



MOUNTAINS INTO GOLDMINES: ROBERT SCHULLER AND THE GOSPEL OF SUCCESS, by Dennis Voskuil. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983. Pp. xii + 176. \$9.95.

It would seem that one of the popular recreations of clergy groups these days is taking pot-shots at Robert Schuller. One need only drop his name in one of these ecclesial assemblies to elicit a battery of groans, grimaces, and theological bons mots directed against the silver-haired champion of self-esteem and possibility thinking. And woe to the poor soul who has the audacity, naivete, or recklessness to seriously cite Schuller’s thought or practice in support of a point. The resultant loss of face and theological credibility would likely be devastating and instantaneous. In short, it is popular—perhaps even expected—among mainline clergy types to be what the man himself calls a “Schuller Shooter.”

Fully cognizant of this state of affairs, Dennis Voskuil of Hope College, Holland, Michigan (Schuller’s *alma mater*), has ventured into hazardous waters. What he presents is a frankly admiring portrait of the work of Robert Schuller—church growth phenomenon, star of the popular “Hour of Power” television broadcast, and pastor of the 10,000 member “Crystal Cathedral of the Reformed Church in America.” His opening lines set the tone of the book:

America loves success stories. And no one has a better story to tell than Robert Schuller, the ecclesiastical giant who began his ministry preaching to fifty cars from the top of a tarpaper shack at a drive-in theater in Southern California....In many respects, his life sounds like an updated version of the once-popular “rags-to-riches” stories of Horatio Alger: poor farm boy from northwest Iowa becomes pastor of one of the greatest churches in America through prayer, persistence, and possibility thinking. (3)

Strong stuff for Schuller Shooters.

Yet this is not a book to be neglected, just as the phenomenon of Robert Schuller in America is not to be written off with a sneer. If clergy are somewhat discomfited by Schuller’s style, theology, and (dare we suggest it?) success, laity in many churches find him satisfying, inspiring, or at least harmless. The service Professor Voskuil has performed is to present a concise, easily digestible, and eminently readable introduction to Schullerism, its practice and tenets. It is fascinating reading even for the staunchest Schuller Shooter. Voskuil describes in consistently favorable terms the evolution of the “Garden Grove experiment” which moved in an astonishingly short time from a rented outdoor theater to the twenty-million-dollar Crystal Cathedral. He provides a survey of Schuller’s principles of church growth, discusses his excursion into the electronic church, and exposes us in some neat synopses to the two keystones of Schuller’s message, possibility thinking and self-esteem. Also included is an interesting chapter surveying the self-help oriented “gospel of success” in popular American religiosity.

If Voskuil's positive presentation of Schuller's work is the strength of the book, it is also its greatest weakness. The author announces in the preface that it is not his intention to "study the person of Robert Schuller" in biographical fashion, but rather "to come to grips with his ministry and the positive message that gives form and focus to that ministry" (x). He never really achieves this latter goal. In a final chapter he hazards some rather mild criticisms in which it is clear that he would dearly like Schuller to be more theocentric than he seems willing to be. But in the main this book could have been produced under the auspices of the Schuller organization as a publicity piece. And the impression is given that Voskuil has at least a minor interest in supporting his famous co-alumnus from Hope College as a theologian of the conservative

Reformed Church in America. He notes without comment:

While certain that his theological enterprise is a faithful contemporary expression of the traditional Reformed thought he learned at Hope College and Western Theological Seminary, Schuller acknowledges that the theology of self-esteem—at base, a theology of mission—is the North Star of his entire system. (139)

But this is precisely the problem. Is Schuller's notion of self-esteem in continuity with and a valid expression of the gospel, as Schuller boldly contends? Is it the keystone that will "save the church," to which "holy cause" Schuller has given himself (92)? Or is it, as others suspect, merely a quasi-Christian baptism of the American success ethic, egotism, and hubris?

In the end, Voskuil seems content to speak a word of blessing on just about everything Schuller says or does so long as it attracts the unchurched. The operative criterion seems to be that if it sounds evangelical and gains a hearing from those outside the church, it must be gospel. We have seen too many crowds gathered around other religious and quasi-religious leaders to be very comfortable with the idea. That we have a mission to the unchurched is undeniable and an issue to be addressed with vigor, especially in our mainline churches where the sense of mission seems to be languishing. That Schuller's method and message is an answer (as Voskuil argues), or even *the* answer (as Schuller claims), seems to this reviewer at best doubtful.

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THE MIRACLE STORIES OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION, by Gerd Theissen. Trans. by Francis McDonagh. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. Pp. 330. \$27.95.

POWER IN WEAKNESS: NEW HEARING FOR GOSPEL STORIES OF HEALING AND DISCIPLESHIP, by Frederick H. Borsch. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. Pp. 172. \$8.95 (paper).

How are we to handle Jesus' miracles and the gospel miracle stories? In his 1925 book (*The Problem of Miracle in Primitive Christianity*), Anton Fridrichsen indicated that these events

and the accounts of them have caused difficulty almost from the beginning. Augustine and Aquinas eventually set the discussion in terms which were accepted for centuries but which also made inevitable a conflict with rationalism. The debate over miracles is a study in changing questions—from the ancient, “What do they prove or signify?” to the modern, “Since miracles are impossible, what really happened?” The focus of the discussion also varies between the events and the accounts of them. Today the question for most scholars is, “How shall we understand the miracle stories?” Various attempts are being made to move beyond the debates over historicity.

The newly published works by Theissen and Borsch both acknowledge the modern questions about miracles but seek to deal with the accounts as they stand. The former presents a detailed scholarly treatment. The latter has written a series of reflections which seek to take seriously scholarly insights. Both intend to approach each account as a whole. Both efforts are flawed successes.

Theissen intends to expand on the methods of classical form criticism through the insights of structural linguistics. The combination confronts the reader with a “not very communicative terminology” (26) which Theissen does not always adequately explain. An excellent, forty-page introductory essay presents a method which is then illustrated by application to the miracle stories. The three main parts of the book consider aspects of the method: 1. “synchronic”—approaching the texts as forms whose structures can be compared regardless of contemporaneity, 2. “diachronic”—approaching the texts as reproduced narratives, studying the origins and changes in a text during the course of its transmission, and 3. “symbolic actions”—noting the function of the accounts within their larger historical context of conditions, relations and intentions.

The synchronic section analyzes texts as networks of relationships. Theissen

catalogs all the characters, motifs, and themes he finds in miracle stories. He studies both compositional (sequential) connections and other relationships (nonsequential) between the elements cataloged. For example, when healing miracles are compared with exorcisms (two themes) we find a motif of the transmission of healing power rather than a motif of conflict. Theissen shows how the power motif is variously associated with a motif of acclamation of God (90f).

In considering the miracle stories as reproduced narratives, Theissen shows that the development is not direct and linear in the tradition. Variations occur in several ways and on several levels. Characters and motifs may be used and combined in ways which reveal possibilities totally hidden in other variations of the narrative. Or, one motif may be so altered that the whole narrative is effectively restructured. These analyses presume a “generic structure” which unconsciously guided the narrator and which has been taken up into the narrative. Through that implicit structure, subsequent retellings may discern a sense or application which no one in the past saw or could have seen.

In the third part of the book, Theissen considers the function of the miracle stories using socio-historical methods. He has not abandoned historical interest, as he suggests the structural approaches tend to do. However, his attention is not to the classic question, “Did the miracle happen?” but to the quite different issue, “What was the function of the story?” Function is

considered from three directions—social situation, religion in history, and the existential. All three point to the stories' presentation of a new understanding of life. The miracle stories declare human willingness to contradict all normal experience rather than accept the negativity of life.

Theissen's book is a mine of useful information. (The indices are helpful, though too brief and not organized by biblical sources.) The chief frustration for the reader unfamiliar with these methods is the necessity of mastering the whole book before it is possible to dip back into the material on specific texts. On the other hand, it is an accessible introduction to methods which have considerable promise for biblical studies. Although the book does not attempt to provide direct help on the contemporary relevance of these stories, I am convinced it will assist the skilled reader who wishes to explore that relevance.

Power in Weakness by Frederick Borsch is a collection of reflective meditations. Like Theissen, Borsch has written a thoughtful introductory essay on the contemporary interpretation of texts. Unfortunately, his chapters do not consistently fulfill his stated goals. Borsch intends to work with the stories as they stand. "The very form of the narrative [can] help to create a bridge between the two worlds of the biblical past and our present" (xii). He deals with nine texts—six miracle stories, plus the Zacchaeus account, the parable of the good Samaritan, and Paul's comments about his "thorn in the flesh." Each chapter is a discrete unit, but they are linked by the theme indicated in the title, by the format of presentation, and by increasing "theological and personal demands upon the reader" (xvii).

The format is not slavishly followed, but in most cases Borsch prints the text and then presents an "imaginative retelling," supplying some historical information as he does so. Then he looks at each text from a contemporary perspective, with more scholarly material introduced where relevant. He suggests that the reader conclude by looking again at the text itself. The retelling, especially in the early chapters, tends toward allegory and psychologizing. The single verse, Luke 11:14, about the healing of a dumb demoniac becomes a four-page story with such unfounded speculations as this:

It had set Nathan wondering. Why, after all, could he not speak? It did seem as if there was something inside him which he did not understand—a power that was part of him yet alien, that controlled his capacity to communicate....It frightened him to think that something strange might live within him....It would help him to understand why others so avoided him. (3)

Fortunately, Borsch does not attempt such psychological imagining with Jesus, but the use of it with other characters misleads the reader. The focus is on the life

and thoughts of those who encounter Jesus, but that emphasis is rarely supported by the story in the gospels. For example, a chapter on the paralytic let down through the roof includes poignant imaginings about the man and his friends. But Mark 2:1-12 is a conflict story about Jesus' authority, and that theme comes in only at the end of Borsch's chapter, almost as an afterthought.

Each chapter here is a meditation, perhaps originally a sermon. As such they work rather well. Attention has clearly been given to scholarly concerns and the information included in the chapters and in the ample notes is helpful and relevant—if not always taken seriously in the

author's re-presentation. The book gets better as it progresses toward an insightful chapter on the healing of Bartimaeus, a story already partially allegorized in Mark. The book concludes with an honest and creative look at the meaning of 2 Cor 10-13 and the complicated and obscure situation behind the text.

Both books are useful, careful and fresh. However, we still need a book which will assist the serious, non-professional student of the Bible to look at these stories and consider their contemporary meaning. Approaching these accounts as wholes with the methods used by Theissen, Borsch and others is fruitful. These tools can be presented in a way intelligible to many. The need to reclaim the miracle stories for intelligent modern believers dictates that such a book should be written. We don't have it yet.

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RELIGION IN THE SECULAR CITY: TOWARD A POSTMODERN THEOLOGY, by Harvey Cox. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984. Pp. 320. \$16.50.

It is nearly twenty years since Harvey Cox visited the Secular City and pronounced it to be the future world. In this world, traditional religion would have no place because secularization meant: "the loosing of the world from religious and quasi-religious understandings of itself, the dispelling of all worldviews, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols" (*The Secular City*, rev. ed. [New York: The Macmillan Co., 1966] 1f.). To speak about God in these altered circumstances a new language was needed. It had to appeal to the sophisticated city dweller. It had to make the cultured less despising. The precise nature of this new theological language was not made clear to the reader of *The Secular City*. One thing was clear, however: the inherited language of orthodoxy was of no help. The book ended with the type of *via negativa* statement so common in the "death of God" theology of the time: "there is no holy language as such, and the word God is not sacred...It is only magic to believe that there is some integral connection between God and any particular linguistic vocable" (233).

In urging the wholehearted acceptance of the Secular City, including its intolerance of the deity, Cox claimed broad theological support. He drew upon the current theology of the day with its interest in demythologizing and in the existential hero. Particularly important were the scattered musings of the late Bonhoeffer in *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Following God meant living "without God," that is, living without the furniture of conventional churchly piety.

In *The Secular City*, Cox never really advanced beyond the half-formed aphorisms of the late Bonhoeffer. This weakness did not blunt the appeal of the book, however. That appeal lay elsewhere: namely, in the book's celebratory attitude toward bourgeois civilization and in its undeniable trendy brashness. Cox confidently asserted in *The Secular City* that he understood the future; indeed, that his ideas were the crest of the future's wave. *The Secular City* was a bestseller.

In his latest book, *Religion in the Secular City*, Cox pays another visit to the scene of his former triumph. He confesses that the future has turned out differently from the way he once thought. Not the death of traditional religion but its resurgence is Cox's new discovery. Traditional religion is having enormous political and social effect in the world. In places such as

States, the religious factor is central to events.

This surprising development does not shake Cox's belief in himself as a theological futurologist. The "modern" world has simply become "post modern." As he pursues his new analysis (still quoting the half-formed aphorisms of Bonhoeffer, by the way—just different ones), Cox confidently asserts that he understands the future; indeed, that his ideas are the crest of the future's wave. No doubt *Religion in the Secular City* will be a bestseller.

To map out this new future of the postmodern world, Cox writes about three subjects: the death of liberal theology, the frightening energy of American fundamentalism, and the near perfection of South American liberation theology. From liberation theology, Cox seeks a proper theological vision for his new world.

Liberal theology is dying. That movement which began in Europe with the theology of Schleiermacher and which helped to bring Christianity to terms with Enlightenment rationalism, historicism, and the discoveries of natural science has had its day in the sun and will soon pass into memory. Liberal theology (which is a curiously broad category for Cox, including not only nineteenth-century Neo-Protestantism but also twentieth-century Neo-Orthodoxy, as well as many current authors) has accomplished a good deal. But it has a fundamental problem. When subject to ideological scrutiny, it is found to be a product of the bourgeoisie, that is, the elite entrepreneurial class which has had the greatest stake in the cultural advances of modernity. Ironically the very group which Cox praised in *The Secular City* is now the object of his deepest suspicion.

Ideological correspondences between the bourgeoisie and its theological child include the following items. As the bourgeoisie is rationalistic and technocratic, so liberal theology intellectualizes religious experience and makes the Bible a document for specialists. As the bourgeoisie is privatistic, so liberal theology separates the sacred and secular spheres, reducing the effect of religious claims on the social order. As the bourgeoisie is self-centered and materialistic, so liberal theology ignores the poor, the working class, the colonized, minorities—that is to say, all the truly good people on the planet.

In Cox's view, "theologies, unlike philosophical schools, or scientific paradigms, do not make headway in the world unless they are borne along by vigorous religious movements. They need a social base" (24). The social base of liberal theology is elitist. This is bad in itself. But more importantly, the social base of liberal theology is shrinking as mass culture grows and the Third World increases its influence.

If American fundamentalism has anything, it has a social base. Taking root in the lower classes and rural America and shunning elitism in favor of populism, fundamentalism makes a strong appeal to American mass culture. To illustrate the energy of the fundamentalist cause, Cox records his impressions of a visit to Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church. He is impressed by its size and vigor. He attends the Sunday morning Bible study at which four thousand people are present, led by a pastor who makes scripture directly relevant to his audience and who, according to Cox, "wears a handsome three-piece brown suit and a tasteful tie—the leaders at Thomas Road all eschew double-knit clothes" (30).

This rather snide remark is revealing of Cox's approach. That the pastor dresses as well

as Cox is indicative of a new sophistication in ideas. Fundamentalism is no hick movement. It has learned that the power of theology is related to political action (a pet idea of Cox). The sacred must engage the secular if it is to have any effect. In this way fundamentalism—or, as Cox calls it “redneck religion”—pays tribute to the biblical confession of the presence of God in the world.

Fundamentalists also know that theological reason and scientific reason cannot be compartmentalized. Faith must have real content. And this means that it must find expression in terms of the world’s understanding of “real.” So fundamentalists care about matters which capture the public attention, such as the moral benefit of school prayer and the problem of teaching about the beginnings of the universe solely from a scientific viewpoint.

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According to Cox, however, fundamentalism cannot seize the future and establish a legitimate relation between Christianity and the postmodern world. Its energy is the frightening energy of right-wing politics which makes the movement a propaganda agent for the free enterprise system of capitalism. This system is judged by Cox to be morally unfit. Further, the puritanical morality of the group makes it look backward, not forward. And it is forward that we must go.

This leads Cox to consider liberation theology. As one begins to read this section of the book, one can almost see Cox putting on his rose-colored glasses. His old ebullient enthusiasm, so evident in *The Secular City* when he praised urban life, returns. Cox’s new object of admiration is the base community phenomenon of South America. Here is to be found true democratic fellowship as priest and people recite litanies responsively, study the Bible with the almost gnostic wisdom that only the oppressed possess, share possessions, and engage in handicrafts. Liberation theology is a theology of praxis. Interpreting the world is no problem for it. It understands the world perfectly. It knows who are the bad guys and who are the good guys. Therefore it can concentrate on the action of changing the world.

Cox loves the life of base communities. His compliments are complimentary indeed. For example, Cox quotes with approval the German Catholic theologian Johannes B. Metz who “believes that in the base community movement, Christianity is undergoing a ‘second reformation’ that will eventually alter the churches at least as much as the Reformation of the sixteenth century did” (127). And Cox himself says, “Theologically, the base communities look on themselves, to use Karl Barth’s famous description of what the church should be, as ‘provisional demonstrations of what God intends for the whole world’” (131).

What God intends, of course, is revolutionary socialism undergirded by Marxist analysis. And this time—oh yes, *this* time—the revolution will not eat its children. A truly just society will emerge where Christianity will have a central role and there will be (again Cox quotes Metz) “the fusing of mysticism and politics” (128).

If this argument makes sense to you, dear reader, then this is the book for you. If you think that ideological criticism—which makes all ideas, including theological ideas, the function of economic class—is legitimate and not just a variation of the old *ad hominem* fallacy, then you will follow Cox’s analysis eagerly, page after page. If you think that neither the track record of countries which label themselves Marxist-socialist nor the track record of chaotic South American politics are any grounds for suspecting the wonderful future that Cox describes, then you will be convinced by his judgments. Finally, if the fusion of mysticism and politics is a

notion that does not disturb you, conjuring up old nightmares, then you will rejoice as Cox's postmodern world arrives on the scene.

Cox has been called by many a "religious journalist." I think that this is an accurate judgment. He shares this distinction with a number of other influential writers on the scene today such as Andrew Greeley, Martin Marty, Richard John Neuhaus, Michael Novak, and in Germany, Heinz Zahrnt.

Journalists are a powerful force in our society. It is fair to say that they do more in the shaping of public opinion than any other profession. But it is also true that journalists practice their craft within certain restricted parameters. These parameters are described by the great English journalist Cyril Connolly:

Carelessness is not fatal to journalism nor are cliches, for the eye rests lightly upon them. But what is intended to be read once can seldom be read more than once; a journalist has to accept the fact that his work, by its very todayness, is excluded from any share in tomorrow....A writer who takes up journalism abandons the slow tempo of literature for a faster one and the change will do him harm. By degrees the flippancy of journalism will become a habit and the pleasure of being paid on the nail and more especially of being praised on the nail, grow indispensable.

After reading *Religion in the Secular City* and rereading *The Secular City* for this review, I am struck by the aptness of Connolly's observations. And I cannot

help thinking that perhaps theology is an inappropriate subject for the journalistic craft.

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LOGIC AND THE NATURE OF GOD, by Stephen T. Davis. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983. Pp. 171. \$9.95.

Several realities may well stimulate contemporary Christian reflection concerning God. There is the continuing external (and internal?) challenge of the Enlightenment suspicion that Christian faith in God represents a mistaken nay-saying to human creativity. There is a wondering within Christian circles about whether Greek philosophical influence has so dominated traditional doctrinal formulation that biblical (perhaps particularly Old Testamental) affirmations of the living God have been neglected. There is the persisting—perhaps even still building—sense inside and outside the church that the horrors of this century place all traditional theodicies in question.

In such a context Stephen T. Davis' *Logic and the Nature of God* is most welcome. Here is a discussion of the attributes or properties of God from a Christian perspective which Davis rightly characterizes as "fairly theologically conservative" (2). The discussion is sometimes

difficult, but it avoids the use of formalized logical arguments and is generally quite accessible. The book can be used as a summary of and/or an entrance to a wide literature in the philosophical discussion of God. Or it can be used quite in itself as a conversation partner for a Christian who seeks to speak appropriately of God. Davis appeals to the “plain sense” of the Bible boldly, if not naively. But he recognizes that theological talk is human talk and argues that “if we want to be rational we have no choice but to reject what we judge to be incoherent” (16). Happily, Davis wishes to be both Christian and rational in speaking of God.

What results is a provocative rummaging through typically Christian speech about God with the aid of the analytic style in which Davis “simply finds himself thinking philosophically” (5). In less than two hundred pages he discusses omniscience, immutability, foreknowledge, omnipotence, benevolence, theodicy, incarnation and trinity. Some helpful sorting-out is at hand here. Thus, recognizing that the concept of creator is crucial to Christianity and that we have “no acceptable concept of atemporal causation,” Davis argues that God is “temporally eternal.” God always exists, but does so with temporal location and extension so that the distinctions between past, present and future can be applied to God. Also helpful is Davis’ work at distinguishing between what God is necessarily and what God is contingently. By that work he prepares for the conclusion that “for me omnipotence and perfect goodness probably constitute separately necessary and jointly sufficient conditions” (for a being worthy of worship). But “since I have not argued that God has these properties essentially, I will also abstain from arguing that God is *necessarily* worthy of worship” (152).

Perhaps it is satisfactory to work at the issues of logical coherence in the rather independent fashion Davis does. He does recognize that there is other work to do, work he identifies as “the positive evangelistic task of convincing people to believe” (109). But in doing “the negative apologetic task of responding to a philosophical criticism” in the bare language of logical coherence or possibility, matters seem to be apart which would better be together. Perhaps it is logically consistent to argue that God’s foreknowledge is not causal and is thus no denial of human freedom. But do we lose here the livingness of a God who undergoes something truly new in concourse with the human? Davis seems to sense something of the sort in mentioning that “someone might claim that this sort of knowledge of an event before it occurs is precisely what is incoherent” (64), but he dismisses this—too abruptly, I believe—by saying, “that is another matter entirely.”

Theodicy issues lie just down the line. If God foreknows (but does not cause) the evil which created freedom will bring about, why does God still create that freedom? Davis doesn’t seem quite prepared to say what he says: “ultimately, it comes down to trust” (116). He moves to his “main claim in theodicy, that God will emerge victorious and in the end will

redeem all evil” (116-17). He needs to come to this conclusion, for in his understanding of omnipotence God is seen as always able to “over-ride” by taking back the power he has given. But if God cannot change the past (80), can God consistently be said to change the consequence of human rejection? As an aside, it seems God is able to change God’s past, for despite God’s choice of good, he still could choose to sin (Davis thinks). Faith simply believes he “won’t.” In any case, does Christian eschatological hope, so crucial in answering the theodicy challenge, entail God changing the past? Davis seems to struggle here, for he writes that those who in

freedom reject God “could not be happy in paradise” and yet they will feel “deep regret that they are not able to live in the presence of God” (116). This matter is hard enough for any of us, but I do believe we need to go more slowly. The remarkable economy of Davis’ bare logic may prove too expensive. We would do well to let Davis’ own “residual feeling that the problem of evil has not been completely disposed of” (109) provoke us to a more thorough “material” discussion. Such a discussion may have to struggle with the tragic sense of divine defeat without giving up all talk of divine victory. It seems too simple to assert confidently that “the goods which will exist in the eschaton will outweigh all the evils that have ever existed and will make them pale into insignificance” (116-17).

Perhaps these paragraphs suffice to suggest that while Davis’ work may be bare, it should not be solitary. He writes with conviction and clarity, provoking a conversation which needs to be continued.

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LUTHER’S CATECHISM COMES TO AMERICA: THEOLOGICAL EFFECTS ON THE ISSUES OF THE SMALL CATECHISM PREPARED IN AND FOR AMERICA PRIOR TO 1850, by Arthur C. Repp, Sr. ALTA Monograph Series, No. 18. Metuchen, N.J. and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., and The American Theological Library Association, 1982. Pp. 311. \$22.50.

If the delight of the exegete is the nuance, as Ernst Käsemann once said, then by parallel the delight of the church historian must be the detail—the stubborn stuff of daily life that refuses to give way to grand designs and comprehensive analysis.

Some of Arthur Repp, Sr.’s students have gone on to the more ambitious undertakings, coming to rival Zane Grey or Adolph von Harnack in the process—they have become more widely known, while Repp has kept his nose buried in the particular. Teaching at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and then Seminex, he devoted years of careful research to the use of Luther’s little catechism among Lutherans in America. The result is a masterful study, succulent in detail and wonderfully helpful.

Repp begins his analysis with a survey of catechetical instruction among the earliest Lutheran immigrants to the U.S., and then provides a catechism-by-catechism analysis, moving through the 18th century to the middle of the 19th. Over sixty translations, interpretations, expansions of and commentaries on Luther’s catechism are considered. A few which attempted to set aside Luther’s work, as well as the confessional base of the church, are also examined.

Repp’s study is significant for several reasons. First, as Martin Marty notes in his preface to the book, Repp has dealt with the down-to-earth matter of religious practice. Oftentimes church historical studies appear to be premised on the notion that virtually everything else but that which the church claims to be influential is controlling its life. It is clear that political, social and financial concerns are formative forces in the church’s corporate affairs. But the use of the Scripture and the catechism—along with a hymnal, generally the only books carried by immigrants—may also be regarded as important factors. Repp has recognized and documented this with regards to the catechism.

Secondly, moving from document to document, Repp is able to provide a detailed picture of how 18th and early 19th century Lutherans attempted to pass

along their tradition. There is clear evidence of problems. But the commonly held stereotype of Lutheranism as an isolated and self-preoccupied church guarding a frozen orthodoxy can't survive such detailed analysis. There is a lot of evidence of a concern to reach beyond the immigrant groups, for example, an early translation of Luther's catechism into Delaware Indian language. And there were various attempts—pietist, rationalist, as well as more orthodox—to come to grips with the theological issues of the day.

There may be a place for "bird's-eye-views," those flying historical tours that sweep over centuries, movements and theological developments in fast guided tours. But that kind of work depends on something far deeper, the nose-to-the-ground analysis that covers in depth. Repp's work is like that. It is closely worked historical study from a man who has served his church by paying attention to the details of the way it has transmitted its witness at the most basic levels. Such a gift, like fine handcraft, is to be received with thanks.

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ECOLOGY AND RELIGION: TOWARD A NEW CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF NATURE, by John Carmody. Ramsey, NJ: Paulist, 1983. Pp. 185. \$6.95 (paper).

Environmental issues have gained widespread attention in the past two decades, though hardly widespread enough in view of the enormity of the problem. Just how enormous the problem has become is reviewed by John Carmody as a prelude to Christian reflection on the sources and solutions of the problem. The threats to water alone are staggering. Each year 7 million tons of oil and petroleum are added to the oceans, and soil erosion from the United States itself would fill eighteen freight trains reaching around the world. Add to this the introduction to ground water, rivers, lakes, and oceans of industrial wastes, chemicals, acids, salts, plastics, chlorine, organic compounds, pesticides, human and animal sewage, radioactive materials, and acid rain, and the long-term prospects are dismal.

A similar horror story can be told with respect to air and land pollution and the health hazards to human life as a result, as well as the terrible toll on animal habitats and animal species. And as if this were not enough, we are also increasingly faced with the devastating potential of radioactive materials—even apart from the holocaust of nuclear warfare.

Accelerating the process and crisis is not only the demand within civilizations for constantly spiralling patterns of growth and "advancement," but also the dramatic increases in human population, and the aspirations of developing nations to raise their standard of living. The pressures upon the entire ecosystem of the earth and its atmosphere are rapidly reaching a breaking point. At the same time, within but a single century we have nearly exhausted the earth's non-renewable resources. Even if we only have a 2.5% annual increase in world consumption, many of the basic industrial minerals will be 80% depleted by the year 2000, and

most of the rest within the next half-century, along with oil and natural gas.

Clearly there must be a revolutionary turn-around in our ways of viewing our relationship to nature and our human destiny. Partly to blame for the present crisis is the common self-image that has characterized civilization, especially Western civilization, from whence has come the greater part of science, technology and industrialization. We have seen ourselves as superior to nature, as charged with having dominion over the earth and subduing it (Genesis 1), as drawn by some manifest destiny which is always moving onward and upward. When one couples this with human pride, greed, selfishness, and violence, and adds to that a competitive marketplace and the competitions between nations, even the virtues to be found in our creativity and progress can become vices.

In the greater part of the book, John Carmody suggests a number of biblical, theological, and moral resources that might be marshalled in an effort to counterbalance this view of human existence and its consequences. He calls for less anthropocentrism and more of a wholistic and sacramental view of the

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world; less of a hierarchical understanding of our place in the scheme of things and more of an ecological sensitivity, and less of an emphasis upon the radical transcendence of God and more on the divine immanence. “Nature is not God, but God is the inmost being of all nature’s processes” (126).

Out of such an “ecological” theology, several radical—yet essential—ethical implications are drawn. We must, at the minimum, imagine and develop a civilization that is based on a recycling of resources, and a reduction in consumption, not a constantly increasing pattern of consumption. We must abandon our “sinful exaltation of human interests above other species.” We have “no right to luxuries whose general possession would bring nature to its knees,” or “to superfluities while other human beings lack necessities.” As a working principle for an ecological ethic, Carmody proposes this: “If I cannot extrapolate my standard of living to the whole world and still find nature flourishing, my standard of living is immoral” (134).

The book is a must for any discussion of ecological ethics. Carmody calls for courage in the church, the political arena, and the business world in rethinking our situation and redirecting Our energies. It is to be hoped that clergy will be bold and prophetic enough to make use of such materials in preaching and religious education.

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IN MEMORY OF HER: A FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS, by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. New York: Crossroad, 1983. Pp. xxv + 351. \$19.50.

The title of *In Memory of Her* is clever, but I hope not so clever that people will not pick up the book. The title might be misleading for those who know that some feminists believe they must leave Christianity behind, or it might be confusing to those who are aware of the language

debate about pronouns and God. This is not a book about the death of God or the leaving behind of God, rather it is a book in memory of the unnamed woman in Mark's gospel who anointed Jesus' head with oil; a woman we too often forget.

What I most appreciate in Fiorenza's exploration of the history of female partnership in the early Christian church are her exegetical insights. When she looks at the biblical texts she always manages to thrill me. Her careful exegesis is easy to follow and it reveals—the hardest of all exegetical tasks—simple details that are easy to miss but completely reorganize the text being considered. One simple thing she pointed out was the difference in initiation rites between Judaism and Christianity. The status of women is automatically different when the initiation rite (baptism) is sexually neutral. There is a kind of religious equality for male and female implied by the very structure of this central rite. Now this is an obvious point but not one ever made for me before. This is the kind of thing she regularly does directly from a scriptural text.

The most difficult part of the book to read is Part I where the theory of hermeneutics used in her historical explorations is laid out. It is, however, a necessary part of the book. Fiorenza examines the place of presuppositions in the understanding of the writings studied—the relation of the written to the world that produced the writing and the writer, and the place of presuppositions of past interpretations and interpreters. She uses fairly standard hermeneutic and historical principles (at least as worked with in philosophical studies) such as bracketing some questions, arguing from silence, etc., as she lays bare the presuppositions that so often stand in the way of biblical studies. All of the best tools of thinkers like Collingwood and Ricoeur are used. Hermeneutically, she uses the following principle:

Theological meaning cannot be derived either from the revelatory surplus of androcentric texts or of true feminist consciousness [the first being her characterization of neo-orthodox interpretation and the second the Daly-type post-Christian feminist], but can only be found in and through androcentric texts and patriarchal history. (31)

There remains, then, a model which “locates revelation not in texts but in

Christian experience and community” (34). That may seem a little jarring if you belong to a tradition which emphasizes the divine inspiration of scripture. Yet if you see Christ as the Word and the community as the place where Christ is surely found—as Lutherans, for example, do you in fact have located revelation in the community and Christian experience. To use Luther's language, the Bible is Christ's cradle and Christ lives in the heard words from one human to another in preaching and in the visible words that are at the center of the sacraments. Those must be and are communal acts. Christian experience and community are, then, already the locus of revelation. This first section is valuable for its hermeneutical acumen, but it may well be easier to understand after reading the other two parts of the book, as is suggested in the Introduction. The section should not, however, be ignored. It is worth thinking about and assimilating, although perhaps with fewer liberation theology frills. In particular I recommend the discussion of the translation of biblical texts to all who interpret biblical texts (43 ff.).

For those of us out in the parish—on the frontiers of the church—the book can be used as

a kind of treasure box for grey days and weeks. For men who serve churches where the most active laity are women and for women who are pastors the book is valuable because it helps put women and the church into a clear historical perspective. Even though the church with the guidance of the Holy Spirit can do new things, it is also important to realize that the present importance of women in the church can be linked historically to the origins of the church. When Fiorenza explores the biblical issues she explicitly is not seeking legitimation for women's place in the church, but when the history of women in the church is made plain, it does connect women as church leaders back into the years of the early church. Thus the book can have a supportive and uplifting impact on the lives of men and women in the present church. The book has this impact because it is a careful scholarly and exegetical study of the early church as revealed in its primary documents.

Fiorenza's discussion of women and their position in the church explores information about women who held leadership roles in the church, as the deacon Phoebe did. She has previously discussed much of this in an article, "Word, Spirit, and Power: Women in Early Christian Communities" (in *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Ruether and McLaughlin). This article and the relevant sections in *In Memory of Her* both reward a reader's effort.

An important discussion in the book is her use of *prescriptive* and *descriptive* to understand the household codes and strong anti-women postures in some of the biblical writings. Her discussion lays a solid base for understanding these ideas in historical perspective. Because our culture is becoming less threatened by women in the public sphere it is time to realize that we have gone beyond those self-preservative tactics of the early church in a patriarchal culture. Instead, we should retrieve the more central message of equality found in the gospel from behind those protective walls raised up in Colossians, 1 Peter, and Ephesians. These were written for a time that is passing and will pass sooner if we come out from behind the walls. Fiorenza's discussion is convincing and helpful.

Fiorenza uses the gospels of Mark and John to show the place the church originally gave women. She demonstrates that they are descriptive of early practice. Colossians, written about the same time as Mark, urges that women retreat or be restricted; it doesn't say they have or have been, but that they should. The pastorals share a time-frame and probable geographical destination with the gospel of John, and they too try to put the discipleship and talents of women in a non-public category. But both post-Pauline and post-Petrine writers distort the gospel when they do so. Fiorenza's discussion clearly and convincingly demonstrates that "the Gospel story remembers that the discipleship and apostolic leadership of women are integral parts of Jesus' alternative praxis of *agapē* and service" (334).

This is a well thought out and convincing book. It is worth reading.

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When I arrived at the doors of a seminary fifteen years ago, I had no background in either formal theology or philosophy. I learned enough of both to survive and graduate. The experience of preaching for over ten years has proved to me that if one's "systematic" theology is off-base or shallow, so too one's preaching. I wish that someone had started me out with books such as this.

Augustine, Luther, and Calvin—giant thinkers of the past—are here. So too are modern theologians: Barth, Moltmann, and Bonhoeffer, to name three. Other partners in the conversation are Flannery O'Connor, Sherwood Anderson, and Pär Lagerkvist from the world of contemporary literature. All are brought together in this slim volume. Additional partners in the conversation are meant to be adult classes or discussion groups within the church.

The subject at hand is "the doctrine of God." The starting point is that our doctrine of God will influence our lives. Our experience and exercise of power/powerlessness will be made known in our actions. The contention is that nothing less than a faith in the Triune God whose power is love will do. Along the way to this point, we are treated to a clear tour through the thickets of systematic theology, Biblical interpretation, church history, and contemporary issues.

In chapter 5, Migliore comes to the heart of his discussion. At the risk of being too brief, his theses about the meaning of the Trinity are three: (1) "Christians experience the one God as a dynamic and differentiated reality. The one God is the faithful Father, the servant Son, and the enlivening Spirit." (2) "God's triune being is communal or social in nature....God affirms difference for the sake of the community, for the sake of friendship and mutual love." (3) "God is the power of self-giving love. This is the deepest meaning of God's being-in-relationship. This is what decisively marks off the living God from the dead idols" (78-80). These three points have the makings of a sermon for Trinity Sunday in them!

How can we be sure of all of this in a world marked by human suffering and the presence of evil? Only by a "theology of the Cross"! Might we venture some hope? Only in the "coming Kingdom of God"! (This is a much better term than "eschatological," which Migliore never, to his credit, uses.)

How then shall we live? Here Migliore introduces a "way of speaking" that I like. If the marks of being a Christian are faith, hope, and love, the way we express these is in "self-limiting power." He then applies this concept to the whole span of human relationships from the personal to the international. As in other parts of the book, he makes sharp criticisms of our everyday idolatries and our usual uses of power. It is here that liberation theology has been used much and well.

My pragmatic test for any book I read is this: Will it aid in the task of preaching and ministry of Word and Sacrament? In this case, I would answer "yes." There are "mini-outlines" and probing questions aplenty to aid the ferment of the creative juices. For this, Migliore is owed many thanks. This book will serve its intended audience well.

One problem I would raise is that the book speaks only "from faith to faith." Judging from the listing on the back cover, that seems to be the nature of the series ("Library of Living Faith"). It is good to find well-written books that do this, but I am also interested in how Migliore would set about addressing those who do not share his concept of power and the exercise thereof. But that is the topic of another conversation. Or is it?

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EXPLORING CHURCH GROWTH, ed. by Wilbert R. Shenk. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983. Pp. 320. \$10.95 (paper).

In his book, *Peace in the Global Village*, Robert McAfee Brown helps the reader to envision hope by pointing to the Lord's Supper. There, all Christians are united as one as they share the unity that supersedes all that would otherwise divide them. Brown points to his own ex-

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perience at the table as an illustration. In one of the chapters of *Exploring Church Growth*, W. A. Saayman traces historically the experience of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. Though fully intending that Christian converts should worship together with the Dutch settlers, an early concession was made for the sake of the "weaker brethren." This concession allowed for separate worship services for black and white Christians, particularly when it came to the Lord's Supper. Saayman goes on to warn modern missiologists of how such practical decisions can become the basis of deeply entrenched policies and principles that are destructive of the gospel.

Brown is really pointing to the unity and heterogeneity of the church as a basis for hope, while Saayman is pointing to separation and the existence of homogeneous units of the church as a source of warning.

The book being reviewed here is an attempt to enter into dialogue with the "Church Growth" school under the leadership of Donald McGavran. Since 1955, McGavran has articulated what is now called the homogeneous unit principle—people "like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers."

The book is divided into twenty-two chapters (all by different authors) under three general headings: Case Studies, Methodological Issues and Theological Issues. The first section looks at six mission areas and suggests various theological, cultural, and methodological reasons for successful church growth, but I found the other sections more interesting and helpful. In an essay in section two, Orlando E. Costas examines church growth from a wholistic point of view. He suggests that there are many kinds of growth and warns against "becoming so entrepreneurial that one will do literally anything to grow a church, including selling down the river basic tenets of the Christian faith" (96). He suggests that, like cancer, church growth can be superficial and shallow and even lead to the death of the organism. He suggests a wholistic model which includes the qualities of spirituality, incarnation and faithfulness. He also points to several dimensions where the church should experience growth: numerical, organic, conceptual and diaconal.

Of particular interest to me as a parish pastor was the chapter on "Missions and the Renewal of the Church" by Paul G. Hiebert. After sketching briefly the movement from vision to institutionalization in a church, he points to processes of renewal. Included is a discussion of conversion and rituals of renewal. The latter are divided into two categories: rituals of restoration or traditional rituals of passage within the community, and rituals of transformation or renewal movements within or on the fringes of the institution.

The "Theological Issues" section of the book has a thorough-going biblical basis which is evangelical without being rigid or shallow. I found particularly helpful David Bosch's exposition of Matthew 28:16-20. By carefully examining this passage within the context of its first readers, he is able to bring light to "church growth" perspectives today. For instance, he suggests that

making disciples of “all the nations” is not, as McGavran suggests, justification for the homogeneous unit design for missions. Rather, it suggests quite the opposite. “We are not winning people like ourselves to ourselves but sharing the good news that in Christ God has shattered the barriers that divide the human race and has created a new community” (239).

For me, the highlight of the book is C. René Padilla’s final chapter on “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle.” Padilla suggests that being a human being and a Christian is always “in relationship.” Christianity is by its very nature a unity in Christ which also implies unity with our sisters and brothers in Christ.

It may be that “men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers,” but that is irrelevant. Membership in the body of Christ is not a question of likes and dislikes, but a question of incorporation into a new humanity under the lordship of Christ. Whether a person likes it or not, the same act that reconciles one to God simultaneously introduces the person into a community where people find their identity in Jesus Christ rather than in their race, culture, social class, or sex, and are consequently reconciled to one another. (287)

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Although sometimes homogeneous factors are simply the only alternative in church planting and growth (because of the lack of heterogeneity in a given area), Padilla warns about promoting such an arrangement simply as a convenience for protecting congregations from responsibility. Such arrangements that keep others oppressed or left out compromise the gospel itself.

For this parish pastor with concerns about success and faithfulness, growth and stagnation, gospel and method, mission and culture—this book was helpful. It raised issues about the nature of the church and the nature of the gospel. It helped clarify the nature, the source, and the goal of growth.

I would like to have seen more emphasis on how the “homogeneous” local parish can relate to and be a part of the rich and diversified people of God. Though there was a short section in one of the chapters on the Lord’s Supper, by and large the sacraments were not adequately dealt with as they relate to church growth. Though the book is aimed primarily at “world missions,” it has much to stimulate thinking about more established places of ministry.

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TOWARD A CHRISTIAN POLITICAL ETHICS, by José Míguez Bonino. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. Pp.. 126. \$5.95 (paper).

In the 1960s, the Civil Rights movement became such a public reality in the United States that it was virtually impossible for it to be ignored or avoided. Individual Christians, local congregations, and whole denominations struggled with the reality of racism and sought ways of bringing the American political creed as well as their religious beliefs and values to bear on the

profound injustices that racism perpetrated.

In the 1980s, the turmoil in Latin America has become such a public reality in the United States that it has become virtually impossible for it to be ignored or avoided. Individual Christians, local congregations, and whole denominations are struggling with the reality of the oppression that has been identified and are trying to bring their religious beliefs and values to bear on a situation in which clarity and truth are difficult to attain.

In both of these struggles, the involvement of the American political system is a deeply disturbing element. In both, the need for a clear Christian witness is evident. José Míguez Bonino, Professor of Systematic Theology at Instituto Superior Evangelico de Estudios Teologicos in Buenos Aires, Argentina is among those attempting to provide that witness with respect to Latin America. He recognizes both the fact that Christians cannot avoid the kinds of struggle identified above and the fact that it is never easy to know how to understand and be involved in such struggles. His intention is to speak to Christians who recognize the same two facts. He speaks out of the framework of liberation theology and out of his experience as an ecumenical church person. He seeks to be of help to two worlds of experience and challenge; to

Christians committed to the struggle for liberation, and the concerns of the ecumenical movement in the area of political ethics. The contribution I intend is modest: to clarify as much as I can the nature of the question, to illustrate it from past and present experience in Latin America, and to add a few “theological footnotes.” The book can perhaps serve as an invitation to Christian political ethics. (9)

Bonino’s intention is modest and his work is introductory, meaning that there is more reliance on suggestive assertions than on detailed argument. Nevertheless, there is more stimulation in this slim volume for Christians who intend to live their faith as a reality in today’s world than in other lengthier treatises which never make the reality of today’s world a serious factor in their deliberations.

By understanding politics in its most elemental meaning—the sum total of all the relations that go to make up life in a particular society” (11)—Bonino suggests that modern life has become thoroughly politicized, which is to say that all our actions are social and public actions involving complex secondary relations as well

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as primary face-to-face relations. Thus, all decisions become political decisions and the need for a political ethic can’t be avoided. Central to political decisions and the political question is the reality of power. Such an understanding poses a dilemma for Bonino, one faced by every Christian:

In this world of power, of economic relations and structures, a world that maintains its autonomy and will not yield to voluntaristic moral ideals imposed from the outside, a world in which power and freedom seem to pull in opposite directions—what can the Christian say and do? (21)

What Christians have done in the past has not been very adequate and insofar as contemporary Christians attempt to respond out of those options—such as the two-kingdom doctrine, a Neo-Kantian position of principle, traditional Roman Catholic social policy positions, or pacifism, to name a few examples—their action will not be very fruitful either. Bonino thus reaches for models and categories that, as he says, “do not belong to the traditional baggage of theology” (38). The reach, then, is for a reciprocal relationship between praxis and theory that is not imposed but is inherent in their relationship and can be described in the following way.

Action overflows and challenges the theory that has informed it; and thought, projecting the shape and future of reality, pushes action to new ventures. Reality is transformed through human action, and action is corrected and reoriented by reality. This dialectical interplay seems to be the necessary presupposition for political ethics. (39)

Within such an understanding of how one needs to proceed, social location and social perspective become important. Access to ethical issues comes through social analysis; theology has no direct access to the subject matter of political ethics. Thus, where one takes one’s stand is critical and for Bonino, as for most if not all liberation theology, that leads to a fundamental assertion and criterion. “Theological and social location for the Christian are one, unified in the specific commitment to the poor. This is the determining option with respect to both the use of socioanalytic tools and the perspective for theological reflection” (44).

Bonino then illustrates the methodological commitments just sketched by attending to the history and the experience of Latin America from the fifteenth century to the present. It is a valuable narrative for its historical facticity and the theological understanding it demonstrates.

Bonino concludes his work by acknowledging that the need is now to move beyond historical identification to theological determination, which is the move beyond a preface to ethics to a consideration of its substance. Such a move is not central to this current work, however, and Bonino simply suggests “a ‘table of contents’—at least the main chapters for such a development” (79). Thus, he points to such questions as the relationship of justice and order, hope and power, and conviction and strategy. Along the way he notes his commitment to a thoroughly incarnational perspective and a fully trinitarian theology.

There is much that is provocative in these latter chapters and much that can be gained from a careful reading of what is said. It remains sketchy, however, and Bonino’s most valuable contribution is to be found in the challenge, especially at the methodological level, that he poses to some of the traditional ways of doing ethics. For many Christians who are profoundly concerned about how to live faith as a reality in today’s world, Bonino can offer both a challenge and the beginning of a way to think about and act out that concern in a responsible way.

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BARRIERS TO ECUMENISM: THE HOLY SEE AND THE WORLD COUNCIL ON SOCIAL QUESTIONS, by Thomas Sieger Derr. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983. Pp. 110. \$7.95 (paper) and **THE ECUMENICAL MOMENT: CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR THE**

CHURCH, by Geoffrey Wainwright. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983. Pp. 272. \$8.95 (paper).

It is helpful to read these two important books in the field of ecumenics at one sit-

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ting. Doing so impresses on the mind the degree to which the two streams which flowed into the river of the ecumenical movement in the formation of the World Council in 1948 still have not co-mingled. The two streams—Faith and Order, and Life and Work—are the focus of attention of Geoffrey Wainwright and Thomas Sieger Derr respectively. Significant contact points between the two discussions are hard to locate.

The Ecumenical Moment dwells with both precision and depth on the important ecumenical advances made in recent years on matters of faith and order. Baptism, eucharist, ministry and the ecclesiological issue of models of unity are the main foci of attention. Even though little attention is paid to the socio-political dimensions of modern ecumenism, one political issue of an ecclesiastical kind is addressed most constructively, i.e., the tension between multilateral and bilateral ecumenical dialogue.

Professor Wainwright correctly underlines the interdependence between the extensive bilateral efforts such as the Roman Catholic/Lutheran dialogue, and the multilateral World Council Faith and Order work on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. In so doing he recognizes that the road to unity cannot bypass the existing world communions: the communions must come along and be transformed *en route*.

Barriers to Ecumenism accents nearly exclusively the churches' witness in the socio-political arena. The strength of the essay is its narrowness of focus. At issue here is the delicate set of relationships between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. The study tackles the tough issues in an open and blunt fashion, tracing the positive and negative developments in recent decades. As he delineates the methodological differences, structural barriers and the substantive issues at stake in this crucial ecumenical relationship, the author offers a sometimes too candid picture of the internal dynamics of the politics involved. It is difficult to tell this story and to tell it the way it is. His treatment of the Vatican, in my estimation, is a bit too harsh. A study like this affects not only the relationship between the World Council and the Vatican, but also the developments within the Vatican.

The value of the work is that it makes very explicit just how common social-political witness agenda of the ecumenical movement develops and how implementation of policy is determined.

Taken together, the two books sketch a fairly comprehensive picture of the scope, pitfalls and possibilities of contemporary ecumenism.

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