



THE ANONYMOUS CHRIST: JESUS AS SAVIOR IN MODERN THEOLOGY, by Lee E. Snook. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986. Pp. 191. \$10.95 (paper).

Snook begins this work by explaining that it is “an introduction to contemporary interpretations of Jesus as Savior” which is intended for “all persons who have a genuine interest in *the importance of Jesus for today*” [italics added]—especially “for all those who have difficulty taking the traditional churchly confessions as their starting point” (7; See also, 17-22). Snook takes as his basic task to demonstrate, and respond to the following premise:

Christians are those who know the history of Jesus as the final definition of the power that saves, but today lack a Christology ample enough to discern the multiplying dimensions of salvation in the postmodern age. (170)

Throughout the reading of this work one would do well to keep in mind the phrase, “Jesus as Savior,” for it functions as an inclusivizing (26), unifying (15), and guiding (13-14) rubric in Snook’s methodology (Introduction and Chapter 1); in his analysis of four basic typological interpretations in 20th-century Christology (Chapters 2-5); and finally in his critique of these interpretations and his own constructive proposal (Chapter 6).

Snook’s thesis is that “every one of the major Christologies with any currency in the church today has gained that currency because it is able to show how Jesus saves from the many dimensions of lostness which threaten humanity” (8). However, this saving message of Jesus does not “reach” people by simply repeating old formulas. One needs constantly “to fashion [or revise] a Christological vessel fit for the treasure, that is, for the reality of salvation in Jesus” (17). With today’s pressing issues of rational coherence, historical relativity, and world religions, the Christian cannot simply look the other way without becoming, broadly speaking, schizophrenic—perhaps dishonest. One must always remember that these doctrinal vessels are “earthen” and of themselves do not save. Yet, all attempts to revise Christian formulations about Christ’s person and work are to be held accountable to “the experienced fact of Jesus as Savior” as given witness to in the New Testament and made available to all people.

Because of these and other “methodological” concerns, Snook suggests that we begin not with the traditional starting point of *Christology*, but rather with *soteriology*, which involves interpretations of that saving event—of Jesus as Savior—which is epistemologically (though not ontologically) prior to, and gives rise to, all reflections about “Jesus as the God-man” (i.e. Christology). Although Snook can see the dangers and criticisms of this approach (e.g. “making Jesus over into what we think we need,” 10), he sees an even greater danger in beginning with Christology qua Christology; namely, when it becomes divorced from or takes precedence over soteriology (e.g. exclusive spiritualizing, where Christianity becomes docetic and floats above history, and our pluralistic world is ignored, 162, 15). He states, “My argument [is] that the ultimate worth of any interpretation of Jesus is how well or badly a Christology functions

soteriologically” (157).

Overall, this method serves one best by offering the possibility of “seeing the many Christologies which are sampled in this book as valid testimonies” (8). “There has never been unanimity in the way people experience [or continue to experience] Jesus” (27). Look at the four gospel writers (24-25)! Various Christologies have been written, but the subject of salvation cannot yet be considered a closed book. “The salvation which *was* definitely and once for all accomplished in Jesus is *not yet* finished” (8, italics

page 324

added). As St. John writes: “The time is coming and now is” (4:23).

As a heuristic device, Snook suggests that we ask of each modern interpretation of Jesus as Savior the following three, interrelated questions: “(1) Who was Jesus? (the question of Christ’s *person*); (2) What is salvation? (the question of Christ’s *work*); and (3) What fact gave rise to these questions?” (14). Snook writes in chapter one:

This opening chapter proposes that the doctrines and theories about the person and the work of Jesus as the Christ (questions one and two) would never have arisen unless something happened, some originating fact centering on Jesus (question three). I will refer to that originating fact as “the experienced fact of Jesus as Savior.” (16)

None of these three questions can be answered in isolation from the others, argues Snook. Emphasis on one will affect and be affected by corresponding effects in and by the others.

But from what does Jesus save us? Snook answers: from the multidimensional phenomenon of lostness which we all experience as human beings (30-32). And “lostness implies relation” (31)—a relation which involves a tripartite interaction between God, ourselves, and the world (32). Showing his preference for Process metaphysics and its central category of *becoming* (73-77), rather than *being* (which Snook would argue focuses too much on the *one* person of Jesus and the *stasis* of his being the God-man), Snook writes:

The subject of soteriology is an action, an event, a deed, with more than one actor. God, Jesus as Savior, the devil, and all humanity are depicted as actors in the drama of salvation. There is only one Savior, but the Savior acts among other actors. Salvation is intractably complex because this one person Jesus, as actor, must act among other agents if there is to be salvation, but whatever else other agents might be thought to *do* in that drama, their status as agents must not minimize or compromise the all sufficiency of the salvation wrought by the one Savior....[But we must remember,] a savior all alone is no Savior. (29-30)

In the main body of the work, Snook analyzes the theme of Jesus as Savior from four basic Christological perspectives, according to the lostness or disrelation which human beings experience: between God and self (Ch. 2); God and world (Ch. 3); world and self (Ch. 4); and most radically, between God, self, and world (Ch.5). Chapter Two, “The Savior as the Word and as the End,” focuses on Barth and Pannenberg—where lostness is analyzed in terms of unbelief

and hopelessness. Chapter Three, “The Savior as New Being and as Creative Transformation,” focuses on Tillich and Cobb—where lostness is analyzed in terms of estrangement and chaos. Chapter Four, “The Savior as Liberator and as Reconciler,” focuses on liberation theologians (esp. Boff) and Schillebeeckx—where lostness is analyzed in terms of political oppression and social isolation (lack of freedom leading to dehumanization). Chapter Five, “The Savior as Total Presence and as Mediator of God,” focuses on Driver/Altizer, Hick and Wilfred Cantwell Smith—where lostness is analyzed in terms of a false consciousness which is brought about by parochialism, christocentrism, and Christian arrogance. Though there are some points where Snook’s Process spectacles have skewed his reading of certain theologians (e.g. that “God, for Tillich, is ultimately unaffected by the world and does not interact with the creation” 153, *Nein!* See Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*, e.g. I:158, 233-4, 237, 245, 252-57, 262, 266-286; III:210, 398), on the whole, he makes good on his attempt to present the various positions “in the strongest light possible.” Panikkar’s words set the stage well for Snook’s own constructive proposal of “The Anonymous Christ” in Chapter 6: “It is precisely because I take Christ’s affirmation that he is the way, the truth, and the life, that I cannot reduce his significance only to historical Christianity” (144).

That many Christologies are necessary, given the many different situations of lostness which human beings experience, is perhaps not all that difficult for most Christians to accept. But it is my hunch that Snook’s further proposal—that “the Anonymous Christ” (167-171) opens up the possibility of affirming that “no Christology is exhaustive of the reality of Christ” (170) and thereby challenges us to immerse ourselves in other religions in

page 325

order to discover “as yet underdeveloped ways for speaking of salvation” (156)—will certainly raise a few eyebrows.

Christologies...have the strongest appeal when our question is not confined exclusively to [Luther’s] agonizing plea, “How can I—so caught up as I am in my own despair and unbelief—find a gracious God?” Rather, the cogency of a [revised, post-modern] Christology has been sharpest when we have asked, “How does God, whose saving grace is unsurpassably disclosed and defined in Jesus, *also* work savingly within *nature* and *other* cultures and other religions?” (154)

On the one hand, Snook is trying to expose the human arrogance which seeks to speak on God’s behalf: “If you don’t know or believe in Jesus you can’t be saved.” On the other hand, he also clearly demonstrates that his proposal is not the ol’ “One religion is as good as another” cliché. Snook’s proposal deserves careful reading, not *ad hominem* labeling.

He anticipates his audience’s anxious question: “If we redefine salvation and Jesus’ person and work so broadly, what is left of the claims for the finality and distinctiveness of Christianity” (162)? Part of his answer lies in the following:

God does not place limits on who is or can be saved or under the auspices of which religion or nonreligion salvation does or can occur. God alone saves by placing limits on God. This does *not* imply that God has limited salvation to

Christians only, thereby excluding *all* other ways; it does imply that the saving will of God excludes *those* ways which, in the name of religion or in the name of nation or even in the name of Christ, do to others what was done to Jesus. (167-168)

We need to be aware that Christologies can become more exclusive than God (168; 158-159)! Bearing witness to Jesus as the Christ always runs the risk of “belief and betrayal” (146). Snook challenges Christians to ask once again—to seek greater clarity on—what we mean when we confess that “Jesus is the only Son of God” (147; John 3:16-18). Once we become more clear about what this confession means, perhaps the Christian concern for the “finality” of Christ will not lead to dangerous fanaticism—tragically turning the gospel into law (163; 34-35). Perhaps then the Christian can be *both* committed to Jesus as Savior *and* at the same time open to the multiple dimensions of salvation in the world (165-166). The life of the Christian church will always involve the tension-filled question: “How [do we] liberate the gospel from old patterns of thought without losing the truth which those old patterns were able to communicate and conserve for centuries” (146)?

Those of us who have had the privilege to learn from this “master communicator” during our seminary years or elsewhere will again discover here the same eloquence, pastoral sensitivity, theological prowess, and worldly wisdom born of rich experience. Whether you agree with Snook’s proposal or not, I am certain that it would give him the greatest satisfaction simply to know that this work had encouraged your faith to search for ever deeper understanding.

John Christopherson
Chicago, Illinois

VIRTUE—PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, Richard John Neuhaus, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986. Pp. 96. \$5.95 (paper).

UNSECLAR AMERICA, Richard John Neuhaus, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1986. Pp. 168. \$8.95 (paper).

What is and ought the role of virtue to be in our common life? And what ought to be the influence of religion in American public life? These important issues are dealt with in the lively books which came out of two conferences sponsored by the Rockford Institute’s Center on Religion and Society under the guidance of Richard John Neuhaus. Both books will be of interest to thoughtful people in the academy, in parish ministry or politics, and to laypeople alike. The Rockford Institute and Neuhaus are to be applauded for making these issues matters for public discussion in a dignified and serious, yet unstuffy, way. These books do their best to make the ideas and principles by which we seek to live our lives vitally exciting,

and they do so in a way that far exceeds the ability of media experts and political campaign ads.

Each book reprints four papers given at the two conferences, and also contains an extensive account taken from Neuhaus’s minutes or tape recordings of the discussions which took place among conference participants about the issues which the presentations raised. These discussions are sprinkled generously with quotations from the discussions, often rather lengthy

ones at that, and so these accounts are at least as interesting as the papers themselves. Indeed, both papers and discussion invite the reader to engage in an internal dialogue with the conference participants. At times, their quality and style virtually compel the reader to engage him or herself in this conversation.

As both space and the nature of the materials preclude complete coverage here, I will comment on some issues or themes raised by conference participants which are particularly noteworthy. In *Virtue—Public and Private*, the essays by Gilbert Meilaender and Robert E. Rhodes, Jr., are especially interesting, raising as they do the relation between the community and the inculcation of virtue. Meilaender summarizes the recent treatments of virtue by Alasdair MacIntyre, James M. Gustafson, Stanley Hauerwas and William F. May. These analyses are carefully done and are fair, on the whole. And the criticisms that he raises about each deserve thoughtful consideration. Meilaender raises the paradox that imitation of virtue does not of itself make one virtuous. Drawing upon the ideas of E. B. White about writing, he argues that virtue, like great writing, requires not only the virtue-shaping community, but also moments of felicity and grace.

Juxtaposed to this emphasis on the role of private groups or professions in nurturing virtue is Rhodes' argument for Thomas Aquinas's view that the proper end of civil law is to lead persons to virtue. Rejecting the medieval view of law (as rules backed by threats) as inadequate to modern expectations of law to protect freedom, distribute benefits and salvage bad situations, and endorsing the Vatican II understanding in *Gaudium et Spes* that law may secure and distribute amenities in society which promote virtue, Rhodes argues for a "jurisprudence of aspirations" in which law is seen as "an expression of what we can aspire to as a community" (35). Such aspirations can, he believes, be set by consensus judgments about human experience.

Readers may, if they wish, read Neuhaus's accounts of the conference discussion of these and other papers in conjunction with the papers themselves. This is facilitated by the fact that each paper was discussed by participants separately from the others. Hence, one gets the feel of lively interchange. In *Unsecular America*, alas, accounts of the discussion are not arranged in this way. While the discussion in this conference has the advantage of being more freewheeling, it lacks the focus of those in *Virtue*, and is harder to correlate with the papers.

Where Rhodes raises the possibility of consensus judgments about the substance and ends of civil law, the conference on unsecular America raises the question of whether the basis of this consensus is or can be religious. The spirit of the revival hopes described by Robert Handy in *A Christian America* seems to animate many participants. But it is now an ecumenical search for a Judeo-Christian America. Catholics, Jews and fundamentalists are all much in evidence in the discussions.

The case for American religiosity is made both by Paul Johnson, who rehearses the religious rhetoric of many American statesmen and symbolic documents throughout history, and by Carl Everett Ladd, who summarizes a chronological comparison of opinion poll data. Several conference participants questioned, however, how deep this religiosity went in the American public. Neuhaus seems to feel that it is considerably threatened. This is indicated by his comments that "What is lost today...is the belief that America is in any way the bearer of a universal hope," and that "Because religion is, I believe, at the heart of culture, it is only the most egregious offender against this world view [i.e., "scientific reductionism"] which asserts itself at all levels of American life" (53,61). Yet, although bits and pieces of this reductionism are recognized, neither Neuhaus nor anyone

else gives it the precise analysis and critique which it seems to deserve—the sort of examination it gets, for example, from the rhetorician Wayne Booth in his *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). For, without this examination and critique, it is easy to miss how pervasive the modern dogma is in the mainline churches and fundamentalist groups (as indicated, for example, by the separation of facts and values, the appeal to common-sense realism, the imposition of the modern understanding of history upon the Scriptures, and the use of modern criteria of historiography), as well as in the secular world.

In this connection, George Marsden brings some needed subtlety to bear in his paper by distinguishing non-theistic from theistic secularists, and methodological positivism from a positivist world view, in order to reserve a legitimate sphere and use for secular assumptions. And he has a helpful discussion of what attitudes religious people ought to take with respect to non-theistic secularists, and how religious people might deal with them and with various aspects of secularization in public life.

Neuhaus explicitly addresses the role of religion in American political and philosophical discourse. He believes religious meaning and ethical and moral themes to be relevant to public discourse, but also thinks these meanings need to be “mediated” or “clothed, translated, and interpreted in a mediating language that makes its publically relevant meanings accessible to all the public” (64). But Neuhaus is not clear about whether the purpose is to enhance the public good for its own sake, or is for the sake of the community of faith and its claims. And he discusses no example to illustrate how this mediation might work. So, it is an idea explored too insufficiently to be fully convincing.

As noted above, the discussion at this conference is lively and far-ranging. I found the conversation on the so-called thinness of American religion, on the connection between positivist methodology and positivist world-views, and on the place of religion in public discourse to be especially interesting. Other readers will doubtless be interested in other topics in the discussion.

Ronald W. Duty
 Maynard-Wang Lutheran Parish
 Maynard, Minnesota

PREACHING: THE ART OF CONNECTING GOD AND PEOPLE, by F. Dean Lueking.
 Waco, TX: Word, 1986. Pp. 128. \$12.95.

How can I incorporate into my preaching some of the real life experiences I have been privileged to share with people during the week? This is the question which preachers will find suggested by the title of this volume. With the current trend in preaching toward a narrative style and the use of story, there is clearly a need for a book which offers assistance in incorporating not just stories but the real lives of real people with whom the preacher has relationships into the proclamation of the Gospel. This is the task which Lueking sets out for himself in *Preaching*. “The aim of this book,” Lueking states, “is to help the preacher see the incomparable wealth of meaning that is found in the congregation itself and in the community beyond. It seeks to demonstrate the art of weaving that personal richness into sermons” (9).

Some will be tempted to minimize the challenge Lueking takes on in *Preaching*, believing, as I suspect most preachers do, that the use of appropriate examples from life is no

new idea but is part and parcel of the preaching task. A close examination of the nature of the challenge, however, reveals several formidable hurdles to negotiate in order to achieve the goal of incorporating people into the preached Word in away that at once respects the people and allows the Gospel to be heard.

The first of these hurdles is the tendency to become so enamored with the experiences of people that the preaching task becomes focused on the people who have had the experience (and other listeners' identification with those experiences) instead of on the person, Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection experience must always be and remain the lens through which all human experiences must be judged. This is the

critical flaw in narrative preaching which never gets around to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, content instead to depend upon the hearer's ability to make the theological and faith connections to the Gospel on the strength of a suggestive story. The major contribution of *Preaching* is Lueking's uncompromising commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his facility in blending that Gospel story with the people stories that predominate in this short work. Lueking's premise:

Preaching is witnessing to the mighty works of God. It proceeds on the conviction that he has put his saving power into a word that can be spoken. That Word is centered in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. The Word is for people, not as a moralizing harangue, not as a specious argument, but as good news for sinners. Preaching has a future because God is who he is for the world in Jesus Christ. (18).

With this as a working principle an entire chapter is devoted to rehearsing the Biblical record of God's grace-filled, covenant relationship with *people*, both in the Old and the New Testament, as away of discouraging preaching that Lueking characterizes as a "peopleless monotone" and instead encouraging proclamation that honors the Bible as "the record not of the human search for God but of God's search for those he made in his image" (29). Another chapter takes this same concept and applies it to current human experience. Under the title "The Wide Range of Human Experiences," the themes of sin and temptation, recipients of grace, the renewal of life, acts of love, growth in grace, suffering, influence, and victories are brought into theological focus through the lens of God's creative, redeeming and sanctifying work centering in the death and resurrection of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

If the greatest strength of the book is Lueking's ability to make connections between the Gospel and the stories of people's lives he shares so liberally in these pages, its greatest weakness is its disappointing shortfall in translating the skills in making the connections into the art of preaching. Those chapters which deal specifically with the act and art of preparing and preaching sermons do little to advance the "state of the art." If this was to be a primer in homiletics this might be forgiveable. But this volume presents itself as covering *new* territory. In some significant ways it accomplishes that, particularly in its insightful and rather sophisticated treatment of everyday stories of people's lives within a theological framework. But this only makes its shallow, sometimes simplistic treatment of the preaching task itself more

disappointing. To the urgent question about maintaining confidentiality in sharing people's lives from the pulpit, Lueking offers little assistance other than the obvious advice that the preacher needs to use discretion and maintain a sense of propriety. This advice, along with the standard techniques of reading the text early, attending to significant experiences during the week which fit the text, and then the suggestions about outlining and production of the manuscript can be found in any standard homiletical text and are the "givens" for any who take sermon preparation and preaching seriously.

Despite the flaw, however, *Preaching* still represents an important contribution to current thinking about this fundamental area of ministry. It presents a necessary corrective to the narrative school of thought which has a tendency to promote story-telling without Gospel proclamation. And for preachers it provides incentive and inspiration to have confidence in God's desire and power to use preaching as a tool for continuing to touch people's lives with the Gospel.

Alan Loose
Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church
Prior Lake, Minnesota

MINISTRY OF THE LAITY, by James D. Anderson and Ezra Earl Jones. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. Pp. 152. \$14.95.

It has been said that "one cannot judge a book by its cover." I want to suggest that "one cannot judge the contents of a book by its title!" If you are looking for some quick answers regarding ministry of

page 330

the laity, this is not the book for you. However, should you want to ask yourself and others questions regarding the nature and context of ministry of the laity, this book will be helpful in its analysis.

Towards the end of the Preface the authors state that the *Ministry of the Laity* is the second volume of a three-volume series on ministry. Volume One, *The Management of Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978), "defines and analyzes the fundamental components of ministry..." (xiii). Hence, Volume One is intended for clergy. Volume Two, under review, is meant for the laity. Volume Three is for both the clergy and the laity and will be published in the future. There are five chapters and an Epilogue.

"[T]he book is not about the church...it is about you—and us—and how we live" (ix). If you neglect to read the Preface and the Prologue, you will be lost. Assuming that the title will have attracted your interest, you might surmise as you read that you took the wrong book from the shelf! *Ministry of the Laity* is not a "how-to" book; it is not a guide for ministry in a particular parish with a specific goal in mind. What this volume did for me was to raise some profound questions regarding the current state of America and ever so carefully expose the shift from the community to the individual. The authors say: "...our present confusion is that for possibly the first time in history we have a society that regards the individual rather than the family as the fundamental unit, the basic building block, of civilization" (62). The authors suggest that our drive for individual successes has left us open to failure in our relationships with others.

It is interesting that the authors cite Luke 4:18-19 as a reminder that the ministry of Jesus began within the synagogue, but “it was lived out on the dusty roads and in the small villages of a remote Roman province...” (xvii). Hence ministry touches and involves both community and individual throughout. Both are important and we dare not lose this vision. These authors argue for a community perspective—a new starting place, which also is the theme of this book (xxix).

That theme, “a community perspective,” places the church as one institution among others in which people participate and which contribute to the common good.

Anderson and Jones agree that something profound has shaken the foundations of America within the past two hundred years. They suggest that the individual has gradually eroded the sense of a “community perspective.” We rely more on specialists in our day than ever before. As part of their analysis they cite three stages in the formation of this erosion. “The first stage, which lasted from our nation’s founding to almost the end of the nineteenth century...was characterized by a remarkable vitality and by enthusiastic citizen involvement” (8).

In the second stage, from the end of the nineteenth century and into the middle of the twentieth century, “our local neighborhoods, voluntary small-scale associations, schools, and churches grew into national organizations” (9). They quote from Wilson Carey McWilliams’ book, *The Idea of Fraternity in America* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1973): “...the small community and the ‘natural association’ had given way to impersonal organizations with a life above that of their members” (9). To express this even more clearly, the authors point out that “at every turn there is someone who seems to be an expert in the very areas of life where the individual has access and opportunity and has been accustomed to exercising his or her sense of immediate responsibility” (11). America’s institutions “have become floundering empires...impersonal, ineffectual, and self-consumptive” (13). “Professional-client relationships become the prevailing condition of daily life” (11).

The third stage suggests a turning around to regain moral integrity: “...Americans are showing a greater willingness to take responsibility not only for themselves but for others and for the communities in which they live and do business” (14). This also ties into their idea of “moralnets,” a term first coined by Raoul Naroll. It refers to “the social network of friends, friends-families, and significant others who do so much to shape one’s moral choices” (72). Accord-

ingly, as “moralnets” weaken, social and physical ills seem to increase (73).

According to Norman Lear, there is too much “short-term” thinking. “It’s everywhere...in Congress, labor, the universities—glorifies the quick fix and refuses through cowardice or myopia to make provisions for the future” (16). Someone has been quoted as saying, “we treasure what we measure” (17).

Sometimes even the church gets caught in “short-term” thinking. In the churches’ attempt to use the participatory processes, many mainline Protestant churches have tended to become “too bureaucratic and too distant from the people.” The goals of more members and a better financial base seem far removed from individual needs. In many instances, the focus has been so global that the everyday, local neighborhood issues are side-tracked.

Chapter 2 discusses the “good-people system” (23-59). The authors define the “good-people system” as “individuals grouped together in families, the neighborhood or small

community where they live, the larger national and world society on which they depend for survival, organizations and institutions in which they participate, and the natural order.” “Families are basic to the good-people system” (40-41). Moreover, they suggest that “we have long neglected the upkeep of the good-people system.” When “the link between home, school, church, neighborhood, and community organizations is broken...we destroy the places and relationships where vision is formed...” (43).

Family life has been broken by changes in life patterns and life commitments. Schools have become wholesale distributors of information rather than learning centers. The environment has been damaged by unthinking and uncaring people who have been short-sighted, while business and industry have increasingly defined their responsibilities to provide profit for stockholders rather than jobs and economic stability for communities. (43)

The steel industry in Pittsburgh is a prime example. “No institution can offer the perfect plan” (42). As economist and futurist Robert Theobald says “more people [need to] recognize the fact of interconnection and interdependence” (55).

The world is so complex that we have been schooled to separate, bifurcate, and isolate the individual parts, with the result being that we forget that the parts make up a whole! Sometimes we find ourselves deep in a hole because of this. We are in a real mess! Perhaps the “difficulty [lies] in the variety of substitutes and alternatives available” (60).

This raises the question of the churches’ role. Just what is it? Anderson and Jones observe that “churches, synagogues, and other religious institutions make up the largest group of voluntary associations in American society...on any given Sunday close to 500,000 local churches and synagogues are voluntarily supported by the American people” (100-101). The church needs “to reinvest itself in the neighborhood that spawned it and turn its attention ‘to the way people order their lives and values at the most local and concrete levels of our existence’” (102). “Rather than view neighborhoods...as reservoirs from which to draw members and resources...(the church) will prepare itself to give its best gifts to all the people (members and nonmembers) who inhabit its geographical area” (102).

Furthermore, they suggest that this will require changes in the ‘modus operandi’ of most religious institutions today. “With few exceptions churches have turned their focus inward and are assuming falsely that building strong churches will in some undetermined way produce good communities. We believe the opposite is true” (103). The church “must share the whole vision with the other components of the system” (103).

Finally, they observe that “the church may again be the best institution in the mediating system, and in society as a whole” (105). “The parish church or synagogue is still in many places a neighbor-centered institution...and studies show they are usually respected and admired” (105). In quoting Walter Brueggemann, the theme of the book is underscored by the authors: “the great moments in biblical faith characteristically happen when somebody has the courage to act out the cry or the defiance to say ‘it isn’t working’” (121).

In conclusion, “we all have the tenden-

cy to make ourselves feel better by assigning the responsibility for our situation to someone else” (121). Psychologist Scott Peck calls this “casting our pain on society” (121).

The value of this book ought not be judged by its cover, but rather by its contents, page by page!

Charles J. Lopez, Jr.
Grace Lutheran Church
Coraopolis, Pennsylvania

I CHRONICLES, by Roddy L. Braun. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986. Pp. xlv + 312. \$22.95.

Roddy Braun has been working with the books of Chronicles for over twenty years. His most significant contribution to this area of biblical investigation has been his identification of a Solomonic apologetic in Chronicles. This, he cogently argues, has influenced the structure of the books of Chronicles as well as the theological claim these books make. Braun’s thesis crystallizes in his investigation of 1 Chr 22, 28-29 where he rightly sees the transfer of power from David to Solomon as modeled upon Joshua’s commissioning, recorded in Joshua 1. Thus, these chapters form a “transitional unit, whose function is to bring together and unite the chapters relating to David (1 Chr 10-21) and Solomon (2 Chr 1-9)” (145).

The commentary falls into two halves of identical size: 1 Chr 1-9, dealing with the extensive chronistic genealogies (146 pages) and 1 Chr 10-29, dealing with David and Solomon (146 pages). The second half profitably harvests the considerable fruit Braun’s insight into the relationship between David and Solomon has yielded and is familiar from Braun’s previous publications. It thus serves as a convenient gathering and synthesis of his work in this area. Of greater interest, for the new light it sheds, is Braun’s helpful analysis of 1 Chr 1-9. These 146 pages represent the most extensive treatment of the chronistic genealogies to date and display an impressive familiarity with the secondary literature, particularly the work of Wilson and Johnson, as well as close attention to the details of the text. Thirteen charts in this section graphically portray the relationships discussed and help the reader navigate the tortuous path the Chronicler presents. Braun discerns four aspects of this material with regard to purpose: (1) an historical overview of Israel and her history, (2) a literary connection with the death of Saul (1 Chr 10) and a chronological connection with the returning exiles (1 Chr 9), (3) genealogy for the sake of genealogy, but also, (4) “the marshalling of Israelites from throughout the ages of north and south, faithful and unfaithful, points to an understanding of the God of Israel as the one who preserves and guides his people to the destiny which he holds in store for them. Whether the original work of the Chronicler ended with Israel in exile,...with the advent of Cyrus,...the erection of the temple,...or at a still later point, that message spelled hope, and it spelled hope for all Israel” (5).

The commentary, itself, follows the familiar format of the series. In the introduction, we are provided with an overview of Chronicles and the scholarly investigation of these relatively unfamiliar books. Braun’s section on theological themes of the Chronicler is especially well done. The bibliographical lists are quite up to date and generally complete. Braun indicates his indebtedness to the classic commentaries of Curtis and Rudolph as well as H. G. M. Williamson’s fine recent offering. Fresh translations of the text are supported with extensive

grammatical and textual notes. The heart of the commentary, those sections dealing with form/structure/setting, comment, and explanation are somewhat uneven. Braun is at his best in his section-by-section comments on the various pericopes. Here, he deals exhaustively with matters of *Tendenz*, textual *Vorlagen* (as intimated in Frank M. Cross's work on local text types), and the scholarly debate in general. His remarks are carefully weighed and judiciously appropriated with an eye to the theological import of the passage. Especially to be noted is Braun's discussion of the "Theology of Rest" (210f., 223-25, 270) as the importance of this concept for understanding the Chronicler has not generally received

page 335

the attention it deserves. In contrast to this, the explanatory sections seem somewhat thin, particularly in light of his fine introductory theological insights regarding Chronicles as a whole.

All who need help in working through this complicated material will find this commentary helpful and informative.

Mark A. Throntveit
Luther Northwestern Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota

OF ONE BODY: RENEWAL MOVEMENTS IN THE CHURCH, by Joseph W. Trigg and William L. Sachs. Atlanta: John Knox, 1986. Pp. 164. \$9.95 (paper).

This book has an openness to diverse opinions and an honest bias. The authors, both Episcopal rectors, state their hopes and their own viewpoint:

We ground our argument in the Bible, which all Christians share. We rely, in particular, on...Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, for the heart of our message, which is that renewal movements and mainline churches must recognize their need for each other and accept each other's gifts. (6)

We see a genuine opportunity for renewal to do what it claims it wants to do, to instill new life in old churches; but as historians, we think renewal could benefit from a longer perspective. (6)

The authors maintain an attitude of learning from and sharing with those who differ from one another within contemporary Christianity. They succeed in being accurate historians and receptive listeners even while they are honest in expressing their own commitments to one of the two "camps" summarized.

The book does divide contemporary Christianity into two camps. "Renewal" includes two sub groups: conservative evangelicals and charismatics. "Mainline" includes: "those churches which are national in scope and have strong ties to traditional sources of social power" (8).

It is significant for this reviewer that the reasons given for combining conservative evangelicals and charismatics together is, "because they share a common stress on personal piety, a common approach to the Bible, and (ordinarily) a common social conservatism" (94). These may well be the common characteristics of these groups but my question is whether or not these

common characteristics qualify these movements for the title “Renewal.” The major question for me is whether or not the authors are correct in accepting size, finances and influence as ample evidence of where life in the spirit is being lived. It seems as though these criteria are used to choose conservative evangelicalism and the charismatic movement as today’s renewal movements.

If one accepts their premise, the book is very helpful. In the renewal movements one finds new life and enthusiasm. Renewal is summarized by the authors in this paragraph:

Renewal today, as in the past, seeks to recover the genesis of the early faith. The prominence of small groups and unstructured gatherings, the recurrent emphasis on the Holy Spirit and on direct inspiration, offer testimony to the power of the past. It is a small group experience, grounded in appreciation of the early church, that has been the most visible feature of spiritual movements today. (43)

As I stated, the authors are open to the contribution of the renewal movements but their bias is toward mainline Christianity. This is evident in the assessments of the shortcomings of the renewal movements which appear throughout the book.

The current spiritual renewal...has seen little need to develop a coherent theory of the Christian life and has given little sustenance and guidance to new converts. (17)

Personal piety, then, is the sole legitimate criterion for authentic Christianity.(35)
The great tragedy of modern evangelism is in calling many to belief but few to obedience. (122)

As long as renewal movements remain crippled by individualism, voluntarism, and perfectionism, they will, we contend, for all their fervor, be a dead end rather than a lasting contribution to the Christian heritage. (40)

Rather than proposing a new social metaphor, the religious right wing is defiantly nostalgic. (153)

If one does *not* accept the premise that there are only two “camps,” it is still a

helpful book in many ways. In the introduction Martin Marty states:

Advocates of both sides help leave behind great numbers of Christians who cannot feel at home with either, as they are not represented. There is, say these authors, a third way, one that lives off the best in both, that includes where the two ways would exclude. (viii)

This was a promise to the reader that we would not be confined to two “camps.” I found this third way to be a helpful conclusion but the authors did not state clearly that it was a third way. For instance, the authors state two choices for authentic Christianity:

If renewal finds authentic Christianity in personal experience of the Spirit and a restored New Testament church, the mainline churches find it in their faithfulness to the Christian theological tradition. (57)

It would have been helpful for the reader to have some reference back to this quote and then a further section on how we are not limited to two possibilities. That is really what the authors do as they move to a section entitled, "Toward a Legacy of Spiritual Renewal." Instead of calling this the "third way," the authors confuse the reader by saying: "The current fascination with spiritual direction is the most solid evidence so far for genuine cross-fertilization between renewal and the mainline" (151).

From this introduction they describe the work of Tilden Edwards, Morton Kelsey, Henri Nouwen, Madeleine L'Engle and Thomas Merton as resources for deep spirituality. These people are all within the theological tradition of the mainline, having found the roots for spirituality within that tradition, and would not fit the definition for renewal used by the authors. These writers are influenced more by the tradition of Religious Orders, Eastern Religions, and historic theology than conservative evangelicals of today. Thus I'm not convinced they give evidence of cross fertilization-but I am convinced they give evidence of renewal within the church.

I like the book. Even the reservations I have come about because it is provocative—not only in the sense of being stimulating in regard to new thoughts and ideas, but provocative in the sense of calling forth our own vocation.

We await the fruits of the Spirit, the fruits that are most likely to flourish when all Christians take seriously that we are indeed of one body. Let us gratefully accept each other's special gifts and special witness to a gospel greater than any of us can comprehend. (54)

John Schramm
Trinity Lutheran Cong.
Minneapolis, Minnesota

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS, AN INTRODUCTION, by Duncan S. Ferguson. Atlanta: John Knox Press; 1986. Pp. 220. \$12.95 (paper).

One of the more lively playgrounds in the study of the Bible in recent years is the playground of hermeneutics, the study of the interpretation of ancient texts as they address contemporary concerns. Like a playground, the field of hermeneutics has children running in every direction. Fundamentalists are off in one corner playing a rigid game of inerrancy. Historical-critics are in the sandbox gleefully digging under the layers of the text to find genres, literary sources, redactors, settings-in-life and other interesting creatures. Structuralists and other sensitive literary types slide across the flat surface of the text without concern for the underlying layers. Deconstructionists play a game on a revolving merry-go-round—there is no objective text but only different readings based on the preunderstandings of different readers. Others play the game along the lines of a feminist hermeneutic or a liberationist hermeneutic.

Duncan Ferguson attempts to clarify and guide us through this jumbled and complex playground in his book *Biblical Hermeneutics, An Introduction*. He proves to be a balanced and

insightful guide indeed. As we peer into the deep and profound recesses of the Bible, we know with the apostle Paul that “now we see in a mirror dimly” (1 Cor 13:12). Ferguson’s book explains why and helps us clean a little more dust off the mirror.

Section I of Ferguson’s book uses three chapters to define the complex and urgent task of biblical hermeneutics and

its crucial assumptions and issues. In this section and throughout the book, Ferguson endeavors to balance the teeter-totter of faith on one end and history on the other. Every reader, says Ferguson, brings some preunderstanding to any text. Yet some preunderstandings are more proper to a given text than others. For the Bible, faith is *the* preunderstanding which is able to rightly comprehend its meaning. Ferguson balances the need for faith in interpretation with the need for historical concern as well. Since Jesus Christ is the center of any Christian interpretation of the Bible and since Jesus is an historical figure, the reader will also find it necessary to employ the critical tools of historical study as part of an adequate preunderstanding of the Bible. But the use of critical tools must be done with a sensitivity to the diversity of types of literature and style within the Bible. Ferguson also surveys in a very helpful way the crucial issues of revelation, faith and history in 19th and 20th century theology. The theme of Section I is that faith and historical study together allow us to interpret God’s Word.

In Section II of the book, Ferguson provides three chapters of very practical and concrete guidelines for the use of the Bible in theology and in the life of the Church and its ministry. He demonstrates the judicious use of historical critical tools in interpreting the various types of literature in the Bible (law, history, myth, poetry, prophecy, doctrine and apocalyptic literature). His overview of Bible use in theology, worship, teaching, pastoral care, spiritual formation and ethics is also very helpful. Ferguson stresses the need for humility and “standing under” the text as we critically study and engage Scripture.

Section III takes us on a field trip through the history of biblical interpretation in the life of the church. Three very readable chapters introduce us to representative interpreters like the church father Origen, the reformer Martin Luther, and more modern interpreters like Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Bultmann, Heidegger, Ebeling, Fuchs, Pannenberg, Gadamer and Ricoeur. Ferguson evaluates the general trends of interpretation in the history of the church on the basis of the delicate balance between faith and history. Although his survey is very helpful, at times his negative judgments on earlier interpreters seem anachronistic and unfair. An example is when he devalues Luther because Luther was not enough of an historical critic. From our modern viewpoint that may be true, but Luther for his own time walked in a brilliant way the tightrope between history and faith, between a rigorous study of the plain sense of the text and a devotion and commitment to the Bible as a Word directed to the reader and his or her time.

Chapter 10 concludes with a summary and “a modest proposal” for a contemporary approach to interpreting the Bible. Ferguson sees that the “guiding norm for the use of Scripture in the church” is “the inauguration of God’s kingly rule in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus” (192). This chapter provides broad guidelines, but as Ferguson admits, it is “modest.”

The strengths of Ferguson’s book are many. It is very well organized and clearly written for a wide audience. Ferguson moves easily from the more philosophical to the historical to the practical dimensions of hermeneutics. He speaks from a committed faith perspective and yet

underscores the need for critical study of the Bible. In short, this book would be an excellent resource to improve your understanding of what the hermeneutical playground looks like these days and how to walk through it without getting tossed to and fro.

Dennis T. Olson
Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton, New Jersey

INTERPRETING THE PSALMS, by Patrick D. Miller, Jr. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986. Pp. 173. \$10.95 (paper).

The Psalms have been used in community worship, private devotion and pastoral care throughout the history of the community of faith. The focus of this book by Professor Miller of Princeton Theological Seminary is on yet another function of the psalms: the theological-homiletical, that is, the use of the psalms as a source for theological construction

page 339

and as a basis for preaching and teaching in the life of the congregation.

The first part of the book consists of five essays, each of which is concerned with an aspect of interpreting the psalms. "Current Issues in the Interpretation of the Psalms" focuses on matters which are of interest to those "whose primary task is the interpretation of the psalms within the life of the community of faith." As an example of new insights into the laments, Erhard Gerstenberger has suggested that these psalms had their original setting in the family and the primary group, suggesting a comparison with what goes on in contemporary group-therapy movements (7). The second essay, "Interpreting the Psalms: Some Clues from their History and Context," develops the thesis that "the Psalter...bridges that gap between then and now, the ancient world and the present world, probably better than any book of the Bible" (22). I found the essay on "Poetry and Interpretation" to be exceptionally helpful. After a discussion of parallelism, Miller explains and exemplifies such stylistic devices as synecdoche, merismus, repetition, inclusion, ambiguity, metaphor and simile, all in light of the fundamental assertion that understanding *form* is essential to understanding *meaning*. Separate chapters on interpreting the laments and the psalms of praise conclude the first part of the book. There have been a good number of essays on the laments of late; this piece on the psalms of praise is particularly noteworthy.

How will all of this work out in actual preaching and teaching? Part Two offers expositions of Psalms 1, 2, 14, 22, 23, 82, 90, 127, 130 and 139, putting into practice what has been described in Part One. For example, Miller has pointed out the importance of considering the Psalter as a book. As this insight applies to Psalm One: "to hear Psalm 1 as it is given to the community of faith, that is, as an introduction to what follows in the rest of the Psalter, is to be pointed down a particular path, a way that will be elaborated and unfolded in the psalms that follow" (85). The author has a way of getting at the heart of the psalms: on Psalm 23, "The fourth verse of the psalm is the gospel kernel of the Old Testament, that good news that turns tears of anguish and fear into shouts of joy.... You don't have to be afraid. This is the salvation word par excellence of Scripture, Old Testament as well as New" (115). And he often points out how psalms provide a context for interpreting the New Testament: "The explication of [the death and

resurrection] of Jesus in terms of the twenty-second Psalm indicates that the Gospel writers saw Jesus as taking up the lament of those who suffer and entering into that suffering. Jesus Christ died for human hurt as well as for human sin” (110). A concluding section discusses English translations of the psalms and supplies an annotated bibliography of commentaries and other works.

I have found this to be an excellent book. Miller’s expertise in the study of the psalms is well known; he has been assigned the Psalms volume of the *Hermeneia* commentary series. This book demonstrates an ability to communicate that expertise in a clear and interesting way. Beyond that, it provides expositions which set forth the essential themes of the psalms and which suggest directions for appropriating them in preaching and teaching. Here is biblical theology at its best.

One might wish to discuss a point or two with the author: What about the stylistic devices of the acrostic poem, and of chiasmus? The traditional labels, “synonymous, antithetic, synthetic,” still seem to me the best way to describe Hebrew parallelism (32ff.). But these are matters for conversation. This book will serve well as a guidebook for anyone looking for the excitement in the study of the psalms these days and will lead the reader to discover new treasures in the “marvelous, deep well of living water that is the Psalter” (150).

James Limburg
Luther Northwestern Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota

THE TEARS OF THE WHITE MAN: COMPASSION AS CONTEMPT, by Pascal Bruckner. Translation and Introduction by William R. Beer. New York: The Free Press, 1986. Pp. xx + 244. \$17.95

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, in her endorsement on the dust cover, claims Bruckner “demonstrates...that much of what passes for sympathy today is as self-serving as yesterday’s rationale for colonialism”—and Bruckner does exactly what Kirkpatrick claims. For some readers, an endorsement by Kirkpatrick is sufficient reason for dismissing this book, but that would be a mistake.

Bruckner, a French “journalist, critic, novelist, and teacher” (so identified on the dust cover), analyzes the attitudes of Westerners, particularly Europeans, toward what has come to be called the Third World. Bruckner’s European, specifically French, vantage point adds to the book’s interest, for the history drawn upon and the personalities mentioned are not the same as they would be for a U.S. writer. The book does not read like a litany of the complaints of the Neo-Conservatives against the Left.

Bruckner’s goal is to uncover “the devious chicanery of the virtue professed by self-appointed partisans of the Third World” (6). He includes himself in the indictment (“My criticism here is above all a criticism of myself” [7]). He has no interest in defending colonialism, or imperialism, or multinationals. Justice demands an alternative to the placid indifference and apathy of the majority in the West. Bruckner argues, however, that “Third-Worldism” has not been a viable alternative to the self-satisfaction of the West. First World advocates for the Third World have unproductively engaged in suicidal nihilism, self-loathing, self-hatred, in short, “a new species of activism—that of self-denunciation” (5). “Every

Westerner is presumed guilty until proven innocent” and all manner of shoddy analysis has been covered over by the cry, “In any case, the West is guilty!”

Bruckner categorizes Third-Worldism into three types and devotes a chapter to each: 1) “Solidarity; or, the Bad Guys Against the Good Guys;” 2) “Pity; or, the Gushing of the Ghoulis West;” and 3) “Imitation; or, Getting High on Paradise.” In each chapter Bruckner points out one irony after another in the attempt to have the West chiefly (if not solely) bear the guilt for what is wrong with the world. The point is not that the West is guiltless, but that the rhetoric of guilt has been self-serving and, in the end, contemptuous of suffering humanity in the Third World.

The solidarity stance, for example, has tended to oversimplify the Third World, “imagining a Third World exists, but denying it the privilege of its own history” (35). There has been a rapid shifting from one area to the next—from Peking, to Havana, to Hanoi, to Managua—in a constant quest for the perfect partner in the enterprise of solidarity. This suggests that the ideological and political programs of the First World advocates have been the primary concern despite all the rhetoric to the contrary. This solidarity has too often been narcissistic and a dehumanizing form of exploiting the poor nations.

Bruckner has no formula or program for the future. The integrity of the poor requires a more open-ended approach. Clearly, there is no room for withdrawal from the neighbors who suffer intolerable poverty. There should be a discord within us that rejects both “a dishonestly clear conscience and sterile self-denigration” (149). The neighbors will beckon us and we will not be able to stay away, but we must let the neighbors be “others” and “strangers.” We are not all in it together (solidarity); we cannot put ourselves in their place (pity); and we are not just like them (imitation)—we each have our own history and sins. This means inevitable tension within ourselves and with our neighbors, but it may also be the beginning of a service to the neighbor that does stop to ask how we are doing according to our own scorecard.

Not every opinion in this book can be endorsed and Bruckner is at times too acerbic, but its heuristic value is considerable.

Richard Nysse
Luther Northwestern Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota