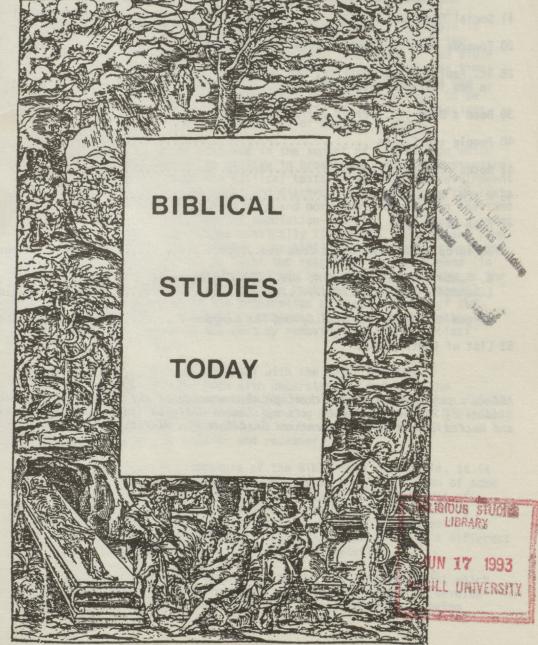
Vol. X, No. 1 Autumn, 1982





#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	Editorial	.Donna Runnalls
5	Old Testament Studies - What's New?	.Robert C. Culley
11	Social Hermeneutics	.Arthur Van Seters
20	Towards a Third «Quest»? Jesus Then and Now	.N.T. Wright
28	St. Paul and the Gnostics, Can There Be Progress in New Testament Studies?	.Frederik Wisse
38	Dean's Desk	.J.C. McLelland
40	People and Events	
42	Notes from the Principals	
46	M.I.M. News	
47	Book Reviews:	
	Northrop Frye, The Great Code	.Richard R.Cooper
	B. Mahan and L.D. Richesin, eds., The Challenge of Liberation Theology	Willian Van Gelder
	Jürgen Moltmann, The Trinity and The Kingdom	Thomas G. Nordberg
53	List of Contributors	

ARC is a publication of the theological community of the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University, its affiliated Colleges (Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church) and the Montreal Institute for Ministry.

According to an item quoted in the September 15, 1982 issue of the Christian Conference of Asia News (12) a survey of 100 seminaries, institutes and renewal centres around the world has shown that the Bible is playing an increasing role in the formation of ministers of the Church. The Bible is studied not as a source book for church doctrines, but as witness to the historical experience of the people living with God. The study of the Bible thus remains at the centre of the theological curriculum. At the same time, the publication of a book such as Northrop Frye's The Great Code, and the widespread popularity it has had, indicates that the Bible continues to be of primary importance not only in the religious life of Jews and Christians, but also as one of the most significant sources of Western culture.

During the past century both the increase in the amount of information which has become available for scholars to utilize in broadening their understanding of the original settings in which the biblical texts arose, and the development of a variety of methods, both synchronic and diachronic, for studying the texts, have made the field of biblical studies more and more complicated. In the same period, however, an increasingly secular population—as well as a large portion of the laity of the church—has become biblically illiterate. The demand from this readership has been for both greater accessibility and greater simplicity in the presentation of the Bible. At least two responses to this demand (in combination with other sociological factors) may be noted. First there is the cultivation of the idea that reading the Bible requires an updated literal translation, which has resulted in the preparation of a new edition of the King James Version. A second response is apparent in the attempt by the Reader's Digest Bible to condense the text by removing the «redundancies» and improving the «story line.»

Such responses do not in the long run deal with the basic problem of enabling people to read the Bible both with understanding and with the excitement which comes from realizing that the people of the Bible were faced with the same life issues that they face. Knowing how the people of biblical times responded to living with God continues to be central to the faith communities who name Yahweh as creator and redeemer.

Given the need for making the literature of the Bible more accessible, it is appropriate that an issue of ARC should be devoted to a consideration of some of the issues significant for those working professionally in the area of biblical studies. The four authors, all of whom are part of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Religious Studies, were each asked independently to prepare an article for the ARC readership. Each has responded with a different approach to contemporary questions in biblical interpretation.

Robert Culley describes different approaches to the Old Testament text which are currently being pursued in Old Testament Studies. He points to developments in historical criticism in which the work of sociologists is being

drawn from to help illustrate the history and writings of Ancient Israel. He mentions discussions about the theological interests of this sacred literature. Finally, he indicates the approach to the text as a work of written language and the directions being pursued in the study of the forms and functions of the biblical material.

The article by Arthur Van Seters illustrates how one type of contemporary study of the Old Testament--social analysis--provides a framework for the interpretation of the Bible. He draws, for illustration, particularly on the development of this method in the Latin American context, but contends that it is an appropriate approach to the text in trying to apprehend its meaning for faith.

Do the gospels tell us about the historical Jesus or are they evidence only for the beliefs of the evangelists and the early church? Thomas Wright places the discussion of this issue in the context of twentieth century scholarship and examines the assumptions underlying the positions taken. He suggests that by placing the origin of the gospel traditions in the proper social context, the relationship of Jesus, the evangelists and the early church to the growth of the gospel traditions can be considered more clearly.

Frederik Wisse considers factors which may have influenced the writings of Paul. He rejects the idea that Paul was working within a systematically structured theology; rather he was responding in the most appropriate manner to the concrete problems of the churches to which he directed his correspondence. Were the Gnostics among those who were creating dissension and against whom Paul formulated his ideas? A consideration of the Gnosticism reflected in the texts found at Nag Hammadi provides a negative answer to this question and therefore eliminates this group as one of those belonging to the intellectual background against which the theology of Paul was being developed.

The breadth of both the subject matter and the methods of these four articles is illustrative of the diversity found in contemporary biblical studies. Despite this diversity, however, consideration of one part of the biblical material from a particular point of view can encourage new understanding about another part of the text. This can only help the study of the total corpus to move forward toward the goal of making the meaning of the Bible more accessible.



# OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES--WHAT'S NEW? ROBERT C · CULLEY

There is always something new in Old Testament Studies. There is always something new in any academic discipline. Continual change is part of the game. Why this is so may be left to the psychologists and sociologists. One of the things that makes life interesting for a scholar in Old Testament Studies is trying to identify the changes that are occurring and seeking to assess how important they are. Some scholars claim that a rather important shift or change is taking place in biblical studies at the moment. Whether or not we are witnessing a fundamental change remains to be seen. Certainly significant shifts are happening in the sense that scholars are more aware of and open to the idea that there are a number of different ways of approaching the Bible and that these different perspectives merit attention.

Before these perspectives are identified and examined, it may be useful to make a comment or two on just what Old Testament Studies is.

It is important to remember that there is a difference between the study of the Old Testament and Old Testament Studies. By this I mean that anyone may read and study the Old Testament. It is not and should not be the special preserve of scholars. All sorts of people not only read but make known their views on and responses to the Old Testament, be it a peasant community in Latin America, an artist who depicts biblical scenes or figures, a poet whose language echoes biblical words or images, a TV evangelist or a fringe religious group which distributes leaflets door to door. Of course, all this activity results in a real jumble of interpretations, some impressive, others startling.

I have a book in my office entitled I Have Found An Elephant in the Bible. It is apparently a serious proposal. The author has found shapes of elephants all through the Bible: in the arrangement of the Israelite camp around the tabernacle, in the shape of mount Sinai, the geography of the Holy Land, the ark, and even the temple, to mention only a few of his examples. There is little evidence that many have been persuaded by this proposal. Still, it offers an illustration, admittedly extreme, of what a sincere and enthusiastic reader of the Bible can produce.

This brings us to Old Testament Studies, a modern academic discipline which nevertheless has a long heritage in both Judaism and Christianity of specialists in the Bible many of whom have produced commentary on the Bible. In recent times, this study of the Bible has been called biblical criticism. It is critical in the sense that specialists and scholars seek to engage in a deeper, more thorough, and more systematic reflection on the theory and practice of reading and interpreting the Bible than general readers usually do. In doing this, scholars hope by attempting to interpret the text themselves and by discussing problems of interpretation posed by the text that they will be able to offer some assistance in distinguishing those readings and interpretations of the Old Testament which are inappropriate from those

which deserve serious attention.

Finally, a word can be said about just who the scholars are who engage in the academic discipline of Old Testament Studies. The contemporary scene is different in some ways from what it has been in the past. Since the Hebrew Bible is part of Christian scripture, study of this document was carried on within the context of the Church and on behalf of the Church. Of course, a corresponding study of the Hebrew Bible as scripture went on within the Jewish religious community.

With the rise of the historical and literary investigation of the Bible in the late nineteenth century, the view was held by some that the Old Testament could be studied equally well, if not better, outside the context of a religious tradition. Julius Wellhausen transferred from the Faculty of Theology to the Faculty of Arts. Nevertheless, biblical studies seems to have continued largely in the hands of Protestant Christians. The twentieth century has shown growing participation of Jewish scholars, and within the last decades a marked increase in the participation of Catholic scholars.

More recently, perhaps associated with the growth of departments of religion in North American Universities, one encounters increasing numbers of scholars who by choice or by the necessity of teaching in a department of religious studies do not wish to study the Old Testament within the context of a religious tradition, whether Judaism or Christianity, but rather as part of the study of religion or the study of literature. Thus Old Testament scholars form quite a mixed group with many different interests and commitments.

I have suggested that what is new in Old Testament Studies may be summed up by saying that scholars are much more aware than they have been that the Old Testament may be viewed from different perspectives, and indeed scholars are beginning to explore these different perspectives quite actively. In order to explain what I mean by perspectives, let us take the following statement as a starting point: the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, is a collection of ancient, sacred writings which continue to be canonical scripture for two major religious traditions, Judaism and Christianity. The key ideas in this statement represent different ways in which the Old Testament may be viewed. Some of these perspectives are well represented in biblical scholarship; others are just beginning to gain attention.

To say that the Old Testament is an ancient collection of writings invites historical investigation. Historical criticism has been for the past hundred years or so, and continues to be, the dominant perspective used in biblical scholarship. The questions posed are familiar. When were the various parts of this collection of material making up the Old Testament written? Who were the authors? When did they live? What were the historical, social, and cultural factors which influenced their lives and thought? A well-known example may be cited. As a result of historical

critical analysis it is widely accepted that chapters 40-55 of Isaiah come from a prophet in the Exile, a very different historical setting and period from that of Isaiah of Jerusalem who preached a few hundred years earlier. The poems of Isaiah 56-66 likely come from a period even later than that of Second Isaiah. Based on this kind of textual analysis, the history of Israel reconstructed by scholars looks rather different in places from the traditional picture given in the Old Testament. Historical critics often argue that it is important to establish authorship and historical setting as far as possible in order to determine the original meaning of the text which should be the starting point for interpretation.

Historical critics have not only been interested in the original units which make up the collection of the Old Testament but also in the process of collection as these units were gathered and arranged in ever larger collections until the final form of the Bible was reached. Thus, through tradition history and redaction criticism it was seen that later editors and collectors often added their views and interpretations to earlier stages of the tradition.

Recently, historical critics have begun to draw on the work of sociologists as an aid to the analysis and reconstruction of the writings and history of Ancient Israel. Norman Gottwald has used this approach to examine the period of conquest in his book The Tribes of Yahweh. Robert Wilson in Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel investigates prophecy in the light of contemporary sociological and anthropological research.

But if the Old Testament is a collection of ancient writings it is also a collection of sacred writings. Much of the biblical material functioned as special, or sacred, writings for the religious community of Israel during much of its history. In his Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, Brevard Childs has sought to draw out the implications of this fact. Not only did the theological interests of the religious community shape the selection, collection, and editing of the growing body of sacred material but this collection in turn shaped and influenced the thought and action of the community. Childs wants to put more emphasis on the canonical or final form of the text rather than on the original units of the text in their historical setting because he believes that the final form represents the fullest and most mature perception of the nature of the religious experience of the community. For example, while accepting the fact that the book of Isaiah stems from three different historical periods, he advocates that the book be studied as a single book because the community put it together as one and must have had some good reasons for doing so. In one of the last issues of Interpretation, R.E. Clements has proposed something along these lines in his article «The Unity of the Book of Isaiah.»

The Old Testament was not only sacred literature for Israel but continues to function as canonical scripture for both Judaism and Christianity. This creates another perspective within which the Old Testament is read and understood. Christian tradition poses rather sharply the implications of this way of looking at the Hebrew Bible when it joins the New Testament with it to

form the Christian Bible. The debate about the nature of the link between the Testaments has gone on since the early days of the church. Once again, one can refer to the work of Brevard Childs who for some time has been advocating that Christian biblical theology must see its primary task as the consideration of the matter of the Bible within the context of the canon. The questions of historical criticism must function within this broader perspective. Whether or not Childs' particular statement of the problem is correct, a fundamental question which arises in this perspective of the Bible as scripture is how one may adequately relate the results of historical criticism to a canonical content.

It has been noted that the Old Testament is an ancient collection of writings, that these were sacred writings and canonical scripture for Judaism and Christianity. The key word to be discussed now is the one which has been employed frequently all through the previous discussion: «writings.» The Bible is language. Another perspective, then, is to view the Old Testament as language, a collection of literary works and a literary work in itself. At a time when many different disciplines are giving some attention to the question of language, it is not surprising that language should become an important issue in biblical studies as well. Some indication of the extent of this discussion may be seen in the writings of Paul Ricoeur who confronts the question of language as a philosopher but frequently refers to and deals with the Bible. Nor have Old Testament scholars ignored the literary: witness the rhetorical criticism of James Muilenburg and his students and the stylistic analysis of Louis Alonso Schökel and his followers. But this perspective is being pursued today more broadly and extensively than heretofore.

The question here is not so much the Bible as literature but the fact that the Bible is literature, being a work of language. In discussing what this means, the word «imagination» frequently comes up. It is not just that poet and story-teller produce their language and shape their literary forms by means of imagination. The appeal of literature is to the imagination of readers and hearers. In a literary mode, language is not so much an instrument for the communication of information as an invitation, or even challenge, to reflection. This inviting and challenging is done by presenting images. These may be in the form of stories like the garden narrative of Genesis 2 or the sacrifice of Isaac of Genesis 22. They may be in the form of figures like the servant or Hosea's wife. In a sense the Old Testament presents a great cluster of images which not only echo each other but stand in opposition: the warrior Yahweh and the servant, or Yahweh the judge with the plumb line in Amos and Yahweh the loving parent in Hosea. These images, alone and together provide starting points for thought and focal points for reflection.

Some scholars, like David Robertson in his book The Old Testament and the Literary Critic, seek to go no further than reading the Bible as a literary work. Others, ike David Clines in his Interpretation article «Story and Poem: The Old Testament as Literature and as Scripture,» argue that to read the Bible as literature is to take it seriously as scripture. Clines comments: «the church can properly hear its Bible as scripture only when it reads it as literature» (115).

A number of articles have appeared in recent times which have endeavoured to explore the literary nature of the Old Testament as well as the structures of its language, many of these being fairly technical. This approach has involved discourse analysis as developed by linguists, different kinds of structuralist analysis as used by students of comparative literature and anthropologists, or story analysis as employed by folklorists. In addition to the work of biblical scholars, we find scholars known mainly as literary critics turning to the Bible, one can mention two books here by way of example: The Art of Biblical Narrative by Robert Alter and The Great Code by Northrop Frye.

One can, then, identify a number of perspectives actively being pursued in Old Testament studies today, and these derive from different ways of looking at the Bible. As I indicated earlier, this represents a significant change in the discipline to the extent that it represents a broadening of the ways of looking at the Old Testament. This awareness of a broader spectrum also seems to be accompanied by an increasing interest in the history of interpretation.

A number of issues are emerging from the present situation and they will likely be discussed in forthcoming articles and books. Just two examples. First, in both the canonical approach and the literary perspective, voices can be heard inviting, even demanding, that the text as a whole, the individual book or even the whole Old Testament, be taken seriously as the basis for study. How can one relate the analytic work of historical criticism and the holistic emphasis of a literary approach? Secondly, each perspective seeks to determine the meaning of the text by placing it in a certain context (the historical setting, the canon, the literary work). How are these «meanings» related to each other?



#### SUGGESTED READINGS

- Alter, Robert. The Art of Biblical Narrative. New York: Basic Books, 1981.
- Childs, Brevard S. Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture.

Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.

- Press, 1970.

  Biblical Theology in Crisis. Philadelphia: Westminster
- Clements, R.C. «The Unity of the Book of Isaiah.» Interpretation 36 (1982), 117-129.
- Clines, David J.A. «Story and Poem: The Old Testament as Literature and as Scripture.» Interpretation 34 (1980), 115-127.
- Frye, Northrop. The Great Code: The Bible and Literature. Toronto: Academic Press, 1982.
- Gottwald, Norman K. The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976.
- Robertson, David. The Old Testament and the Literary Critic. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977.
- Wilson, Robert R. Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel.

Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

#### ERRATA

The following errors should be corrected in ARC Vol. IX, No. 2 (Spring 1982), «Journey toward Meaning»:

- p. 12, 1. 15 of the poem «Sing to Him . . . Stand in Awe of Him»:

  for like read lake
- p. 19, 11. 30-31: for Sean O'Casey's read John Synge's

#### SOCIAL HERMENEUTICS

#### ARTHUR VAN SETERS

I've never heard a sermon on the Ten Commandments, and especially on the last commandment about coveting addressed only or specifically to the men of a congregation! That seems a bit strange when one realizes that it is formed as an address to Israelite males. Note the pronouns and the reference to «neighbour's wife» (Ex. 20:17). This male orientation is is also assumed in the pretext to the Ten Commandments where in Ex. 19:15 «the people» are obviously the adult males.

Now this simple observation causes me to ask some questions. On what basis have preachers changed the kerygmatic thrust of these commandments? If there has been some lack of consciousness of the patriarchal social shape of this material, why has this been the case? What hermeneutical approach might allow these words to be extended to women?

This is only one example of a text's social orientation. There are others that relate to issues of race and class and in ways, as with the social structures of patriarchy, that disturb the sensitivities of many interpreters concerned about issues of sexism, racism, and classism. I think it is increasingly important to ask how our awareness of these alienating orientations relates to our interpretation of biblical texts. This, in turn, requires us to discern what social systems are reflected in the text and how various passages relate to dominant social structures or counterculture forces in society. As the answers to these questions emerge, the whole issue of the normative character of the Bible as Scripture takes on new and perhaps disturbing, but also challenging dimensions.

In this article I want to sketch three ways of approaching what I shall call "social hermeneutics." These various ways cannot, in my view, be worked into a neat consistent theory. They focus on different aspects of the hermeneutical process, understand hermeneutics differently, and are based on differing assumptions concerning social analysis. At the same time, they overlap and have connections here and there with other historical and literary methods of interpretation. But for our present purposes, I propose to look at some examples of each social approach separately in the following order: those that focus on the social world of the text, those dealing with the social structure of the text, and those that stress the social agenda of the interpreter. Each approach will be illustrated from the Book of Exodus.

#### THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE TEXT

While I was in Nicaragua in October of 1981, I read the 1979 Statute on the Rights of Nicaraguans published by the relatively new revolutionary government. I was suddenly struck by some similarities between that document and sections of the Covenant Code (Ex. 20:22-23:33). Statue II/14 stated: «No one shall be imprisoned solely for being unable to fulfill an economic

obligation, no matter how it may have been incurred.» The Gode stated: 
«If you lend to the poor, you shall not be a creditor nor exact interest» 
(Ex.22:25) and «You shall not pervert the justice due to the poor in a 
legal suit» (23:6). As the Statute was obviously shaped by a particular 
situation of social change, I began to wonder about the social factors that 
influenced the evolution of the Code and about whose interests are protected 
or promoted by its various ordinances. Take, for example, the laws which 
concern the poor in general (22:25-27; 23:3, 6-11) and also the sojourner, 
widow and orphan (22:21-24). According to Eberhard von Waldow, the laws 
concerning the poor are distinctive among others in the Covenant Code. The 
poor are defended in the strongest prohibitive language and only here is 
Yahweh named as a legal party in a law. He is the defender of the poor.

The reason for the shape of these laws can be found in the social history of Israel. In earliest times the Israelites were small cattle breeders on the steppes surrounding the Canaanite cultivated countryside. These were marginal conditions requiring strong family and clan ties for survival. Clans were either rich or poor without economic distinctions within them.

In this situation those without family protection (sojourner, widow and orphan) needed to be protected by the community as a whole. Such protection became a part of their covenant theology and later continued to be expressed through the cultus, especially the Feast of Tabernacles every seventh year.

When the Israelites settled in Canaan, their social equality was gradually eroded after several centuries. The seventh (and/or fiftieth) Year of Release (Deut.15 and Lev. 25) was an attempt to redress imbalances, but there is little evidence of its effectiveness. Certainly with the establishment of the state and monarchy and with the increasing concentration of land ownership by city people (with the king as the major landowner), the plight of the poor worsened considerably. The conditions of the sojourner, widow and orphan deteriorated even more.

One reaction to this situation was the call for reform by the priesthood as expressed in the Book of the Covenant (as well as the Book of Deuteronomy and the Holiness Code). Early Israel had been committed to averting poverty. That goal was now abandoned, but those early traditions were utilized and reinterpreted to better the lot of the poor. The Sabbath day became a day or rest from hard labour. Every third year the tithe was to go to the poor (including now Levites and hired servants). The seventh year was to become one of restitution. In all these changes Yahweh was declared to be the special protector of the poor, for Israel was to remember that it was Yahweh's people liberated by him from enslavement.

Another reaction to the plight of the poor came from the prophets. Though they too accepted the ancient traditions, they did not try to reinterpret them in the direction of social reform. They compared and condemned. Conditions under the kings, who systematically abused the poor, pointed to a breaking of the nation's covenant with Yahweh their defender. The nation was doomed.

Only after its destruction would a messianic reformer reestablish Yahweh's kingdom as one where peace comes through justice and where the poor will again have hope.

This brief social analysis of some of Israel's legal traditions indicates that these traditions functioned in three radically different ways in relation to three different social outlooks. For a society where human equality is a prime value, these laws maintain that equality. In a society where there is systematic inequality the same laws are used differently, depending on one's social stance. A reformist stance basically accepts a liberal interpretation of the social order: the system is accepted but improvements need to be made. A revolutionary stance calls for a whole new order itself.

I would submit that this kind of analysis confronts the interpreter in a very different way than either traditional or historical-critical exegesis has. The latter do not usually stimulate deep reflection on the social dimensions of biblical faith as the present approach has inevitably done.

When we begin to dig into the literature that focuses on the social world of biblical texts, it soon becomes clear that different social models (ways of generalizing about human behaviour) are used by different interpreters. Bruce Malina describes three. A structural functionalist one emphasizes social cohesiveness. A conflict model stresses the constraints in society and values change over stasis. The third approach, called «symbolic,» partly combines the other two; societies require equilibrium and readjustment through social systems and social structures. It is often fairly obvious that biblical interpreters who use social analysis follow one or another of these approaches. Norman Gottwald, for example, follows a conflict model in his examination of pre-monarchic Israel and Paul Hanson's typology of the apocalyptic visionary is closer to the symbolic model (Long 246-254).

It seems to me that von Waldow has identified in eighth to sixth century (B.C.E.) Israel two examples of social analysis. The priests take a kind of Weberian, symbolic approach (though not scientifically self-consciously so!) and the prophets use one that is similar to a Marxist, conflict model. This poses at least three questions. How accurate is this analysis of these two outlooks? Given two different options in the biblical text, what is the kerygmatic thrust of the text for us today? On what basis might or should we opt for the priestly response to conditions of poverty, or the prophetic one, or some other alternative?

### THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

A second way of reading the biblical text is to see it as a literary work. This method does not distinguish between past and present meaning. It assumes an immediate encounter with the text as it stands with all of its implicit social relationships and patterns. This may be illustrated by the story of

the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, and its sequel, the rescue of Moses (Ex. 1:15-2:10).

The dramatis personae of the first story are the Hebrews, Shiphrah and Puah, and the unnamed king of Egypt, with God as an off-stage actor, as it were. The opening dialogue establishes the social relationships: the king commands, the midwives are expected to obey. Then the narrator introduces God as the king's rival; the fear of God is a stronger force in the midwives than the commandment of the king. They deliberately disobey. In the subsequent dialogue, the king, who formerly commands, becomes an enquirer and the midwives, formerly silent, now answer with boldness and deception. They make a racial contrast between Hebrew and Egyptian women claiming that their own race is more vigorous. In this dialogue they enter an arena where the king semmingly holds no power (as is implied by his silence). So the humble gain a victory for their people (and their life-giving God) when they dupe the powerful oppressor. But the king still issues a second death-command. However, it is to his own people, enlisting them as agents of genocide. He has given up on the midwives over whom he apparently has no power.

In the sequel the role of women in the thwarting of the king's work is extended even further. The narrator no longer speaks of God's involvement. The women act independently, cunningly and in clear defiance of the king. What is most ironical is that the king's own daughter, far from becoming an agent of genocide, becomes the saviour of Moses, the future leader of a revolt against her father! She stands in solidarity with the God-fearing Hebrew midwives.

The structural relationships in these stories appear to be clearly crafted literary expressions of social relationships: women versus a man, race versus race, and class versus class (with some ironic twists!). Dominations based on sex, race and class are all challenged and intentionally undermined by the story-teller.

This is counter-culture literature. Analysis of the social structure does not necessarily yield this result, but there are lots of other examples in the Old Testament (my primary focus) of the same thing (e.g. Ruth and Song of Songs). In any case, this method of study makes the interpreter aware that social influences have shaped the text as a literary work.

To extend this line of thought a bit further, I want to contrast historical-critical exegesis and literary approaches once again. The former seeks to recover the intention of the original speaker/writer. Literary studies, however, indicate that the meaning of language is not limited to such an intention. It is also determined by the meanings which are present in the situation within which the word is spoken or written, heard or read. All communication and interpretation is grounded through the structures and symbols of the social world (Kovacs 149). So the interpreter needs to ask, not just what was intended by the speaker/writer, but how do the words of the text operate socially, culturally, and politically (Bonino 80).

All of this raises important issues regarding the development and shape of the biblical canon. Ex. 1:15-2:10 is socially anti-patriarchal. Yet it takes its place alongside other narratives in which patriarchal structures seem unquestioned and beside legal traditions where patriarchy reigns unchallenged (Trible 1982, 116).

It also seems apparent that the social structure of a text can make an immediate impact on the interpreter. Sometimes it creates a world alternative to our own and confronts our experience. Sometimes it reveals resemblances to our social situation and seems to affirm us (Clines 126-127). Either way, the interpreter still has to struggle with whether confrontation or affirmation is to be accepted at face value. The hermeneutic of analyzing the social structure of a text does not answer that question, but it does raise it poignantly.

#### THE SOCIAL AGENDA OF THE INTERPRETER

Our third way of coming to the text is quite different from both of the preceding methods. Up to now I have been dealing with social approaches that analyse the text's social conditioning in different ways. These are exegetical methods, reading from the text, presumably with some degree of scientific objectivity. But gradually some interpreters are prepared to admit that such objectivity is an illusion. Interpreters are themselves also socially conditioned. Their situation, context, experiences and outlook contribute to how they "hear" the text. To some this may be dubbed "eisegesis," reading into the text, and that would be accurate, but its evaluation, to others, is by no means negative. Of course, it will not appeal to those who seek objective, universal interpretations, for this yields a very particular understanding of the biblical text and its message. The meaning of a text may prove, for example, to be very different for Latin Americans than for North Americans (though I am always a bit sceptical of facile dismissals of Latin American liberation theology as irrelevant to our context).

Let me illustrate this hermeneutical approach using Severino Croatto's interpretation of the Exodus story. Croatto comes to the text as a Brazilian in solidarity with the oppressed people of his country. He expressly claims to be re-reading the Exodus account existentially and sees the Exodus as an unfinished historical project that gives him and his people a sense of confidence that that project will be implemented in Latin America.

Like many Latin Americans, the Hebrews were an exploited labour force as the story begins (Ex. 1:11, 12). All exploitation is characterized by an ignominious, arrogant arbitrariness. So the people cried out (3:7) and groaned (6:5). The word of hope from their deliverer (Moses) in response to their cries fell on deaf ears «because of their broken spirit and cruel bondage» (6:9). This deafness is not lack of faith, but the inevitable result of estrangement and, with that, the internalizing of the domination of their oppressors which prevents them from imagining any change that might liberate them. This is a situation of sinful exploitation that is both

political (in the exercise of the king's power) and social (in the suppression of an immigrant people).

While the cry is passive, a groaning instead of acting, it is the beginning of the people's conscientization toward their eventual liberation. They were no longer silent. They shouted their protest.

The next element in the conscientizing process came when Yahweh chose an intermediary to announce his plan of salvation. Although the people did not listen at first, the liberating word through an interpreter conscientized so that the people developed a sense of their vocation to freedom (4:31). But it is only the oppressed who can be conscientized. Oppressors cannot liberate either others or themselves. Pharaoh heard the same liberating message, but instead of being melted in heart (the internal change within the Hebrews), he became more hardened. He rejected the message, opposed the freedom of the oppressed and even oppressed further (chap. 5).

This inhuman response is intimidation which, in turn, creates a fear of freedom in the oppressed. The people came to Moses and Aaron and blamed them for these new hardships. The cause of their plight had now shifted from the enslaver to those who promoted the cause of freedom. When Moses heard their response, he also internalized this fear of freedom and accused God, the ultimate author of the liberation plan.

In chapters 7-11, the account of the plagues, we have the confrontation of «powers.» The power demonstrated through Yahweh's messengers aroused Pharaoh's will to power. But this confrontation also led to to the moment of liberation as an act of God's power. The Hebrews had been stripped of any power they ever had. Only a superior power could help them. This superior power was described by Yahweh's covenant people (as they later understood themselves) as transcendent.

The members of the Comunidades Cristianas de Base in Latin America also believe in a power superior to that of the oppressor. They have a clear consciousness that there is no power superior to that of a united, committed «people.» When an entire people rejects a tyrant, it creates a «power vacuum.» The Hebrew's decision to rebel collectively and to become free ensured their success. This was a conscientized doubt. Croatto concludes that the religious focus of the account doesn't spell out the strategy but it does indicate that a liberating process, having all the contours of a political and social event, can and should be interpreted as the will of God because the oppressed became free.

This is a circular reading of the text (Croatto v, vi, 3, 8, 11). There is a series of dialectics: between the saving event and the record; between the kerygmatic word and the situation to, in and from which it speaks; and between the biblical word on liberation and our process of liberation. The hermeneutical movement is from the present to the past as well as the reverse.

The message speaks to a specific situation but a specific situation also allows one to "hear" the message afresh. A hermeneutical reading occurs whenever the reading in a new situation supercedes the first contextual reading (of both author and readers). This happens whenever new questions are addressed to the text and whenever we are involved in the process of liberation. Only by the grace arising from our involvement in the praxis of liberation can we receive the gift of penetrating the unfathomable riches of God's activity in this hermeneutical process without a prior commitment to converting the biblical word into praxis.

#### SOME EMERGENT FAITH ISSUES

What must seem fairly obvious by now is that these social hermeneutical approaches seem to provide less certainty in «fixing» the meaning of biblical texts. As I understand it, the historical-critical exegetical method is aimed at discovering with probable accuracy the original or intended meaning of the text. The structuralists have claimed even more; they seek to interpret what they believe to be «beyond doubt» (Kovacs 151).

Social hermeneutics, at least as it focuses on the social agenda of the interpreter, is not concerned with defining the meaning of the text but with how one lives by faith out of dialogue with the text.

It would seem, for example, that Norman Gottwald has given up the traditional movement from hearing the divine word and responding to it, to hearing in Israel's radical, social experiment of faith in Yahweh a challenge to us to allow that reading to become a challenging address to a broken world (Long 255; Gottwald n.d., 42-57).

This shift is also evident in Bruce Malina's concluding remarks in his survey of the relationship between the social sciences and biblical interpretation. Malina uses the Bible, not as a source book for theology, but as an arena for encountering a people, our spiritual ancestors, who embody a living faith and enable us to discern what is ultimately meaningful for human existence (Malina 242).

This thrust may seem frightening, especially if one's theology of preaching is based on proclaiming with unwavering certainty the «Word of God.» But this social heremeneutic draws me toward what I understand to be a biblical faith, a faith that accepts ambiguity and is more often than not marked by precariousness (Brueggemann 126-128). It also challenges me to a faith engagement in the social realities of my own particular situation in continuity with the Old Testament prophets. Yet (with the prophets) I cannot equate social analysis with «hearing» God's Word. The former helps particularize what God is saying but does not mean there is no word from beyond, no creative newness from God.

#### SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

On the Social World of the Text

- Camigo, Pedro, and Fred Murphy, eds. The Nicaraguan Revolution. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979, 43-55
- Gottwald, Norman. The Tribes of Yahweh. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1979.
- . «Biblical Theology or Biblical Sociology.»

  The Bible and Liberation published by Radical Religion,
  n.d., 42-47.
- Long, Burke O. «The Social World of Ancient Israel.» Interpretation 37 (1982), 246-254.
- Malina, Bruce. «The Social Sciences and Biblical Interpretation.» Interpretation 37 (1982), 232-237.
- Von Waldow, H. Eberhard. «Social Responsibility and Social Structure in Early Israel.» Catholic Biblical Quarterly 32 (1970), 182-203.
- On the Social Structure of the Text
  - Bonino, José Miguez. Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age. London: SPCK, 1975.
  - Clines, David J.A. «Story and Poem: the Old Testament Literature and Scripture.» Interpretation 34 (1980), 115-127.
  - Kovacs, Brian. «Philosophical Issues in Sociological Structuralism: A Bridge from the Social Sciences to Hermeneutics.» Union Seminary Quarterly Review 34 (1979), 149-157.
- Robertson, David. «Literature, the Bible as.» Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Supplementary Volume, Keith Crim, ed. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976, 547-551.
- Rohrbaugh, Richard. The Biblical Interpreter. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
- Russell, Letty M. ed. The Liberating Word. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976.
- Trible, Phyllis. God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.

The Christian Century (February 3-10, 1982), 116-118.

On the Social Agenda of the Interpreter

Brueggemann, Walter. «Covenanting as Human Vocation.» Interpretation 33 (1979), 115-129.

Cone, James. «The Gospel and the Liberation of the Poor.»

The Christian Century (February 18, 1981), 162-166.

Croatto, J. Severino. Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Freedom. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981.

Mesters, Carlos. «How the Bible is Interpreted in Some Basic Christian Communities.» Conflicting Ways of Interpreting the Bible H. Kung, J. Moltmann, eds. New York: The Seabury Press, 1980, 41-46.

of the Common People.» The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities Communities. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, eds. Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981, 197-210.

Segundo, Juan Luis. The Liberation of Theology. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1979.

#### AWARDS FOR 1982-83

CANADA COUNCIL AWARDS

Richard Cooper Kay Koppedrayer Celia Rabinovitch

MCGILL SUMMER FELLOWSHIPS (Summer 1982):

Tom Nordberg Celia Rabinovitch

FCAC (QUEBEC) GRANTS:

Leslie Orr Krystina Paknys

## TOWARDS A THIRD «QUEST»? JESUS THEN AND NOW

#### N.T. WRIGHT

Karl Barth's Romans, so the saying goes, fell like a bombshell on the playground of the theologians. The same thing could have been said of Albert Schweitzer's famous review The Quest of the Historical Jesus. In neither case has the dust yet settled. I do not intend in this article to rebuild the playground, or to hunt for survivors from the explosions. I want, if anything, to lay a few more detonators.

It is common knowledge that the "Quest," though its epitaph was written by Schweitzer, has refused to lie down and stay dead. Schweitzer himself constructed his famous portrait of Jesus the failed apocalyptic visionary. Bultmann, while working towards his equally famous view that the preaching of Jesus constitutes a presupposition for, rather than a part of, New Testament Theology, wrote his Jesus and the Word to portray Jesus as the great preacher of existentialist self-understanding. Post-Bultmannian scholars. even while paying lip-service to the dogma that the gospels do not really contain «biographical» data, have continued to write about Jesus, although their work, held together with caveats and alternative possibilities, often looks decidedly shaky. The so-called «New Quest of the Historical Jesus,» rising like a phoenix from the ashes of the old one, attemps to combine the Bultmannian premise (that the early church was not interested in the earthly Jesus) with the apparently contradictory result of redaction criticism, namely, that the writing of Mark is evidence of a desire to wearth» the exalted Christ of the kerygma by identifying him with the Jesus of history (Käsemann; Perrin 1970,76). Meanwhile, scholars in other traditions have continued to write about Jesus, not (to be sure) uncritically, but at least in the belief that we can know several things about him with reasonable certainty. Anthony Harvey's recent Brampton Lectures, Jesus and the Constraints of History, are an excellent example, as is Ben Meyer's The Aims of Jesus. The larger works by Schillebeeckx and Dunn are further evidence of the continuing possibility of serious work not merely on the primitive Christian community in which the gospel materials were transmitted but on Jesus himself.

A proper preliminary task for such work would be an examination of the imposing façade of the dominant paradigm in gospel criticism, and a demonstration that it not only contains cracks and fissures, but is actually built on shaky foundations. This alarming news is already being understood in various (and widely differing) quarters (e.g. Maier; Petersen 9-48). In the present paper I must be content with a few abbreviated remarks.

First, asking questions about Jesus must be reckoned a valid historical project. Any historian of the first century must face the problem of the rise of Christianity, and any serious historian will not be content to attribute the phenomenon merely to the enthusiasm of a Jewish sect and the brilliance of a wandering missionary and letter-writer. The «primitive

community» and Paul are not enough, by themselves, to explain the Christianity of Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp. Something must be said about Jesus.

But how? It is a commonplace of modern scholarship that the gospels are evidence not for Jesus but for the evangelists and/or their sources and/or communities; and this would appear to leave us with only a very few bits of information—the brief, biassed accounts in Jewish and pagan sources, and the few sayings and biographical details that even the most radical of critics would allow through the net. But (this is my second point) this «commonplace» of scholarship needs to be challenged, as follows.

One of the odd quirks in the history of ideas is that philosophical theories, themselves long out of fashion, continue to beget recognizable offspring in other areas of study. What we are witnessing in the field of gospel criticism is the application to the biblical literature of phenomenalism, the theory that insists on understanding statements about the external world in terms of the speaker's «sense-data.» Ultimately, of course, this movement of thought leads to solipsism. That is one of various good reasons why its force as a serious philosophical option is now largely spent. But it survives in its literary-critical grandchildren: «We must take as our starting point the assumption that the Gospels offer us directly information about the theology of the early church and not about the teaching of the historical Jesus» (Perrin 1970, 69). «Every text is first and foremost evidence for the circumstances in and for which it was composed, and in this respect texts serve as documentary evidence for the time of writing» (Petersen 15, describing this as an «analytical principle»).

But the only sense in which this «assumption» or «analytical principle» is valid is also a fairly trivial one: that all human writings, including the NT, are just that--human writings, not self-created or produced by unmediated divine activity. Wise readers will always take a writer seriously as a person, and even when this is impossible (e.g. in reading an anonymous poem) they will at least be aware of a probable context. But in fact (this is the equivalent of the realist's reply to the phenomenalist) few writers write their lines in order to have readers read between them to discover the writer's personality or background, and readers who try to do that will almost certainly fail to hear what the writer wanted to say. Worse, the apparent «objectivity» of phenomenalist literary criticism, which gains its strength from the obvious need to understand the viewpoint and bigs of a writer, masks a deeper subjectivity: released from the constraints of the prima facie subject-matter, the critic's imagination is free to create psychological or sociological entities, not infrequently in a dangerously anachronistic form.

A third weakness in the twentieth-century "quests" for Jesus has been the failure to appreciate the original aims of form criticism itself. For Bultmann, the thing which mattered in the NT, the thing worth hunting for, was not the "historical Jesus," but the faith of the early church. Though some of his

followers have used form criticism as a tool to probe back within the tradition towards Jesus himself, it was designed to do, and is of course much better at doing, something different--creating a picture of the primitive community preaching, praying, counselling one another, and so on. That was the «normative» thing. This task is not really part of the quest for the historical Jesus. It is the quest for the kerygmatic church.

It is true that the «New Quest» (see Käsemann; Robinson) marks an important step on the road. Käsemann spotted a flaw in Bultmann's scheme. It was vital, he pointed out, that the Christ of faith should be identified with the human Jesus who died on the cross, since otherwise he would remain a docetic figure, removed from our world. But this means, ultimately, that the writing of gospels is not, after all, evidence for a failure of nerve on the part of the early church, a lapse back into history-faith. The gospel writers had a good reason, it appears, to be interested in the Jesus of history--as of course scholars outside the narrow Bultmannian tradition had always maintained (e.g. Dodd, Manson, Moule, and now Harvey and Stanton). Nevertheless, the «New Quest» has not proved itself markedly more successful than the old one, not least perhaps because of this tension or even contradiction within its presuppositions. Recent work (Meyer, Harvey, Riches, etc.) indicates that scholars from several backgrounds are eager to discover new ways forward, building on the strengths of old models while attempting to eliminate weaknesses. It is in that hope that I offer a few suggestions in the second half of this article.

Many criticisms have been advanced against the «criteria of authenticity» set up by Perrin and Fuller as tests of synoptic material (see Perrin and Duling 405 f.; for some criticisms see Hooker 1972, 1975).

But even on the most stringent criteria, certain points emerge more or less beyond dispute: that Jesus began his ministry at the time of John's baptism, that he proclaimed the Kingdom of God, that he had a well-earned reputation as a healer and exorcist, that he gathered around him a group of close associates, sometimes kept dubious company, engaged in controversy with the Jewish religious teachers, and that, as a result of this, he was finally crucified «under Pontius Pilate.» (This is an abbreviated version of Perrin's minimal account, in Perrin and Duling 411 f.) In Perrin's famous sentence (412), «that... is all that we can know: it is enough.»

But--enough for what? For Perrin's own (Bultmannian theological scheme, perhaps, in which anything more than a bare outline of Jesus' story is too much. But enough, also, for us to know one fact about Jesus which, though almost laughably obvious, is scarcely ever given any prominence at all (Meyer, Caird, and Flew are good exceptions), while being, I believe, of great significance. It is this: the total ministry of Jesus takes place in the context of the hope of Israel. And that hope was not, in essence, universalizable. It could not be transplanted into other nations or cultures or times. It was, specifically, not a generalized human hope. It was the hope that now, at last, God would act in history to vindicate both his own

name and his covenant people Israel. This hope that God would take his power and reign was therefore a hope for national restoration. God would exalt Israel to occupy the role for which the Torah had fitted her, that of being his right-hand nation, ruling over those outside. This hope, variously expressed in the so-called Intertestamental writings and elsewhere, is of course in essence the result of the tension between Israel's vocation in the Torah and Prophets and the actuality of first-century politics. It is important to note that only in comparatively rare cases did it include specific Messianic expectation. Conversely, when such an expectation existed, it was as part of the larger whole, God's purposes for his chosen race (see now Harvey 77 f.).

It was within this context that Jesus appeared, like John, as a prophet, declaring that the time promised of old had now been fulfilled. It is at this point (I believe) that a good deal of Christian reading of the gospels has gone wrong, jumping too quickly, in the interests of contemporary relevance, away from the specifically Jewish context of the ministry and teaching of Jesus. In fact, neither John nor Jesus was preaching a set of «timeless truths.» Their message was one of sharp local relevance. was not sent «except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel» (Matt. 15.24; cf. 10.6). The message--of apocalyptic urgency--was not a universalized prediction of the imminent end of the world, but a specific prediction (couched, of course, in appropriate apocalyptic imagery) of what, from a Jewish point of view, would be conceived as the end of the present world order, i.e. that state of affairs in which Israel according to the flesh was the chosen people through whom God would act in the world. That is why the predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem are irrevocably intertwined with those usually interpreted as referring to a final cataclysm. As John warned that the axe was laid to the roots of the tree (the tree being, in context, Israel as the people of God), so Jesus, in proclaiming the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel, necessarily announced the final warning to a people whom he saw as failing in their divine vocation.

This framework provides, I believe, a historically credible and theologically appropriate context for a good deal more synoptic material than normally survives critical scrutiny. The preaching of the kingdom, in particular, is to be understood in a threefold fashion. First, it is the declaration that God is at last fulfilling his promises, reigning as King and, in doing so, vindicating his people. Second, however, it is the explanation (particularly in the "parables of the Kingdom") that this fulfilment is not taking the shape commonly expected. Third, therefore, it is the urgent summons ("Repent, and believe the good news") to prove oneself truly a member of the eschatological people of God, to respond not merely to the message but to the messenger himself, the Prophet whose aim seems to have been to gather the nucleus of the true Israel around himself (see Meyer, etc.).

If this picture is accurate, the criterion of coherence will show that a good deal of synoptic material, whatever its subsequent use in the church, can be seen as belonging in a peculiar sense in the ministry of Jesus. The

healing miracles, for example, are not mere philanthropy, nor even merely a fulfilment of (e.g.) Isaiah 35. The healing of lepers, deaf and dumb, paralysed people and so on was first and foremost the restoration to covenant membership of those who had been ritually excluded (compare 1QSa, etc.). This activity corresponds to the open table-fellowship with outcasts: «today salvation has come to this house, inasmuch as he too is a child of Abraham» (Luke 19:9).

Within this context, too, there is scope for a renewed assessment of Jesus' so-called «self-understanding.» We can at least say that he was conscious of a vocation to proclaim that God was at last doing what he had promised, and this consciousness (perhaps we should say «belief») seems to have included the belief that God's kingdom was in some way bound up with his own proclamation and activity. Jesus appears, in fact, to draw on to himself the role marked out in God's purposes for Israel itself: God is ruling, and redeeming, the world through his obedient Man. And this inevitably effects the reconstitution of Israel around the Man. The prophetic word of judgment and mercy is acted out by the prophet himself in his death and resurrection, as he accomplishes, for Israel and for the world, what Israel was called to do but failed to do. It is when we raise the further question, of the appropriateness of this fulfilment of God's redemptive purposes, that new Christological perspectives are opened up which it is here impossible to pursue further.

This all too brief reconstruction suggests a new kind of criterion for further synoptic research. Paradoxically, we meet up at this point with the results of some recent redaction-critical work, in which Matthew and Luke see the time of the ministry of Jesus as a special time, a sort of «sacred time» (Perrin and Duling 289, 303 ff.). Our suggestion is that, while these analyses of Matthew and Luke may need further adjustment, the insight is fundamentally correct, in two senses. First, Matthew and Luke (and for that matter Mark) do see the time of the ministry as sui generis; second, they were right so to see and describe it. Certain sorts of event were appropriate then, so to speak, which were appropriate at no other time. Only then was Jesus walking round Palestine preaching and acting in just that way.

Two results follow at once. First, if the evangelists made a clear distinction —as the redaction critics and the «New Quest» are now saying—between the ministry of Jesus and the time of the church, the old form—critical presupposition that "early church" material could without difficulty be transposed back into the life of Jesus looks decidedly shaky. Second, it is possible to use this basic picture of the ministry of Jesus as a theological "criterion of dissimilarity," as opposed to the regular history—of—religions one. According to such a criterion, certain sorts of event (not merely teaching) would be appropriate for the time of the ministry, and certain others would not.

Like all good historical proposals, such a point of view would function as an hypothesis in need of verification or falsification. The tests, as in scientific work, would be whether the hypothesis succeeded, at least more than its rivals, in (a) making clear and coherent sense of as much of the basic data

as possible, and (b) helping to solve other problems in addition to those for which it was designed. I believe that the suggestions I have made here, albeit dangerously brief, could in principle be expanded into an hypothesis that would fulfil the first condition. Further research on other NT areas, not least Pauline theology, might help towards satisfying the second. Such is my present proposal for some new detonators to be placed in the theologians' playground. Whether they would explode or not, and if so which toys would remain undamaged, it is beyond the scope of this article to predict.

THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE'S PROGRAMMES IN CONTINUING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Three programmes of Continuing Theological Education are planned during February and March 1983 as follows:

Programme A: February 28 - March 4, 1983

Leaders include Professor Robert C.Culley, McGill; President Ingram Seah, Taiwan Theological College; and President Howard Hageman, New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

Programme B: March 7 - 11, 1983

Leaders include Professor Fred Wisse, McGill; President Ingram Seah, Taiwan Theological College; Professor Hendrikus Berkhof, Leiden University; and Professor Donald Capps, Princeton Theological Seminary

Programme C: March 14 - 18, 1983

Study and Research on the theme of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches: «Jesus Christ, the Life of the World.»

Accomodation for out-of-town registrants will be at l'Institut de Tourisme et d'Hôtelellerie du Québec.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS REFERRED TO

- Barth, Karl. The Epistle to the Romans Trans. E.K. Hoskyns. London: Oxford University press, 1933. (First German ed. 1918.)
- Bultmann, Rudolf. Jesus and the Word. Trans. L.P. Smith and E.H. Lantero. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934.
- Caird, George B. Jesus and the Jewish Nation. London: Athlone Press, 1965.
- Dodd, Charles Harold. The Founder of Christianity. London: Collins, 1971.
- Dunn, James D.G. Christology in the Making. London: SCM Press, 1980.
- Flew, R.N. Jesus and his Church. London: Epworth Press, 1938.
- Harvey, Anthony E. Jesus and the Constraints of History. London: Duckworth, 1982.
- Hooker, Morna D. «On Using the Wrong Tool.» Theology 75 (1972), 570-81.
- in Honour of Christopher Evans. Eds. M.D. Hooker and C. Hickling. London: SCM Press, 1975, pp. 28-44.
- Käsemann, Ernst. «The Problem of the Historical Jesus.»

  Trans. W.J. Montague. In Essays on New Testament Themes. London: SCM Press, 1964, pp. 15-47.
- Maier, Gerhard. The End of the Historical-Critical Method. Trans. E.W. Leveranz and R.F. Norden. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977.
- Manson, T.W. The Teaching of Jesus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931.
- . The Sayings of Jesus. London: SCM Press, 1949.
- Meyer, Ben F. The Aims of Jesus. London: SCM Press, 1979.
- Moule, Charles F.D. The Phenomenon of the New Testament. London: SCM Press 1967.
- Perrin, Norman. What is Redaction Criticism? Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970.
- Perrin, Norman, and Dennis C. Duling. The New Testament: An Introduction. 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982.

- Petersen, Norman R. Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
- Riches, John K. Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1980.
- Robinson, James M. A New Quest of the Historical Jesus. London: SCM Press, 1959.
- Schillebeeckx, Eduard. Jesus: An Experiment in Christology. Trans. Hubert Hoskins. London: Collins, 1979.
- Schweitzer, Albert. The Quest of the Historical Jesus. Trans. W. Montgomery. 3rd. ed. London: A. and C. Black, 1954.
- Stanton, Graham N. Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974.

#### ANDERSON LECTURES

The 1983 L.W. Anderson Lectures will be given by Professor Hendrikus Berkhof of Leiden University, the Netherlands. Dr. Berkhof is a noted Reformed theologian who has written such works as The Christian Faith, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and A Well-Founded Hope. The lectures will be held on Thursday, March 10, 1983, in the auditorium of The Presbyterian College at 12 noon, 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.



# ST. PAUL AND THE GNOSTICS, CAN THERE BE PROGRESS IN NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES?\*

#### FREDERIK WISSE

Before I can speak about St. Paul and the Gnostics, I need to take a few steps back and put the issue in perspective. Allow me to start with a rather strange question, or at least an unusual one in religious studies: Can there be progress in our understanding of St. Paul? I am not asking whether we can expect further important books on the subject, for seeing the considerable number of talented scholars dealing with Pauline themes, this can be taken for granted. Rather my question is whether we can hope to come closer to our goal of recovering what Paul meant, as far as that can be expected on the basis of the available evidence. On this point one need not be a cynic to be pessimistic. New Testament scholarship, in spite of its claim of being scientific, stands in this apart from the non-theological disciplines.

The problem is in part that as New Testament scholars we do not seem to want to reach goals and attain definite results. No dean need fear that the NT professor on his faculty will come to him with the following report: «Sir, I am sorry it took so long, but after a century and a half of detailed study by thousands of scholars we are finally finished with the scholarly interpretation of this ancient, little book called the New Testament. I respectfully request reassignment to a new or unfinished task.»

Built into the discipline is the principle that the search for the original meaning of the New Testament writings should never end. We have no framework or mechanism to acknowledge assured results and eliminate wrong approaches and answers. Privately we are allowed to have our preferences and we may feel that most issues are basically settled, but officially all questions remain open and all answers possible. The impression is given to outsiders that further study will always lead to new, important insights, while the old solutions remain valuable enough to fill our introduction and footnotes.

In spite of this built-in bias against progress, which would make New Testament Studies more an art than a science, there has, of course, been much progress over the last century, whether officially recognized or not. There are many signs that our attempts to recover the original meaning of the NT writings is near the goal line. We have long passed the point of diminishing returns for our efforts. Though new theories and approaches continue to have journalistic appeal, they are by definition suspect. If 150 years of profound scholarly efforts failed to see what I see, then I am either wrong or my discovery is only of marginal interest. Also, the unprecedented subtlety reached in NT Studies would indicate that the evidence has been squeezed dry. We are scraping the bottom of the barrel. The situation is not unlike gold mining, where it has become worthwhile, in view of the high price of gold, to sift through the old slag heaps for discarded low grade ore which may still yield something thanks to our technically advanced methods. There appears to

<sup>\*</sup> Abridged form of a lecture given at the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University on December 7, 1979.

be a deep-seated feeling among NT scholars that the mother lode has been exhausted; all that remains is low-grade rubble. Small wonder that much of the activity has shifted to the fringes of NT studies and even beyond, for many NT scholars concentrate their efforts on Judaism, Hellenistic religions, and Patristics.

In a way there is bound to be progress in NT studies insofar as it is a scholarly discipline. This progress need not always be expressed in positive results but will often consist in the elimination of wrong answers and the identification of issues for which there is not sufficient evidence to reach a conclusion. As a discipline which tries to locate the original meaning and setting of ancient texts, it must of necessity operate with hypotheses. Thus progress will be primarily the elimination of inadequate hypotheses.

Let me illustrate this in terms of one of the most delightful of Plato's dialogues, the Lysis. In this dialogue Plato is trying to define friendship, an undertaking not much less difficult than our attempt to understand the thought of St. Paul. Whatever else Plato may have intended in the Lysis, it certainly functions as a paradigmatic exercise in the logic of problem solving. It lies in the nature of things that only a limited number of hypotheses are available of what friendship can be. For example, friendship either arises from an internal human need or it exists for an external higher good. At the same time friendship has to be the attraction of like to like, or unlike to unlike, or of the indifferent to the good. Each of these hypotheses in turn can be tried out to see whether it does justice to our common experience of friendship; if it does not, or only inadequately, it must be rejected. Of course, our hope is that our attempts to understand St. Paul fare better than those of Plato's Socrates with friendship, for he found all the possible definitions wanting.

The possible hypotheses to fathom the thought of St. Paul cannot simply be deduced from the subject matter as Plato tried to do with friendship. Yet also with Paul the options are limited and we can count on a long history of interpretation to reflect the available options. Of course, this history of interpretation also has its liabilities, for it has come to stand between Paul and us, and tends to distort our vision. It began already with the inauthentic Pauline letters which tried to carry on in the great apostle's footsteps, but inevitably shifted direction or emphasis and mixed in decidedly un-Pauline elements and concerns. As one scholar put it, Paul has always been either misunderstood or only partially understood. We observe that Paul has been the main inspiration for some of the most important theological developments in the history of the church, but few, if any, of these are truly Pauline.

It is a relatively recent discovery that the hypotheses or models which have been used to understand phenomena that cannot be directly observed are borrowed from contemporary culture. A recent book on the history of the study of the human anatomy showed convincingly that each advance in knowledge was due to a

borrowed mechanical model which had recently become available. Thus the blood circulation was better understood in analogy to the pump, the nervous system in analogy to electrical circuits, and the functioning of the brain in analogy to the computer. While these models happen to have led to an advance in knowledge, many others have not, and may even have impeded an advance. Such has also been the case with Paul.

It is not my purpose to survey and evaluate all the hypotheses which have played a role in Pauline studies. I will sketch only a few basic turning points which prepared the way for the «Gnostic» hypothesis which has played such an important role in recent Pauline scholarship.

One of the most basic assumptions in Pauline interpretation has been the idea that behind the peculiarities of the letters of Paul stands a unified theological system held together by a rational principle, or a fundamental doctrine, or mystic vision. This assumption was made quite early in the history of the church and continues to have some appeal today. In this view Paul's letters are instances, or aspects, or offshoots of his theology and the task of interpretation has basically been accomplished once the theology behind the epistles has been reconstructed.

Ironically, Paul's writings have thus suffered a fate similar to the writings of the Gnostics insofar as they were known to the Church Fathers. These defenders of orthodoxy assumed that the books of the heretics were, like their own books, representative of a theological system. Since no gnostic writing appeared to agree with the next, a further assumption was made that each book indicated the existence of a separate sect with its own distinctive theology. In their attempt to reconstruct the theology of these hypothetical sects the Church Fathers felt free to draw inferences and implications not found in the writings themselves. They portrayed the Gnostics in analogy to themselves, except, of course, that they represented the truth and their opponents falsehood. It did not enter their minds that a religious book need not be derived from an ecclesiastically approved theological system, but could be the creation of an individual responding to a practical need or a mystical experience, and feeling free to use divers theologumena available to him and useful for his purpose.

The model of a unified theological system, used by the Church Fathers as a Procrustean bed for the gnostic writings, is equally inappropriate for the letters of Paul. It does not really apply to the pre-orthodox or heterodox situation to which both sets of writings belong. Both Paul and the Gnostics are examples of a different model which could be called ad hoc theologizing. They not only wrote for a specific situation, but, more importantly, for a situation in which there was little or no theological control. Most important questions for later orthodoxy remained unasked, and if asked few bounds were set for the possible answers.

With the model of a unified Pauline theological system found wanting, it could be expected that the constant factor, the point of reference, was sought elsewhere. No longer was the constant factor sought in Paul's theology, such as "justification by faith" or his "in Christ" mysticism. The attention shifted from

Paul's theology to his background. It is a truism that a person will not depart very far from his religious and intellectual background and is best understood against this background. This new model for understanding Paul did not appear ex nihilo but was provided by the great advances made during the nineteenth century in our knowledge of the Greco-Roman world. Christian scholars discovered rabbinic and Hellenistic Judaism, apocalypticism, mystery religions, Gnostics and Hermetists, Stoics and Cynics. It was not difficult to find some correspondence in Paul's writings with each of these different movements. Suddenly a whole new set of hypotheses became available to explain Paul's thought, such as Paul as a rabbinic or Hellenistic Jew, Paul as a mystic, pneumatic, Gnostic or Stoic. Some of these hypotheses were not very probable and never got much of a following; others have not yet run their course and remain part of the debate. However, it is now widely realized that also these models derived from the Greco-Roman world hold little promise of leading us to the centre of Paul's thought.

In the equation «Paul was a Pharisee» or «Paul was a mystic» it was assumed that the predicate was a relatively constant, well-defined factor. Nothing could be farther from the truth. To define a first-century Pharisee, Gnostic, or Stoic may be even more difficult than understanding Paul. At least for Paul we are fortunate enough to have writings from his own hand. We are not even sure whether there were contemporaries of Paul who thought of themselves, or were recognizable as, Stoics, Gnostics, mystics, or apocalypticists. Each of these categories is simply another can of worms about which we may never possess any certainty. Even for first-century Pharisees, a category which holds considerable promise for understanding Paul, it is uncertain what exactly their views were and in how far they differed from our much later rabbinic sources. To a large extent, trying to understand Paul in terms of his religious background is an example of an obscurum per obscurius explanation. There is little use in explaining the unknown factor x in terms of the more obscure factors y and z. This is not to deny that the study of the first-century Jewish and pagan environment has contributed much to the understanding of detail in the Pauline letters. But the religious movements in Paul's environment are themselves ill-defined and in a state of flux, and as such they cannot function as a backdrop against which Paul's unique features and contributions can be defined.

If the key to Paul's thought cannot be found in either his theology or his theological background, then there remains only one area where it might be located, i.e. the churches to which he addressed his letters. This was a likely place to turn, since in the case of an *ad hoc* theologian it is essential to know the particular situation for which he wrote in order to understand his message. Thus we see in recent studies a gradual shift in emphasis from Paul's theology and background to his audience.

Again the basic model was borrowed from the modern interpreter's own situation. Ever since the rise of the historical-critical method there has been an atmosphere of tension and distrust between the church and Biblical scholarship. The church felt threatened in its very foundation by modern Biblical research

and the scholar often felt misunderstood or persecuted by zealous churchmen. As a result polemics of some sort or other have become a basic part of what is written in the theological area. Those engaged in religious studies are very much aware of opponents within their field or on the outside and this greatly influences the content and form of what they write. Whether expressly stated or not, most of us are to some extent involved in polemics. The innocent hearer or reader may be unaware of it, but the insider and opponent will notice immediately.

This polemical model taken from our own situation has now become the most prominent framework for understanding Paul, and not just Paul but also the other NT writings. In recent scholarship it has been proposed for every book of the NT that it was written with definite polemical purposes in mind. Some NT writings contain a clear basis for this assumption but others do not. No one will doubt that St. Paul was engaged in polemics in his letter to the Galatians, but the same is far from obvious for the Gospel of Mark. The excuse for applying the polemics model also to writings which are not overtly polemical is the belief that theology is in essence polemics. The underlying motivation for all theological writing is the aim to define the truth against falsehood. A theologian will only climb into his pen when he is challenged, when he faces opposition, when the truth, as he sees it, is threatened.

Actually this model was used already a century and a half ago by Ferdinand Christian Baur, the father of modern NT scholarship. He applied to the NT a Hegelian philosophy of history according to which theology advances by being challenged (antithesis) which leads to a compromise (synthesis) which in turn is challenged and so on. When applied to the NT this meant that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was opposed by Jewish Christians such as Peter and James, a conflict which eventually led to early Catholicism under the pressure of Gnosticism. Baur's polemical model lost much of its appeal when Hegel dropped from favour, but has now been resurrected without its rigid philosophical underpinnings. For Baur the Judaizers had been the main opponents of Paul; in recent studies the Gnostics have taken centre stage.

The Gnostics had played a role already earlier in Pauline studies in terms of Paul's own background. At the beginning of this century representatives of the German «History of Religion» school claimed that Gnosticism played an important and constituent part in Paul's thinking. The best known proponent of this position was Rudolf Bultmann who argued that gnostic ideas and concepts are visible in such key areas of Paul's thinking as his Christology and Cosmology. The issue has been very controversial and divisive in NT studies. Vigorous opposition to Bultmann's view has come from theologians for whom a gnostic influence on something as basic as NT Christology is unthinkable. Their main defence has been the contention that the NT phenomena in question can be explained adequately in terms of Jewish antecedents and that there is no convincing evidence outside the NT of a pre-Christian Gnosis which could have influenced the NT writings.

The recent find of a large number of original, gnostic writings in the Nag Hammadi codices has raised hopes of getting the debate out of the stalemate. This collection of some twelve codices written in the middle of the fourth century in Upper Egypt was at first thought to be a gnostic library. It is now becoming clear that these codices were in reality written and used by Christian monks at a time when the Pachomian monastic establishment left room for a remarkable degree of heterodoxy. These books must have been buried at a time when the church hierarchy in Alexandria began to enforce orthodoxy in the monasteries late in the fourth century. Though the majority of the treatises in the codices represent Gnosticism in its various forms, there are also Hermetic and more or less unobjectionable Christian writings. The monks must have cherished this strange variety of texts not so much for the heretical elements as for their ascetic teachings and implications.

Relevant to the debate on a direct, gnostic influence on Paul, the Nag Hammadi texts have proven beyond doubt that there were forms of Gnosticism which, if not pre-Christian, were certainly non-Christian. However, these non-Christian gnostic treatises have little or nothing in common with Paul, and instead seem to be related to early Neo-Platonist circles. In any case one should not expect a conclusive proof or disproof of Gnostic influence on NT writings from the Nag Hammadi texts. At best they can add some weight to the probability of the one position over against the other.

The Nag Hammadi texts hold much more promise of being relevant to the issue of gnostic opponents in the New Testament. Here gnostic teaching is supposed to have influenced the NT indirectly in that it already posed a threat to the church in its first decades and so required the New Testament authors to define their own views in opposition and to engage in refutation.

We must still specify the procedure used by interpreters to identify Paul's opponents and how they use this information to understand Paul. It is assumed in the polemical model that Paul is engaged in refuting his opponents even when he does not mention this specifically. This means that if Paul asserts or denies something it is because there were opponents among his addressees who said the opposite. This would allow for a kind of mirror reading; by negating the emphases and admonitions of the author we can recover elements of the position of his opponents. If we know of a religious group to which these elements can belong then the opponents have been identified. Our knowledge of this group from extra-Biblical sources can then be used to fill out the picture. Thus supplied with more complete knowledge of the polemical situation, Paul's position can be understood properly.

It is not my purpose here to criticize this mirror reading in general or particular instances of it. Though fascinating, it is a dangerous enterprise in which the thin borderline between science and parlour game is easily crossed, but when certain conditions are met and its limitations are observed it has its legitimacy. My interest is how scholars on the basis of characteristics of the opponents, rightly or wrongly gleaned from Paul's letters, come to identify them as Gnostics. The standard they use for this identification should be

examined in light of the new gnostic evidence from Nag Hammadi. For our purpose it need not be claimed that all aspects of Gnosticism are present in these texts. We are looking for dominant characteristics which were typical for a wide variety of Gnostics; for this the Nag Hammadi collection certainly is a sufficient and in some ways ideal testing ground.

One of the main characteristics which, according to interpreters of the NT, prove the opponents to be Gnostics is libertinism. The issue is complicated by the fact that in the heat of the polemic opponents have often been vilified by attributing immoral behaviour to them. This was justified by the common assumption in the Hellenistic world that false teaching must of necessity lead to an immoral life. Furthermore, according to the Jewish-Christian, apocalyptic tradition, the false prophets and anti-christs of the last days would be characterized by libertinism. Already very early in the history of the church the opposing party in a conflict was thought to be a fulfilment of these prophecies. This makes it difficult to determine if any of the reports of the libertine behaviour of opponents are trustworthy. In any case, apart from passages in 2 Peter, Jude and Revelation, which refer to the eschatological false prophets rather than to the behaviour of actual opponents, there are no sure references in the New Testament to libertinism. To see, for example, behind the admonitions in 1 John about doing what is good and refraining from what is evil, opponents who argued for the opposite is far-fetched, especially in view of the diatribe style of the epistle.

According to the reports of the Neo-Platonist philosopher Plotinus and some of the Church Fathers, there were Gnostics who justified all kinds of immoral practices. These Gnostics did not think they were bound by the moral laws of the evil creator-god, or they thought they were saved on the basis of their spiritual nature and thus did not need to live a virtuous life. A closer examination of these reports shows that they are not eyewitness accounts but wrong inferences and hearsay. The Church Fathers were more than willing to assume the worst about their gnostic opponents. Besides, like Plotinus, they could not imagine that someone could despise the Creator of this world and yet live a virtuous life. For them the two were causally connected. The gnostic writings in the Nag Hammadi codices rectify this erroneous picture. They contain no trace of libertinism but rather are decidedly ascetic. The libertine inferences drawn by Plotinus and the Christian heresiologist are completely absent. If there ever were libertine Gnostics, they must have been exceptional.

A second characteristic of opponents in the NT which is generally thought to be gnostic is the denial of the resurrection. The main NT passage in question is 2 Tim. 2:18 which refers to Hymenaeus and Philetus who claimed that the resurrection had taken place already. Several interpreters believe that the same view was held by those in the Corinthian congregation who said that there is no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12). It has also been suggested that the strong emphasis on the physical resurrection of Jesus in the Gospels of Luke and John was directed against Christians who in some way denied the resurrection. At least for Hymenaeus and Philetus it is generally assumed

that they were Gnostics who believed that they had already experienced a spiritual resurrection and that no other resurrection was to be expected. This would presumably be part of a *theologia gloriae* in which salvation is already fully enjoyed in the present.

The basis for attributing the view that the resurrection has happened already to the Gnostics is surprisingly slim. There is a reference in Irenaeus's account of the teaching of the Gnostic Menander which could perhaps be construed that way. However, it appears that Menander taught a resurrection at the moment that the soul becomes immortal by means of a magical, baptismal ritual without denying the other important meaning of resurrection, namely, the future ascent of the soul to the heavenly realm after the body has been stripped off.

Three Nag Hammadi treatises bear directly on this issue: «The Treatise on the Resurrection,» «The Gospel of Philip,» and «The Testimony of Truth.» I will give a brief summary of what they indicate.

- (1) Gnostics, but also many others within the church, rejected the resurrection of the physical body. This goes back to the anthropological dualism which Gnostics shared with many other groups in the Hellenistic world. Most likely, this dualism lies behind the denial of the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15:22, and it may have been opposed implicitly in the Gospels of Luke and John. As scriptural basis 1 Cor. 15:50 was often cited: «flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.» Thus rejection of the physical resurrection could be evidence of Gnosticism, though not to the exclusion of other groups that followed Paul's teaching on the resurrection body.
  - (2) Gnostics did not deny that there would be some kind of resurrection at the time of death. This future resurrection refers to the ascent of the soul into heaven.
  - (3) Gnostics tended to ignore the general resurrection on the last day and the accompanying problem of the intermediate state. When the concept of the final resurrection is maintained it has been given a new meaning.
- (4) The teaching of a resurrection which for the believer has happened already is found only in the Gospel of Philip. It should not be called realized eschatology for it does not come in the place of the future resurrection; it is very similar to the concept of regeneration in conventional Christian theology. It is doubtful whether the author of the Gospel of Philip would have characterized his view by the phrase «the resurrection has happened already.» Thus, as with libertinism, the gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi do not justify calling this characteristic gnostic.

The situation is not much different with the other traits of NT opponents which have been called gnostic. I can only briefly refer to them. Docetism, the denial of Jesus' humanity, was thought to be characteristic of Gnosticism. In general it can be said that only a minority of the Christian-gnostic and heterodox writings in the Nag Hammadi collection can be called docetic, and then only inconsistently and with little uniformity. The evidence indicates that docetism was far less important to Gnostics than one would expect in light of their pronounced anthropological dualism and emphasis on the divine origin of the saviour. Many Gnostics had no difficulty accepting that Jesus had come in the flesh. In the Nag Hammadi tractate «Melchizedek» we even have a gnostic writing which could be called anti-docetic!

Esoteric tendencies and enthusiasm are sometimes taken to be signs of Gnosticism. There can be no doubt that they apply to Gnostics but not more than they apply to non-gnostic sectarians. These are not dependable traits to identify the opponents of Paul. Finally many NT interpreters have assumed that there existed a typically gnostic vocabulary which helps to identify gnostic opponents or gnostic influence. The assumption was made mainly on the basis of Manichean and Mandean sources. However, these writings are relatively late and belong to clearly defined religious sects. The Gnostics of the Nag Hammadi writings never developed their own vocabulary. They were notorious syncretists who adopted and mixed concepts and mythologumena from a great variety of non-gnostic sources. The dualistic language they used was not coined by them but borrowed from Jewish, Christian and pagan writings. The Qumran scrolls have shown that one does not need Gnosticism to explain dualistic terms in the Gospel of John or the letters of Paul. Such language was used very generally in the Hellenistic world.

Several conclusions can be drawn from our test of the gnostic opponent hypothesis in light of the Nag Hammadi writings. First of all, the identification of at least some of Paul's opponents as Gnostics is not supported by the gnostic texts. It is very doubtful that Paul was confronted by Gnostics in the Corinthian church or in Colossae or elsewhere. On the basis of 1 Corinthians it is even questionable whether there were real opponents. The errors Paul is combating in this letter appear to be the views of immature, overzealous Paulinists.

Secondly, the polemical model has not proven to be particularly productive for understanding Paul. It is already very difficult to derive clear characteristics of the opponents from Paul's writings. It is yet far more difficult to associate these characteristics with any of the known religious movements in the environment of the Pauline churches. These movements were not themselves stable entities about which we have adequate knowledge. Particularly the Gnostics are notoriously difficult to pin down. The attempt to pose them as Paul's opponents in 1 Corinthians can even be called counterproductive.

I do not want to leave the impression that the results are only negative. As a matter of fact the different models or hypotheses which suggest themselves had to be tried. This is the only wa/ we can come to some kind of certainty or consensus. Thus the gnostic opponent model was not just a blind alley but

a legitimate option which had to be tested before it could be eliminated. Through this process of elimination we come to see older solutions in a new light. Once the gnostic opponent model recedes into the background, the Judaizers as Paul's primary opponents can take their rightful place again, with the difference that their importance for understanding Paul will be clearer than ever. For me that is progress.

#### INTERCULTURE

Bilingual (French/English) International Quarterly Thematic Journal

Devoted to exploring the frontiers of cross-cultural understanding. Examines various themes and dimensions of human living from the perspective of different cultures.

Learning from India; From an Integrationist to a Cross-Cultural Recent titles: Quebec; Native Indian-Christian Dialogue; Native Law and

Native Rights.

Subscription: Canada \$6.00/yr; Other \$7.00/yr.

Single Issues: Canada \$2.00; Other \$2.25

Cumulative Index: (1968-1978): \$8.00

Published by: Monchanin Cross-Cultural Centre

4917 St. Urbain, Montreal, Ouébec

## DEAN'S DESK .....

#### J.C. MCLELLAND

The 1982 Birks Lectures are just over, with Samuel Terrien's moving praise of wisdom still echoing. Both stimulating and controversial, it has led to considerable fall-out. I think it was a good event this year, in which we tried to recall our heritage by unearthing from storage portraits of former college dignitaries, class composites from 1912 to 1961, and other mementoes. These were on display in the Birks Building for Graduates to spark nostalgic and humorous memories. I should like to feature Graduates this year, in updating our mailing list, tracking down «lost» names, and generally identifying names and addresses. For instance, during the Birks week the Class of 1957 held their twenty-fifth Reunion, with five in attendance. This has been a class which kept communication open for over ten years through a circulating letter to which members added material in turn. Recently this custom dropped, but their reunion suggests something of that class spirit. Why not each year follow the custom of reunions for tenth, twentieth and twenty-fifth years? Next year this would mean '58, '63 and '73.

Details of our Faculty life and work appeared in the Birks Brochure which you received during the summer. (If you did not, tell us and we'll correct the mailing list.) To bring you up to date, enrolment is down in our B.Th. programme but holding steady in the others (B.A., M.A., S.T.M., Ph.D.). Since B.Th. recruiting is largely a college and denominational affair, readers should recognize the challenge this fact brings to all of you. We need your cooperation as our publicity agents and recruiters. Don't be shy about us, and ask for our help if you need materials or speakers—or our slide set—for vocational meetings, etc.

One reason alumni have been on my mind is that in recent trips I have been privileged to meet them and admire their work. Last year in Rome, for instance, there was Dr. Renzo Bertalot, my first doctoral student, now Direttore per l'Italia of the Bible Society--appropriately housed in Humility Street. He has been active in ecumenical relations (two priests work for him) but has problems with his project for moving to a new location with room for his growing enterprise. (What about taking this on as an individual or congregational project? It would be a show of solidarity with an outstanding alumnus in a difficult vocation. Send your contribution to: Libreria Sacre Scritture, Via dell'Umilta, 33, 00187 ROMA.)

This May-June it was a visit to North-East Asia for the centenary of theological education in northern Taiwan. George Leslie MacKay, Canadian Presbyterian missionary, built Oxford College in 1882 in Tamsui on the coast.

Today its successor is Taiwan Theological College in Taipei. We visited Japan, Hong Kong and Korea briefly, besides Taiwan. The frenetic pace, compounded by the heat and humidity, proved exhausting, but allowed us to visit twelve campuses, lecture at all three Presbyterian seminaries in Taiwan, meet theologians and educators and missionaries in each place, and even perfect the use of chopsticks. Tokyo's Union Theological Seminary was one memorable visit. Dr. Kikuo Matsunaga (Ph.D.'70 under George Johnston) is now teacher there and was my translator. The famous Kitamori (Theology of the Pain of God) was there, while their Library houses the books of the Philosopher of religion Hatano, all untranslated, unfortunately. In Osaka a P.C. alumnus, Kim Duk-Sung, provided a guest room in his six-storey Church building.

In Seoul, Dr. Choo Chai-Yong (Ph.D. '74 with Prof. Jay) and Kim Dal-Soo (S.T.M. '79) were kind hosts. Prof. Choo teaches at Hankuk Seminary and serves as Director of the Korean Association of Theological Schools and Co-Director of the North-East Asian A.T.S. His social conscience and stance in a trying political situation mark his leadership. The similar political situation in Taiwan has been criticized chiefly by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Their declaration of human rights and call for free elections has brought sad reprisal. Dr. Kao (D.D. '73 from Presbyterian College, Montreal) is serving a seven-year sentence, and other clergy and laity are imprisoned. The seminaries have played a supportive role; no doubt the initial teaching can take considerable credit--and must take considerable responsibility-for such social protest. Principal Ingram Seah of Taiwan T.S. will visit P.C. and the Faculty next term. He was my host and the reason for the trip, so I look forward to meeting him again and hearing him address us on both theology and the Taiwan context. Another Taiwanese theologian we hope to receive is C.S. Song, formerly Principal of Tainan T.S. (in the southern region) and now in Geneva. His books should be read, especially Third Eye Theology and The Compassionate God (Orbis Books). He succeeded another famous Principal, Shoki Coe (C.H. Hwang) of mission theology and W.C.C. fame.

One of the concerns in both Taiwan and Korea is «Church growth». Seoul has the largest Presbyterian church (60,000) and largest congregation of any kind--200,000 in the Pure Gospel Church! It's perhaps a case study in how to and how not to increase the church. We need to know more about N.E. Asia-its culture, problems and theology. Its concern with the Chinese tradition of ancestor worship, for instance, raises questions about the Communion of Saints and the Eucharist that demand appropriation by our Western tradition. The insistence of Dr. Song that a form of «transposition» is required in Eastern forms of Christian faith is a hard demand on us, with severe critique involved. And the fact that so much of that area's Christianity is so patently Western (and indeed reflective of the old kind of missionary evangelicalism of the Founders) remains a challenge for us to help them free themselves from our continuing image as their master and model.

No doubt I'll be reflecting on such things again. Meanwhile, remember that as Graduates your links with scattered parts of our world remain strong and potentially fruitful for the future of our shrinking and troubled globe.

## PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Professor Robert C. Culley edited with Thomas J. Overholt issue 21 of the journal Semeia, «Anthropological Perspectives on Old Testament Prophecy,» and wrote an introductory article, «Anthropology and Old Testament Studies: An Introductory Comment.» As President of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, Professor Culley gave the presidential address at the annual meeting in Ottawa in June celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Society.

Professor Douglas J. Hall returned this summer from a year's sabbatic leave in France (Strasbourg and Provence), having completed in good draft form the first volume of a series on contextual theology. Another book written during this period, The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age (New York: Friendship Press), was published in October. Professor Hall was also a recent guest lecturer in Colorado, Toronto, Kaiserslautern (West Germany), and Waterloo.

Dr. George Johnston, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., D.D., LL.D., will be named Emeritus Professor at the Founder's Day Convocation, November 24, in Place des Arts, with Dean McLelland presenting him for this outstanding honour. Dr. Johnston was Professor of New Testament Language and Literature from 1959-1970, and Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies, 1970-1975. He joins Dr. Eric Jay in this honorary position. The first Emeritus Professor of the Faculty was the late James S. Thomson.

Dr. Johnston has recently published «Jesus: Deacon of God and Persons» in R.F. Berkey and Sarah A. Edwards, eds., Christological Perspectives (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982), pp. 219-27. In July Dr. and Mrs. Johnston visited the Shetland Isles, Scotland, and saw Jarlshof and St. Ninian's Isle, as well as many chambered cairns, standing stones, and other important antiquities. Other summer visits included York Minster (Roman remains in the Undercroft), Chapel Finnian, Mote of Mark, and Cairnholy in south-west Scotland.

Professor Frederik Wisse gave a paper on «Asceticism and Gnosticism» at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Francisco, December 19, 1981. Professor Wisse's recent publications are «Stalking Those Elusive Sethians» in Bentley Layton, ed., The Rediscovery of Gnosticism II (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), pp. 563-76, and «The Opponents in the New Testament in Light of the Nag Hammadi Writings» in Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi (Quebec/Louvain: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981), pp. 99-120. He has also published reviews of Elaine Pagels' The Gnostic Gospels in Queen's Quarterly 88, 2 (1981), 399-401, and Melvin K.H. Peters' An Analysis of the Textual Character of the Bohairic of Deuteronomy in Journal of Biblical Studies 101, 1 (1982), 630.

Professor Katherine K. Young presented a paper entitled «'Dying for 'bhukti and mukti: The Śrīvaiṣṇava Apprehension of Death» at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion held in Ottawa at the beginning of June. In May she gave a paper entitled «Sexual Bisection at the Divine/Human

Intersection: A Study of the Hindu Couple as God and Goddess Incarnate» at the Conference on Religion in South India held in Pittsburg.

In June four graduate students at the Faculty of Religious Studies presented a panel entitled «Philosophy and Religion: Yatīndramatadīpikā of the Višistadvaita School» at the Canadian Society for Sanskrit and Related Studies in Ottawa. The students were Zainool Kassam, Nancy Nayar, Kay Koppedrayer, and Kristyna Paknys. Dr. Katherine Young was the moderator.

At the meeting of McGill's Board of Governors on October 18, 1982 Professor Robert W. Stevenson was appointed to the position of Dean of Students for a five-year term beginning January 1, 1983. Dr. Stevenson was Acting Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies during 1980-81 and will continue to teach in the Faculty on a part-time basis. For the Autumn 1982 term Dr. Stevenson is on sabbatic leave in India.

Professor N.T. Wright published an article, «A New Tübingen School? Ernst Käsemann and His Commentary on Romans,» in Themelios 7 (1982), 6-16. Professor Wright also gave some lectures on Galatians at the Ontario Theological Seminary in Toronto in August.

#### DEGREES for 1981-82

B.Th. 18 graduates in 1981-82, 2 with first class honours: Michael Kaye, Jay
Atkinson

Birks Award: Michael Kaye
McGill Alumnae Society Prize: Jay Atkinson
University Scholars: Michael Kaye, Jay Atkinson
Great Distinction: Donna-Mae Siderius, Cathy Throop
Distinction: Carol Delisle, Blanche Hodder, Ken Harding, Geoff Martens
The Neil Stewart Prize for Hebrew: Kyle Wallick
Faculty Scholar and James McGill Prize: Linda Stone

B.A. 3 graduates in 1981-82.
Faculty Scholar and James McGill Award: Elizabeth Bryce, Patrice Brodeur (for in-course students):

Normand Demers

GRADUATE 8 S.T.M. graduates in 1981-82
10 M.A. graduates
3 Ph.D. graduates in 1982: V. Rajapakse, Pamela Milne, Gary Redcliffe
Birks Award: Grant Lemarquand

# NOTES FROM THE PRINCIPALS

# ANTHONY CAPON (MONTREAL DIOCESAN THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE)

Once again I am glad to greet all alumni in the name of Diocesan College, and to send you some news of the College.

As a College community, we have been continuing our exploration together of what it means to be a unit of the body of Christ. I firmly believe that a theological college community must cease to be a typical mixture of teachers and learners and must become in every practicable way a model of the church itself. The integration of whole families into our fellowship has brought us a long way in this respect. Prayer together (both formally and in spontaneous groups), Bible study fellowships, a shared life of worship, community meals, mutual support in times of stress, and shared leadership have all contributed to the strengthening of our understanding of ourselves as people bound together by God's Spirit in a common venture.

As a diocesan college, and thus a pluralistic group, we have had to face up to our differences of tradition, theology, and methods. I believe that these issues have been very largely resolved. We find our unity in our common commitment to Jesus Christ, to the holy Scriptures, and to the gospel of God's love, and this enables us to enjoy the wealth of the variety of perceptions and expressions that are represented by both students and faculty. We endeavour to live by the principle enunciated in 1 Corinthians 12:13--«By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ... and were all made to drink of one Spirit.»

We have come a long way, but realize that we have by no means «arrived». We are endeavouring to listen for the voice of God, however he may choose to speak, and this is obviously a joint enterprise. We know we are at present only experiencing a small fraction of what we should be, and what we are capable of being, and we appreciate the prayers of our alumni as we continue this very exciting quest.

The major event this year has been the resignation of Dr. Don Thompson as Director of Studies, after 11 years at Diocesan College, to become Director of Academic Studies at the Centre for Christian Studies in Toronto. Don is a man deeply committed to God, to his Church, and to supporting and caring for generation after generation of students. Working with him for four years I came to appreciate his unflawed loyalty, his prodigious hard work, and his fine integrity of Christian character. He left his stamp not only on hundreds of individual students from our whole consortium but in very many ways on our College itself and what it is today.

The Search Committee hopes to be able to announce a replacement for Don very soon. Meanwhile, the Reverend Dr. John McNab (Rector of St. Paul's Church, Cote des Neiges, and a Lecturer in Liturgics at the Faculty of Religious Studies) is Acting Director of Studies on a half-time basis. He has already won the respect and affection of all of us, and I believe that he is going to bring a breath of fresh air to many situations in which he is involved, particularly as he draws on his many years of parish experience. We have six students in final year, and John is responsible for guiding their progress,

More detailed information about the College is given in the letters which go out from time to time to our own alumni and other supporters of the College, so I will not repeat it here. This year we are remembering five of our alumni at each of our College eucharists, notifying you ahead of time, and I know that this bond of prayer means a lot to all of us. May God's blessing be on the life and ministry of each alumnus and alumna.

#### WILLIAM KLEMPA (THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE)

Before reporting on the current academic session, reference should be made to two events which occured at the end of the 1981-1982 academic session. The 115th Annual Convocation of the College was held in the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul on Wednesday May 5, 1982, when six students were the first recipients of the new Master of Divinity degree and of the Diploma in Ministry. Two other students received the Diploma of the College and the Diploma in Ministry. The Convocation was addressed by the Rev. Principal J. Charles Hay of Knox College, Toronto, on the subject «The Theologian as Evangelist.» The degree of Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) was conferred on two persons who have been connected with the overseas mission work of the Presbyterian Church: Miss Mary Whale, formerly Secretary for Mission Personnel, Board of World Missions, and the Rev. Earle F. Roberts, Secretary for Overseas Relations, Board of World Missions, and now the new Secretary of the Church's Administrative Council. A large audience was in attendance. The Convocation was followed by a reception in Kildonan Hall. Next year's Convocation will be held in Knox, Crescent and Kensington Church in NDG on Thursday May 5th.

The second event which deserves mention is the Annual Alumni Association Dinner in connection with the meeting of General Assembly. This was held at the Royal York Hotel, Toronto, on Wednesday evening June 9, 1982. The dinner was attended by about fifty-five alumni/ae, spouses and guests and three faculty members. A programme followed the dinner during which four graduates of the College, two recent and two earlier, gave their evaluation of the theological programme and its relevance for the work of ministry. This is part of a three-year project on the part of the Senate and the Faculty of the College to establish closer connections with the alumni/ae. The Annual Dinner next year will take place in Kingston, Ontario.

Student enrolment is slightly down from last year. Nine new students entered the College this September: two into the In-Ministry year and the other seven into the Bachelor of Theology and Master of Divinity degree programmes. The total number of students enrolled in all years of the theological programmes stands at 28.

This year's Annual Retreat was held at Shalom House near Lancaster, Ontario, from Friday September 24th to Sunday September 26th. About twenty-five students and six faculty members were in attendance. The theme of the retreat, «Liberation, Revolution and Violence», was introduced by a panel discussion on the Friday night led by Dr. Art Van Seters, a member of the Faculty and Executive Director of M.I.M., Rev. Chris Ferguson, Presbyterian/United Church Chaplain at McGill, and the Rev. Joe Reed, Director of Tyndale House. Each of the panellists spoke on the Central American situation on the basis of recent visits to that part of the globe. On Saturday morning Dr. Bill Klempa spoke on «Revolution and Violence», Professor Fred Wisse spoke on «Materialistic Exegesis» and Dean Joe McLelland spoke on «Revolution and Marxist Analysis». The afternoon session was devoted to a discussion of the implications of liberation theology for Canadian theological education.

The College Residence has forty students of which the majority are non-theological students studying in the various faculties of McGill University.

Work began this summer and is continuing on preparing a catalogue list of the rare and antiquarian books owned by the College. There are over seventeen hundred of these books which have not been properly catalogued. It is hoped that this work will be completed by next summer and that a catalogue will be published. Alumni and friends of the College will be solicited for gifts to enable this project to be completed.

## PIERRE GOLDBERGER (UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE)

The 1981-82 academic year has seen the first graduates with a M.Div. degree. This modified programme resulted from intense curriculum discussions encouraged by the A.T.S. visit and evaluation process. Various elements were introduced, including a integrative paper which will be written over a 3 year period, a two hour per week college seminar focusing on the relationship of theological studies and praxis of ministry, and an interdisciplinary seminar which also contributes to the greater interaction of theory and praxis.

Our Faculty is currently involved in various committees and task forces pertinent to both church life and social and ecumenical context. Last August, during the biennial General Council of the United Church of Canada held in Montreal, our College presented a daily «contextual» programme consisting of speakers with whom we have on-going working connections on theological, social and political issues raised in our milieu. The interest of those who attended these events was a stimulating sign of support for the

work and orientation of the College.

Professor Douglas Hall and Pierre Goldberger also acted as theological resource persons at Ottawa's World Alliance gathering. We were very glad to welcome back Professor Doug Hall from his sabbatical leave spent in France working on what will eventually be a 3 volume Canadian contextual theology.

In thanksgiving, the College with many friends, former students and colleagues has honoured Dr. George Johnston on the occasion of his «official» retirement from the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill. Professor George Johnston continues to teach at the United Theological College, giving leadership in both lay education and student formation.

L'Institut Francophone de Théologie offre trois cours cette année: Philosophie de la Religion, Ethique, Histoire de la Réformation. Ceci est très encourageant. Il offre aussi pour la troisième année, une formation théologique pour laïcs dans le cadre de «Bible Ouverte.» Cette année il y a 32 inscrits, avec des animateurs et des participants sur une base oecuménique (Anglicans, Catholiques, Presbytériens, Englise Unie). Madame Cosette Odier agit comme co-ordinatrice et a mis sur pieds plusieurs colloques et conférences avec l'Université de Montréal, notamment avec le prof. Samuel Terrien, invité aux «Birks Lectures» cette année. Madame Odier est également une personne ressource dans le cadre de la dernière année du Montreal Institute for Ministry.

This fall, the College retreat at «Les Sommets» started our community on a very dynamic basis. The collective worship experiences and the level of openness encouraged students and staff to «dream» and take the College's context seriously. Out of this came the will to be «present» on campus, as a community. As an animateur put it: «the extent to which, while in training for the ministry, we take our immediate context seriously, i.e. the University, the student and staff «polis», will probably be telling of the way we relate congregational life and community in our ministry ...» Students are off and demonstrating remarkable creativity on campus ....

U.T.C. is participating in the support of various minority groups and rejoices in the presence of the Women's Ecumenical Resource Centre located near the College.

Our student enrolment has been steady, and in spite of obvious financial concerns that all Institutions have, we are quite confident of being able to pursue more adequate ways of both serving our church and our community.

We would like the College friends and Alumni to be in their respective milieux convincing agents for those who consider theological studies. Our theological consortium combines several challenging assets: McGill's

Faculty of Religious Studies' academic excellence; the Montreal Institute for Ministry's action and reflection-based unique professional year of training for the ministry; the College's community orientation towards training and Justice, solidarity and faith, contextuality and international concerns and relations. All this in an ecumenical context which has a long history.

We remind friends that our guest room is at your disposal--on a first come first serve basis--and we hope to have the pleasure of your visit.

#### M. I.M. NEWS

The Montreal Institute has some new faces on staff. John McNab has been appointed Acting Director of Studies for Diocesan College and will be developing a course in liturgy, working with Art Van Seters and Bill Klempa in the Liturgy and Preaching course, and co-ordinating a course on Management in Ministry. He will also have general oversight of the Reading and Tutorial Course of the Institute and be involved in Core Group work for theological reflection on ministry. Cosette Odier comes to the staff in her capacity as Co-ordinator of the Institut de Théologie de Montréal. She will assist us in looking at the francophone context of our programme throughout the year and will co-ordinate the development of the Quebec Workshop in February. She and Chris Ferguson will also lead a francophone Core Group. Faye Mount will lead a Core Group with Art Van Seters. She will also help us to look at the concerns of women in the church and in society and the wider area of human sexuality in relationship to ministry. In the middle of the fall term there will be a workshop on Ministry and Mission and one of the principal resource people for that week will be Lois Wilson, former Moderator of The United Church of Canada. In an attempt to respond to special needs, the programme will include course options for the final six weeks of the second term.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES LIBRARY
WILLIAM & HENRY BIRKS BUILDING
3520 UNIVERSITY STREET

OPEN 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

MONDAY - FRIDAY

#### BOOK REVIEWS

#### NORTHROP FRYE

THE GREAT CODE: THE BIBLE AND LITERATURE

TORONTO: ACADEMIC PRESS CANADA, 1982

In the near quarter of a century since its first publication Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism has become something of a classic. It has come to stand as a central text of the movement in literary criticism which is generally called archetypal criticism, but which might better be called the myth and symbol perspective. Along with the so-called New Criticism, the myth and symbol perspective tended to dominate Anglo-American criticism in the two decades following the Second World War. Although these two staples of the critical diet of a generation of literary scholars have now been largely supplemented by the developments of structuralism, post-structuralism, hermeneutic theory, and reception or reader-response criticism, my guess is that they still form the basis of most undergraduate studies in North American English departments. It is therefore with a good deal of anticipation that another major theoretic synthesis by Professor Frye has been awaited.

As the fortuitous historical pun contained in the title of The Great Code indicates (the title comes from Blake, but also invokes the importance of the word code in contemporary critical terminology), Professor Frye has assimilated the developments of recent criticism into his theoretical framework as a means of refining rather than altering his interpretative position. This can be illustrated by the way in which he uses Roman Jakobson's famous distinction between metaphor (the order of similarity) and metonymy (the order of contiguity) within an imaginative Viconian vision of historical and linguistic cycles: the mythical age of poetic or hieroglyphic language, the heroic age of hieratic language, and the vulgar age of demotic language. After which, the ricorso starts the process all over again. The poetic language of the mythical age, the age of the gods, is identified with metaphor. The dialectical language of the heroic age, the age of aristocracy, is seen as being essentially metonymic in character. And the demotic language of the age of the people, beginning roughly in the sixteenth century, is viewed as descriptive. From one point of view, Professor Frye's scheme would appear to be highly suspect to both the structuralist and the historian of ideas. But such a point of view would miss the main import of the scheme. What we are given here is an imaginative way of conceiving the relationships between language and reality, a theoria in the radical sense of the term. This theory also enables Professor Frye to locate the Bible as a vehicle for Revelation within a special category characterized by kerygmatic language. That is to say, the direction which the biblical proclamation takes, while embodying the rhetorical figurations of metaphor and metonymy, transgresses the limits of wan argument disguised by figuration» (29). Nevertheless, myth as narrative metaphor becomes, in opposition to a simplistic understanding of Bultmann, whom Frye exculpates in a note, the linguistic vehicle of kerygma. This imaginative theoretical framework initiates the development of the rest of the book.

The Great Code is divided into two parts: «The Order of Words» and «The Order of Types.» It is possible, I think, to see in these two broad categories the relationship between metaphor as a particular linguistic phenomenon and the mythic functionality of metaphor as narrative within the imaginative-historical scheme of typology. Indeed, in revivifying for the twentieth century the typological way of viewing reality, a way at once metaphoric and metonymic, Professor Frye has demonstrated just how typical this interpretative mode is for the Western, Christian hermeneutic tradition and just how alive it still remains.

Each of the two parts of The Great Code consists of four chapters which are mirrored, as it were, concavely. Thus Language, Myth, Metaphor, and Typology in Part One reappear as Typology, Metaphor, Myth, and Language in Part Two. The image of the «double mirror» (xxii), though, is perhaps somewhat misleading. Rather, the structure of the book imitates the paradigmatic shape which Frye discerns as basic to the Western literary tradition. This paradigm assumes two forms: the U-shape of comedy and the inverted U-shape of tragedy. It is interesting that Frye has chosen to depict this pattern as a U rather than the more traditional V. Does this indicate that literature always fails at the point of transcendence? That, confined by form, it can never fully impinge upon otherly-shaped reality? In any case, it seems to me that there is a certain ambiguity as to whether The Great Code itself is U-shaped or inverted U-shaped. I would suggest that this ambiguity reflects something of the ambiguity of literary criticism as an undertaking. The upward swing of the code of art, even paradoxically in tragedy, always points towards the comedic, whereas meta-art, of which literary criticism forms a significant aspect, carries the downward thrust of what might be called the code of history, the impetus of tragic transiency.

Readers of the Bible are familiar with the up-and-down movement of the biblical narrative taken as a whole, a movement which Frye diagrams at one point as a series of rounded peaks and valleys and aptly calls «manic-depressive» (176). This structural pattern combines the shapes of comedy and tragedy within the sequential dimension of historical time. Frye then sees, with due qualification, a major mythic, cyclical design encompassing the entire biblical narrative from Genesis through the Apocalypse. Would it not, however, be more appropriate to see this overarching design as spiral? Looking at it in this way would enable the reader to accommodate the up-and-down historical movement to an underlying cyclic, or cyclic-progressive design, one of the patterns of eternity in time. For, after all, a spiral coil looked at head-on is a circle.

The Great Code is an immensely rich book. Part of its density is no doubt due to its origins in Professor Frye's courses. To a certain extent, however, the very richness and density of the work make it difficult to read. This is the sort of book that one needs to study as one studies the material for a course. But, then, is this not perhaps the only form that a book dealing with the Bible could assume? It is a book to be re-read on a book that is being constantly re-read.

I can see that The Great Code will be of interest mainly to two kinds of students of literature and students of the Bible. Not very often in our contemporary culture do these two kinds of students meet. present, biblical studies as an academic discipline remains at core historical-critical in its orientation, while literary studies have for a long time tended to downplay the historical approach at the expense of an often confusing proliferation of competing text-analytical and interpretative approaches. Frye's book is, of course, written from the point of view of the literary scholar; and, no doubt, biblical scholars will have a number of criticisms of some of its generalizations. Yet it would be a pity if biblical scholars were not responsive to the kind of imaginative reading that Frye offers. On the other hand, the aesthetic unity towards which imaginative literary criticism aspires is always in need of the historical and philological objections which biblical scholars can raise. The Great Code opens a channel of communication between these two scholarly domains and, at the same time, approximates more closely than the usual representatives of either to the concerns of the educated, unspecialized reader of the Bible. One eagerly looks forward to Professor Frye's promised sequel.

Richard R. Cooper

BRIAN MAHAN AND L. DALE RICHESIN, EDITORS

THE CHALLENGE OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY: A FIRST WORLD RESPONSE

MARYKNOLL, N.Y.: ORBIS BOOKS, 1981

In this volume seven theologians respond to questions which liberation theologies have posed for First World theology and biblical studies. Their essays (with two exceptions) were originally presented as papers at a student conference on «the challenge of liberation theology» held at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago in 1979.

In the first essay Dorothee Sölle describes the need for liberation in a consumerist society. She urges First World Christians who have learned to endure their «Egyptian» exile to «choose life» by participating in the struggle against the totalitarian and hedonistic culture which holds them captive. Lee Cormie follows with a First World view of the role played by international capitalism in racism, sexism, and poverty. He argues that liberation theologies are accurate in exposing the irrationality of the capitalist worldview, its optimism and its individualism, and that liberation theologies converge in attempting to transcend the present system by means of a new and liberating rationality.

James H. Cone explores the relationship between Christian faith and political praxis in the context of black theology. He defines praxis as a specific kind of obedience connected with a social theory of change. Faith is ontologically prior to obedience, but «by putting obedience prior to faith on the sociological plane, we protect ourselves from the heresy of substituting

faith for action» (62). James W. Fowler applies his theory of the structural-developmental stages of faith to black theologies of liberation. He discovers «ideological theologians» and «theologians of balance,» representing two different stages of faith, and concludes that both theological approaches should be preserved in the hope that their interaction will result in a more comprehensive synthesis.

Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza defends the «advocacy stance» of liberation theologies and suggests that the «option for the oppressed» should be the canon and norm for biblical interpretation. Noting that the Bible functions as a male weapon in the political struggle against women's liberation, she argues that a feminist biblical hermeneutics «must uncover and denounce biblical traditions and theologies that perpetuate violence, alienation, and oppression» and «must delineate those biblical traditions that bring forward the liberating experiences and visions of the people of God» (108). Since Scripture is a source of violence and domination as well as of truth and revelation, the Bible should be understood as prototype rather than archetype.

Langdon Gilkey surveys biblical views of evil in history and concludes that the powerful and the affluent are primarily responsible for the distortions of social life. Political liberation therefore means a struggle both against the dominance of ruling groups and for new forms of social existence inspired by the symbol of the Kingdom. In the final essay Schubert M. Ogden asks whether Christian theology today must be conceived as liberation theology. His answer is that theology must be more than «critical reflection on faith as a liberating praxis» (Gutierrez); it must also subject the claims of faith itself to the question of truth.

It is clear that liberation theologies challenge the adequacy of First World theological method and biblical hermeneutics. Most of these essays therefore attempt to clarify questions concerning contexuality, theory and praxis, witness and critical reflection, redemption and emancipation, or the individual and the social.

On a deeper level liberation theologies challenge the values and worldview of the dominant First World culture. The «culture of consumerism» is fundamentally irrational and must be transcended if a community of justice is to be established.

This book is a warning, however, against a too-easy appropriation of liberation theology by First World Christians. Schüssler Fiorenza charges that co-opting the term «oppression» through generalization renders it meaningless and neutralizes the struggles of particular groups for liberation. Sölle allows that First World citizens do indeed need liberation but adds a crucial qualification:

« Our need for liberation has a different starting point than the struggle for economic justice. Our being exploited is different from the exploitation of the Third World. Still, it is one beast that rules over us, Third World and First World people, but we in the affluent societies tend to overlook its fascist dimensions. Our immediate experience of the beast is of its hedonistic side rather than of its oppressive side (9-10).»

I recommend the book to all pastors and educators who are willing to be challenged by what continue to be the most provocative theological movements today.

William Van Gelder

#### JURGEN MOLTMANN

THE TRINITY and the KINGDOM

SAN FRANCISCO: HARPER AND ROW, 1981

With Andrei Rublev's fifteenth century Russian icon of the Holy Trinity poised before him, Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann has made a noble ecumenical effort at resolving the doctrinal issue which divides our church, East and West. The Trinity and the Kingdom is Moltmann's first in a series of «contributions to theology.» In it he gleans from his previous major works in order to confront, head-on, the constant Western trinitarian temptation of modalistic monarchianism, i.e. Sabellianism.

Romans and Protestants alike will be as quick in their accusing Moltmann of «tritheism» as others were in their charging him with «patripassianism» with the publication of The Crucified God (ET, 1974). In this treatise Moltmann's hermeneutical point of departure is that of considering the various relational «forms of the Trinity» as they are revealed in the scriptural account of «The History of the Son.» Therefore, the author is considering the relationships of the three divine persons prior to any discussion of unity.

Moltmann contends that in Western Christian doctrine the unity of God has always been considered prior to the diversity and always at a loss of trinitarian differentiation. God's unity is not to be thought of as Tertullian's celebrated una substantia, nor as moderns (Barth, Rahner, et al.) would have it, divine subjectivity. No, Moltmann appeals to John Damascene's doctrine of perichoresis. In the salvific perichoretic working of the three persons of the Trinity lies the unity of God. «The unity of the divine triunity lies in the union of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, not in their numerical unity» (95).

Riding on the crest of a working group of Faith and Order in the World Council of Churches, Moltmann addresses the filiaque question, i.e. the ecumenically divisive question of whether the Spirit proceeds from the Father exclusively (as the East claims) or from the Son as well (a Western interjection into the ecumenical creed). With acknowledgement of the mediatory positions of the Old Catholics of the West who wish to strike the filiaque clause from the creed and Russian Orthodox theologian Boris Bolotov, who sees that the Son is not «uninvolved» in the Spirit's procession Moltmann offers his own go-between.

First he makes the claim that the triune economies of God which we experience are no different from the immanent essential triune character of God, in and of himself. But this very presupposition is violated as Moltmann suggests that constitutionally there is a «monarchy of the Father» from which the Son and the Spirit are respectively «generated» and «breathed,» while in the relational life of the Trinity each person perichoretically contributes to the economic form of the others.

As to whether or not the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son (filioque), Moltmann sides with the Eastern tradition in suggesting that constitutionally the Spirit proceeds exclusively from the Father. Yet he sides with the Western tradition in saying that the Son is not uninfluential in the determination of the relational form of the Spirit. The Spirit proceeds from the Father of the Son and is sent by the Son. The author's suggestion is that the filioque be withdrawn by the West for it obscures where it intended to clarify.

With this constitution/form distinction recalling the substance/accidents distinction in medieval eucharistic debates Moltmann himself becomes conscious of the implicit contradictions between a constitutional «monarchy of the Father» and the perichorectically determined form of the relational life of the Trinity. As soon as he offers his hairsplitting solution to the feuding churches, the author abandons the distinction, opting for relational perichoresis over any form of monarchy, immanent or economic. He writes: «It would therefore be helpful to remove the concept of First Cause from trinitarian doctrine altogether, and to confine oneself to an account of the interpersonal relationships» (189). With that, all of his sincere efforts at resolving our 1500 year old division evaporate.

The real fruit of the book lies in the practical ramifications of the author's original appreciation. God's unity is now understood to be not one of monarchial substance or subjectivity, but rather a community of the three divine persons, as pictured in Rublev's icon. This further suggests that the imago dei is not to be found in bourgeois individuality but in authentic human community. Similarly, the perichoretic community of the Trinity undermines the supposed divine sanction which grounds both political and ecclesiastical propensities towards monarchialism. God is no singular monarch, so despots and clerics have no divine foundation upon which they can attribute their singular and often abusive authority. Singular authority mistakes freedom for power over property, but the loving community of the Trinity, in its liberating economies, reveals freedom to be passionate community.

Recalling Joachim of Fiore's trinitarian view of history, Moltmann suggests that the Kingdom of the Father frees people to become the honourable servants of God. The Kingdom of the Son justifies these servants and liberates them unto the personal and intimate relationship which the Son shares with the Father. The Kingdom of the Spirit takes these servants now children and includes them as free «friends of God» within the redemptive project of bringing history toward the eschatological Kingdom of glory.

- Anthony Capon is Principal of the Montreal Diocesan Theological College (Anglican).
- Richard R. Cooper is a doctoral candidate in philosophy of religion at the Faculty of Religious Studies and managing editor of ARC.
- Robert C. Culley is Professor of Old Testament in the Faculty of Religious Studies.
- Pierre Goldberger is Principal of the United Theological College and Faculty Lecturer in Theology in the Faculty of Religious Studies.
- William Klempa is Principal of the Presbyterian College and Faculty Lecturer in Theology in the Faculty of Religious Studies.
- J.C. McLelland is Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies and McConnell Professor of Philosophy of Religion.
- Thomas G. Nordberg is a doctoral candidate in Christian Theology at the Faculty of Religious Studies.
- Dunna Runnalls, the editor of this issue of ARC, is Associate Professor of Old Testament and Judaism in the Faculty of Religious Studies.
- William Van Gelder is a doctoral candidate in Christian Ethics at the Faculty of Religious Studies.
- Arthur Van Seters is Faculty Lecturer in Old Testament at the Faculty of Religious Studies and Director of the Montreal Institute for Ministry.
- Frederik Wisse is Associate Professor of New Testament in the Faculty of Religious Studies.
- $\it N.T.$  Wright is Assistant Professor of New Testament in the Faculty of Religious Studies.

TO THE READERS OF ARC:

Dear Friends:

This academic year marks the tenth anniversary of the publication of ARC. During those ten years we have distributed ARC twice-yearly to nearly 1500 alumni/ae and friends of McGill's Faculty of Religious Studies. To help meet printing and postage costs, we have asked for an annual contribution from our readers. A number of readers have been most faithful and generous with their gifts. To them go our very sincere thanks.

We have now reached a point, however, at which we must seriously consider the future of ARC. At present we are operating on a growing deficit. Printing and postage costs have steadily increased in the last two years. For example, the cost of producing and mailing the Autumn 1980 issue of ARC was \$1,097.02; the cost of the Autumn 1981 issue was \$1,367.60. In contrast to this, the contributions received between January 1981 and January 1982 to this, the contributions received between January 1981 and January 1982 amounted to \$726. The cost of the Spring 1982 issue was \$1,777.44 as compared to contributions received to April 1st, 1982, of \$471. On a rough average the receipt of contributions amounts to about half of the cost of producing ARC.

We estimate that for the coming year, even with an effort to cut expenses as much as possible, it will cost us between \$2.50 and \$3.00 to produce and post a single copy of ARC.

Bearing all this in mind, would each of you please fill in the following questionnaire and send it to us by return post.

Once again, our sincere thanks go to our faithful readers and supporters.

The Editorial Committee ARC

## QUESTIONNAIRE

of topic of the origin to	read ARC and wish to continue receiving it.
TO amen many 11 .	I do not read <u>ARC</u> and do not wish to continue receiving it.
trus know so that we ry de la cos Aldress A	I am willing to contribute \$5.00 per year to the support of ARC. (Please make your cheque payable to the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University
	I am willing to contribute \$ per year to the support of ARC. (Contributions of \$25.00 and ove are tax deductible. Cheques for \$25.00 and over should be made payable to the McGill Development Fund and earmarked ARC.)
-/	I should like to suggest the following topics as possible themes for future issues of ARC.
	The second secon
etherine K. Young	- Control of Control o

Please return this questionnaire to:

ARC Faculty of Religious Studies McGill University 3520 University Street Montreal, PQ H3A 2A7 ARC is an attempt to provide a means of maintaining the ties that exist between the academic community and its Alumni/Alumnae. To aid in this continuing theological education, we are publishing two issues per year which are distributed to almost 1500 graduates and friends of the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University, its affiliated Colleges (Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church) and the Montreal Institute for Ministry. We are asking for an annual contribution of \$5.00 per person in order to offset costs of printing and distribution.

ARC welcomes all comments, suggestions and donations. If your name or address is incorrect on our mailing label, please let us know so that we can send you the next issue of ARC without unnecessary delay. Address all correspondence to:

ARC
The Faculty of Coligious Studies
McGill University
3520 University Street
Montreal, PQ
H3A 2A7

Editor for this Issue - Donna Runnalls

Editorial Committee - E.J. Furcha, Katherine K. Young

Managing Editor - Richard R. Cooper

Typist - Diane Coull