



A NEW HEART: A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL, by Bruce Vawter and Leslie I. Hoppe. International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991. Pp. 218.

I recall one of the formative moments of my seminary internship year. I was riding with my supervisor on our way to some meeting. On the way we passed a church with a portable marquee out front (the kind you see at the car wash, for instance). In movable letters there was a pithy maxim about sin. I made a pejorative remark about such billboard theology. After a silence my supervisor quizzed me: “What is a pastor supposed to do with sins?”

“Call them for what they are?” I ventured.

“Forgive ’em,” he said. That’s the movement in the book of Ezekiel. What does God give this exilic prophet to say about the sin of Israel? First, Ezekiel must pronounce a realistic appraisal of both the sin and its inevitable consequences—for the first 24 chapters, the prophet calls it like it is. Then, when the obstructive wall has been toppled, God gives Ezekiel words of forgiveness, salvation, and restoration to bring to the people (chapters 33-39).

I suppose that all “fresh” pastors like myself have not found it an easy task rightly to preach God’s word as law and gospel. That judgment/ mercy dialectic (together with the prophet’s convoluted style and the editors’ redactions) makes Ezekiel a difficult part of Scripture to take as a whole. “A New Heart” is a very helpful tool to assist one in understanding not only the Book of Ezekiel, but God’s way with his people.

The book is part of the International Theological Commentary series. Editors George Knight and Frederick Holmgren describe the ITC as having three goals: (1) to study the Old Testament both historico-critically and as part of the whole Christian canon of Scripture; (2) to be sensitive to issues and interpretations beyond those of traditional western Christianity (hence, “International”); and (3) to aid the proclamation of the biblical message.

Vawter organizes the book around an expository outline of Ezekiel. At the outset he notes the deep editorial work that is evident throughout Ezekiel. Thankfully, Vawter opts to analyze redactions only when it is needed for the sake of clarity. Leaving such arguments to others, Vawter works mainly with the received text, willing to accept as canonical not only the words of the “authentic” Ezekiel, but also of those who remembered and expanded his prophecy.

At the same time, there is no lack of scholarship in his work. Vawter’s portion of the book, dealing with chapters 1-24, sparkles with lively and helpful details about the culture of the day. Insights into poetry, food, art, myth, and so on, are welcome guests coming in and out of his exposition of Ezekiel.

Vawter died in 1986 leaving this book half completed. His work is complemented by the second half in which Hoppe continues in expository style. Hoppe works with Vawter’s achievement while adding to it more theological comments and conclusions along the way. Hoppe has excelled in the difficult task of completing a book-in-progress.

Although both authors are American scholars (unlike many of the other authors in the ITC), they are careful to maintain an “international” concern beyond western Christian parochialism. Notable is their openness to phenomena of prophecy. For instance, though prophetic clairvoyance is recognized as a difficulty in the text, they are aware of the limitations of western thinking: “we would be wary of firmly deciding what a prophet could and could not do” (12).

The commentary highlights the importance of Ezekiel’s prophecy to post-exilic

Judaism. For Ezekiel, Israel’s historic failure to be God’s covenant people was evidenced by apostasy, worshiping “in high places,” and syncretism. The new Israel (Ezekiel 40-48) would be re-centered in the temple of Jerusalem. It is astutely noted that Ezekiel prefers to call Israel’s leaders “prince” (*nasi*) instead of “king” (*melek*). Israel’s leadership should be priestly, not political; Yahweh would be King (204). Also emphasized is the prophet’s shift from collective guilt to individual responsibility (Ezekiel 18). Israel was more comfortable with the idea of national guilt. Ezekiel would permit them no such comfort, no false hope. Being God’s chosen would not offset the inevitable divine justice. Nor would repentance attain redemption for Israel (14). Only God could give Israel new life out of death.

The prophet Ezekiel envisioned “a new heart and a new spirit” for Israel that would eliminate the possibility of disobedience. Here the book gets bogged-down for a moment in western apologetic, worrying about the implications of Israel as “a moral robot incapable of evil” or of good (213). While freedom is sometimes a useful category for our concern, it was not Ezekiel’s business. Ezekiel’s prophetic vision was that Israel would lose their “hearts of stone” and receive from God new “hearts of flesh” (11:19). By keeping our eyes on this central theme, the authors do indeed aid the proclamation of the biblical message. Ezekiel insisted to his people, as his witness insists to us today, that redemption is the product of God’s mercy and not Israel’s repentance.

The prophet came to realize that if Israel’s future were dependent upon its potential for repentance and faith, there could be no future. Israel’s future would be the product of God’s mercy and not Israel’s potential. Such a perspective will not allow any people to believe that they are beyond hope for redemption. This vision of God’s grace is something that every generation needs to experience. (212)

The first half of Ezekiel’s prophetic career, full of judgment, made it possible for Israel to hear the second half, full of hope, and to have a faithful future.

In our three-year lectionary, readings from Ezekiel are assigned only seven times. Only one of those Sundays prescribes a reading from the “judgment” section of Ezekiel (19 Pentecost A); the rest are all words of restoration and forgiveness (most notably Ezekiel 37, “The Valley of the Dry Bones”). If the lectionary schedule reflects a reticence to speak of judgment together with mercy, perhaps a re-examination of our ideas about God’s judgment and its relationship to grace is in order. Surely a thoughtful reading of the prophet Ezekiel, such as we are given in this commentary, could help us re-integrate the experience of judgment and repentance with the gospel of forgiveness and restoration which we cherish so much. Such a re-examination might in turn lead preachers to use more of the canon in the struggle to speak God’s word to God’s people, and in so doing, to “forgive ’em.”

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LUKE, by Fred Craddock. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox, 1990. Pp. 298.

The author calls this a “Wednesday book,” by which he means a biblical/theological commentary aimed at pulpit and lectern. Preachers familiar with the Interpretation series and with Fred Craddock, professor of Preaching and New Testament at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, will find in this book a wealth of imaginative resources for their demanding task.

At the outset, the author seeks to help his readers understand Luke as preacher and theologian. This means paying attention to the whole gospel, to Luke’s literary form and skills, and to his use of Scripture. Craddock joins those interpreters who challenge the old dictum that Matthew is the Jewish and Luke the gentile gospel. Luke, too, remains rooted in Judaism, despite the gentile mission. Craddock keeps both Luke and Acts in view, looking for their literary and thematic unity. Like other volumes in this series, the discussion pro-

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ceeds section by section, not verse by verse. While this may frustrate those who want a more technical exegesis, the reader’s gain is a powerful sense of the whole story and Luke’s distinct way of telling it.

A general outline introduces the gospel and each section begins with a concise statement of its content and relation to the whole. Craddock has listened carefully to the most recent literature and is particularly sensitive to literary and redactional emphases. But what makes this commentary so rich is the masterful way the author bridges the gap between then and now. Here the eyes of an eloquent preacher penetrate Luke’s textual world with fresh insight. Practically every page has clues and observations that facilitate moving from text to sermon.

While Craddock’s outline of Luke agrees with most interpreters he is especially concerned to show how it all flows together. He uses the unique Lukan preface (1:1-4) as his general introduction to author, setting, sources, and purpose. Part One, “Infancy and Childhood Narratives” (1:52-52), argues vigorously for a thematic relationship to the rest of the gospel (promise/fulfillment motif) and stresses the classical Lukan theme of God’s reversal of the lowly. Parts Two and Three, “Preparation for the Ministry” (3:1-4:13) and “The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee” (4:14-9:50), provide useful preaching insights, particularly on the Temptation and the Sermon on the Level Place, though his comments were disappointingly brief on the thematic synagogue sermon in Nazareth (4:16-31). I found Part Four, “The Journey to Jerusalem” (9:51-19:28) among the best in the commentary. The section on table-talk in Luke 14:12-14 rightly notes that this text exhibits Jesus’ radical understanding of hospitality with strangers (“nothing is more serious for Luke than the dining table”).

Part Five, “The Ministry in Jerusalem” (19:29-21:38), offers a succinct survey of church-state issues from a biblical perspective within the context of paying tax to Caesar. In the

apocalyptic discourse he stresses the cosmic scope of the creation's coming redemption. Parts Six and Seven cover the "Passion and Resurrection Traditions," again discerning Luke's own way of narrating the story. Craddock's keen eye for worship and liturgy leads to the plausible suggestion that the divergent accounts of the Ascension in Luke 24/Acts 1 may be due to Luke's contouring the gospel account for lectionary reading on Easter.

Periodically the author provides explanatory historical comments that illumine the background of texts (e.g., on the Sadducees or apocalypticism). Contrary to some current scholarship he argues Luke is not anti-Jewish, nor does Luke abandon hope for the Jewish people in that the gospel offers forgiveness to Israel and to the nations to the end of time. Nor does he agree that Luke has no theology of the cross, for suffering and call to service constitute the life of discipleship (with this, Craddock challenges those churches that avoid Good Friday and celebrate only Easter).

One can quibble with individual judgments (e.g., the statements that Luke views the Temple positively—not so in Acts) or the uneven treatment of certain texts. Yet with the New Testament on one side and this reliable and eloquent commentary on the other, many a Sunday sermon will be enriched.

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A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO READING THE BIBLE, by Craig R. Koester. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991. Pp.112.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, by Diane L. Jacobson and Robert Kysar. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992. Pp. 116.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO STUDYING THE BIBLE, by Rolf E. Aaseng. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992. Pp.108.

Like well-prepared travel guides that crystallize a vast amount of information into a few pages and make the place about which they are writing irresistible to the traveler, these three concise and highly readable books will compel the reader,

whether a beginner or not, to explore the fascinating world of Scripture.

The publisher of *A Beginner's Guide to Reading the Bible* promises that the author, Craig Koester, will help the reader "enter into the world of the Bible and discover how it still speaks to us today" (7). Bringing together a wealth of scholarship and a keen sense of the audience, the writer focuses on basic, frequently asked questions: Why read the Bible? What is in the Bible? How was the Old Testament formed? How was the New Testament formed? Who decided which books to include? How have people viewed the Bible? Why so many translations? How should I read the Bible? Each chapter is a rich resource of information and interpretation, a sensitive conversation with the reader, anticipating questions and urging one to "enter the world of the Bible" with expectation and delight.

And perhaps that is what makes this volume larger than its size. Koester is not only

writing *about* the Bible, he is making life in the still-speaking word, the uncharted world of the Spirit, so attractive one cannot resist its fascination or its claim. Using examples from history and Scripture, he shows that the Bible “still speaks to us today,” to strengthen faith, give direction to people’s lives, and make disciples.

The book provides practical suggestions for reading the Bible, and clear, historically accurate maps that will encourage the individual or group to “embark on a journey of discovery” (96). The invitation to enter the world of the Bible and “find yourself viewing your own world with new eyes” (75) will capture the interest of those who have no previous acquaintance with Scripture while it assures others of the renewable resources of God’s word and our reliance on it for nourishment throughout all of life.

In *The Beginner’s Guide to the Books of the Bible*, Diane Jacobson and Robert Kysar preview Old and New Testament books in brief and focused distillations that will provide students of the Bible with central messages of each book in the context of the whole story of God’s dynamic relationship with God’s people over many centuries.

Avoiding technical language, they have followed a consistent and direct format that will be adequate for some students and inspire others to do further research. Major sections of Scripture are introduced: Pentateuch, Historical Books, Psalms and Wisdom Literature, Prophets, Gospels, Letters of Paul, and Pastoral Letters. Individual books are discussed in terms of historical background, authorship, date and purpose, contents, distinctive features, and central themes.

“How will I use this book?” I asked myself. And then I thought of the students in my Bible classes and the varying degrees of information they seek. For some, these brief previews will be enough, all they want to know. For others, each summary will provide an organizing outline that will make the details of the book easier to understand. I will press them all to go beyond, to learn more, to see how the background, in this book and other commentaries, helps to clarify the texts and locates us and our religious experience in the tradition.

“Learn to love the questions” the poet Rilke wrote, and Rolf Aaseng must believe it, judging from *A Beginner’s Guide to Studying the Bible*. I’m going to enjoy using this book in my classes! Students, looking for answers, say to me, “What does the Bible say about this, or that?” And I tell them, “Ask questions of the Bible. Keep asking questions until you can’t think of any more. Perhaps insights will come as we learn to ask the best questions.” Now this book will help us.

Aaseng asks two central questions of the text: What does it say? and What does it mean? Arriving at the answers to these questions is not always simple, as most of us know, remembering the several steps we took to get there in seminary exegetical courses! The writer takes several steps too, but he makes the idea and the method accessible to the student, all the while encouraging careful attention to the text. That seems to be lacking in many study groups where bringing our ideas to the text takes the place of listening to what the passage says, or jumping too quickly to the “what does it mean” question stifles the message before it is heard.

The methods suggested in this book work for both individual or group study. And the suggestions are practical: remember the world in which the Bible was writ-

Bible; be aware of the context; seek God's will for your life. Two appendices provide a variety of methods, and a bibliography expands study resources.

One can read between the lines of each of these three books and discover the writers' deep personal love for Scripture and the desire to pass that love on to the reader. As the *Michelin Guides* have made travelers out of many of us, or have enriched the experience of those who needed no encouragement, one would hope that *these* guides to the reading and study of the Bible would make Christians and Bible students out of many readers, nurturing faith and increasing love for God who is revealed in the word.

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STONY THE ROAD WE TROD: AFRICAN AMERICAN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, ed. by Cain Hope Felder. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991. Pp. 260.

This book should go to the top of your must-read list if you are serious about keeping abreast of developments in biblical interpretation. It is the first discussion published by African-American biblical scholars concerning the use of modern critical methods of interpretation. The book is a result of four summers' consultations by most of the country's African-Americans holding doctorates in biblical studies. They bring the methodological tools and impressive doctoral credentials of Boston University (Copher and Waters), Duke (Martin and Hoyt), Emory (Bailey), Harvard (Wimbush), Princeton Seminary (Weems), Union (Felder), Yale (Lewis) and others to the texts and interpretive issues they discuss, and add to them their unique experiences of vitality and suppression. While many have lauded the book as a sign that a critical mass of African-American biblical scholars has developed, this is secondary to the fact that this is a powerful collection of essays, each of which will influence the discipline for years to come.

The book is divided into four sections: (1) The Relevance of Biblical Scholarship and the Authority of the Bible, (2) African American Sources for Enhancing Biblical Interpretation, (3) Race and Ancient Black Africa in the Bible, and (4) Reinterpreting Biblical Tools. Sections (3) and (4) speak most powerfully to me. Essays by Cain Felder, Charles Copher, and Randall Bailey, "Race, Racism and the Biblical Narratives," "Black Presence in the Old Testament," and "Beyond Identification: the Use of Africans in Old Testament Poetry and Narratives," respectively, yank us out of a mundane reading of the texts and remind us of the necessities and limits of historical-critical methods.

Copher is the godfather of African-American biblical studies. For decades he stood as the sole working academic, and most of the men who have attained the level of senior scholar were influenced and encouraged by Dr. Copher. Copher's writings have been focused in two areas: the insertion of racism into biblical interpretation (he believes it was a late rabbinic phenomenon), and the topic at hand in the present volume, identifying the blacks in the Bible. He acknowledges the difficulty of determining what is black, but ultimately determines to use a combination of methods: linguistic, genealogical, ancient and modern sociological. Copher finds necessary the use of modern sociological categories because of the American obsession with dividing the races, and a modern unwillingness to deal with complexities of class and culture that our ancient forebears seem to have taken in stride. He challenges the giants of the previous generation whose

work survives in our current education of the church's leaders. For example, William F. Albright argued in the *Interpreter's Bible* that all the peoples of the Bible except Nubians and Cushites belonged to the Caucasian race. Referring to the non-American but highly influential Martin Noth, Copher writes: "another scholar claims the ancient Egyptians incorrectly depicted the Nubians as Negroes, and criticizes them for doing so" (151). This corrective to the blind spots of these two Old Testament giants makes reading Copher a requirement. He offers more.

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Copher goes on to catalogue the presence of blacks in both redemptive and non-redemptive roles in the Hebrew Bible. He considers primeval history, the patriarchal period, exodus wanderings and conquest, monarchies, the exile, and restoration. In every case he finds a notable black presence. His categories are clear and arguments sound. I am particularly uncomfortable with his use of "black" for ancients, but that may be a convention forced upon him by a desire to be consistent with current American parlance.

Felder reminds us of the need to use the tools in new ways and to push questions to their logical conclusions. He adopts von Rad's language of sacralization when discussing election in the Hebrew Bible. The problem with conventional election as frequently put forward is that it connects God's favor with a particular race. Felder considers the story of the racist remarks of Miriam and Aaron toward the Cushite wife of Moses (Numbers 12). In the course of his argument, he answers one embarrassing question about the story. That Miriam is stricken with leprosy while Aaron, her partner in crime, is untouched, is often interpreted as patriarchal sexism. Felder's unsacralized reading, i.e., one which excludes an assumption of God's preference for a particular family or nation, allows the possibility that the punishment is meted out not only to answer the arrogance of the challenge to Moses' authority, but also in relation to the racism implicit in the challenge. The fact that Miriam was turned "white" balances their complaint against the black woman.

In the fourth section of the volume Clarice Martin offers a fine example of the new interpretations. Her essay on the *Haustaffeln* reflects a fine combination of critical methodology and Afro-feminist insight. After defining her position on the deutero-Pauline authorship of the sections she is considering and other critical questions, Martin goes on to the interpretive issue: a call for consistency. She argues that the African-American and liberal white churches have not come to the gender issue with the same intensity of purpose they brought to the race issue.

She presents pro-slavery and abolitionist interpretations of Scripture and reminds the reader of a 130-year history of insistence that the Bible is not a racist document. Her question, "Why do churches fail to make as strong a case against gender bias?" is one that marks considerable intellectual maturity, since it is most directly addressed to the African-American church. This is just one example of the self-critical character of the collection.

The writing is accessible throughout. It is suitable for the college student willing to stay with the argument. It is ideal for the seminarian or pastor who has some familiarity with the issues at hand. It has long been the plaint of professors and pastors that they simply do not know how to acknowledge or represent African-American thinking on biblical studies. With the publication of *Stony the Road We Trod*, Felder and his colleagues have eliminated that excuse.

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PASTORAL LIFE AND PRACTICE IN THE EARLY CHURCH, by Carl A. Volz.
Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990. Pp. 240.

In this successful book, Carl A. Volz sets out to describe the evolution of the pastoral office during the formative years of the church in the cultural context in which it developed. Employing a method that is both descriptive and analytical, Volz is at times refreshingly critical of ministry in the early church. The text tells the story through the sources to the fifth century with a particular focus on the clergy. Volz chooses to end with the fifth century—though he discusses Gregory the Great (d. 604) as an exception in chapter 4—“because the basic outlines of pastoral life and practice had reached a level of uniformity that would remain until the expansion of Christianity beyond the Mediterranean” (10).

Volz begins by describing the changes from the “Pauline churches whose leaders emerged on the basis of their charisms” to the time of Augustine (A.D. 420), when clergy were regularly selected and or-

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ained. The following chapters focus on the additional functions of the clergy: leading in worship, administration, dispensing charity, adjudicating disputes, serving as a role model of the Christian life. The priest and bishop were, of course, preeminently teachers, catechists, preachers, and pastoral counselors. Chapter 5 is devoted to the pastoral role of women, especially in the latter part of Volz’s chosen period. Since women served as clergy but not regularly in the role of presbyter or bishop, Volz emphasizes the ministry of widows, virgins, and deaconesses. It may have helped to weave this chapter into the rest of the story to demonstrate the scandal of the exclusion of women from ordination in relation to their critical role as church leaders.

Useful as a textbook for a variety of college and seminary courses, this text is a fine example of how good scholarship and a concern for the practice of ministry can go hand-in-hand. It is written with an eye to current pastoral life and practice without ignoring the differences between the periods. For the general reader he answers such questions as why Christmas is celebrated and when its observance began; who constituted the membership of the earliest congregations; and when the church first owned property.

In five beautifully crafted chapters Volz describes the elements of both continuity and change among the clergy of the early church; “continuity in that clergy have always been engaged in the proclamation of God’s word and in presiding at the sacraments, change in the influence of the culture that has shaped the role and identity of the clergy” (10). The most significant change for the early church came about when the clergy became officials of the Roman government and assumed positions previously reserved for leaders of the Roman cults (10).

Volz argues eloquently that Christians in the early church placed hospitality and care for the needy high in their priorities, and their enthusiasm for this work elicited admiration from those outside the faith. The bishop, the guardian of the faith, was entrusted with this work, and episcopal authority was in part based upon the collection and distribution of funds for charity.

The dichotomy between faith and life, such a struggle for affluent northern-hemisphere

Christians, was not an issue for many of the leaders of the early church. “No one could leave home for the service without bringing their gifts for the needy” (83). Tertullian observed that money was deposited with the bishop for a wide range of charitable purposes (83). When the rigorist Hippolytus, a trinitarian theologian, interrogated candidates for baptism and their sponsors, he did not inquire into their doctrinal beliefs, other than the recitation of the creed, but he asked, among other things, whether those who sought the sacrament had “honored widows,...visited the sick,...[and] been active in well doing” (86). Basil had a social consciousness which addresses our individualistic and private age.

The story goes that while he was visiting the hermits in Egypt and Syria, he read in the lesson for Maundy Thursday that after Jesus had washed his disciples’ feet he said to them, “I have given you an example that you should also do as I have done to you” (John 13:14). It occurred to him that if one lives alone, apart from a community, whose feet will you wash? He returned to his home in Asia Minor and there founded a monastery with its vocation being that of service to the needy. He built a hospice for the poor, a home for the elderly, a hospital, schools for children, and a daily ration for the hungry. (85)

By the time of Gregory the Great (600) it was decreed that twenty-five percent of church revenues should be expended for charity.

The chapter on proclamation comes to life with selections fitly chosen like golden apples in a bowl. Every preacher should take to heart the words Chrysostom addressed to his congregation, “Have you sinned? Go into church and wipe out your sin....For here there is a physician’s office, not a courtroom” (129). Every preacher who regularly unleashes prophetic sermons on a congregation should memorize the following passage from Chrysostom: “My reproach of you today is severe but I beg you to pardon it. It is just that my soul is wounded. I do not speak in this way out of enmity but out of care for you. Therefore I will strike a gentler tone” (130). What

sound advice is contained in the words of St. Augustine, who took a six-month sabbatical after his ordination to the priesthood to memorize the Scriptures: “A man speaks with more or less wisdom to the extent he has made more or less progress in the knowledge of the Scripture” (132).

In the chapter on the “The care of souls,” I found especially helpful an admonition from Gregory the Great: “He chides clergy who equate busyness with accomplishment, whose lives are governed by reacting to external pressures rather than controlling their own time...and so they disregard those interior matters which they ought to be teaching others” (176, 177).

Unfortunately, space does not permit comments on the excellent treatment of the development of the sacrament of penance (69). However, the thorough development of the above issues through the use of primary sources sufficiently demonstrates that good documentation is a strong point of the book.

Volz is careful that the reader not romanticize the early church and its pastors. He quotes Jerome, who “speaks of clerical businessmen who, after ordination, have used their office for personal gain” (88). Concerning the “care of souls” Volz concludes, “Early Christian pastors

addressed themselves to this daily task with the same degree of zeal or indifference, responsibility or lethargy, competence or incompetence, as their successors of every age” (179). However, every pastor will find comfort in Chrysostom’s empathetic description of the burdens inherent in the office summed up in the powerful observation: “I do not think that there are many among the priests who are saved; many more are perishing.” Volz continues, “The reason they are perishing is because the demands of the office cause them to neglect their own souls” (89).

My criticisms of this fine book are few. Whereas much of the material presented in the book is offered as a resource for contemporary pastoral life and practice, asceticism and the high value placed on celibacy in the early church is the subject of running critique. Given the increased value of the single life in our culture, this may be a theme to be taken more seriously. Since the topic is so interesting, the reader frequently feels shortchanged in some chapters as the author presses on, though he always refers the reader to the primary sources. The book is well edited and pleasant to read. The word “Besancon” on page 170 should be “Besançon.”

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THE TRAVAIL OF NATURE: THE AMBIGUOUS ECOLOGICAL PROMISE OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, by H. Paul Santmire. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. Pp. 274.

This is a wonderfully useful book for anyone who yearns to bring the reflections of foundational Christian theology into the now crucial conversation regarding ecological responsibility. Its re-release during the year of the Earth Summit in Rio is a poignant reminder of the uncertain voice Christian faith has offered in that conversation.

While the book is not written defensively, it is clear that Santmire regrets traditional western theology has been dismissed from the conversation by those asserting a “critical ecological wisdom” (1). So the volume is the work of an historian looking both to identify the tradition and to assess whether another, more relevant, strain of that tradition might be identified as a conversation partner.

This is a book written for students—and I presume we all are students on this issue—by a skilled and passionate teacher who knows both how to objectively describe his subject and how to share his own creative reflections and hopes. Santmire has been chaplain and lecturer at Wellesley College for thirteen years and earned his Th.D. from Harvard University. He currently serves as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Hartford, Connecticut.

Using a comfortable voice and a trustworthy, repetitive style Santmire leads the reader through often difficult material from the ancient church fathers, beginning with Irenaeus and Origen, through the moderns Barth and Teilhard.

His approach is to sample and review material from the authors under three interpretive root metaphors: ascent, fecundity, and migration to a good land. Santmire then explores how these metaphors combine, interweave, and coalesce into two historic motifs that have shaped Christian thinking about nature.

The two traditional motifs—the spiritual and the ecological—reveal the ambiguity at the heart of the western tradition: “That is the challenge before us in this study: to identify and to highlight that ambiguity and its complexities, in concrete historical terms” (10).

The “travail of nature” as a theological construct lies in the inconsistent way the tradition has valued nature, the ecological most often sublimated under the spiritual motif. The spiritual motif is summarized in this way:

Christian theology has to do primarily with human history—with the unfolding providential story of God and humanity, with God and the people of God, or with God and the believing human soul—not with nature. (4)

This is the conclusion of a line of thinkers beginning with Origen and running through Thomas, Bonaventure, Dante, Barth, and Teilhard de Chardin (surprisingly!). The scriptural views presented in the Gospel of John and the Letter to the Hebrews support this spiritual motif.

An ecological motif, conversely, can be traced from Irenaeus through Augustine, Francis, Luther, and Calvin. This motif is supported, in Santmire’s opinion, by biblical material from the Hebraic and Jesus traditions, Pauline theology, and the Pauline authors of Colossians and Ephesians.

A paradigmatic expression of this [ecological] motif...is the picture given to us in the narratives about St. Francis’s death: how at this moment of his most intimate communion with God he kept reciting his elegant Canticle to the Sun, thus placing himself in solidarity with...the whole world of nature. (9-10)

Santmire has performed the work of an historian with skill and integrity. He has not taken short cuts or avoided the hard questions. His conclusion, that there is an ecological motif to be recovered from its secondary position and celebrated, hints that this volume will form the groundwork for a more imaginative and creative systematic response that will be the author’s true delight. The author’s essay “Healing the Protestant Mind: Beyond the Theology of Human Dominion” (in *After Nature’s Revolt*, ed. by Dieter Hessel [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992]) sets the agenda for this constructive work still to come. We have much to be thankful for, and to look forward to, from this scholar and author.

Regrets, if any, have to do with this reader’s impatience with the historian’s task and a desire to see Santmire engage the contemporary sirens of ecological wisdom (Matthew Fox, et al., especially Fox’s recent interpretations of the ecological wisdom of Meister Eckhart and Thomas Aquinas).

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THEOLOGY AND FEMINISM, by Daphne Hampson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990. Pp.188.

Daphne Hampson’s *Theology and Feminism* is an important book for *Word & World* readers. Not simply a passing fad, feminism is a major contemporary movement that practitioners

of ministry need to understand and take seriously. We may agree or disagree with the basic tenets of feminism. We may agree or disagree with Daphne Hampson's conclusions. But we need to hear the debate, in order to minister with compassion and integrity among those who are so deeply divided over the issues feminism raises.

Daphne Hampson contends that Christianity and feminism are fundamentally opposed to one another. Christianity, she maintains, is thoroughly misogynist. Christianity's claims of particularity, of the divine nature of Jesus, of revelation in Scripture, of reverence for patriarchal tradition that marginalizes women at best and annihilates them at worst—all these factors combine to make Christianity incompatible with feminism, she argues. "Christian feminism" for Hampson, is an oxymoron.

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Hampson acknowledges that in her conclusion that Christianity and feminism are incompatible she is making the same arguments that conservatives who oppose feminism make. But while conservatives reject feminism as a world view, Hampson rejects Christianity, which by its misogyny is irrelevant to modern society. Hampson is equally clear throughout her book that she does not reject religion, and that she does not reject God.

Hampson is familiar with the various arguments of those who would reconcile Christianity and feminism. For many years, as she worked for women's ordination in the Church of England, she was among the ranks of those who found the two world views compatible. Her treatment of the Christian feminists' positions is a helpful overview. Though she ultimately rejects their conclusions, she does present them fairly.

Hampson's book is divided into five chapters. "Methodology" begins with a section on the nature of Christianity as a religion founded on and tied to a particular historical revelation. She then moves to a treatment of the conservative response to feminism. She describes the conservative outlook as "a peculiar kind of 'faith' ...that the theology is God-given and self-enclosed, unaffected by humanity" (20). There are many Christians, Hampson finds, who find the conservative outlook untenable, and who look for ways to bridge the misogynist past and the present. She presents various conciliatory approaches.

The "kairos approach" claims that God breaks into history at various times to change the order of things. This argument, she notes, has been widely used in the Anglican communion to advocate a breach of tradition to ordain women. Her critique of the kairos approach is that it "whitewashes the past" (24).

A more Lutheran attempt to bridge past and present is what Hampson calls the "golden thread" approach, involving first a determination of the "essence" of Scripture in a particular issue (for Luther: justification; for others: equality of women and men). Having determined the "essence," the second step in the golden thread approach is to judge the relative importance of seemingly contradictory biblical positions (for Luther: preferring Romans to James; for feminists: preferring Galatians 3:28 to Ephesians 3:22). The problem with this golden thread approach lies in the subjectivity of choosing what is wheat, what chaff.

A third approach is the "ethical a priori" in which one holds certain principles up as not subject to qualification. The difficulty with an ethical a priori position on the equality of women in the church is that it clashes with revealed and revered history.

A fourth Christian feminist position takes a different approach. Rather than wrestling

with the discontinuity of misogynist past and feminist present, it seeks to interpret the past and give it meaning for the present. Biblical scholars such as Phyllis Trible and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza represent the theological and exegetical interpreters of biblical history who seek to close the gap between past and present. Hampson finds both Trible and Schüssler Fiorenza deficient, because in their attempts to wrestle with and re-interpret the patriarchal past of the Bible they inadvertently bolster its authority. By attempting to enter the discussion with Scripture on its own terms, and turf, they have already conceded the argument, Hampson argues.

Hampson makes no effort to reconcile Christianity with feminism in articulating her world view. There have been a number of challenges to the truthfulness of Christianity's world picture in the modern age. Hampson adds a new challenge—whether Christianity is “morally true.” Because Christianity has done irreparable harm to women on the level of symbolism, Hampson says, it is not morally true, and therefore not a viable option for feminists.

In chapters on “Christology,” “Concretion” (by which she means the symbols and metaphors which give religion its flesh), “Anthropology,” and “Theology,” she builds her case for a post-Christian religious understanding, by portraying the ethical and philosophical shortcomings of Christianity and the inadequacies of the various Christian feminist positions in response to Christianity's problems. She deals with such issues as: “Jesus was a feminist” (no, he wasn't); “the Holy Spirit can

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represent the feminine” (when it does so it is only submissive); “Christ is neither male nor female” (Jesus was male—we can imagine him as black and that is liberation theology; when we portray him as female it is blasphemy).

Feminist scholars she examines include Rosemary Radford Ruether, Letty Russell, Patricia Wilson-Kastner, Sallie McFague, and Carter Heyward within the Christian tradition, as well as Mary Daly, Carol Christ, and Naomi Goldenberg from post-Christian/post-Jewish positions. Her presentation of the various feminist positions both within and outside Christianity is insightful, as are her observations on who stays with the traditions and who leaves.

Daphne Hampson pushes the discussion of christology, anthropology, and theology to the limits, and then gracefully steps over the limits into a place that is unthinkable if one is within the Christian tradition. Having removed herself from Christianity, she is able to analyze it with remarkable clarity and calm.

Hampson does not claim that her new theology is unaffected by western tradition in general and Christianity in particular. She does not deny her roots, nor is she obsessed with anger. Rather, she is as one “in recovery” from Christianity. Hampson is a post-Christian who believes deeply in God, while rejecting utterly the Christian faith as a vehicle to God. Our challenge is to take seriously her social and theological analysis, and to formulate our response.

Word & World readers are people attempting to minister within the Christian tradition. Hampson's book is a challenge to people within Christianity—can we incorporate her insights and move towards being “recovering misogynists”?

Unlike many feminist theologians, Hampson sets out neither to rescue nor to destroy the church. It is our job to respond to her analysis with viable ministry in the real world of hurting women and men.

We are a church in transition, only beginning to deal with the implications of our

misogynist past. It remains to be seen whether we can transcend that past, or whether we are trapped by it as Hampson maintains.

Daphne Hampson's careful analysis of Christianity and its alternatives is a powerful challenge to the Christian church as we proclaim the gospel and minister in a world broken by sin. We are challenged to be in dialogue not only within the church but with those who have left the church. We cannot resort to easy answers or flip reassurances. We must struggle.

Readers of *Word & World*, both conservatives and Christian feminists, are people within the church. Our challenge is not only to be in dialogue with one another, but to be in dialogue with the radical feminists outside the church. Until we can really hear the voices on the outside our ministry will be limited by our own selective deafness.

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