

video-game-like fashion in a matter of days; and whose sports heroes and musical stars are predominantly black? In fact, Shriver's argument has much to say to Generation Xers, though Shriver himself does not make this explicit. Given his thesis that one learns forgiveness in a community, it might be equally argued that one also learns the negation of forgiveness (vengeance, hatred) within a community. Thus, a community has a corporate identity, one which carries both positive and negative attributes. If Generation Xers will read Shriver's work with both a sense of corporate violence and shame (original sin), then this book will affect the way they deal with political enemies in the near future.

By (re-)introducing forgiveness into political discourse, Shriver has hopefully initiated a movement which ventures to reconcile political enemies, whether the enemies be Jewish-German, Korean-Japanese, Slavic-Croatian, Hutu-Tutsi, Chechen-Russian, U.S.-Iraqi, and so on. A book which breaks open old, festering wounds in an attempt to achieve long-term wholeness is, to be sure, daring. However daring it might be, Shriver, recalling Hobbes's "war of all against all," would argue that it is necessary; for without forgiveness in politics, human existence may be in peril—and he just may be right.

Scott T. Kline

McGill University

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*Essays in Critical Theology.* By Gregory Baum. Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1994. ISBN 1-55612-710-3. Pp. viii+244.

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Gregory Baum's latest book is a collection of eleven essays, ten of which have been published in various journals and books (from 1989 to 1992) and one new article that responds to the critical theorist Ray Morrow. The first section focuses on the shortcomings of deconstruction and postmodernism while the second looks at the possibilities of change within the Catholic Church. One could summarize the book by saying that Baum saves a universal *ratio* from the clutches of relativism and overtones of nihilism implicit in postmodern theories (22–6), while defending a highly modified view of natural law that identifies him as a radical reformer within the church and places him at odds with much of Catholic orthodoxy (184–6).

Baum accomplishes these two goals through diverging means. He argues against what he considers to be the monolithic interpretation of capitalism put forth by theorists of the postmodern. He submits that Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard are in fact former Marxists who, having rejected modernity because of the failure of socialism, have not lost their appetite for grand theories (80–91). Against Lyotard's claim of a dominant capitalism, Baum speaks about different types of capitalism, each of which has to be analyzed on its own terms (88). The same holds true for Daniel Bell's anti-utopian theory of post-industrialization. Although the information highway has replaced a previous focus on industrial production, this does not result in a classless society that is only interested in technical solutions to economic problems. The marginalization of cul-

tures and peoples who do not see technocracy as king gives rise to renewed conflict along gender, race, and national lines (79–83).

Baum saves his most severe criticism for John Milbank, who he believes has co-opted postmodern theories to promote a type of religious sectarianism. As an “Anabaptist Barth,” Milbank believes in no universal reason other than the pacifist one given by God in Jesus Christ (52; 55–63). Everything else, including the social sciences and classical reason, are children of violence. In response, Baum quotes Scripture to show how Samuel used secular arguments to convince the Israelites that a king would only bring slavery and bondage (58–9), and affirms an “inclusivist Christology” that builds on the virtues and hospitality implicit in other cultures (63–75).

The final section on ecclesiology is interesting because it places Baum closer to the Anabaptist Barth, which he has just accused Milbank of becoming, than to the Catholic Church of which he considers himself to be an “orthodox” member. This radicalness entails a modification of natural law that includes a defence of secularity as intrinsically valid and homosexuality as part of human nature (12; 21–2; 73–5). In the same way that slavery was recognized as an evil only two hundred years ago, there may come a time, as Baum so candidly puts it in his subtle, humble and ironic prose, when homosexuality is regarded as socially acceptable.

Baum also sounds like an Anabaptist Barth when he defends an egalitarian priesthood of all believers (185). Against deconstruction, he underscores the importance of the subject and his or her active participation in the world. The author is most persuasive in this regard when he quotes the Pope’s encyclicals on labor and uses the “preferential option for the poor” to advocate change and revolution. John Paul II’s convictions about labor as a fundamental value and engine of society enable Baum both to demonstrate his orthodoxy and severely to criticize North America’s preference of capital over labor.

The fact that the preferential option for the poor has found acceptance within the Catholic church also gives Baum a conflict model of sociology to reinforce the need for radical economic and social changes. Employment is more important than keeping inflation in check; labor-intensive jobs are more beneficial than the risks of high-capitalization projects; social solidarity among small businesses and co-operatives does more for the common good than top-down theories of government. The social teachings of the Catholic church are Baum’s ready ally in combatting the mainstream’s baptism of balanced budgets and (resultant) misery for a large undersector of society.

Baum’s natural law theory has thus been modified to such a degree that it is no longer recognizable as the static, organic, hierarchical superstructure with which it has been traditionally associated. At the same time, his defence of a “universal *ratio*” enables him to sidestep the problems of postmodern theory while undergirding a radically social vision of dignity, solidarity, work, and transformation. This highly dialectical approach, grounded in a deep respect for conservative values, orthodoxy, and tradition, should outlast the postmodern theories which Baum is criticizing.

To conclude, a discussion of the Jewish thinker Emil Fackenheim and the American Catholic theologian David Tracy is included in the book. These two

chapters round out the ecumenical impetus of Baum's work and place him clearly in line with Vatican II's fundamental respect for other religions as well as the Canadian Catholic bishops' unique left-wing perspective on the economy and social structures.

Donald Stoesz

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*Either/Or: The Gospel or Neopaganism.* Ed. by Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995. ISBN 0-8028-0840-9. Pp. vi+125.

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I must confess that I began to read this book with a sceptical eye, given the provocatively 'conservative' title, which suggests a return to a pristine (and mythical?) orthodoxy in the face of a transforming ("pagan") world. Indeed, in the opening remarks and the first essay of this volume, my suspicions were anything but allayed. In the end, however, there is no escaping it: this is a timely book, a book not fit for weak-stomached liberals, but precisely for this reason, one that demands attention.

The articles which make up *Either/Or* are taken from papers delivered at a 1993 conference sponsored by the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology. The title of the conference is that of the book, and the tone of the participant speakers echoes strongly in these pages, which fairly shout at the declining church and the secular culture to which (in the eyes of the contributors) it bows down. The authors (or, rather, the editors, who are the most vociferous of the voices found here) frankly admit their "partisanship," going so far as to attack not only lukewarm attempts at religious "pluralism," but also "multiculturalism," "feminism," and "hospitality" (!). These are viewed as nothing short of "acts of betrayal" when integrated into the church's vision.

Strongly "kerygmatic" in approach, this book does not flinch in its counter-offensive against the temptations of modern humanistic and "neopagan" ways. The "gospel" of the title, Braaten explains, is not the gospel as-opposed-to-the-law, but rather "the whole message of Jesus Christ...not only what Jesus personally proclaimed but what his apostles proclaimed *about* him" (7). "Neopaganism," in turn, involves the "modern variations of the ancient belief of pre-Christian mystery religions that a divine spark or seed is innate in the individual human soul" [Eckhart's *Seelenfünklein*]; it is the dissolution of the three pillars of orthodoxy ("history, kerygma, dogma") into the acids of "self-assured subjectivity" (7).

The rhetorical nature of this work is reflected in the choice of terms, starting with the title; these give some indication of the assumptions (and elisions?) which undergird these articles. Although Braaten dismisses the historical approach to the study of Christianity, particularly the search for the pristine Jesus and his unsullied message, there is unquestionably here a sense of a distant and lost ideality of origins: of a pre-Hellenistic "Hebraic-Christianity." Throughout this Tertullianistic volume, the "way of Athens" is chided (with some justice,