

difficulty is with Volf's Christology. As a theologian in the Reformed tradition, he points to Jesus Christ and him alone as the solution for all unresolved conflicts. He argues that people will be able to create conditions of peace and justice only if they follow Christ's sacrificial self-giving on the cross.

As a Catholic theologian, I am more inclined to hold that revealed in Jesus Christ is the universality of God's offer of grace; that a certain continuity, even if interrupted by sin, exists between creation and redemption, and that therefore an appropriate creaturely self-love or even self-interest need not be at odds with the *agape* of the New Testament. People are summoned to overcome conflicts and the wounds of the past not only by the example of Christ's self-giving love, but also by the grace-inspired recognition that the way of forgiveness is the road leading to their own spiritual happiness. The great wisdom contained in Volf's wonderful book can therefore also be meaningful to people of good will who are not Christians, and to Christians who do not wish to compare their love and generosity to Christ's supreme sacrifice on the cross.

This splendid work demonstrates that Christian doctrine is relevant to the concrete issues of political life. The book is so well written that it is hard to put down.

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Christ the Reconciler: A Theology for Opposites, Differences and Enemies. By Peter Schmiechen. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1996. ISBN 0-8028-4178-3. Pp. 176.

Reconciliation: Our Greatest Challenge—Our Only Hope. By Curtiss Paul DeYoung. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8170-1256-7. Pp. 142.

The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches. By Gregory Baum and Harold Wells. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997. ISBN 1-57075-107-2. Pp. ix+195.

Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu. By Michael Battle. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8298-1158-3. Pp. 181.

A theme that has been emerging in the current Christian discourse is the theology and politics of reconciliation. Recent contributions to this discourse reflect as much diversity as they do thematic unity. Four of these—all representing different publishing houses and traditions—are to be considered in the following essay.

In *Christ the Reconciler*, Peter Schmiechen (President and Professor of Theology, Lancaster Theological Seminary, PA) sets out to address what he sees as the present crisis of the church by drawing on the historical resource of theology, and the inspiration of an envisioned future.

In short, a crisis has arisen in the Protestant (all denominations) church's ability to meet the needs of those inside and outside. This crisis in the church's *doing* is a result of fundamental problems in her ability to *be* who she is, brought on by now-ingrained habits of thought absorbed from the surrounding culture. Thus, reform of the church which answers to this situation of crisis will be true and effective reform if it is a reform of thought about being. Only theological reform will bring a transformation of being, which will result in a lasting transformation of the church's doing.

Neither "moral reform" (social action, 1,2), mission strategy reform, nor reform in church-world relations will have a significant and lasting impact, either on the church or the world. Such reforms have come and gone, and affected no more than a few in the church over the long term, because they have not changed the structure of the church's action: her mode of being. For example, while the social movements of the 1960s and 70s brought a much needed critique of the church's lack of social activity, calls to action affected only a small number in the church. The majority never connected the need for social action with their understanding of the gospel. Thus, the overall structure of the church's being was not transformed to facilitate the new mode of action. The involvement of most was limited to bursts of enthusiasm, and crises.

Not even doctrinal reform is adequate. Although it is *close* to theological reform, it tends to be "scholastic and reactive" (3), imposing the past on the present, preventing fresh encounter with the gospel. In this respect, it tends to drive the wedge of old divisions further, rather than encouraging ecumenical rediscovery of the essentials common to all denominations: namely, the new life of Jesus Christ in the community, made possible by the reconciliation of otherness accomplished by God in Christ on the Cross (1-6).

In chapter 1, "The American Inheritance," Schmiedchen explains that the inner crisis in America's Protestant churches is a reflection of the broader crisis of American culture, brought on by two main features of American cultural ideology that the church has unthinkingly imbibed: unquestioned belief in the primacy of the individual, and the "triumph of doing over being" (7).

The effects of individualism and functionalism are socially pervasive: American culture is riddled at all levels with conflicts which seem unresolvable because few think past the immediate language of rights, obligations, and gains for self. Lasting, covenantal commitment to a community in which difference is not only sustained but celebrated has become next to impossible in a "me-first" society structured around the liberal model of voluntary associations of (necessarily) like-minded individuals.

The church's absorption of the language of individualism has led to the loss of her own covenantal understanding, impoverishing her ability to maintain unity-in-diversity. Furthermore, a functional approach to church offices has resulted in a division in the church between active contributors, and religious "consumers," rendering the church uni-dimensional (9-17).

While the distortions of individualism and functionalism affect ecclesiastical life and structure adversely, such distortions are not to be equated with

differences of emphasis between denominations. Theological reform does not mean denominational homogenization.

In chapter 2, "Images of the Church," Schmiechen outlines eight general "types" of Protestant church structures which arise through differing theological emphases. His typology is interesting, not reductionist, and supports his theses that all denominations have a different strength to contribute to the life of the church catholic, and that all the varying theological emphases would benefit from gospel-based reform (31-60).

In chapter 3, "The Signs of Our Times," Schmiechen addresses the fact that though church reform must not be dictated by cultural ideology, the church which answers the crisis of today must be aware of, and respond to, "the signs of the times." This is an excellent and incisive chapter in which he locates several adaptations of basic Cartesianism which drive today's "identity" discourse, and which the church must both avoid, and answer. For example, many today define their identity according to the statements "I am different/I suffer/I am angry; therefore, I am." The church which will effectively proclaim the gospel of the grace of God (of the reconciliation of otherness) must resist the divisive cultural tendencies to make difference absolute; to nurture a victim mentality; and to define self according to the direction of one's anger.

Simultaneously, however, these Cartesian distortions reflect real needs in society and the church. Thus, theological reform must include proper recognition and affirmation of difference, acknowledgement of suffering and willingness to redemptively suffer with, as well as positive action to address the injustices and divisions that produce alienation, suffering and anger (61-94).

In the last two chapters, "The Gospel of Reconciliation" and "The Church as an Image of Reconciliation" (95-176), Schmiechen shows how theological apprehension of the gospel of God's gracious reconciliation of humanity to Himself in Christ would revolutionize the church from the inside, out. Denominations with different emphases on doing would be united in being a concrete "image of reconciliation," providing living proof for the possibility of reconciliation in a world which otherwise has none. The church which has the power to bring cultural and political change to a world where difference creates hostility, is the church in which real "others" live together in community built on the common ground of the Cross. In a culture obsessed with the problems of being/identity, the church which focuses on the essence of her being in Christ will be able to respond effectively.

Schmiechen does not conclude his book with a structural prescription for the reconciled church's "new being," because he believes this must be worked out in each denomination and congregation, in accord with their own contextual embodiment of the common vision to which he calls them.

In general, Schmiechen's work is thoughtfully organized and very well-written. While one might wish for more extensive footnotes and a bibliography for the sake of further research, the lack of both primary and secondary material on Schmiechen's subject makes this omission understandable. Where appropriate, he has indicated the source of those works and ideas which have inspired him. Obviously written for the sake of the church rather than scholar-

ship as such, *Christ the Reconciler* is a substantive, thought-provoking and timely essay which any pastor, theologian, lay leader, or student in theology would do well to read.

Similarly to Schmiechen, Curtiss Paul DeYoung begins *Reconciliation: Our Greatest Challenge—Our Only Hope* by situating himself in the conflict-riddled pluralist society of the present. Noting the danger that the popularity of reconciliation themes in the 1990s may be just a fad, he seeks to “clarify what biblical reconciliation is and what precipitates it” (xvii) so that society can be transformed.

Referring to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s call for “costly grace” in the face of a “cheap grace” which cost German Christians dearly, DeYoung calls for “costly reconciliation” (xviii). His principle point is to illustrate that since God reconciled Himself to us at a price, “what has cost God much, cannot be cheap for us” (xviii). Accordingly, the book is divided into four parts: “A Costly Problem,” “A Costly Proclamation,” “A Costly Process,” and “A Costly Practice.”

From his standpoint as a pastor in the Church of God, and the president of an urban (Minneapolis) para-church ministry which is focused on reconciliation and social justice issues, DeYoung identifies the multiple problems and barriers dividing people in the United States. It is not enough to address racism, classism or sexism alone, because they are intertwined. The *lack* of community, mutuality, peace, and reconciliation in America is a holistic lack that touches every aspect of society, producing the wounds of isolation, injustice, exhaustion, betrayal and denial. These wounds affect the whole person. Thus, both internally and externally, the problem of division and conflict is individually and socially costly.

Often, the ways people try to address the problem are also harmful. Assimilationism and tokenism produce feelings of inferiority, rage and fear which sabotage even well-intentioned efforts. When Christianity has mirrored the exclusiveness in society, rather than Jesus’ inclusiveness, it has helped divide and marginalize. Moreover, hypocrisy in the church has prevented those outside from finding the “real Jesus.” For Christians an aspect of the problem of societal division that must be grappled with has to do with the struggle to find the One, “real Jesus” behind all the conflicting images of Him made whenever people impose the aims and values of their particular social location on Him (1-40).

The costly struggle of finding the real Jesus brings about a holistic process of healing, which necessarily includes the costly task of proclamation. As it cost Christ to break the “dividing wall of hostility” between “Jew and Gentile,” so it will cost us individually and collectively to proclaim the breaking of walls in the “temple,” and of oppression in society. Comprehension of the vertical reconciliation accomplished by God for all time in Jesus has a necessary horizontal implication at all times. In all situations, Christians—those who believe the reconciliation of Jesus Christ—are “ambassadors of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20), i.e., those given the mandate to bring the message of the concrete reality of reconciliation.

Negatively, bringing the message means struggling against "all things that produce division": racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, hatred, prejudice, jealousy, gossip (59). Positively, it means striving for peace, justice, equality and integrity, and practicing—as well as encouraging others to practice—love, joy, hope and faith. Becoming an ambassador of reconciliation involves a "reconciliation mind-set" which begins with self-examination, and is consistent.

A reconciliation mind-set does not embrace justice in one area, and injustice in another. A reconciler seeks to set broken relationships right, beginning with those personally close, and working outward. Reconciliation is oriented to people as they exist in relationships, not causes and principles. Since the proclamation of reconciliation goes against the grain of tradition, a reconciliation mind-set has persistent resolve—and costs.

Fleshed out in relationships, the practice of reconciliation presupposes equality, the risk of trust where relationships have been severed, and a willingness to consider all viewpoints. By nature, reconciliation sets free. It does not mean mere "getting along," but transformation in relationships (43-83).

Because reconciliation is about holistic healing of human relationships at all levels of society, it is not an "instant answer" to conflict. The costly *process* of reconciliation involves individual responsibility for "compassionate listening" (99)—for knowing the *other's* truth, and feeling the other's pain. For example, men who are really seeking reconciliation must come to a place where they can understand something of how sexism affects women (95). Conversely, victims must try to understand whatever pain lodged deep in the oppressor drives him/her (96).

Reconciliation is not a general movement to be observed, or co-ordinated by specially skilled leaders. It concretely begins to happen when normal individuals lead in taking personal responsibility for the divisions they live in, and so come to be leaders. Martin Luther King, Jr. is an example.

Once one has acknowledged one's part in the painful division, and listened to the other well enough to be able to articulate what the other is feeling, then one can begin to act to change the situation. Being a willing agent for reconciliation means living in the midst of the division that needs healing. It requires sacrifices of our safe distances. Integral aspects of such action are forgiveness, repentance, acts of justice, symbolic gestures, and public acknowledgement of the whole truth (illustrated, for example, by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission) which includes an uncovering and re-claiming of history (99-112).

Since human actions will always be incomplete and ultimately dissatisfactory, healing requires an awareness that one's identity is fully restored in God. Referring to Jeremiah's cry "Is there no balm in Gilead?," DeYoung makes the point that only reconciliation with God brings about the deepest inner healing that enables one to pay the cost of forgiving, trusting, hurting, sacrificing and hoping that is part of the process and practice of reconciliation. We will not be reconciled unless we realize that it happens on God's time-table, not ours.

Although the emphasis in this work is more on the costs of practical reconciliation than it is on theology, DeYoung's starting and finishing-points are the

theology of reconciliation: God's costly act on the Cross. DeYoung's concern with social engagement is grounded in clear, honest theological conviction; his critique, on what he affirms. As a result, he is persuasively compelling.

While this work is thorough and frank, it is also open-ended. One useful feature is the list of probing questions at the end of each chapter, which are ideal for provoking small-group or classroom discussions. Because of DeYoung's holistic approach, the book would make a fine springboard from which to leap into a plethora of specific issues in the context of either an undergraduate course, or an academic paper. It is also simply an enjoyable, inspiring read.

In *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*, Gregory Baum (Roman Catholic) and Harold Wells (Protestant) share both Schmiechen's and DeYoung's aim of addressing the situation of conflict in society from within the framework of the Christian faith tradition.

In their preface, Baum and Wells make the additional point that, given that reconciliation and peace have always been understood to be integral to the Christian calling, conflicts around the globe such as have exploded in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia are evidence that the churches around the world have not shouldered their responsibility. Therefore, Christians today have the twin task of repentance for their failures, and of making the message of reconciliation explicit. This task may mean conflict since "true reconciliation cannot be achieved at the cost of injustice and continuing oppression" (vii-viii).

The editors share the basic operating assumption that reconciliation means repairing relationships through the righting of injustice. Therefore, both embrace world-wide national/ethnic drives for self-determination by "oppressed" or colonized peoples (including Quebec francophones).

In chapter 1, "Theology for Reconciliation," Wells establishes the work's theological framework. He argues that while theology must begin with God's revelation in Jesus Christ, actual doctrines are human, and must therefore be tested against the standard of their ethical and political implications. Because Christianity is influential world-wide, Christians must shape their doctrine according to what is politically and socially beneficial. In the present context, this means that Christians have an obligation to develop a "theology *for* reconciliation" (2).

Such a theology draws on parts of Hebrew Scripture, as well as the life and sayings of Jesus. It looks especially to Jesus' balance of radical love for the enemy, and confrontation with perpetrators of injustice. Briefly, the life of Jesus must be carefully regarded. For example, attention to his teaching on love of enemies might have prevented Christians from torturing and slaughtering various ethnic "enemies" over the centuries. Yet, even though this is true, "nonviolence" still cannot become a rigid principle (4-7).

Development of a theology which is for reconciliation necessitates a careful reinterpretation of a good number of key theological doctrines. For example, one must watch out for doctrines like Anselm's on the atonement, because they are "subtly destructive," legitimate "a cruel patriarchalism" (10), and portray a bloodthirsty God, which is incongruent with the love of Jesus. Since it is not

easy to simply discard the doctrine of the atonement (which would be better), it can be empoweringly interpreted to signify the fact that evil deeds are not to be taken lightly, and that reconciliation is costly because it cost God (10-11).

Reconciliation of Peoples is a volume of articles written on and by church leaders who Baum and Wells feel have fulfilled, or are fulfilling, the task of reconciliation in their life-contexts. Although each of the contributing authors has their own emphases, they either implicitly or explicitly share the editors' ethical-theological position. Their life-contexts are representative of several types of conflict in different countries: civil war, ethnic genocide, internal persecution/oppression of a minority by a majority, conflict resulting in a people's being deprived of a land/home, and internal conflict provoked by external war (countries considered are: South Africa, Rwanda, Chile, Korea, Fiji, Israel, Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, Poland, East Germany, and Canada [Quebec, First Nations]).

Generally, the articles are interesting and informative, and the footnotes are excellent. However, the marked appreciation of all contributors for a top-down approach to the practice of reconciliation has the effect of distancing the majority of Christians. The authors' examples are not all that helpful to the average pastor, professor, student, or lay-person looking for ways to promote reconciliation. One is left with the impression that the process of reconciliation is best left in the hands of a capable, politically connected elite "in the know."

Intellectually, "reconciliation" is so dependent on the categorizations ("oppressed," "oppressor") it is intended to overcome, that it ironically drifts perilously close to becoming ideologically exclusive itself. Theologically speaking, I am concerned by the root assumptions of this work as a whole that God is not an actual actor on the human stage (prayer is not considered an activity of practical relevance), and that the language of the church must conform to the needs of humanity, which, as it turns out in this work, is defined by a very particular political-economic world view.

Nevertheless, all articles are well-written, and contribute insights which must be reckoned with by anyone wrestling with the problem of responding to the urgent situations of division and conflict around the globe. The narratives would be inspiring to those outside Christianity as well as those inside. In his "Theological Afterword," Gregory Baum helpfully concludes without closing, leaving the door open for debate and discussion.

Michael Battle's book, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*, is inspired by the singular, Anglican archbishop who held the vision of a rainbow nation in the midst of apartheid. Battle's aim is to explain how the African concept of a community of mutuality expressed by the word *ubuntu* functions as Tutu's primary theological hermeneutic.

In fact, the evidence Battle presents (especially direct quotes of Tutu) shows that while the *ubuntu* concept is Tutu's dearest parable for the Kingdom of God, Tutu's actual understanding and use of it are shaped by the framework of his theological heritage. Thus, there is a remarkable disjuncture between Battle's thesis and analysis, and his actual presentation. This is chiefly revealed

in his chapter on Tutu's use of liturgy ("Inspired by Worship and Adoration of God," 122-83).

That his conclusions and arguments do not respect the facts he cites to prove them is the only reasonable explanation I can find for the book's terrible organization and style. Not only do paragraphs not follow one another within a section, even sentences within a single paragraph often do not cohere. More than once, the topic of a sub-section is not the same as that suggested by its title.

Frankly, a much clearer picture of Tutu's theology *as African* can be obtained by reading one of Tutu's published volumes of sermons in parallel with Shirley DuBoulay's (almost hagiographic) biography *Tutu* (1988).

Shortcomings aside, anyone who has already read these would benefit from picking through *Ubuntu Theology*. Battle helpfully correlates Tutu's life and theology with the wider context of South African history (although the historical work is not very thorough, sometimes vague and not quite accurate). Also, his research includes a substantial number of Tutu's unpublished sermons, letters, lectures and conversations. The footnotes are excellent, and the bibliography extensive.

Taken as a group, these four works are without a doubt a worthwhile read. I can only hope, however, that they are inspiring to Canadians. There is much here that would be helpful to Canadians desiring reconciliation in our tense socio-political and historical context. Unfortunately, the two most helpful works (Schmiechen and DeYoung) are written by Americans, for America. Although the global representation in the one Canadian work (Wells and Baum) is heartening, it is somewhat distant—regardless of the one article on Quebec. Lamentably, while Tutu's thought and life is prophetically and practically encouraging anywhere (strangely *because* of, not *in spite* of, his South African-ness), Battle's discussion is not.

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In the Beginning... A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall. By Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Trans. Boniface Ramsey. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1995. ISBN 0-8028-4106-6. Pp. 100.

This is a simple book: a set of four homilies (appendix excepted) about simple and yet profound and foundational Judeo-Christian truths—truths about God, Creation and human beings.

First, a word about the homilist. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger is no stranger to the theological world. He was present at the Second Vatican Council (1962-64), and enjoyed a distinguished teaching career at several universities, including Tübingen and Regensburg. In 1976, he was made Archbishop of Munich and, in 1981, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. With this information, we can already guess the tone of this book: for one thing,