

Severe, under-treated pain has profound, far-reaching effects on the patient. One of the main themes of the book is the close relationship between pain and the desire to die, and between pain management (analgesia) and the will to live. An article by Sylvia D. Stolberg included in *Death Talk* is a rebuttal to the pro-euthanasia position, refuting the claim that "human dignity is lost through disability, disease, dependency, or suffering. Human dignity is not a thing that can be lost, and [to think so] involves an impoverished interpretation of human dignity" (256). She makes the pivotal point that the pro-euthanasia debate assumes that dignity is socially-determined judgment, and not, as she believes, an intrinsically human value—an inextricable aspect of human nature.

*Death Talk* suggests that it is perhaps our fear of death that elicits a need to control it, and that perhaps euthanasia deprives us of unique, meaningful, transcendental experiences that can enrich our understanding of existence and death. In the final analysis, we will all find ourselves in the dilemma of euthanasia, and "We all hope to be included among those who have 'good deaths'" (25).

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*Religious Language and Critical Discourse Analysis: Ideology and Identity in Christian Discourse Today.* By Noel Heather. Religions and Discourse Series. Volume 5. New York: Peter Lang, 2000. ISBN 0-8204-4238-0. Pp. 319.

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Since the publication of *The Postmodern Bible* by the Bible and Culture Collective in 1995, it has become quite common to find theologians and religious scholars interacting with specialists in critical theory and cultural studies in order to address the politics of religious identity. Noel Heather's recent book broadens this dialogue to include the theoretical work in critical discourse analysis by linguists such as Norman Fairclough and Teun Van Dijk. Readers will find an insightful example of theology's "linguistic turn" in Heather's study of evangelical Christians' discursive practices in Great Britain. In his analysis of Church texts, worship service rubrics, and transcripts from conversations, the author endeavours to understand the role that ideology holds in contemporary Christian discourse.

Heather states that his exploration into the social construction of Christian identity was inspired by two recent books, Martyn Percy's *Power and the Church: Ecclesiology in an Age of Transition* (1998) and Anthony Thiselton's *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self: on Meaning, Manipulation, and Promise* (1995). These two books serve to frame the context and reference point by which Heather examines interactions in the Church. Both Percy and Thiselton are concerned with the use and abuse of power, a theme very much related to critical discourse analysis. There is an anti-objectivist thrust in Critical discourse analysis research and this tends to place an emphasis on the presence of

"antagonism" in social relations. In representations of Christian identity, the linguistic construction of social antagonism tends to determine the believer's relation with those who are deemed as "other," both inside and outside the Church.

Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary field, influenced by sociology, psychology, computer science, anthropology, philosophy, and linguistics. The Critical discourse analysis research method, which Heather uses, is interpretive and it examines its subject matter in terms of discursive practices and their relation to power. A given discourse usually represents a structure of knowledge and power. The discursive analyst exposes these structures and locates the discourse within wider cultural, economic, historical, and social relations. Since Critical discourse analysis is subjective, it is deeply influenced by the researcher's own personal agenda or life experience. Heather is a professor of literary studies at the University of London. He describes himself as a "progressive conservative" Christian, who has been influenced by the postliberal theology of George Lindbeck. From a Critical discourse analysis perspective, Heather argues that the discourse of ecumenism has achieved a hegemonic status in many circles of the Church. He criticizes the insincere politeness and socially "engineered" language of "neat" ecumenism. Near the book's end, Heather proposes an "alternative, discourse-fashioned view of ecumenism which has postliberal undertones" (281).

Heather argues that Critical discourse analysis methodology is useful because it "focuses on language as a situating tool" (289). He finds that many Christians define their religious identity through exclusion, that is, by positioning people "in certain categories at the edge of their belief communities." Critical discourse analysis can help believers to become more aware about "silent killers" to religious community, such as language that downgrades and excludes the unmarried. Heather examines the type of language Church's use to explain what faith commitment means. He explores how "elite groups" in the Church manipulate authority-shaped texts in order to develop and maintain their own power. Such ideologies as "family values" serve as implicit communication of "the way we do things here" to the worshipper-consumer. This but one of many examples of how religious language, Heather argues, often forces individuals into adopting roles which serve power-driven goals of hegemonic groups in the Church.

This study of Christian discourse is informed by the theoretical work of Teun Van Dijk and Norman Fairclough. Van Dijk is the author of numerous discourse analyses of racism and prejudice. He uses discourse analysis to infer the characteristic ways of thinking of readers and writers. Heather draws on Van Dijk's study of how social cognition is linked to power through ideological discourses. From the work of Fairclough, Heather borrows the discourse categories of commodification, technologization, and democratization (or bureaucratization) in order to probe the manipulative scripts within the Church's various discursive practices. Heather also applies Fairclough's theoretical linking of Foucault's insights on power with Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, in

order to explain how the mechanisms of religious discourse can manipulate individuals as social subjects.

My opinion is that it is very helpful to learn from the strategy and research approach that Heather follows. The Critical discourse analysis method could become a highly productive tool for practical theologians involved in reflection on social issues. In recent years, there has been a shift in the function of language in social life. Discourse has become a "site of struggle" in every day life, where various economic, political, and institutional forces attempt to control and shape us. Forces such as consumerism are often at work influencing religious language, just as in any other discursive domain of human activity. Critical discourse analysis can help the Church to be more reflexive in its discursive practices of worship, religious instruction, and pastoral ministry.

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*Niebuhr, Hromadka, Troeltsch, and Barth: The Significance of Theology of History for Christian Social Ethics.* By Kosuke Nishitani. New York: Peter Lang, 1999. Pp. xvii + 400.

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Kosuke Nishitani, a professor of Christian social ethics at Tohokugakuin University in Japan, expanded his dissertation to create this work. Though it does indeed read like a dissertation at times, there are some interesting elements to this book. Originally entitled *Hromadka and Niebuhr on the Theology of History. The Significance of Theology of History for Christian Social Ethics*, this work was expanded by the addition of a third section to chapter two, and fourth section to chapter seven (x). One of the most important sections of this book is chapter 2, "Theological Dialogues of Hromadka and Niebuhr with Barth." Though Nishitani is careful to note that both Hromadka and Niebuhr were considerably influenced by Barth, and were sympathetic to his theology, they were both quite aware of Barth's shortcomings and pose important historical and political questions for Barth. For the purposes of this review I will concentrate on Niebuhr.

Niebuhr criticized Barth for trying to create an absolute character for revelation, and thus to escape relativism through dogmatism. Niebuhr identified Barth's theological stance as "dogmatic" or as a "terrifying subjectivism" (31). In his essay, "Barthianism and the Kingdom" he also criticized Barth's social ethics for being ruled by "ethical and religious perfectionism" (33). Soon after Nazism arose, Niebuhr wrote an essay entitled, "Barthianism and Political Reaction" where he criticizes Barth for being undialectical. "If the two poles of this dialectic are 'God who transcends history' and 'God who acts in history' [then] calling Barth's theology undialectical means, in the one case, that this theology emphasizes only the pole of 'God who transcends history' and in the other, that it forgets the distance and the tension between the two poles, thus