new understanding of ministry that is consistent with the kind of power that Jesus gives to us. He suggests that the organization of the church is more than adiaphora. If our organizing principle rejects the power and authority that Jesus gives to us, we threaten to undermine the gospel. At the very least we tempt God. Therefore, the relationship between ordained and lay ministers of God, our understanding of those two types of ministry, and the way we choose to structure the whole are all important matters, worthy of renewed reflection.

In the introduction to his book Gustafson lays out the basic terms of his argument. He distinguishes between two very different kinds of power that are at work in the world. First, there is the power that the world bestows, which receives its authority from death. This kind of power treats people like objects and forces us to compete with one another for control. In contrast to this first type of power is the power of Jesus. The authority for his power comes from the Father, not from death. It is a power for life, which is characterized by self-emptying servant-hood.

Gustafson contends that too often in the church we have not taken Jesus' power seriously. We have taken death's authority for granted and have operated according to the world's power. This can be seen, for example, in the relationship between clergy and lay people, where the question often becomes: "Who will be the object of whom?" The purpose of his essay is "to construct a doctrine of ministry that rejects death's dominion" (10).

He begins his construction by considering the situation of the church in the world. As he sees it, Jesus' presence is the focal point of the church's life. The church is located in the world because that is where Jesus has chosen to be. The problem for us is that we cannot always be sure where in the world we will encounter Jesus. That, in part, is why we gather to worship. By gathering where Jesus has promised to be present, we are more likely to recognize him when we meet him elsewhere in the world.

Chapter one continues with a provocative discussion of Jesus' promises. Several times in the Gospels, in various contexts, Jesus promises to be present with his disciples. Gustafson suggests that what Jesus promises in these instances is his bodily presence, just as in the sacrament of the altar. If we gather around word and sacrament because we expect to encounter there the presence of Jesus, then it follows that the church should gather also in the other places where Jesus has promised to be, in order to receive the benefits of his presence.

Gustafson himself acknowledges that there are some difficulties with his pro-

posal. In each passage he cites, the meaning of Jesus' promise is somewhat ambiguous and can be interpreted in various ways. Nevertheless, he maintains that we have more to lose by ignoring the promise than by taking the risk of interpreting it incorrectly.

What is most needed is discernment. When we see Jesus' presence as the focal point of the church's life, then discernment becomes the primary task of ministry. This is so, because the presence of Jesus in the world is always ambiguous, even in those places where he has promised that he will be. "Whether we are where we believe Jesus has promised to be present or elsewhere, our task is always to discern Jesus' presence, to testify to that presence and to follow as

disciples” (15). The distinction between ordained ministry and the ministry of the whole people of God can be made in terms of this task of discernment. The ordained are called to “discern, witness, and follow” primarily in those places where Jesus has promised to be present, while the rest of the believers minister in everyday life, in places where Jesus may be present though he has not promised to be.

The discussion in chapter two focuses on ordained ministry. Gustafson denies that any task or activity belongs exclusively to the clergy, asserting that in the life of the church the laity have done all the things normally associated with ordained ministry. The reason that certain tasks have been associated with ordained ministry is that these tasks provide the context in which discernment can happen. Discernment itself is a corporate event requiring the spiritual gifts of all God’s people. The role of the ordained is to make Jesus’ presence in worship as unambiguous as possible, so that the people of God will be better equipped to do their ministry, i.e., recognize Jesus where he has not promised to be, testify to his presence, and follow.

In order to make all of this possible, a charism is given at ordination. The reception of a spiritual gift has nothing to do with an ontological change, but it does imply that ordination is something more than a functional designation. Using 1 Timothy 4:11-16 and the Apostolic Commission as a basis, Gustafson argues that the charism given at ordination is a promise that Jesus’ presence and power will be at work when the ordained person is present in a place where the church is gathered to discern Jesus’ presence.

Chapter three looks at the power and authority of Jesus in connection with ordained ministry. Jesus the master emptied himself and became a servant, and he called his disciples to follow him in servanthood. So long as we presume the power of death, lay people and clergy will be in a competition for control, but the power that Jesus gives offers the basis for a new relationship. Gustafson rejects any notion of apostolic succession that creates a hierarchy in the church, because such a power structure is contrary to the power of Jesus. The ordination of women, on the other hand, can easily be embraced in light of the power and authority that Jesus gives. He attempts to further broaden our notion of who should be ordained by asserting that “good candidates for ordination are those whose calling and vocation routinely place them in the position of performing those tasks that create arenas in which the Body of Christ can discern Jesus’ presence, testify to that presence and follow” (119). In addition to pastors and bishops, the list of candidates might include organists, choir directors, cantors, teachers, and seminarians. It would be to the benefit of the whole church to give these people the charism of ordination for the sake of our mutual work of discernment.

The fourth chapter concludes the book by considering the priesthood of all believers. Unlike the ordained, those who minister in the world must often do their discerning, witnessing, and following in isolation from a community of believers. They will be led to reject some of the “necessities” of life in the world, but as they do so, they will not always have the support of those around them. This will often result in suffering. In order to best serve the gospel, the church should be organized in such a way as to support the people of God in ministry so that they are not left alone. This can best be done by recognizing that the ministries of the ordained and the whole people of God are not in conflict, but rather serve each other.

church. By approaching ministry from the perspective of Jesus' power and presence, he attempts to reform our understanding of ministry and what it means to be church. Whether this perspective results in a doctrine of ministry more faithful to our Lord than that under which we are currently operating is a matter for the church to discern. But if his argument is taken seriously, it could have a profound effect upon the church's life and ministry.

Michael Mueller
Prairie Lutheran Parish
Carthage, South Dakota

SEX IN THE PARISH, by Karen Lebacqz and Ronald G. Barton. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991. Pp. 279. \$14.95 (paper).

MINISTRY AND SEXUALITY: CASES, COUNSELING, AND CARE, by G. Lloyd Rediger. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990. Pp. 156.

“This is a book about sex” (7). With these words, Lebacqz and Barton begin their book entitled *Sex in the Parish*. It is a book about just that, sex in the parish, sexuality and intimacy, pastor and parishioner. For four years, the authors studied intimacy in the parish. Their goal was to provide an ethical framework for sex in the parish. The authors believed that there must be a Christian approach to sexuality, an approach

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which adequately addresses the dynamics of power and oppression in our spiritual and sexual lives.

But what is sexuality? For Lebacqz and Barton, sexuality is “our entire way of being male or female in the world” (10). The most helpful chapter is the first, “The Joy of Sex—in the Parish.” The authors believe that there is a sexual dimension to parish life, that is, God has created us female and male, and that is good. Sexuality then is a life-enhancing gift from God. As a gift from God, sexuality is linked to spirituality and can be one way that God is mediated to humans. God is love; we have been placed in community; we are sisters and brothers; we long for union. All of these statements are part of who we are as God's people and are rooted in Scripture, in tradition, and in our experience. The authors conclude that there is room for the joy of sex—even in the parish.

But because sex is so good and is a part of parish life, attraction can develop between pastor and parishioner. The problem comes when pastors begin to act on this attraction. The next chapters seek to answer the questions, “How do pastors set limits?” and “What makes a behavior right or wrong?” Because of the confusion answering these questions creates, the authors see a need to develop an “explicit ethical framework” for how to deal with sex in the parish. Is there a different ethic for pastors than for parishioners? They argue that all Christians are called into responsible sexuality, but because of the public role clergy have, pastors have a special calling to set an example. Lebacqz and Barton ask questions which lead to this ethical framework, but leave the specifics to the individual denominational judicatory. This is both a strength and a weakness of the book.

Another helpful observation is that our society is a sexist one. That is, women and men do not experience their sexuality in the same way. This means that the power and authority invested in ordained pastors is different for women than for men. It means that the church must also take seriously the situation of single pastors, gay, lesbian, and bisexual pastors. Unfortunately, there was not enough time in the study to look at this aspect of sexuality. It merits yet another study.

This book is helpful reading for pastors, for sexual ethics committees, and for those people, lay and ordained, who work with pastors. It is helpful as we seek not to further repress sexuality and its reality in parishes, but desire to maintain healthy and appropriate expressions of sexuality. It encourages denominations to develop appropriate frameworks to discuss sexuality in the parish.

In the foreword to Lloyd Rediger's *Ministry and Sexuality*, James Nelson states, "the church is an 'uncertain trumpet' when it comes to providing sexual leadership" (x). Both of these books are attempts to encourage the church to provide that sexual leadership. Each book builds from the premise that human sexuality is God's gift. Rediger reminds his readers that there is sexual health among the majority of clergy. He sees the church's primary role as helping the healthy pastors to remain healthy. Yet, over the past 19 years, the author has observed a rise in clergy sexual problems. A lot of this is due, according to Rediger, to societal changes in the role of pastor.

"Maybe there is a third sex—clergy" (1). This is how Rediger begins *Ministry and Sexuality*. Contemporary society still imagines that clergy are "different." They don't have normal appetites and needs and are spiritually and morally superior to ordinary mortals. Of course this is not true. Because clergy are not a third sex, but suffer the same temptations and the same stresses as other people while serving in a public role, there are sexual problems among clergy. Rediger advocates in this book that the church continue to develop open discussion of sexual malfeasance and sexual issues, that clergy take more conscious responsibility for managing their own lives, and that the church develop better systems of support for clergy and congregations. Secrecy and privacy only perpetuate sexual problems. Rediger goes beyond prevention, to challenge churches to establish "systemic strategies for clergy development toward excellence, and for the support of clergy in their lives and ministries" (123).

Rediger's book is helpful for seminaries,

synodical committees, and congregations engaged in developing policies to end clergy sexual malfeasance and encourage and maintain healthy clergy. The book assists those who counsel perpetrators (9), offers ten statements which form the basis for a clergy professional ethic (109), and gives practical guidelines for the prevention of clergy sexual abuse (119).

The challenge of these books is for the ELCA, as a specific denomination, to respond as Lutherans. As a denomination, the ELCA clearly acknowledges the reality of sexual malfeasance among clergy. Synods are developing policies on sexual abuse and are assisting pastors to remain or become healthy. The ELCA has undertaken a study entitled "Human Sexuality and the Christian Faith," which eventually will become a social statement. Rediger assumes that a primary reason for the increase in sexual abuse among clergy is the confusing and changing role clergy have in society. Again, as a denomination, the ELCA can assist clergy and congregations in sifting through the office of ministry. Through the "Visions and Expectations" document used

in the candidacy process, Article V of the Augsburg Confession, Scripture, tradition, the constitution, and the study of ministry, we can help pastors and congregations understand the role of a pastor. But, as a denomination we can always do more. We can acknowledge the reality of cultural and ecclesiastical sexism and its relationship to female and male clergy and parishioners. We can renew our commitment to disciplined study and courageous proclamation.

The weakness of both of these books is not only their non-denominational position but also their concentration on ordained married heterosexual male clergy. Certainly this group constitutes the majority of perpetrators of clergy sexual misconduct. Each book also seeks to celebrate the goodness of sexuality and sexual health among clergy but leaves unanswered questions for those clergy who are single, women, homosexual, or celibate. The books are a helpful beginning to a discussion which must be kept alive so together we, as the church, can be a safe place for all, and pastors can be leaders and examples of “faithful service and holy living.”

Susan Elizabeth Tjornehoj
Northwestern Minnesota Synod
Moorhead, Minnesota