



TRACTATE ON THE JEWS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JUDAISM FOR CHRISTIAN FAITH, by Franz Mussner. Translated and with an Introduction by Leonard Swidler. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. Pp. 339. \$29.95.

A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF THE PEOPLE ISRAEL (Vol. II of *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality*), by Paul M. van Buren. New York: Seabury, 1983. Pp. 362. \$26.95.

The three most fundamental and harmful anti-Jewish stereotypes have been the “deicide” accusation, the “deserved suffering” charge, and the “fossil religion” myth. During the past 30 years, Christians have rejected these falsehoods in dozens of statements issued by churches and ecumenical agencies as well as in the works of individual scholars. The first two charges were clearly repudiated but the third has seldom been given decisive and coherent treatment. The third issue is difficult for most Christians to handle since it touches on the very basis of traditional Christian self-understanding, namely, that Christians have replaced Jews as God’s covenant people. If Christians are to acknowledge that Judaism is not a bankrupt religion but a living faith, then it is essential that the meaning of Israel’s continuing existence be clarified for Christian thought.

A breakthrough in this matter began in 1974 when many churches officially repudiated the traditional replacement theology and affirmed that Judaism retains validity in its own right after the coming of Christ. These statements, however, never included a rationale which could reconcile the deeply-rooted claim of Christian exclusiveness with the notion of co-existence. Yet once the continuing relationship of the Jewish people with God is acknowledged, the formulation of a revised “Christian theology of Israel” becomes the inevitable next step.

The two books under review are a welcome sign of the increasing maturity of Christian reflection about Judaism. Both authors recognize that the theory of Jewish-Christian relations is lagging behind the practice of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Both take as their point of departure the relatively recent Christian recognition of the reality and integrity of Israel’s continuing covenant with the true God.

Franz Mussner, professor in the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Regensburg, West Germany, has produced, in his *Tractate on the Jews*, an almost encyclopedic treatment of all biblical issues concerning the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. More than 60 pages of notes provide a superb bibliography of German, English, and French literature on the subject. The author says that “behind this book lies a learning process of many years, a true changing of the mind” (xi). He invites the reader to enter into this learning process and to think differently about Israel. Freedom for Catholic scholars to explore a theology of co-existence was allowed by the 1965 Declaration *Nostra Aetate* of Vatican Council II and by the

1975 document, “Vatican Guidelines and Suggestions for the Implementation of the Conciliar Declaration, ‘No. 4.’” Mussner believes that Auschwitz and new impulses released by *Nostra Aetate* constitute a call to Christians to develop a reconceived “theology of Judaism.” The time has come, he says, for Christians to make amends for all the patristic and medieval “tractates against the Jews” by writing a “tractate for the Jews.”

In his first chapter, Mussner presents an “Outline of a Christian Theology of Judaism.” He discusses the central biblical elements of the Jewish tradition. Election, peoplehood, land, covenant, Torah, salvation, and servanthood are examined in depth. These fundamental elements are not repudiated by the New Testament. The church has not replaced Israel but shares in its privileges. The church is “the extended people of God

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who together with Israel form the one people of God” (9). All Israel, including those who have rejected Christ, will be saved, although not by conversion but by a “special path” which rests upon the principle of grace. Mussner asserts certain distinctive Christian claims but will not allow them to justify anti-Jewishness or a supersessionist theology.

Mussner’s second chapter, “The Great Heritage of the Faith of Israel,” takes up the entire range of religious ideas which the church has inherited from Israel and which are “the continuing theological root of the church” (52). The church should cease to emphasize differences vis-a-vis Judaism and should instead represent such topics as monotheism, creation, the image of God, holiness, obedience, fear of God, love, conversion, praise, covenant, messianism, atonement, resurrection, and the yearning for a just world as convictions that bind together Judaism and Christianity. Mussner sees Jesus as the “way” or “bridge” by which this Jewish heritage entered into the Gentile world. It is a repeated theme in Mussner’s book that Jesus was distinctive or “un-Jewish” in certain respects, yet he did not step “outside the framework of Judaism” (74). Mussner appears to be saying that Christians are Gentiles who have been invited into the house of Judaism by Jesus the Jew. He can also be read as suggesting that Christianity and Judaism are parallel ways of salvation. The author admits that what he has written can be seen as “Old Testament theology” rather than a “theology of Judaism,” but claims that these Old Testament ideas still define the life of the devout Jew. At this point many Jewish and Christian scholars would disagree with Mussner and would contend that at least equal attention should be given to postbiblical Judaism in order to understand contemporary Jewish faith and life.

In his chapter on “The ‘Jew’ Jesus,” the author shows that the church can appreciate the Jewishness of Jesus without having to give up its christological convictions. Once it is clear that the “un-Jewishness” of Jesus is not to be found in his attitude to the Law, then it is clear that Jesus did not see Judaism as a preliminary stage to Christianity. A discussion of “Paul and Israel” shows that it was not Paul but post-Pauline theology that made his view of the Law anti-Judaic. Paul’s opponents were fellow-Christians, not Jews. A chapter on “Theological Reparation” throws valuable light on the formation of the Gospels within the context of the late first-century separation between church and synagogue. As a form of “theological restitution,” Mussner sets about dismantling several distortions that have “demonized” Judaism since the time of the primitive church.

Mussner acknowledges “That Which Distinguishes and Divides” but is able to show in a discussion of “prophet christology” and “Son-christology” that there is a linkage between the Old

Testament and the New Testament with respect to “the becoming human of God” (226). Church and synagogue have “Common Tasks and Goals” which may be summed up as the “shalomization of the world.”

With great learning and skill the author makes a valiant effort to reinterpret biblical texts, dismantle distortions, and build bridges within the parameters of official church teaching. This book is to be highly recommended for both veterans and beginners in the Jewish-Christian encounter.

Whereas Mussner’s book is primarily exegetical and works from within to expand and revise the Christian “theology of Israel,” the second book under review is primarily systematic and proposes a framework of interpretation which outflanks much of the received tradition. Paul M. van Buren, Professor of Religious Studies at Temple University, has written a highly original book, one which appears to this reviewer to be the most important recent contribution to the growing literature of Jewish-Christian dialogue. In *A Christian Theology of the People Israel*, van Buren takes the bold and unusual step of using “the reality of postbiblical Israel” (8) as his point of departure. His “intent is to discern the finger and voice of the Lord God of Israel in the postbiblical history of both Israel and the church, as well as in the Scriptures and the Apostolic Writings” (9). Thus van Buren is perhaps the first Christian scholar to take with utter seriousness the requirement of Jewish-Christian encounter that Judaism, Jews, and Israel be defined in terms of Jewish

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self-understanding rather than in Christian categories.

If it is true that the Jews are neither deicides nor a reprobate people and that Judaism is not a bankrupt religion, then it follows that “Israel has something to say which the church needs to hear” (18). The present task of theology is to set aside the questions and categories of its Hellenized and Latinized tradition, and to engage in listening to, learning from, and incorporating Israel’s witness into Christian theological reflection. Since van Buren chooses to work with the Jewish Scriptures plus the rabbinical tradition and the Apostolic Writings plus the Christian tradition, and since he is not bound by any official church declarations, he enjoys a unique scope and freedom.

In a series of chapters on Israel’s testimony to creation, election, the nations, the people, the land, and Torah, the author explicates what he calls “the Jewish-Christian reality,” his alternative to the traditional theology of replacement. He begins where the Jewish Scriptures begin, with Israel’s testimony to the Creator and Redeemer, to creation and covenant, and to Torah-faithfulness as the form witness to the Creator-Redeemer takes. He continues with God’s call of Abraham and the vision of history as the realm where the Creator and the creatures address each other and where the Creator enlists the Torah-obedience of the elect people for the purpose of bringing God’s threatened and incomplete creation to completion. God’s fidelity to his decision in calling Abraham, his “righteousness,” entailed the promise of a future for all creation and all peoples through Abraham and his descendants. As God and Israel together moved through time, there was born a son of Abraham, a Jew, one marked by that covenant of election. In him, Israel’s light began to shine out upon the nations, the Gentiles, as never before. In him, once more and in a new way, the righteousness of God appeared, that which Abraham had acknowledged by trusting in God. In Jesus God opened up a tremendous enhancement of that

which he had begun with Israel. Jesus is Israel-for-the-church, the way God has summed up and presented the covenant to the Gentiles. God had always planned to bring the Gentiles into his covenant purpose. Jesus was God's way of bringing this about. Paul saw in the obedient death of Jesus the Israel which was Torah's goal. Thus Jesus as Torah-true Israel is the *telos* of the Torah, for he is Israel effectively enlightening the Gentiles, so that all who trust this new righteousness of God may be accepted by God. Christianity expressed its faith in the doctrine of the Trinity as a testimony to the action of the God of Israel who so acted as to call the Gentiles into his service, alongside Israel, by his Spirit, through Jesus Christ. What God began in Abraham, he is continuing in raising up from the Gentiles a community, the church, to be an auxiliary of his original election, and only in our days finally beginning to assume the cooperative role which it was designed to play alongside the people of his election.

The richness of van Buren's exegetical and theological insights can only be suggested by such a summary. He acknowledges genuine differences between the two traditions. But an emphasis on the oneness of God's developing covenant of righteousness is his overriding concern. In the course of his exposition he makes it clear that Israel, in its biblical and rabbinic expressions never saw its relation to God as being based on anything but grace alone. Torah-obedience cannot be construed as "works-righteousness." Moreover, no "faith-works" dichotomy can be found in Paul, "the Pharisee whom God sent to the Gentiles" (157).

Those who have had some experience with Jewish-Christian conversation will welcome this book as a magisterial framework of interpretation. Those who have not been so involved will be stimulated to reconsider the validity and necessity of the traditional supersessionist theology and the triumphalistic exegetical and theological habits of mind generated by the Neoplatonic categories lurking behind Augustinian formulations of belief.

A special merit of van Buren's work lies in the fact that he has undertaken the ambitious project of producing a four-volume systematic theology under the title, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality*. The first volume, *Discerning the Way* (1980), constituted a prolegomenon and addressed the nature and necessity of theology. The present volume, *A Chris-*

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tian Theology of the People Israel, is Part Two of the total work. Volume III will focus on a christology for the Jewish-Christian reality, and Volume IV will be devoted to the relations of the church and the Jewish people to other religions.

As a contribution to the literature of systematic theology, van Buren's present volume is admirably comprehensive and coherent. The author develops a wide-ranging and original thesis from fundamental principles and never allows the reader to lose sight of the relationship between the stages of the argument. The angle of vision from which van Buren approaches his constructive work is unique in the history of theology. No other theological architect from Origen and Augustine to Tillich and Macquarrie has attempted to work out a comprehensive theology by listening with scrupulous care to the testimony of biblical and postbiblical Israel to its God.

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REALITY AND RHETORIC: STUDIES IN THE ECONOMICS OF DEVELOPMENT, by Peter Bauer. Cambridge; Harvard, 1984. Pp. 192. \$15.00.

Who's to blame for Third World poverty? Mean-spirited Uncle Sam, or Nasty Mr. Multinational, or Greedy Mr. Bigbank? All of the above! says the rhetoric of the Third World. None of the above! says Lord P. T. Bauer, a developmental economist at the London School of Economics and world expert on the subject of Less Developed Countries. More often than not, the real culprit is the politicization of economic life. In *Reality and Rhetoric*, Bauer exposes the gap between Third World rhetoric and the realities of economic development, and in the process demonstrates how powerful honest economic thinking can be.

Bauer's thesis presents a vicious circle of poverty in the Third World, but not the one popularized in church mailings on World Hunger. The real circle of poverty begins in the West in humane circles of development economists, academics and clerics—all of whom seek to uplift the poor of the world. Invariably that which is promoted from pulpit, lectern and textbooks is for more of the resources of the affluent West to be transferred to the Third World in the form of foreign aid and development planning.

The circle continues in the Third World where bureaucratic elites with little to gain and much to lose—namely more foreign aid—take and spend for themselves, for capital show cities, and for ill-conceived policies while denying economic freedom to their subjects. To make the circle complete these rulers blame the West for their poverty, thus easing the job of their self-loathing Western sympathizers.

One economic basic that Bauer claims to be widely misunderstood is that governments are not producers of wealth. They can shape the conditions that encourage its creation or they can put roadblocks in the way. Income transfers from the West enable Third World governments to monopolize economic life, thus reducing their people's living standards by far more than foreign aid could ever raise them. Drawing on his own experience in the rubber industry of Southeast Asia and in the organization of trade in British West Africa, Bauer recounts how rapid economic progress was made *prior* to government controls and marketing boards which confiscated the incomes of producers, distorted prices, and discouraged trade.

The evidence shows, moreover, that *less* government involvement in economic life is the most likely route to rapid development. The free market model, which proved so stunningly successful in North America and West Europe in the period 1945-73, developed still more dynamism in the Pacific in the 1960s and 1970s. Bauer's premise parallels Charles Krauthammer's critique of the Catholic Bishops' Letter on the U.S. Economy published in *The New Republic*; he writes, "Capitalism ultimately, if inconveniently, is *the* preferential option for the poor."

Bauer identifies foreign aid as the problem not the solution to Third World poverty. Aid provides recipient governments with the resources and rationale to take an increasing hand in the economy. Individuals and groups are thereby encouraged to invest more in the political

process, and energy is diverted from constructive economic activity toward the all-important task of securing political power. Ironically, economically productive minorities are often persecuted in the process.

Foreign aid has not only caused many recipient countries to regress economically but also enabled their governments to behave more tyrannically. Conscription, forced mobilization of resources and people, all in the name of the poor, are phenomena common in the Third World. In the case of Tanzania,

it has been widely and rightly recognized even by supporters of President Nyerere that without large-scale external aid he would not have been able to persist for so many years with forced collectivization and large-scale removal of people into so-called socialist villages.

In this day when Marxist ideology has seeped into, but not yet saturated, the minds of many intelligent Christians, some readers will take offense at *Reality and Rhetoric*. With scholarly precision Bauer demolishes the widely accepted propositions that the poverty of poor nations is caused by the wealth of rich nations; that in order to uplift the poor, the wealth of the rich must be confiscated; and that centralized planning is beneficial for development. In his clear defense of individuals as chief economic agents and his belief that individuals should be held accountable for their actions and credited with their own successes he clearly challenges Marxist analysis and prescriptions.

On the other hand, sensitive readers will be outraged that Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant churches have been such easy dupes for the misplaced guilt of Third World rhetoric which has had such tragic consequences for struggling people. "Donor governments," says Bauer, "cannot wash their hands of the consequences of their so-called caring." Intellectuals and clerics have long looked askance at the massive failures of socialism. Bauer joins others including Thomas Sowell, Melvyn Krauss, and Charles Murray in charging that the goals socialists seek are not well-served by following their advice.

Of the ten essays in this collection, four deserve special mention. In the two chapters on foreign aid Bauer rejects major policies and programs for manifesting Western concern for the world's poor, but he does so only after persuasively arguing that such policies do more to prevent progress in poor regions than to promote it. In chapter five, "Ecclesiastical Economics: Envy Legitimized," Bauer examines church statements on wealth and poverty and finds them to be shaped more by ideological politics than experience and reflection. And finally, in the tenth essay, he speaks to the silent taboo in intellectual circles against criticizing socialism. As an example, he cites the late Professor Paul Baran of Stanford who despite his many crass misstatements on economic matters was always warmly received by the faculty in the contemporary manner of receiving Marxist-Leninists as a sign of one's open-mindedness.

As an economist of keen intellect and solid experience, Peter Bauer is more impressed with what works than with what ideologues say ought to work. It's a question of what really does help the poor. Will market-oriented economies actually bring to the poor more bread and liberty? Peter Bauer thinks so and convincingly argues his case based on common human experience. For the sake of the much maligned American political economy as well as for the sake of the ever-present poor, this book deserves to be widely and wisely read.

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CRISIS AND CATHARSIS: THE POWER OF THE APOCALYPSE, by Adela Yarbro Collins. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984. Pp. 180. \$11.95 (paper).

Few if any of the books of the Bible have been so widely studied as the Book of Revelation, yet without agreement by biblical scholarship or popular piety as to such basic matters as authorship, date of composition, "Sitz-im-Leben," or its definite interpretation. For many it remains a "seven-sealed book," a curiosity piece either conveniently neglected or regularly misunderstood and misapplied.

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Adela Yarbro Collins' *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* seeks to help meet this problem by examining how apocalyptic literature functions in the Book of Revelation to meet the crisis which had arisen for its author and first hearers. She attempts to go beyond the historical-critical approach ("the world behind the text") by using literary and psychological insights to examine "the world in front of the text," that is, the social situation of the author and his audience. The result is a psychological interpretation of the Apocalypse which sees its function as an emotional catharsis of the author's feelings of fear, powerlessness and aggression against Rome.

The first chapter, "Who Wrote the Book of Revelation?" discusses the difficult authorship question. Collins feels that much can be learned about the author by inference, even though a definite historical person cannot be identified. Such data regarding his "social identity" includes his role as an itinerant prophet, his being influenced by earlier written and oral traditions, his affinity with the Jewish Sibylline tradition, and his part in early Christian prophecy.

In the second chapter, "When Was Revelation Written?" the author attempts to date Revelation as precisely as possible. She sees Irenaeus' testimony for a date at the end of Domitian's reign (95-96 C.E.) as the strongest external evidence for the time of composition. She also uses internal evidence (the use of the name Babylon for Rome, the motif of the seven kings, etc.) which for her clearly indicates a date after 70.

The third chapter, "The Social Situation—Perceived Crisis," examines the nature of the crisis which led the author to write. Collins believes that the Apocalypse was not written in response to a major Roman persecution of Christians; it was not a book of consolation for Christians suffering unbearable persecution by order of Domitian who was demanding emperor-worship. Rather, she says the crisis included such matters as a conflict over wealth, the "precarious" relations with Rome and the experience of trauma. She sees an "unbearable tension and trauma" present between what ought to be (God as ruler of all) and what was (a "perceived social crisis") as foundational.

The two ways this social crisis and trauma were dealt with are the subject of chapter 4 ("Social Radicalism in the Apocalypse") and chapter 5 ("The Power of Apocalyptic Rhetoric—Catharsis"). Socially radical methods included a call for hearers not to accommodate in any way to the polytheistic culture, by stressing detachment from wealth and property and by demanding a thoroughgoing opposition to the Roman government. The second way of dealing with the crisis and trauma was by the creation of a new linguistic "world." Collins feels that the symbolism and

plot of the Apocalypse helped surface the hearer's feelings (feelings of fear, powerlessness, and aggression), and heighten them:

They are placed in a cosmic framework, projected onto the screen of the heavenly world. This intensification leads to catharsis, a release of the disquieting elements of the emotions in question. By projecting the tensions and feelings experienced by the hearers into cosmic categories, the Apocalypse made it possible for the hearers to gain some distance from their experience. It provided a feeling of detachment and thus greater control. (6)

Thus, like Aristotle's discussion of the phenomenon of catharsis in Greek tragedy, so Collins sees the Book of Revelation relieving the tension aroused by the crisis of its day.

In her conclusion, Collins shares her concerns about the Apocalypse's means of resolving tension. She is troubled by what she sees as the use of violent, vengeful, dehumanizing language in the Book of Revelation and its call to rejoicing over the destruction of one's enemies (Rome). She instead proposes the values of humanization, justice and love as more helpful ways to relate to others. For her the book is "a broken myth...a partial, imperfect vision [which] can still speak to our broken human condition" (172).

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the book is her assumption that John and his hearers were not suffering a real persecution and oppression by the Roman government under Domitian. In that respect her arguments are simply not convincing. Yet, *Crisis and Catharsis* is a valuable

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able tool in opening up for us the world of the last book of the Bible and in clarifying how the Apocalypse achieves its desired effect in dealing with the crisis for Christians of Asia Minor at the end of the first century.

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EQUALS BEFORE GOD: SEMINARIANS AS HUMANISTIC PROFESSIONALS, by Sherryl Kleinman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. Pp. 133. \$15.00.

From a sociological perspective, a profession is a group of people who know what is best for their clients. Their authority derives from the knowledge and skills they employ in an esoteric service. The ministry once held the honorific title of "profession" without question. Clergy were truth givers and standard setters; they were the experts on morality and the judges of everyday behavior.

Today, however, like other professionals, ministers have clearly lost some of their traditional authority. "Deprofessionalization" begins when persons begin to challenge professional claims to expertise or altruism. As Ann Douglas has pointed out, the process of deprofessionalization for the ministerial profession began in the 1800s with industrialization and

the democratization of American culture.

Kleinman argues that Protestant clergy responded to the beginning of deprofessionalization by gradually developing a “humanistic professional ideology, role, core activity, and rhetoric autonomy” (4). Humanism involves personalized and egalitarian relations between people. Humanistic ministers treat their clients like peers. They become counselors and enablers rather than preachers and moral standard setters. Ministry becomes a matter of being a helpful, caring person. “Community” becomes a central term in the humanistic rhetoric.

“This book is the first study of the consequences of deprofessionalization for the socialization of new professionals” (14). Kleinman spent six months in 1977-78 conducting in-depth interviews and participating in and observing as many of the daily activities of the students at “Midwest Seminary” as they, their teachers, and time permitted.

Midwest Seminary has a three-year M.Div. program involving both classroom and field work. Most of the 195 students lived on campus. Students learn that their personal identity is the basis for becoming a good minister. The seminarian’s “person” is worked on through psychological and vocational tests, personal interviews, a journal of personal and theological reflections, and a required ministry project. “Most of the faculty emphasize the heart of ministry as interpersonal rather than intellectual” (53). Egalitarian rhetoric stresses that ministers are not the sole religious authority. Community rhetoric is frequently used and serves to convince students to do the things designed to make them good ministers.

The humanistic ideology, role, knowledge, and rhetoric are not only incongruous with most parishioners’ expectations but also “provide students with only a shaky basis of professional authority” (97). Students acquired an ambivalent professional identity as they tried to accommodate the personal egalitarian expectations of parishioners, parents, and, in many cases, themselves. The absence of a convincing ideology and rhetoric to legitimate the professional authority and autonomy of the ministry created dilemmas for students. In as much as women have tended toward more personal and egalitarian relations with others and have not had the authority generally vested in males, female students were especially concerned about encountering legitimization problems.

As Kleinman admits, Midwest Seminary presents an extreme case; however, as she correctly argues, the contribution of her study lies in the seminary’s atypicality:

The atypical or unusual are important in studying social life because they highlight general patterns we otherwise take for granted. By studying an extreme case, we will not only understand the problems that may arise in schools responding to deprofessionalization but also learn how typical professional programs assist their

students in avoiding similar dilemmas. (14)

Certain aspects of Midwest’s program can be found in most seminaries today. It seems obvious that any clergy who find their authority in contemporary notions of professionalism are on shaky ground. Those involved with theological education and interested in the preparation of persons for the ministry will find this book thought-provoking. How can seminary faculty and

pastors respond to deprofessionalization in helpful ways? What is the basis of pastoral authority today? This is a question that deserves serious theological discussion.

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POLITICAL PILGRIMS: TRAVELS OF WESTERN INTELLECTUALS TO THE SOVIET UNION, CHINA, AND CUBA, 1928-1978, by Paul Hollander. New York: Harper & Row, 1983. Pp. xxx, 526. \$8.95 (paper).

When George Bernard Shaw arrived in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, he met two waitresses in the restaurant of a railway station just inside the border. Not by chance, they were well acquainted with his work. He was flattered and immediately drew a comparison: "waitresses in England," opined the unsuspecting GBS, "were not so well read as their Soviet sisters." Later, after being lavished with food in Moscow, he scoffed at rumors of famine in the land, though the famine was all too real in fact ("the only case in history of a purely man-made famine," says Robert Conquest in *The Great Terror*; and the man who made it was Stalin). And so it goes with the "techniques of hospitality," as Paul Hollander calls them, one of the means by which some dictatorships of our day have tried to convince us that they are democratic.

Their efforts continue. There still are pilgrimages like Shaw's, for other dictatorships have by now replaced the Soviet Union as iconographic shrines, since it became an embarrassment to all but a few of its one-time admirers: first the People's Republic of China, then Cuba, later North Vietnam, now Nicaragua, if not somehow "the Third World" altogether. According to the argument of Hollander's instructive book, these pilgrimages are a consequence of the "alienation" or "estrangement" of Western intellectuals from the political life of their own nations. Bernard Shaw, for example, was not only sympathetic to the Soviet "experiment," as it was then called. He was also convinced that British politics was corrupt beyond all hope: "the bourgeoisie is rotten. The army is rotten....Above all parliamentary institutions are rotten" (95). And so he invested his political hopes in the Soviet Union. Much the same air of discovery is found in John Strachey's memorable claim that "to travel from the capitalist world into Soviet territory is to pass from death to birth." This pattern of estrangement and discovery repeats itself, as even our later-day pilgrims sometimes recognize, though usually well after the fact. An American named Jonathan Mirsky travelled to Mao's China in 1972, but later recognized that his group had "sheathed the critical faculties which had been directed at our own Government and... humbly helped to insert the rings in our own noses." His hosts knew better at the time: when in 1979 he met one of his former guides, he reported that the guide said, "we wanted to deceive you. But *you* wanted to be deceived" (xxiii).

Intellectuals, however, are also citizens; and citizens, as distinguished from intellectuals, cannot be displaced persons. Hollander fears for the health of American constitutional democracy, which depends on the discriminating support of its citizens; but they will fall into the bad habit of undervaluing it, if their view of its place in world politics is derived from the reports of such easily deceived travellers. Constitutional democracies such as ours, after all, are rare human achievements: they have existed for only a few centuries and have taken root in only a few countries. But our travellers imagine that they have witnessed something more authentically

democratic elsewhere. And having absorbed, sometimes without knowing its lineage, the criticism of “bourgeois democracy” that originates with Marx (see, e.g. *The German Ideology*,

Part I) and Rousseau (his two *Discourses*), these travellers then find it easy enough to scoff at “parliamentary cretinism,” as Lenin called it, at home. Yet they, too, no less than other citizens, depend upon such commonplaces of parliamentary democracy as our constitutional guarantees of freedom, when they attempt to rally the unenlightened multitudes. However, they “seem to care surprisingly little” about those guarantees, says Hollander, on the evidence of their having “been capable of admiring societies...where such freedom does not exist” (435).

We might then look for a more balanced assessment of our constitutional system and its place in the world than we get from the political pilgrims of our day. To be sure, they sometimes do address particular questions of world politics not only urgently but in a compelling way. But these questions are always questions of foreign policy, that is, of how this country stands related to other countries. And taken to the root, questions of foreign policy are inseparable from the debate over constitutional democracy; and that debate, in turn, takes place within the history of modern political philosophy, e.g., between the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists in this country, or between Hobbes and Rousseau.

The debate centers on the questions of political equality, on whether it is enough if citizens are equal as citizens, if, for example, they have equal rights as voters. Though the Civil War struggle or the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its Extension in 1970, not to mention other salient features of our history, seem to suggest that equality of this kind is itself very difficult to achieve, critics of our constitutional system argue that it is not enough. They claim that political equality must be accompanied by social and economic equality if democracy is to be more than a sham. This is why they talk of “social justice,” as distinguished from political justice, and why they entertain visions of democracy that overcome the defective practices, so they describe them, familiar to us all.

Their visions have been severely tested in our century. Since equality seems not to grow naturally, it must be enforced. And it may be enforced by bureaucratic means; but then the bureaucrats become “the new class,” as Milovan Djilas called them in his remarkable book of that title: they reserve privileges for themselves as their reward for the arduous task of enforcing equality among others. Our century has seen another means of enforcing equality, namely, totalitarian dictatorship. But its deep incoherence and inhuman cruelty betray its alleged purpose, as readers of such diverse works as Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, Trotsky’s *The Revolution Betrayed*, and Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago* should remember.

Either way, whether the means are totalitarian or merely bureaucratic, it can hardly be said that twentieth century practice has fulfilled nineteenth century visions of a new and improved kind of democratic equality. All the more reason, then, for us to reconsider the original debate over constitutional democracy and what its promises are. If our pilgrims were to sort out the terms of this debate, their assessment of American constitutional democracy and its place in the world might be more balanced than in fact it is.

Our church travellers have something to learn from the mistakes of these pilgrims. Hollander’s chronicle of self-deception is instructive on its own terms, and it points beyond itself

toward a theological question. His analysis shows how the search for “political utopia,” on the assumption that it is to be found somewhere in practice, is a force in world politics today. His readers who are also fortunate enough to have studied Eric Voegelin’s *The New Science of Politics* will immediately recognize the import of Hollander’s analysis. What he has done is to describe a new form of the ancient heresy of gnosticism: the self-deceived enlightened ones of our day know what the future will be, that is, they know where the truth is to be found and how the course of history will take us there. His book is thus doubly useful. It not only offers warnings to church travellers about some of the hazards that await them on their trips, but also helps us to squelch the recent clerical rumor which would have us believe that the *logos* of history (a.k.a. the Holy Spirit) was last seen headed toward the southern hemisphere, where it is being realized in today’s strug-

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gle for democracy and in those “authentic Christian communities” which are no longer to be found right here in River City.

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REVOLUTION UNDERWAY: AN AGING CHURCH IN AN AGING SOCIETY, by Cedric W. Tilberg. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984. Pp. 117. \$4.95 (paper).

As the result of massive demographic and social changes, we find ourselves in the midst of a revolution that is already having a profound effect upon the mission and ministry of the church. Cedric Tilberg, a consultant for the Division for Mission in North America, Lutheran Church in America, compellingly sets forth this thesis in his timely study, *Revolution Underway*. The growing number and proportion of adults 65 and older have escalated from 4.1% in 1900 to over 11% in 1980 and are projected to be nearly 20% of the total population of the United States by the year 2200. As the result of the force of the unprecedented demographic transition now in progress, the traditional social meanings of aging and becoming old are being rigorously challenged. Tilberg argues that aging has become and will remain in the next century a societal issue of momentous importance which the religious community must be informed about and respond to in increasingly new and innovative ways.

Until recently, little of merit was published concerning the complex issues of aging and the church. Indeed, it has only been in the last two decades that gerontological research has begun to create a body of literature that examines the process of aging and provides insights and understandings concerning what it means to grow old. This volume presents a useful distillation and application of gerontological studies relevant to the religious sector.

By dividing his study into two parts, Tilberg provides a helpful framework for examining demographic realities and their implications for the church. Part I, “Elder Today and Tomorrow,” is a concise but surprisingly inclusive review of some of the main issues in gerontology. The myths and stereotypes about aging are cogently challenged and the richly diverse characteristics of older adults are described.

The author is not unmindful of the statistical fact that women are the survivors of our aging population, and that there is no evidence that this is likely to change in the foreseeable future. Widowhood, economic insecurity, and inadequate housing and medical care are but a few of the common hazards of growing old as a woman in our ageist and sexist society. Being old, female, and a member of an ethnic minority in the United States compound the risks of aging. Such data have crucial significance for local congregations engaged in providing services as well as support systems for community based elderly, most of whom are women.

This volume is refreshingly different in that it is not a litany of injustices and problems that confront the elderly. Instead, it details the valuable resource that older adults represent and the contributions they make to our society and, especially, the church. Tilberg labels as “theological heresy” the frequent lament that because a congregation has a disproportionate number of older people that it is a dying congregation with no future. He contends that the age spread of the membership is rarely the cause of a congregation dying. He reminds us that cohorts of today’s elderly are healthier, better educated, more politically involved, increasingly active in the work force and in volunteer activities, and generally more assertive and pro-active than older adults in the past. Consequently, the church must take them seriously and “prepare to involve them, not in ‘playpen activities’ or peripheral responsibilities but in the most central expression of mission” (47).

In Part II, “The Church’s Response,” the author illustrates the Social Statement of the Lutheran Church in America, “Aging and the Older Adult” (1.978), as a blueprint for outlining program ideas and strategies for congregational life, health and welfare agencies of the church, the church’s college and seminaries, and regional judicatories. Theological imperatives are set forth which elucidate the

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meanings of aging and provide a basis for creative and responsible ministry. The church’s role as a prophetic community and an advocate for the elderly is reinforced and strategies for facilitating constructive change in social attitudes and values about aging and the aged are set forth. These programmatic recommendations and suggestions represent a useful part of this volume.

The strengths of this publication are the breadth of issues introduced in the restrictive space of its 117 pages, the positive emphasis on older adults as assets and resources in congregational and community life, and the many helpful suggestions and ideas for designing and implementing programs and services that enhance the lives of older adults, including their spiritual well-being. The limitations are its abbreviated introduction of complex gerontological issues and the resultant risk of appearing at times to oversimplify.

Tilberg has rendered the entire religious community a service in providing this volume even though he may be vulnerable to the criticism that he relies too heavily on materials from the Lutheran Church in America in the second half of his book. *Revolution Underway* provides an excellent study guide for church councils, social ministry committees, and for anyone who is concerned about the role and mission of the church in developing gerontological programs and policies that are faithful to the gospel and do more than mirror the ageism which pervades our society.

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THE STRENGTH OF THE WEAK. TOWARD A CHRISTIAN FEMINIST IDENTITY,
by Dorothee Soelle. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984. Pp. 186. \$9.95 (paper).

This collection of essays and sermons revolve around the theme of liberation—liberation *from* all that keeps us from realizing our full human potential and liberation *for* the abundant life that Christ makes possible for us.

It is a tremendously thought-provoking book, well written, with vivid and stimulating imagery throughout. Being a collection of short pieces, there is some repetition, as in chapters eight and nine for example.

The over-all thesis of the book is that a theology based upon an authoritarian, paternalistic God inevitably results in oppression and a stripping away of human potential, which is in fact manifestly evident in church history past and present. Soelle advocates a thorough Christocentric perspective as an antidote for authoritarianism: a faith centering on the suffering and crucified Jesus is the only basis on which a Christian life of understanding and compassion can be built. As he gave himself in weakness for this world, so we too identify and have compassion with those in this world who are weak. True strength comes not by force—the pattern of this world—but through the weakness of Christ.

Soelle passionately and at times harshly attacks all she feels imprisons us: fear, injustice, intolerance, poverty, greed, arms race, paternalistic religion, meaninglessness and crippling self-images which society perpetuates in both men and women. Despite the subtitle, it is not a “feminist” book. True, she is outraged at what authoritarian, male-dominated theology has done to women in past and present, but her dream is that both men and women can realize their full human potentials. In that sense we should all be “feminist.”

She does make sweeping generalizations. The nuances of the book tend to be black-and-white rather than the more true-to-life shades of grey. In the first chapter, for instance, she states that the “simplest forms of transcendence” are “almost unattainable for the middle class” (21). In the third chapter she asks, “What point is there in talking about love under capitalistic conditions?” (35). In chapter five she speaks of the “impoverished male. He has sold out and betrayed his own desires, reducing his wishes to the same kind of mechanical banality that characterizes his movements and speech. Society has trained him not only to hide his feelings but also to cut himself off from the possibility of transcending what he is. He does not dance. He does not cry.

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Can we imagine him praying? The idea is ludicrous” (53, 54). There is much about the male stereotype which bears criticism, but such shrill generalizing does not bear careful analysis or contribute to a sharing of opinions on the subject.

She weakens her argument by such overstatement. She is, for instance, scathing in her criticism of capitalism as well as the western middle classes. Much of her criticism is justified, and Christians consider no government or system ideal. But she has fallen victim to a political utopianism, failing to provide a balanced view of the shortcomings of all systems, and offers no

concrete alternatives. In a recent trip to an Iron Curtain country I saw no more evidence of brotherly-sisterly love and no less an emphasis on materialism than in the west.

The book would have profited by a chapter on the nature of sin as it affects people and society as a backdrop to those abuses and evils she criticizes. Her criticisms are well-aimed but not analyzed in depth. Also, she paints very idealistic hopes for Christian living, but she is not specific in the forms these goals might take.

Her first chapter is worth the price of the book. She writes about the “mass atheism” which increasingly pervades and characterizes western society (to say nothing of other parts of the globe!). In her view the word which describes this drift to life without transcendence or God is “banality.” She makes her point very concrete (something she does very well throughout the book) by contrasting the lives of two German women in their early sixties whom she knows. All that is left of any trace of religion in Mrs. K’s life is a vague sort of work ethic: order, work and health. The dominating ritual of her life, which she does with almost religious ardour, is shopping. Going to the department store is her equivalent of going to Mass. This week’s specials and the best prices are her hymns and prayers. (Soelle adds, “I have heard American women pronounce the word ‘shopping’ with a zeal that sent cold chills down my spine.” [18]). With all sense of transcendence gone from her life, Mrs. K has also cut herself off from other people. “Living without religion means that she is cut off from others, an isolated individual. She has no past and no future. She feels no sympathy, no pangs of guilt, no self-doubt. She does not ask the big questions” (14).

Mrs. S, on the other hand, still goes to Mass on Sundays “and sees to it that her grandchildren go too” (13). She is not what we would call an active church member, but her life and mentality are framed by a consciousness of God. Consequently, her love of life, her participation in the vital force, goes infinitely farther than Mrs. K’s. Her connection to God also connects her to other people, if for no other reason than “she hears about world hunger all the time through her church...” (19). Soelle sadly predicts that “Mrs. S’s daughters and granddaughters will come to resemble Mrs. K more and more” (17).

For real life, of course, such a contrast is drawn far too starkly. But Soelle’s questions and point are crucially important. Into the “banality” of a predominantly materialistic and atheistic culture, what do we Christians bring and how best do we bring it? What can we Christians do to bring about a revolution? We offer an “uprising of life against any forms of death, which is to say, resurrection” (76).

A deep and passionate caring about humankind and its fate pulsates through these pages. One cannot help but be drawn into her concerns. Whether we agree or disagree with the extent of her arguments, she has done the most important for us: She has made us think and feel. “...Perhaps it is my task in these dark times to keep alive at least the desire to sing with everyone, including the dead, including the cosmos” (23).

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