



**INTERPRETING THE GOSPELS**, edited by James Luther Mays. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981. Pp. 306. \$13.50 (paper).

*Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, published by Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, has established a reputation for presenting significant results of biblical scholarship in a nontechnical manner for an audience wider than specialists. This book, edited by James Luther Mays, incorporates five sets of essays on the Gospels which previously appeared in that journal between 1975 and 1979 and for which there has been frequent request for back issues.

After the first set of essays considers the Pauline understanding of the gospel and the implications of the church's preserving all four documents we designate Gospels, each Gospel is discussed by four scholars. In each case, one article draws attention to distinctive features of the Gospel. Another provides some assessment of recent scholarship on the Gospel (omitted for Matthew, however). A third article tends to focus on the central figure of Jesus in some way, and the fourth one probes some dimension of the Christian community in which the Gospel was first used.

The first four articles originally appeared in the October 1979 issue of *Interpretation*. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, in the opening essay, describes the characteristic ways in which Paul employs the Greek terms *euangelion* and *euangelizesthai* and their possible origins in the tradition. In the second article, Charles H. Talbert, as an alternative to Bultmann's explanation regarding the development of the "Gospel" genre in the early church, argues that the church deliberately incorporated in its final presentation of the story more than one limited perspective (for example, that of the miracle-stories or the sayings source) to avoid a reductionistic picture of Jesus. In the third article, Jack Dean Kingsbury briefly sketches the distinctive emphases of the four Gospels, and then in the fourth article Robert Morgan discusses the hermeneutical problem of the respective roles historical criticism and christological affirmations should play in Christians' reading of the Gospels and formulating their own picture of Jesus.

Articles five through eight relate to the Gospel of Matthew and were previously published in the January 1975 issue. Charles E. Carlston, employing the redaction-critical approach, points to distinctive elements in the first Gospel as a means of demonstrating how Matthew handles the tradition. Next, Jack Dean Kingsbury examines both the Gospel's form, to show that it is christologically determined by 4:17 and 16:21, and its message, to elaborate Matthew's christology of Jesus as the Son of God. Then, Lloyd Gaston seeks to demonstrate how Matthew's redaction of the tradition accents both the anti-Israel and the pro-Gentile themes; realizing this, he suggests, prevents the contemporary misuse of the Gospel of Matthew to justify anti-Semitic feelings. Finally, James P. Martin characterizes the Matthean church by drawing attention to the importance of charismatic activity and ethical rigor but most of all to the Christians' need to live in a responsive relationship with Jesus Christ.

Published in the October 1978 issue, articles nine through twelve concern the Gospel of Mark. In the first essay of this set, Paul J. Achtemeier argues that Mark's purpose is to provide an appropriate context for the Jesus-stories so as to prevent distortion and to employ the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus as the hermeneutical key to the entire Gospel. Howard Clark Kee traces briefly, yet systematically, the history of the twentieth century research on the Gospel of Mark, and he includes comments on the most recent interpretative endeavors of structuralism and literary criticism. John R. Donahue describes the differing images of Jesus suggested by Markan scholars (e.g., Hellenistic Savior, Fulfillment of the Old Testament, Messiah-Son of God and Son of Man, Prophetic Teacher, and

Apocalyptic Seer), and then goes on to offer another way of reading the Markan narrative, this time viewing Jesus as "the Parable of God." In the final essay, Eduard Schweizer describes what, for Mark, is involved in "following Jesus" and pursuing a "life of faith."

The next four essays on the Gospel of Luke first appeared in the October 1976 issue of *Interpretation*. Arland J. Hultgren examines the third Gospel in regard to its structure, distinctive features, and general theological significance for the contemporary church. Charles H. Talbert, assessing recent scholarship on Luke-Acts, demonstrates that Hans Conzelmann's seminal book on Luke is now under question in a number of areas (regarding the actual Greek texts to be accepted in certain pericopes, the role of Luke 1-2, and the appropriate interpretations of certain Lukan theological themes). In the next article, Ralph P. Martin takes "salvation" as a central theme and suggests that as the bringer of salvation, Jesus is portrayed both as an earthly figure and the heavenly Lord. Throughout the Gospel, according to Martin, Luke pictures a discipleship which is demanding in the interim before the final fulfillment of the kingdom. The final essay on the third Gospel is Frederick W. Danker's consideration of the use of Lukan texts in Year C of the recently revised lectionaries. He concludes that Luke was used to good advantage.

The final four articles, which concern the Gospel of John, appeared in the October 1977 issue of *Interpretation*. Paul S. Minear, noting internal evidence which hints at the nature of the original audience for the fourth Gospel, concludes that this Gospel was aimed directly at a "second generation" of believers who, thinking that they were at a disadvantage over against the first disciples, are urged to see their plight differently (that is, they and the first generation have essentially the same problems and advantages). Next, Robert Kysar summarizes and, to some extent, evaluates recent criticism applied to the Johannine Gospel, particularly in regard to the character of the community receiving the Gospel. In the third article, D. Moody Smith seeks to outline the Johannine presentation of Jesus, not its christology, by drawing the contrast to the Synoptics in regard to the use of miracles, the discourse sections, and the cross as the moment of glory and not humiliation for Jesus. Further, Smith asks about the milieu for the Gospel and essentially accepts some kind of conflict situation between the community and Judaism; this accounts for John's unique "metahistorical" presentation of Jesus. In the last essay, Raymond E. Brown, taking up the thesis of J. L. Martyn, sets out to explore what can be further argued about the earliest development of the Johannine community (or communities) before the Gospel was written. This work of Martyn, Brown and others is revealing the complex nature of this major strand of New Testament tradition which was outside the Pauline churches, and will undoubtedly have many implications for the understanding of first-century Christianity.

In this brief review, it is not possible to engage critically the specific essays. Rather, let me simply remind the reader that important Gospel research has taken place since the original publication of many of these articles. In particular, there have been attempts at structuralistic analysis of parables and other parts of the Gospel tradition and, in the case of Mark, considerable efforts in literary criticism have yielded promising results. Further, some scholars have begun to test a sociological approach, similar to Norman Gottwald's in the Old Testament, on Gospel materials. Gospel research, like most research, marches on and it is obvious that the collected essays, in the current mix, represent only a part of the investigations in the Gospels. Though not easily done, it might have been helpful if the authors had been asked to revise the footnotes to incorporate important articles and books published subsequently to the original appearance of their essays. As far as I can determine, no such revision was done.

Nonetheless, this Fortress Press paperback, though not inexpensive at \$13.50, makes available in a single volume twenty substantive articles regarding the Gospels for more convenient use in seminary, graduate and possibly undergraduate courses. As well, pastors and teaching scholars who have not subscribed to *Interpretation* will find a wealth of good research on the Gospels, emphasizing theological interpretations over historical and

technical considerations, and by a careful reading they can become aware of major conclusions and trends in recent Gospel research.

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**JESUS CHRIST IN MATTHEW, MARK, AND LUKE**, by Jack Dean Kingsbury.  
Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981. Pp. 134. \$4.25.

As a result of his publications on Matthew, we have come to expect of Kingsbury only the most meticulous and insightful work. This volume, his second contribution to the "Proclamation Commentaries," more than fulfills that expectation. It is, however, a quite different addition to the series, since it is not an introduction to recent scholarship on a New Testament book, as are the other volumes. Instead, it is a topical approach to the synoptic gospels which uses the skills of redaction criticism to mine the christology of each of the first three gospels. The editor of the series, Gerhard Krodel, explains in a foreword that this book supplements the volumes on Matthew, Mark, and Luke by including a chapter on "Q" and by comparing the synoptics on the important issue of christology.

In the first chapter which deals with Q, Kingsbury first summarizes the history of the sayings source in modern research, and then discusses the pivotal center of Q, namely, the expectation of the imminent parousia. Following that, he treats the figure and mission of Jesus, discipleship, and soteriology in the hypothetical source used by Matthew and Luke. Each of the synoptic gospels is then treated in subsequent chapters around five themes: the accomplishment of the gospel, the figure of Jesus, the mission of Jesus, discipleship, and soteriology. Within the scope of these themes the author describes the view of the history of salvation embraced by each

of the evangelists. Within the discussion of the soteriological view of the evangelist, Kingsbury briefly characterizes the community out of which the gospel was written and states whatever sociological concerns might have influenced the situation of the community for which the gospel was written.

The book is rich with insights into the faith of the evangelists, but one of the more fascinating contributions of Kingsbury's discussion involves the use of the titles, "Son of Man" and "Son of God," in Matthew and Luke. He proposes that both evangelists understand the latter as a confessional title used in the relationship of Jesus with the believing disciples and the former as a "public" title used of Jesus in interaction with the world. For Matthew the two titles converge in the parousia—"...at his parousia as the glorious Son of man, Jesus remains the Son of God" (73). In the case of Luke, the confessional title, "Son of God," and the public title, "Son of Man," are brought together at the ascension. This suggestion is helpful in understanding the maze of occurrences of these titles in the two gospels. For Kingsbury Mark attempts to give the cross more importance than the parousia, in contradistinction from Q. Matthew's central theme is that in Christ God draws near to abide with his people (the church). The focus of Luke is somewhat different: "the salvation that God in Jesus proffers to Israel" (94).

Seldom is one offered a more compact and exact treatment of the central christological themes of the synoptics than this slender volume. There are some points at which critical questions might be raised, however. As important as the ending of Mark is for understanding the evangelist's theology and narrative, the problem of the ending is never discussed. One must ask of Mark, can the resurrection function so crucially as Kingsbury claims without stories of the "appearance" of the resurrected Christ? A more general methodological question regards the categories Kingsbury uses in his discussion. Do such categories impose a theological structure foreign to the gospel? Could the categories employed have arisen more directly from the gospel itself? (Such a concern, of course, is a fundamental methodological difficulty in any theological analysis of New Testament materials.) On another point related to the categories the author uses, it is a bit clumsy to have the section entitled soteriology used to discuss (among other

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things) the community of the document. Finally, one hesitates to ask for more of a book that is already packed with jewels, but it might have been helpful to have had a summarizing chapter at the end of the book.

Still, after the critical questions have been raised, it remains the case that this volume constitutes the best compact introduction to the christologies of the synoptic gospels. No student of the New Testament will want to be without the benefits of Kingsbury's concise and penetrating treatment of the issue.

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**PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING**, by William E. Hulme, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981. Pp. 176. \$6.50 (paper).

William Hulme helps the reader to appreciate the uniqueness of pastoral counseling. He

does this in two ways. First, he assumes the reader has a general knowledge of counseling. This enables him, without disparaging the behavioral sciences or counseling techniques, to move beyond the skill development that is the implicit goal in many pastoral counseling texts. Second, Hulme energetically advances his thesis that pastoral counseling is unique by virtue of the theological and ecclesiastical bases of the discipline. Pastoral theology provides the framework for Hulme's consideration of the distinctively religious resources which characterize pastoral counseling. Hulme's sections on "Guilt and Reconciliation" and "Death and Resurrection" not only provide the framework for his discussion, but are worth the price of the book alone. Of particular interest is his insight into confession as a form of experiential "reliving." Hulme clearly points out the differences between *repetition* without growth, and *reliving* toward growth.

Since this reviewer's early experiences with Kubler-Ross in Chicago, a continuing pastoral concern has been how to witness to our Christian hope in the situation of terminal illness. Hulme offers a clear, cogent pastoral approach, which denies neither the reality of death nor the reality of hope. Hulme identifies the struggle for meaning in the situation of terminality, and he suggests the type of ministry appropriate to persons "for whom death is their end, but not their destination." Hulme shows what it means that, in Christ, death has been overcome.

Having set a theological framework, Hulme devotes the remainder of his work to how one uses the resources of God-talk, the Bible, meditation, prayer, and the sacraments in the context of Christian community. He identifies the ways in which a *counseling* use of these resources differs from a teaching or preaching use. He is specific as to why these resources are used and when they are to be used. In the development of this material, Hulme is sensitive to the personhood of the pastor, as well as to the way in which the pastor functions as representative of the Christian community.

The book is very readable. Hulme's is a wise and caring pastoral approach. This book redresses the over-identification of pastoral counseling with psychological and other behavioral sciences. Hulme requires that the pastoral counselor find his or her identity in relation to the faith. While this work is not a substitute for other texts in pastoral counseling, which Hulme acknowledges, it is an indispensable companion volume. Indeed, without the understanding which Hulme sets forth, pastoral care and counseling lose their uniqueness. William Hulme has earned the commendation of his colleagues in pastoral care for so clearly identifying the issues and so compellingly addressing them.

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**AUGUSTINE: HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT**, by Warren Thomas Smith. Atlanta: John Knox, 1980. Pp. 190. \$8.50 (paper).

In this very interesting book, written with loving care, Warren Thomas Smith uses as his main biographical source Augustine's *Confessions*. Is it safe to do so?

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth a group of classical and theological scholars

(e.g., Gaston, Bossier, and Reuter) made a strong attack against such a dependence. They “psychologized” (who doesn’t?) and rated *Confessions* as a heavily dramatized invention needed for a bishop to present himself as a very repentant sinner. They scrutinized Augustine’s early works (*Contra Academicos*, *De Beata Vita*, *De Ordine*, *Soliloquia*, *De Libero Arbitrio*, etc.) and demanded to see a real penitent with tears in his eyes. Instead, they saw in these a little group of cheerful friends together with Augustine’s mother merrily prating about the meaning of life, about the true happiness, about meeting God in loneliness, about the search for God in the Platonic philosophy, etc. In their noble indignation these scholars loudly proclaimed that *Confessions* is not an authentic autobiography, but rather something “doctored up.”

As a young man, I passionately loved *Confessions* but did not dare to speak about Augustine’s conversion unless I was sure that there was no liberal scholar around lest I be caught in disbelief in the topnotch achievements of modern scholarship.

*Confessions* has also had some competent defenders, namely, Roman Catholic scholars like Bardenhewer, Hertling, and Mausbach. Especially impressive were Johannes Hessen and Erich Przybywara.

I was somewhat reassured about the authenticity of Augustine’s feelings after studying some of the early Church Fathers like Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Here there were no tortured consciences! No “dark night of the soul!” Instead, they celebrated the “exuberant jumping and dancing joy of God’s children” (Clement of Alexandria). If one had the chance to listen to one of the same Fathers in an hour of confession, then another much lower, darker voice might have been heard, but nonetheless it would be the voice of a *forgiven* sinner. Human beings (every Christian included) are not so monotonously simple that there is only one motif, one ruling emotion, one dominating idea. And such was certainly not the case with Augustine. *Confessions* should be read forward from the early Church Fathers.

With this as a background, it is my opinion that Smith is justified in his reliance on *Confessions* as a major biographical source.

Smith gives clear indications that the key figure in Augustine’s autobiography is his mother Monica. She knows how to rule her “crackpot” husband with Christian gentleness and superior maturity; she knows even more how to bring her windbag, prodigal son back to Christ with iron consistency. It was certainly not her desire to have him at her apron strings, but rather to have him at the hand of Jesus Christ. She followed him and died when her aim was reached. This motif might be decisive in his mother’s harsh demand that he separate himself from his concubine, for it is possible that she suspected her of being instrumental in the tie with the Manicheans (so Werner Achelis’ explanation). Smith fittingly provides a fragment of Monica’s meaningful last conversation with Augustine about the “Silence of the Soul.” This piece is sometimes disregarded by Protestant scholars in spite of its importance for the thought of Augustine.

A welcome contribution is Smith’s attempt to defend Augustine for his attitude against Donatists and Circumcellions. Our present experiences with sects and cults (e.g., the mass suicide in Guiana) indicate that Augustine’s attitude still has some utility.

The same can be said about his concentrated, vivid, and objective report of the Pelagian Controversy. In his writings on this subject, Augustine certainly does not show his usual

gentleness, serenity, and friendliness. But one can understand the feelings of Augustine when he met Pelagius. Augustine, who had experienced God's grace in all its depth, was pitted against a splendid, hard nosed rationalist capable of sharp and honest thinking who at the same time was disastrously shallow and arrogant in not understanding what God's grace was and how all were in need of it.

It is remarkable that together with his emphasis on the devastating character of original sin, Augustine maintained up to his death the same teaching of the free will, the beauty of human nature, and an appreciation of Platonic philosophy coupled with a Christian critique.

In full agreement with Smith we can

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say that Augustine has "one of the highest positions in the entire Christian fellowship" and is a "writer of tremendous depth."

I very warmly recommend this carefully and interestingly written book as an introduction to the study of Augustine.

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**PAUL THE APOSTLE: THE TRIUMPH OF GOD IN LIFE AND THOUGHT**, by J. Christiaan Beker. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980. Pp. 452. \$22.95.

J. Christiaan Beker, professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Seminary, has given us a full-dress study of Paul's thought, characterized by comprehensiveness, exegetical discipline, theological penetration, and a passion for a responsible contemporary hermeneutic. Beker first introduces his readers to what he considers to be the character of Paul's thought, namely its apocalyptic texture and the ubiquitous dialectic between its "coherent core" and its "contingent expression" (Part One). He then dives into Galatians and Romans—both are considered to be situational—in order to explore Paul's way of doing theology always in relation to a given setting (Part Two). Here attention is focused on the contingency of the gospel, and thus on the versatility of Paul the preacher. The bulk of the book follows as an exploration of the gospel's coherence, significantly introduced by a penetrating return to the matter of apocalyptic, which thus serves as a sort of bridge from the treatment of contingent expressions to the quest for coherent core. That core, distinguished from "timeless doctrine," Beker says, emerges as Paul's apocalyptic is explored under the rubrics of cross, sin and death, the Law, indicative and imperative, responsible life in Christ, the church, and the destiny of Israel (Part Three). A conclusion draws many of the threads together under the theme of the book, the final triumph of God.

Among the attempts that have been made in our time to issue a comprehensive, full-scale treatment of Paul's thought, this book is surely the strongest and the most compelling. Indeed there are at least three reasons for claiming that one makes no contribution to our cinematic tendency to inflate adjectives by identifying the book as magnificent.

First, its scope reflects a remarkably disciplined determination to move toward an understanding of "the whole Paul" (ix). The complexity of Paul's theology has driven many a

scholar to issue a monograph on this aspect or that. Not Beker. Obviously the fruit of many years of research and teaching, the book treats virtually every facet of Paul's thought.

Second, its comprehensiveness is of the truly brave sort, rather than being an encyclopedic matter. We already have the remarkably encyclopedic volume by Herman Ridderbos, and I, at any rate, am glad to have it at hand, because it can often serve as a next step after one has consulted the concordance. But its comprehensiveness is so thoroughly analytical that one is unlikely to meet in it the cantankerous and aggravating human being called Paul. Beker's book, on the other hand, is written by a nervy sort of fellow, who wants to take seriously in a holistic fashion the body of Paul's thought as that of a living, breathing, moving human being, even though doing that is difficult and risky for the interpreter. If Beker emerges with a few scars, perhaps he is entitled to quote with the proverbial grain of salt Galatians 6:17.

Third, Beker takes the risk of a holistic interpretation because of a clear and often contagious commitment to Biblical Theology. There is a fairly large debt to some aspects of the broad movement that for years went under that name, revealed not least in the role granted to "salvation history." At the same time, Beker clearly knows how to go his own route, as he attempts to avoid timeless interpretation by focusing his efforts on Paul's apocalyptic hermeneutic, Paul's peculiar way of relating coherence to contingency. That focus, Beker believes, will help to make Paul hermeneutically relevant to our own theological situation.

The major issue raised by the book is the one posed by every essay on what we blithely call "Paul's Theology," namely the way in which one moves from the mass of data before us in *seven situational and highly variegated letters* to the presentation of something that is recognizable as a

*coherent structure of thought.* Most of us are not satisfied to speak indefinitely of the thoughts of Paul, but the rub comes when we ask exactly how we go about avoiding that. From what I have said above it will already be clear that Beker's route is focused on apocalyptic. Drawing on the work of Ernst Käsemann, yet also following his own exegetical paths, Beker is able to argue that apocalyptic "constitutes the heart of Paul's gospel" (17), that "Only a consistent apocalyptic interpretation of Paul's thought is able to demonstrate its fundamental coherence" (143), that "the death and resurrection of Christ in their apocalyptic setting constitute the coherent core of Paul's thought" (207). I suppose it is in part our common indebtedness to Käsemann that causes me to find this interpretative route basically congenial. Exploring Paul's particular and peculiar grasp of apocalyptic seems to me to offer the only hope of perceiving something that approaches coherence. Hence, as regards the basic issue of the book I am in complete agreement.

Massive agreement can lead to boredom; yet that never happened in my reading of the book, and I believe the reason lies largely in Beker's considerable talent to make one *think*, a *sine qua non* for interpreters of Paul. Again and again I paused over a paragraph, being driven to re-read the texts under discussion, and to ponder at length that treacherous path that leads, or appears to lead, from contingency to coherence. The result is an imagined conversation with Beker of a most instructive and stimulating sort, not least because of points of disagreement. I want to mention four of these as tokens of appreciation.

There is, first, the fundamental matter of reaching a working definition of Paul's apocalyptic. Preferring the lead of Koch to that of Vielhauer, Beker opts for a definition that

plays down the disjunctive dualism of the two ages, accenting instead the linear matter of God's victorious faithfulness as it is directed toward the future consummation of his gracious plan. Paul does not balance his references to the Old Age by mentioning explicitly the New Age, a fact that Beker takes to indicate a brand of apocalyptic primarily focused not on dualistic patterns of thought, but rather on the continuum of a history that God is directing toward his final triumph. It follows that in the course of exploring Paul's thought, Beker is able to discover a kind of marriage between apocalyptic (as core) and salvation history (as structure?). My own opinion is that the marriage, as presented in this book, is rather more arranged by Beker than discovered in Paul. Yet just here we have one of the gifts Beker proffers to us in the imagined conversation; for the critical reader will see that the book has the effect of posing a very important question: If salvation history is to be a useful term at all in our efforts to interpret Paul, how are we to see its relation to apocalyptic?

Second, that question is posed nowhere more clearly than in our attempts to hear Paul's letter to the Galatians, and to allow that hearing a role in our quest for coherence in Paul's thought. For Beker, Galatians was written in a setting that made it necessary for Paul to "suppress the apocalyptic theme of the gospel" (x). It is not surprising, then, that although he treats both Galatians and Romans when he is exploring the contingency of the gospel, his account of Paul's Apocalyptic Theology, the core of his book, is written without reference to Galatians. But here again the critical reader who is willing to converse with Beker will find that yet another weighty question emerges: Is the apocalyptic theme of the gospel suppressed in that letter in which Paul says with unmistakable emphasis that the truth of the gospel is a matter of apocalypse (Gal 1:12, 16; 2:2, 5, 14)? One is driven to ask whether it is not Paul's voice in Galatians that is being suppressed, perhaps because that letter is felt to be offensive on two counts: it contains very few references to God's future triumph, that is, to what Beker views as the core of the coherent apocalyptic core, and it can be read as revealing a conscious avoidance of the continuum of salvation history. This second offense committed by Galatians may play a crucial role in Beker's assessment of the letter. For if one has arranged an indissoluble marriage of apocalyptic and salvation history, one may be tempted to say that the absence of one proves the absence of the other. But there may be another route! Could Galatians perhaps be allowed to play its own role in showing us precisely what the nature of Paul's apocalyptic was? If one should answer that

question in the affirmative, one would be driven back to the issue of the relationship between apocalyptic and salvation history.

Our wrestling with that question requires, in the third place, our examining and re-examining Paul's utterances about the Law and about Israel. And on both of these counts the major problems arise for us because *we* have both Galatians and Romans. The present review is scarcely the place to attempt yet another approach to these problems. Romans seems to prove almost as victorious in Beker's comments on the Law as it does in his treatment of the destiny of Israel. But if Romans 9-11 can stand virtually alone because it has no proper counterpart in Galatians, the same cannot be said of Romans 7. The history of Pauline interpretation shows, I think, that Paul's words about the Law in Galatians 3:19-25 and his similar and dissimilar words about the Law in Romans 7 have usually combined to form a fish-bone in the throat of every interpreter who has attempted to formulate a coherence in Paul's understanding of the Law.

That fact leads me to the fourth and final point of appreciative critique. The structure of Beker's book could lead one to think that he conceives the interpretative route to be a one-way street *from* contingency *to* coherence. At numerous junctures, however, he indicates that the two are dialectically interrelated. Perhaps Beker would agree that our work with Paul is always a movement around *the circle* of contingency and coherence, each being more sharply brought into focus as we return to it from the other. For example, we can move toward a coherent core of Paul's theology of the cross only after we have worked exegetically at his contingent proclamation of the cross in letter after letter; and that attempt at synthesis can lead, in turn, to a refined grasp of the contingent proclamation in, say, 1 Corinthians; and so on. It follows that when a scholar sends his manuscript to the publisher, he is in fact giving a report about the circular journey he has been able to make thus far. The question is whether he pauses to give his report as he is moving from contingency to coherence or as he is moving from that degree of coherence he has been able to discover back to contin-

gency. Given Beker's passion for Biblical Theology, it is not surprising that for the most part the structure of his report is dictated by its being given on the way to coherence. I have to admit a preference for the structure of the book by Leander Earl Keck (*Paul and His Letters*, Fortress Press, 1979). Equally aware of the interpretative circle, Keck chose to issue the final part of his report at the point at which one is moving from coherence to contingency. Two advantages result; (1) the interpreter reports while experiencing the same movement Paul experienced as he wrote his letters, thus increasing, perhaps, the chances of exegetical empathy; (2) the interpreter may find it easier to avoid the posture of a theological distiller by consistently taking risks of contingency parallel to those taken by Paul. In a word, it is not difficult to imagine Paul applauding Keck's emphasis on matters the apostle considered worth fighting for, while being enormously grateful for Beker's determined focus on apocalyptic.

Finally a prophecy. This book by J. Christiaan Beker will grace our Pauline shelves for a very long time, not least because readers will sense that the theological passions that raged in the heart and mind of Paul incite a contagious resonance in the heart and mind of the distinguished author.

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**PERSPECTIVES ON OUR AGE**, by Jacques Ellul. Edited by William H. Vanderburg.  
Translated by Joachim Neugroschel. New York; Seabury, 1981. Pp. 111. \$10.95.

Subtitled "Jacques Ellul Speaks on His Life and Work," this slim volume reads as though Ellul was speaking into a dictaphone. It is halting, disjointed, fragmentary, and often elusive. This is its virtue as well as its defect.

C. S. Lewis remarked that, for allegory, style is incidental; what is central is the power, the resonance of the ideas. The power of Ellul's book is in the ideas that lie in the text like rough diamonds in a stream bed. Because he does not argue, but asserts, the ideas must be taken on

their own. But precisely because of this, the book has been a catalyst for my own reflections.

Part 1, a brief autobiographical excursion, is fascinating both for what it reveals and for what it leaves unmentioned. Born to a poor family in the “wretched milieu” of portside Bordeaux, Ellul’s intellectual gifts led him to a doctorate in law and an academic and political career.

He discovered Marx amidst the dislocations of the 1930s and although he eschewed Communist parties, Marx has remained his intellectual touchstone. But Marx did not provide an answer to his nagging questions as to the meaning and purpose of life. In 1932 he became a Christian and, after brief participation in Catholic life, joined the Reformed Church in France. Calvin’s influence was followed by his discovery of Karl Barth. All of Ellul’s subsequent work has been done under the joint aegis of Marx and Barth.

Ellul recounts childhood deprivation, participation in the Spanish Civil War, his dismissal by the Vichy government, his work as a farmer, courier for the Resistance, and (later) mayor, professor, and political guru. What is missing from all his personal accounts is any sense of feeling or emotion. Events happened, ideas were thought, but by whom and expressed to whom remains unknown.

This sense of detachment from the nit and grit of life characterizes the three remaining parts. Theories float in with the scantiest empirical referents. This provides some of the excitement of the book; it is the reader’s task to put flesh on Ellul’s ideas, to puzzle out how they might apply and how his ideas and the reader’s might possibly come together in a coherent vision.

Ellul takes Marx and changes the determining category from “capital” to “technology.” But like Marx he retains the vision of an all-encompassing ground which determines all social forms. The human story for Ellul is the story of nature overcome by society and now (since 1945 at least) of society overcome by technology.

We easily think of nature and society as immense transhuman forces which shape and dominate the particles within their field of force. As society expanded, the domain of nature shrunk with farm-

ing replacing gathering and hunting and towns crowding out both starlight and the fierce voices of the night.

It seemed to many that the change from the suzerainty of nature to the dominance of social forms was a move from the innate givenness of natural laws no creature had chosen to social laws at least influenced by the governed. Social laws could be otherwise; reason and reasonableness could hold court.

Ellul contends that we are in a new age in which *both* nature and society have been overcome as fundamental arbiters, and the new realm of technology dominates. But if the move from nature to society marked the dawn of reason’s reign, this new change signals its sunset: no more than nature is technology susceptible to human initiative. It follows its own laws, not those of human beings. It is not that humankind is apart from the story, but human beings are again playing the role our ancestors played in natural evolution; they are mutant, not mutator.

The prospect for the future is grim; human destiny is controlled by a technological reality that displays no more concern for humanity than nature had for species.

If there is hope, Ellul sees it as coming entirely from outside the purlieu of technology. Returning to Barth in Part IV, Ellul (in an amazing leap from the gloom of his theories) affirms that in God lies both the human future and the ability to shape and transform even the technological mechanism. How this is to be done, what the finite steps of faith and faithfulness are to be, are unfortunately scarcely hinted at.

I would recommend this book to the reader seeking a springboard for thinking about our technological milieu and about the possibility of shaping as well as being shaped.

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**A BOOK OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**, by Johann Christoph Hampe. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980. Pp. 242. \$7.95 (paper).

When in doubt, return to basics. That bit of advice is apparently behind this book and our doubting age surely could use a review of the basics.

In 1969 a German commission began work on a new catechism, “intended to identify and address the realities of life in the modern world from the perspective of Christian faith” (9). Now, commissions are not known for creating popular works. They are generally known for publishing twenty pound tomes which are announced as the most important event in Christian history since the council of Nicea; tomes purchased by conscientious and scholarly clergy; tomes quickly forgotten if they are ever read. The commission must have realized something like that. So they hired Hampe. His job was to take the ponderous and make it ponderable.

To achieve that pondering effect, Hampe took the catechism form and added additional verbiage. The questions posed aren’t exactly Luther’s, but the form is. Each small section can be lifted out, examined, debated, perhaps even voted on or memorized. The book’s contents divide into six “units,” each with six “chapters.” Each chapter is divided into six questions and answers. Each unit closes with a summary, each chapter with a shorter review called, “Where we have come.” This structure, while a little heavy on the sixes, does make the book convenient for reading in short snatches and then pondering awhile.

The subject matter likewise divides into convenient parcels. Units one, three, and five offer us the problems of modernity; we are without a place to stand, under conviction that things are not as they should be, and looking for a structure on which to build a just society. Units two, four, and six offer Christian answers to the modern situation: answers structured on the Apostles’ Creed and the Ten Commandments. For example, Hampe closes the first unit, “Where We Stand,” with a summary of the existential questions forced upon us by the nature of our life as modern people, and with an affirmation: “I believe I am called to something eternal, just as I am called to unity...” (34). He then uses the next unit to describe that “something eternal”: God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth.

Hampe’s answers to modern humankind’s questions are all standard

orthodoxy. Yet the book is advertised as something marvelously new and different and critical. I

wonder why. Are we really convinced that old equals obsolete? The British Baptist who introduces the book leaves the impression that he needs at least the appearance of something new. *A Book of the Christian Faith* “gives no cheap answers,” Edwin Robertson declares. “A critical examination of church history...and a rejection of what has not stood the test of time or the disciplined methods of science...” (7) are the hallmarks of this work. Supposedly.

That sounds positively radical. Hampe’s work is anything but radical. This is just generalized orthodox Christianity. Why make this plea for a scientifically scrutinized faith? Might it be because Hampe wants to cajole non-attenders back into worship? Might it be that he believes the world to be basically atheistic (which he indeed says), and further believes that atheists will believe if only they can be told, “look, this isn’t as medieval as you thought it was, it’s scientific.” Are we church people that anxious about our faith that we can’t affirm that which has been affirmed “everywhere, at all times, and in every place,” simply because it is ubiquitous? Hampe seems to think so. Americans seem to think not. At least some of us do not think so, despite the fact that we may doubt. We still want to return to the basics of a particular kind of confession.

*A Book of The Christian Faith* wants Christianity in general, a one size fits all faith. As a result, the sharp differentiations between confessions are lost. For example, in answer to the question “How does the church remember Christ?”, an answer which I thought surely would deal with anamnesis in the eucharist, I found no hint of the one great act of remembering the church is charged to do. But that makes some sense. This is a book of agreements. The disagreements between communions aren’t even mentioned here.

The results of such “one sizing” is that distinctive teachings tend to become watered down. Thus, despite the fact that looking at the church “honestly” leads Hampe to confess that it is at once justified and sinful, the answer to this dilemma is moralistic, rather than mysterious. “In our disappointment we sometimes forget [the church’s] moments of faithfulness. But when we judge the church we also condemn ourselves” (197). That forgets that it isn’t our faithfulness which makes the church holy.

Overall, I have to wonder if this is really a book with an American audience. The only way to know for sure would be field testing in a parish study group. I’d want to know from this group, “Are these the questions you’re asking? Are these answers you find helpful?” I suspect that they are not, but the only way to tell for certain is to test my hunch.

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**THE INFLATED SELF**, by David G. Myers. New York: Seabury , 1980. Pp. 189. \$12.95.

*The Inflated Self* is a no-nonsense, clearly-written expression of human evil as gleaned from many areas of psychological research. The capacity of the human mind to rationalize and to justify one’s action is presented in vivid, compelling examples—adding up to the need for hope to come from outside the finite trap of human existence. Clearly the strength of Myers’ book is his commanding view of the almost infinite array of psychological research which he pulls together to support his basic thesis. It is hard not to have a healthy disrespect for one’s own rational systems of self-justification after reading this work.

Myers' thesis comes early in the book: Human evil—actions which are self-serving at the expense of others—reflects a basic greed in individuals covered by pride. Basic greed is seen in the prevailing tendency toward “poortalk,” a term coined by Myers to drive home the message of adaptation level theory. It is clear that people are not happy with more, but rather adapt to the higher standard of living and then engage in “poortalk” to reflect their unhappiness in not having more. The individual's pride covers up this basic greed as one's well-honed rationalization system kicks in after self-serving behavior becomes evident. Subtle rationales are built up step-by-step to jus-

tify behavior erupting in extreme cases as ample justification for gross social evil.

Human evil and its self-serving system comes from the struggle for meaning and security. Independence from the infinite source of this security (a breakdown of one's relationship with God) compels one to clutch at false finite security. This struggle for security and meaning gives the human rationalization system the green light to form and sustain false beliefs. Attribution theory and the wealth of research surrounding this theory shows how false beliefs are formed and sustained. Such false beliefs form a circular pattern as they seem to control perception and memory. After citing an almost overwhelming array of research to show both the false nature and the tenacity of such beliefs, Myers concludes in one of his most powerful statements: “It can be surprisingly difficult to demolish a falsehood once a person has conjured up a rationale for it” (57).

Myers concludes the book with the question of hope. His answer comes straight out of traditional Christian and reformed theology: Since human belief systems are doomed by their circular logic, hope can only come from outside the system. God, through the Spirit, breaks through to convince us of sin (so that we see our illusions and false beliefs for what they are). Once the presence of such evil is acknowledged and its significance in destruction is clear, then we are open to the Christian hope. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our self-worth is established, and the basis for our identity—hence our basic perception of life—is attributed to us. The “leap of faith” made possible by God's Spirit is thus the starting point for our whole rational system.

I find that by far the strongest section of this book is in the explanation of how we form and sustain false beliefs. The massive array of evidence that Myers pulls together shows how powerful a person's rationales can be. Once an individual or a community has come up with a way to justify certain actions, selective perception and reliance upon single emotional experiences will sustain the rationale. I think that this basic understanding of the human condition, presented in brilliant fashion by Myers as he integrates theology and psychology at this crucial point, is well worth the reading of this work.

Myers tends to become a bit polemic, and I feel, sets up straw men in the latter part of the book. His characterization of psychological therapy and certain styles of religion, though valid to some degree, seems to be overstated. I would also take issue with Myers' epistemological model for the development of our understanding of human nature. If his thoughts are summed up with the following, then alternate approaches to such understanding would tend to be negated:

Christians would do well to adopt the attitude of science which in its ideal form

involves profound humility. Theology at its best is like science at its best—ever reforming its always imperfect models (113).

I agree with the constant necessity for reforming and calling human systems into question, but the implication that such reformation should take place through further research and data collection (the scientific method) should be tempered with an understanding of the validity of other methods of calling human systems into question.

Overall, I find the book refreshing and much needed in its creative blend of psychology and theology. Myers is truly a scholar and faithfully represents the field of psychological research. He also is well schooled in reformed theology and thus brings a wealth of insight into the interface of the two disciplines. I heartily recommend this book to anyone willing to grapple with the relationship between these two areas.

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**CREDO: THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF FAITH AND LIFE**, by Gustaf Wingren. Translated by Edgar M. Carlson. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981. Pp. 207. \$8.95 (paper).

Though Gustaf Wingren has written two earlier monographs, *Creation and Law* and *Gospel and Church*, which together constitute a two-volume dogmatics, *Credo* is a one-volume textbook in systematic

theology for use in both the university and the parish. Shortly after the Swedish edition was published in 1975, Wingren himself led a study circle reading the book at St. Hans Church in Lund.

*Credo* is strongly oriented toward what takes place in the worship of the congregation. It is an exposition of the three articles of the creed, examining both its Apostolic and Nicene versions. The creed is a designation for a portion of the service. Wingren has also written prayers which, except for the introduction, follow each of the chapters. In the Swedish edition there are in addition eight new hymns written by Wingren, which may be sung to melodies found in the Swedish *Psalmbok* (hymnal). Unfortunately the hymns posed such translation problems that they were omitted. Wingren explains that one of the purposes of the prayers and the hymns is to indicate that even though pluralism must be acknowledged in the discussion of the faith, there can at the same time be unity in worship.

Wingren is conscious of pluralism not only within the Christian community, but also as the Christian faith is related to various “isms,” Marxism, Existentialism, Platonism, Humanism, and Naturalism. This probably reflects the needs of the Swedish educational system, where the prescribed curriculum requires that the Christian view of faith and life be compared with other theories of human nature. Wingren is quite willing to make such comparisons. He does not want to express the Christian point of view in such a way that it is applicable only to Christians, however. He interprets the

priority of the doctrine of creation, strongly stressed in the book, as meaning that the Christian faith is addressed to all people everywhere, and he also finds God at work everywhere. One could wish that more attention could have been given to other world religions—Buddhism, for example, which questions the need for a doctrine of creation, though it is at the same time no less universal in its appeal.

There is a simile to which Wingren repeatedly refers, the likening of the Christian life to the grain of wheat which falls into the earth and dies in order that it might bring forth an abundant harvest (45, 90, 94f., 103, 108, 121, 166, 181f., 188ff.). This simile, found both in John 12:24 and 1 Cor 15:35-38, becomes the pervading theme of the book. At one point (152f.) Wingren argues that God, the Creator, acts in a similar fashion in nature (the grain of wheat) and in the congregation (the Christian giving his/her life in sacrificial service). Yet there is an important difference in that the grain of wheat really doesn't die and the human being really does die. The growth of new plants from seeds and resurrection are not wholly analogous. Wingren, in discussing Jesus' resurrection, criticizes those who distinguish too sharply between body and spirit, between the physical and the ethical. Yet he also grants that "when the physical aspect of the resurrection becomes a burden for our intellectual conscience, then the word no longer liberates" (123).

Many interesting suggestions are given in the final chapter on eternal life. A clue to the nature of eternal life is to be found in the play of children. Wingren does not, in this connection, discuss the play of animals. He does believe, however, that "the spontaneous or sovereign expressions of life" (a concept borrowed from the Danish theologian, K. E. Løøgstrop) which are often seen most clearly in the behavior of children are clues to what is intended in God's creating activity. Eternal life is to be understood as the ongoing song of praise in which the departed are included. The desire to hold on to one's own individual identity must, however, be surrendered. The Christian hope is for resurrection rather than immortality. "It is, however, necessary in our time to present this original Christian hope in its demythologized form if it is to be a *hope* for us at all" (192). Something of what these thoughts imply is expressed in the hymn with which in the Swedish edition Wingren concludes the final chapter, the last verse of which may be translated as follows:

The life that is a life in Christ  
 Can't be my own possession.  
 O Spirit, foster, help, and teach,  
 So that I do not falter  
 When I must step across death's stream,  
 And enter that existence  
 Where nothing will belong to me,  
 Lost in the song of heaven,  
 My urge to own  
 Extinguished in your sea of love.

The translation by Edgar M. Carlson, who has a deep appreciation for Wingren's thought, is clear and readable. One of several possible corrections is the following: "Simone Weil...draws

from the New Testament, and specifically from what Jesus has to say about the grain of wheat, the possibility of interpreting death as appointed, necessary, and from the viewpoint of the individual, meaningless” should be “Simone Weil...in the face of death as appointed, necessary, and from the viewpoint of the individual, meaningless, draws from the New Testament that interpretative possibility which is given through Jesus’ word about the grain of wheat” (181).

One regrets that the subject index in the Swedish edition was not included. The table of contents is quite detailed, but an alphabetical listing of topics discussed in the book would be useful. There is an index of biblical passages and study of Wingren’s exegesis of particular passages will prove rewarding. Finally, the previous publication history of the book should have been indicated. *Credo: Den kristna tros- och livsåskådningen* was published in Lund by LiberLäromedel in 1975.

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**STRANGER AT HOME: THE HOLOCAUST, ZIONISM AND AMERICAN JUDAISM,**  
by Jacob Neusner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981. Pp. 215. \$15.00.

Essays are usually written over an extended period of time. So it is with the es-

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says in *Stranger at Home*. The essays cover a period of twenty-five and more years, but what is important is that they are a corpus of writings having a clearly defined subject matter. Professor Neusner essentially thought and wrote about three issues both as independent and as interdependent subjects, i.e., American Jews, Zionism, and the Holocaust. In fact, there is a fourth subject in the essays but it emerges as the other three are discussed. It is religious Judaism, a necessary corollary to the other three because of the centrality of religious Judaism to the entire Jewish experience. Neusner discusses the problem “Why be Jewish?” and he does so in relation to religious Judaism. For many Jews, religious Judaism and being Jewish are one and the same. In contrast, Neusner states that there is something distinctly Jewish apart from religious Judaism, and one supposes, apart from gearing one’s life to the rhythms of the Jewish calendar.

But American (and Western) Jews have a particular problem that has occupied Professor Neusner over the span of these essays, the relationship of these Jews to the State of Israel. Jews obviously have a deep attachment to the State of Israel, born in part out of the fiery furnaces of the Death Camps and from the compounds of the D.P. camps and in part out of the persistent political force born in Europe in the late nineteenth century, Zionism. Israel is both the national home of the classical Zionist dreams and hopes; it is also a National State living in the tensions of the twentieth century. American Jews support both concepts, the National home and the State. They do not choose to live there. But American Jews are inextricably bound up with the State of Israel.

But Neusner then points to the dilemma of American Jews who go to Israel, “...they discover not their Jewishness but their Americanness” (118). Like all hyphenated Americans, Jewish-Americans upon returning to their homeland are “strangers,” i.e., “All of us turn out to be

strangers at home” (119).

The explication of this idea comes later in Chapter 13, “Israel and Yavneh: The Perspective of Time.” Here Neusner addresses the twin themes of Land and State, or the significance of “sacred space.” In the Torah the land was holy, but the possession of it was conditional. Importance is attached to *what* happens, not *where* it happens. Ancient Israel was to obey God in order to enjoy the blessings of the Land. Now the Land is once again occupied by Jews after centuries of alienation and exile. It is also occupied by those who remember because they survived, the Holocaust generation. The Land has new meaning. It fulfills the hopes of the long exiled Jews; it also fulfills the hopes of Zionists whose hopes are rooted in political realities free of any specifically religious meaning. Today the political realities and religious hopes are intertwined in a geographic space called the State of Israel occupied by a people for whom the Land has multiple special meanings. A Land, by the way, where Jews are not conscious of being Jewish because everyone is a Jew (182). As Neusner says, the State of Israel is the biggest Jewish neighborhood in the world.

For many Jews, Zionism itself has taken on new meaning as the “new Messianism.” Political Zionism, by its success, is given a new attribution. Spatially, the State of Israel is “...the center of the Jewish people,...the spiritual center of the Jewish people” (158-159). From the Israeli perspective, Diaspora Jews, those who choose to live outside of Israel, really

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should feel guilty, move to Israel posthaste and thereby return to God and to Torah. Neusner calls this a most appealing option, “...a final solution to the Jewish problem” (160).

But is it really an option? Is there not, rather, another option available to Jews of the Diaspora, particularly American Jews? The resolution is to be found, not in “enlandisement,” or in political Zionism, nor even in Zionism as the new Messianism, but in a renewed understanding of the meaning of Judaism and of Jewishness, given that “Zionism has had a uniformly beneficial effect upon Jewry” (178). “...Jews live by truths that could endure outside a single land and culture” (180). The whole concept is summarized in the closing sentence of Chapter 14, “Judaism and the Zionist Problem.” He concludes, “...insofar as Jews live and suffer, are born and die, reflect and doubt, raise children and worry over them, love and work—insofar as Jews are human, they require Judaism” (185).

This book will, of course, be of interest to Jews; it ought also to be read carefully by non-Jews, especially Christians. American Judaism and American Jews, Zionism, the State of Israel will all take on new meaning. One’s own prejudices and understandings will be challenged and informed, and the reader will learn. In fact, the reader will learn a great deal.

Sadly, one must nit-pick, but constructively. This fine book is marred by many typographical errors. While reading along, a cry rises up within: “Where was the publisher’s proofreader?” Too many glaring errors (at least 11), one in the first sentence of an essay; two within two sentences. But the glossary is excellent, the index adequate and a complete listing of the original place, date and title of all the essays is included (viii-ix), thereby tending to overcome the errors, but not quite.

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**THE CASE FOR LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY**, by Donald E. Miller. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981. Pp. 160. \$8.95.

Donald Miller has undertaken an important task in this book, namely to argue that liberal Christianity can again play an effective role in the formation of personal and communal Christian identity. During the past two decades liberal Christianity in America has lacked vitality and direction while conservative and fundamentalist churches have flourished. In contrast to that trend *The Case for Liberal Christianity* asserts that liberalism has a special relevance for the revitalization of Christian identity in America in the 1980s. Despite the admirable intention of the book, however, Miller's "case" is incomplete and finally unconvincing. Rather than restoring confidence in the future of liberal Christianity, it leaves the reader all the more concerned about liberalism's continuing spiritual and intellectual impotence.

The book opens with an interesting account of Miller's own attempt to recover a sense of religious piety after having undergone the kind of faith crisis widely chronicled in modern religious literature. While rejecting the "literalism" of traditional religion, Miller, nonetheless, emerged from his crisis with a longing for the stability offered by a religious community and its tradition. Miller argues that a broadly symbolic and pluralistic interpretation of tradition with a renewed emphasis upon ritual activity presents the most effective form of Christianity for those who share Miller's ambivalent reaction to more conservative forms of Christian community. The initial chapter thus raises the expectation that the remainder of the book will constitute a proposal for a revised and revitalized view of liberal Christianity.

Unfortunately that expectation is disappointed as Miller develops a view of liberalism that is often simplistic and offers little that is novel or imaginative. Part II, "Commitment Beyond Belief" presents a notion of Christianity's symbolic truth that is little more than a simplified version of Paul Tillich's view. The strongest aspect of this section is Miller's argument that the assertion of Christianity's truth is not inconsistent with a recognition that its beliefs are imaginative social constructions. "I would argue that God can neither be experienced in the abstract nor conceptualized intellectually without tapping the fictive power of the imagination" (21). That rich insight could have been the basis for a creative proposal concerning

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the role of imagination in Christian belief. Miller seems satisfied, however, to use this insight merely to criticize all forms of literalism as "idolatry;" in his constructive work he merely relies upon Tillich's well-worn theory of symbol. This squandered constructive opportunity points to the major weakness of the work. While it contains a number of interesting observations, the insights remain at the intuitive level and are not developed with any sophistication into new constructive proposals.

These flaws are most apparent in the major section of the book, "Constructing Christian Identity." Liberals have traditionally devalued the centrality of ritual and worship in developing their moral vision of Christian reality. By contrast Miller argues for the indispensability of liturgy in providing a corporate experience to engender and sustain that moral vision. And yet the inner connection between worship and morality is never clarified. "The importance of the experience of the *mysterium tremendum* in worship is that its 'otherness' lends authority, or one might say, 'a legitimating presence,' to the ethical vision presented in worship" (63). But surely such an

account falls considerably short of an adequate explanation of “the moral significance of worship” (the title of the chapter). What is the link between Christian worship of *God* and Christian ethics? Why have Christians so often continued to chant the *Te Deum* while carrying out the most illiberal, intolerant, and unethical of actions? What kind of behavior is being legitimized by this presence Christians call God? Is “God” no more than the projected reification of an alienated consciousness? One can hear the voices of two great modern critics of liberalism—Karl Barth and Karl Marx—rising to challenge Miller’s position. Unfortunately Miller never seriously engages any of the major theological and ethical criticisms of liberalism. He writes as if liberalism had simply fallen out of fashion and merely required a coherent restatement in order for it to be restored to its rightful position of dominance. In fact many liberal anthropological, political, and theological notions have been subjected to devastating critique by theological and political analysts. Any defense of liberalism which ignores those decisive challenges has little prospect for a successful brief in support of liberal Christianity.

The final difficulty which plagues *The Case for Liberal Christianity* is that it is not really a book with a sustained thesis. It is rather a collection of thirteen essays, eight of which have been published previously, posing as a coherent monograph. The final three essays can be integrated into the earlier material only with great difficulty, and while the initial ten chapters have a common theme, they do not constitute anything like a cumulative argument. One wishes that Miller had *developed* his earlier insights in order to *argue* a case for liberal Christianity. He is content, rather, to repeat those insights. Consequently they remain interesting and occasionally thought-provoking but insufficient to establish the case he seeks to present.

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