

BOOK REVIEWS

Old Testament Theology, Volume II. By Horst Dietrich Preuss. Translated by Leo G. Perdue. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996. x + 438 pp. \$34.00.

H. D. Preuss, a highly respected Old Testament scholar in Germany, is not well known in the English-speaking world. The two volumes of his *Old Testament Theology* represent the culmination of his years of teaching and research. They were completed just prior to his retirement and only two years before his death in 1993. Their translation and publication in the U.S. should establish his reputation here.

In the past two centuries the search for the theology of the Old Testament has been largely a Protestant (and German) effort. The twentieth century has witnessed the publication of several distinguished works in this field. But the attempt "to offer an overview of the world of faith and witness of the Old Testament" (I, 1) is a daunting task, one which some scholars consider impossible. For Hebrew Scripture is a collection of writings of varying viewpoints and theologies. Numerous authors and editors, appealing to different audiences over the centuries, contributed to these works. Can there really be a theology of the Old Testament? Can we really systematize such diverse material?

Biblical theology must understand Israel's religious ideas in terms of that nation's own historical and cultural context. This is not easy, since there is so much about the ancient Near East and the text of the Hebrew Bible which we do not know. Historical criticism is essential for drawing out the theology of the Old Testament, and yet it may not be sufficient. Modern scholarly research recognizes that there is more than one way to approach and understand a text.

Every Old Testament theology must deal with the relationship between God and Israel. Preuss understands *election* as the central theological concept of Hebrew Scripture. For him the "center" of the Old Testament is found in the divine activity which establishes an ongoing relationship with the people of Israel. This relationship was initiated by God but required a human response. Preuss is probably correct in assuming that every aspect of Old Testament thought is a consequence of God's election of Israel. However, we must recognize that some of Israel's religious ideas (for example, wisdom traditions) are not *immediate* consequences of its election.

Volume II of *Old Testament Theology* relates election to important aspects of Hebrew religious thought and activity. It contains parts three and four (chapters 6–15) of the combined work. Part three associates specific narratives and ideas with Israel's election: the ancestors, the monarchy, the city of Jerusalem and its temple, the priesthood, and the prophets. Part four is dedicated to the results and consequences of election as experienced in Israel's history. This section explores Israelite anthropology, ethical questions, the cult, eschatology, and the relationship between Israel (the chosen people) and the nations (the non-chosen).

Old Testament Theology is no work for a beginner. However, a pastor or minister who has gone beyond introductory biblical courses will find much in this work that will be helpful. Preuss's knowledge of the text and familiarity with biblical scholarship is phenomenal. His approach is largely historical critical. This could be disappointing to someone who prefers a literary approach to the Bible. Hebrew words appear frequently in this work, but in such a way that the non-Hebrew reader can ignore them and still understand what the author is saying. The two volumes are like an encyclopedia, for they attempt to explore every possible aspect of Old Testament theology. However, this can also be a drawback to the work. For one can get lost in the details of Preuss's scholarship. His tendency toward long paragraphs and critical dialogue with other scholars can also be disconcerting. However, these two volumes should be required reading for any serious student of Old Testament theology.

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Lydia's Impatient Sisters. A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity.

By Luise Schotroff. Translated by Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995. 298 pp. Hardcover, \$29.95

This latest work of Luise Schotroff is not for the impatient, that is, those who look for simple solutions to the complex phenomenon of Christian patriarchy and its consequences. But for those patient enough to follow Schotroff's detailed argumentation, the effort is well spent. This is not an easy book; every page presents strong challenges in bold language. Using a feminist liberationist approach, Schotroff constructs a social-historical interpretation of the Bible. She seeks out the oppression of women and their praxis of liberation in terms of the concrete social conditions that have constructed women's economic, political, and social reality. By asking questions such as: "What did it mean for a woman to become Christian in the early days of Christianity?" Schotroff opens whole new dimensions of meaning.

The book is divided into four major sections. In Part I, Schotroff lays out her methodological approach. She insists that interpreters take seriously both their own social location and that of the people who speak in the Bible. Schotroff queries where a gospel that was originally critical of all patriarchal structures of domination became confused with that very ideology. She does a critical analysis of patriarchy and then offers a counter-concept of a feminist vision of the reign of God. Though the biblical tradition be androcentric, she sees it as yet transformable, still offering traces of a radical critique of structures of domination. But one must ask of each text, "Who benefits from this statement? Whose benefit does it claim to serve? What does it call for? What praxis follows from it? What other statements does it lead to? What statements support it? In what situation is it uttered? By whom?" (57). For those already committed to feminist endeavors, this first section will be somewhat remedial.

In the second part Schotroff takes New Testament texts that reveal the social reality of everyday women's lives, and analyzes traces of oppression and women's resistance. She shows the hatred of women's liberation, the reality of women's work, and control of money. Part Three centers on texts concerning the call of God, the gospel of the poor, and eschatology. The final section looks to the elevation of debased women with regard to marriage, family, and relationships of mutuality in the new community of believers. Each chapter in these three sections has four parts: (1) questions related to the texts; (2) the social-historical issues reflected in the texts; (3) feminist critique of the history of interpretation; (4) additional feminist observations on the use of the texts discussed.

The most revealing and persistently disturbing aspect of the book is the way in which Schotroff methodically unmasks unwarranted presuppositions and patriarchal biases that have colored interpretations of biblical texts. She makes a great contribution to New Testament scholarship by providing commentary from an alternative perspective and by asking previously unvoiced questions. By showing her readers how to persistently make such queries about the social reality of the women of the biblical texts, Schotroff's book succeeds in making one impatient to work for the transformation of structures of domination. It is eminently clear, however, from Schotroff's chapter on "The Gospel of the Poor and the Option for Women," that in dominant theology Christianity has been co-opted into "a religion that offers middle-class and rich people scope to create identity and to occupy their positions of power" (145). It is the poor who are impatient for transformation of the status quo; middle-class and rich readers who are attracted to the gospel of the poor must face their own contentment and patience with the delay in the hour of conversion.

Schotroff's book is a clarion to Christian women and men today not to let themselves be "driven into resignation by despair and fear," but rather to be reinforced by the impatience of our foresisters "who have raised up their heads because they have felt the power of God to be near" (xvi).

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Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective. By Ivoni Richter Reimer. Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. Pages, xxvi + 302. Paper, \$24.00.

This book is a must for anyone attempting to retrieve the fuller picture of the life and work of women disciples in the early Church. To my knowledge, it is the first extensive treatment of women in the Acts of the Apostles. Reimer asks previously uninvestigated questions and challenges sexist presuppositions that underlie traditional interpretations. In her six chapters, she analyzes the stories of Sapphira (5:1-11), Tabitha (9:36-43), Lydia (16:13-15, 40), the prophetic slave in Philippi (16:16-18), Priscilla (18:1-3, 8-19, 24-28), and women mentioned briefly or not at all.

Her feminist liberation method makes use of customary historical tools including extensive word analyses. Reimer's aim is to reconstruct the history of women, while recognizing that the sources are androcentric, revealing only a partial history. She asserts that the women featured in Acts are not exceptional, but rather, are typical of many others like themselves.

By posing questions that are not usually asked, Reimer both unmasks unwarranted assumptions of previous interpreters, and offers fresh possibilities of meaning. With Sapphira, for example, she asks, "Why did she support her husband in his act of concealment?" (6). Reimer concludes that Sapphira, like Ananias, does not wholly trust the community and that she "could not or would not withdraw from the control of patriarchal power" even though "she surely would have nothing to fear in the community of equals if she had resisted her husband in this matter" (15). For Reimer Sapphira's true sin lies in having reinserted herself into a patriarchal marriage in which she would not offer resistance to her husband's decisions (20).

This final assertion presents a difficulty that recurs throughout Reimer's work. Were the early Christians in fact free from all patriarchal structures, functioning as true communities of equals (126, 218, 267)? Indeed, Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-36, and other NT texts present such an ideal. But was this a reality? I am not as convinced as Reimer that it was. Almost every early Christian writing shows evidence of tensions over this very issue. I agree with Reimer that a liberative reading of the stories of women in Acts impels contemporary Christians to work toward egalitarianism, but is it a return to a former pristine practice? Or is it not striving for what has always been ideal but never fully achieved?

One of Reimer's most important contributions is how she unfolds the realities of the work lives of women. She shows Tabitha as a textile worker whose works of righteousness (9:36) were also challenges to unjust social and economic relationships. Lydia is not a rich merchant, but a foreigner, a freed woman, working with other such women in a despised trade, the production of purple cloth, engaged in subsistence work for herself and her household (112). The prophetic slave girl is not enslaved by the Pythian spirit, but rather, by her owners. Her exorcism will be liberating for her only if there are new possibilities of life open to her, now that her means of employment is removed. Prisca's life as a leatherworker was difficult and despised. She and Aquila were immigrant, lower class minor craftworkers. With these portraits of women in Acts, Reimer challenges the prevailing notion that Luke showcases rich women in his second volume. Rather, missionaries who spread the gospel include ordinary working women.

Reimer unmasks interpretations that reveal anti-Jewish biases. In Tabitha's story, for example, she shows how many commentators distinguish Christian from Jewish ethics, to the advantage of the former. Instead, Reimer sees Tabitha as exemplifying a Christian who continues to live a Jewish spirituality rooted in pious practices on behalf of the poor.

In sum, this book is an indispensable tool for understanding significant parts of the story of early Christianity that have been previously overlooked or misinterpreted.

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History of Vatican II. Volume I. Edited by Giuseppe Alberigo. With an English version edited by Joseph Komonchak. Maryknoll: Orbis Press. Leuven: Peeters, 1995. 527 pp.

Any similarity between the preparation for Vatican II and its final outcome is purely coincidental! This brilliant first volume of a projected five-volume study takes us into the “smoke-filled backrooms” of the Vatican where the council is being planned. For more than five hundred pages we are *treated* to a battle of minds, personalities, and power.

Giuseppe Alberigo gives the background in announcing the event that is to be Vatican II. The Ante-Preparatory phase is covered by Etienne Fouilloux. The third section, brilliantly arranged and presented by the American Joseph Komonchak, is by far the longest and the most informative chapter in the book. For more than two hundred pages Komonchak gives us an *experience* of the struggle that was the council’s preparation: the power-plays, the maneuvering, the dodges, the pettiness, and the parry and thrust of getting one’s own agenda “on the books” and getting everybody else’s swept away. The external climate surrounding the council: the press, reactions of various episcopates, the revolutionary style of the upstart Pope, and the disastrous Roman Synod is the material for J. Oscar Beozzo. The final chapter by Klaus Wittstadt brings us to the eve of the Council. In this section we get the final reactions of the various episcopates, the “touchy” situation of appointing the *periti* (theological experts). And this section informs us of all the things we were not aware we wanted to know about Vatican II’s more practical aspects: microphones, lighting, telephones, data processing for voting; also, steps taken to preserve secrecy (like hiring security men who did not know Latin!!). Add to these the super-practical questions: what happens when twenty five hundred older men have to go to the little bishops’ room? All the details are there, and, of course, the *very* bottom line: who is paying for all this?

On a less practical but more important note, Fouilloux in the second section gives a masterful overview of the Church in the 1950s, the setting sun for Ultra-Montanism, the Church with the problems that Vatican II was called to solve. The nucleus of this ecclesial situation, then as now, was the Roman curia. As expected, curial officialdom were *not* happy when it came to anything that would challenge their privileged position and centralized power base. The irony in all of this is that the initial responses from the world’s bishops were not terribly keen on changes either. Most wanted business as usual. This includes Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, who was not at all enthusiastic. A big number of bishops never bothered to respond. The Catholic universities reflected the same pattern. Chicago (Loyola?) ignored the request for prospective agenda for the council. A number of these same schools who at the time cared little about changes in Rome are presently the ones in a dog-fight with the Roman congregations. How history *does* play tricks on us!!

The major obstacles to the birth of the renewed Church can be laid at the feet of the Pope. John, as unpredictable as he was lovable, knew the need for change, yet he appointed curial officials to head the all-important conciliar commissions, a move very much like trying to get the House of Lords to vote themselves out of power. The result was: Catholicism already immobile by its certainties became paralyzed. The biggest difficulty had to do with the all-important Theological

Commission and its all-powerful head Cardinal Ottaviani. The TC was the conciliar counterpart to the Holy Office. The TC, holding all the marbles, *alone* could approve any material involving revelation. They used this power to torpedo ecumenism, liturgy, laity, collegiality, and any other issue not to their liking. The other commissions knew they literally did not have a prayer—any theological position was vetoed by the TC, unless it was *their* position. As a result, commissions submitted schemata that were little more than practical suggestions without theological bases. Ottaviani, however, met his match in Augustin Bea and his Secretariat for Christian Unity, a pet of the Pope. Technically, the SCU was not a commission, and, therefore, it had no authority to introduce conciliar schemata. But Bea and his group refused to lie down and die. (After the council began, the Pope raised the SCU to the status of a commission in a brilliant move that floored the TC and the curia.)

The Old Guard were determined to make Vatican II the finishing touch of the negative, authoritarian Vatican I. They wanted continuity with *Pascendi*, the infamous letter that ecclesially executed the Modernists, and they insisted on all the principles and policies of Pope Pius XII, especially those embodied in *Humani generis*. They wanted Vatican II to come down hard on the errors of the modern age and wanted no encouragement or direction for millions of good people, Catholic and non-Catholic, who deserved more than condemnation. The authors of this volume show us how the Holy Spirit was smuggled into Vatican II. We all knew the council was a struggle. This volume proves it was a miracle.

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Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States. By Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M. Second edition. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996. 258 pp. \$16.00

This is the second edition of a text first published by Macmillan in 1989 as part of the "Makers of the Catholic Community Series," commemorating the bicentennial of the initial organization of U.S. Catholicism under Bishop John Carroll. The author has written a new preface for this edition. The text has weathered the last eight years well, and it remains a solid achievement.

The book is organized chronologically and divided into five parts: An Enlightenment Synthesis, 1776–1815; The Immigrant Vision, 1830–1866; The Spirituality of Americanism, 1866–1900; A Fractured Inheritance, 1900–1930; and Seedbed of Reform, 1930–1965. The enlightenment synthesis, articulated by Bishops John Carroll and John England, addressed the pastoral needs of the Catholic minority in the colonies. The rapid expansion of the Catholic population due to immigration during the nineteenth century led to disagreement about Catholicism's pastoral strategy. Bishops Martin John Spalding, John Hughes, and John Neumann articulated the "immigrant vision," emphasizing a strong institutional Church as a bastion against Protestant hostility. Other leaders (Orestes Brownson, Isaac Hecker) argued for an "Americanist spirituality," one more open to dialogue with American culture.

This debate was interrupted by Leo XIII's 1899 encyclical *Testem benevolentiae* which condemned the heresy of "Americanism." Chinnici argues that this letter resulted in a "fractured inheritance" (135). Leo XIII, in all his teaching, reiterated that Church and state formed perfect societies which operated in different spheres, the supernatural and the natural. Thus American Catholic spiritual writers could no longer synthesize the spiritual and the secular; rather, "spiritual" and "secular" became parallel spheres of activity.

In the early twentieth century, Chinnici argues, this fracture can be seen in the writings of the social activist John A. Ryan, the eucharistic movement, and the retreat movement. In the final section of the book Chinnici examines figures who presage the reforms of Vatican II: Virgil Michel who led the liturgical reform movement; Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker; James Keller of the Christophers; and the Trappist Thomas Merton who touched off a widespread interest in contemplation.

Two aspects of Chinnici's contribution particularly stand out. First, the chapters are based on archival research and a reading of the primary texts. The conclusions about U.S. Catholic spirituality are thus not derived from European scholarly work in spirituality but are thoroughly rooted in American soil. Second, Chinnici focuses upon spirituality as a synthesis of "a Catholic's self-identity, experience of society, convictions about the institutional church, devotional life, attitudes toward asceticism, and image of Christ." Spirituality focuses these various components into "a cultural whole," a lifestyle that responds to the cultural context (xii). The word "structure" in the subtitle alludes to this approach. He traces how various structures of spirituality evolved as Catholicism faced new challenges.

The book's strong point—its solid basis in historical research—implicitly contains its weak point—its limited treatment of the subject. In the preface to the second edition Chinnici himself acknowledges that "the limitations of *Living Stones* are obvious" (xvii). Three such limitations can be mentioned here. First, with the exception of Dorothy Day, the book examines only Anglo males. A study of women's contributions would have enriched the book considerably. Similarly, the text would be enhanced by incorporating material from the diverse ethnic groups woven into the tapestry of American Catholicism. Second, several major figures are not covered. Why Chinnici would, for example, cover Rev. Terence Shealy of the retreat movement and not examine James Cardinal Gibbons is unclear. Finally, more treatment could have been given to popular expressions of religiosity (devotions, material artifacts, print media, radio and television).

The book is written in a lucid, accessible style and would be of interest not only to historians but to anyone wishing to further his or her understanding of U.S. Catholicism.

Acknowledging the book's limitations, one must still recognize Chinnici's accomplishment. *Living Stones* is the best available one volume history of American Catholic spirituality.

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Christ in Christian Tradition: The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century. By Aloys Grillmeier with Theresia Hainthaler. Volume II, part 2. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995. 565 pp. Cloth. \$50.

The scholar of Byzantine history, christology, ecclesiology, or ecumenism will be happy to see this new book of the author's monumental research become available in English. This section of the history, from Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604), concentrates on the Byzantine capital, with a third part of this volume to concentrate on the patriarchates of Jerusalem and Antioch, Armenia and Georgia, and the Church of Persia, and a fourth, focusing on Alexandria, Nubia, and Ethiopia. In addition to these parts, already available in German, there will be a third volume on the West.

This great research project is oriented not only to the careful scientific exploration of the sources, theological arguments, and faith of the Church, but it is also meant to serve an ecumenical purpose, exploring the differences and compatibilities of the christologies of these Churches, divided these many centuries. In this respect, the evaluation of Justinian's strategy and theology, and the Fifth Ecumenical Council, Constantinople 553, are of particular importance. For this reason, it provides an invaluable resource to those following the reconciliation of Oriental and Byzantine Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in our own day. As the author notes, in reviewing the massive literature of the period, in retrospect, and especially in light of the Islamic conquest—next chapters in this ecclesial history—one finds more common christological ground than did the antagonists of that era.

The volume covers in depth and detail the theological positions and arguments of Severus of Antioch and his interlocutors like Julian of Halicarnassus, Nephalius, Leontius of Byzantium, Romanos Melodos, Leontius of Jerusalem, and the expanded circle of Chalcedonia theologians and monks. The author surveys, and provides an evaluation of, the most current critical sources, outlines their positions on the Cyrilian terminology, their formulations of the hypostatic union, and the implications of their protection of the duality or unicity of natures of Christ. He goes on to lay out the role of Justinian and Theodora, of Popes John II and Vigilius, and the various patriarchs. There are chapters on the *Three Chapters* dispute, the fifth ecumenical council, and the condemnation of Origen.

The discussions of various attempts at reconciliation of both terminology and theology on the one hand, and theologians and Churches on the other are explored in detail. Indeed, it is in this period, and at the Council, that the hermeneutics of Chalcedon and its formulation on the person and natures of Christ are set for the subsequent course of Christian history. The authors not only deal with the explication of the original sources and arguments, but they carefully survey the secondary literature and current debates, judiciously making judgments where possible, and laying out alternatives, where they feel the documentation does not support a definitive solution. The importance, for subsequent Christianity, of the condemnations of Origenist anthropology and cosmology, and the compromises and orthodoxy of Justinian are essential for understanding the rest of Christian history and its expression of faith.

As the authors note, it has been impossible to explicate the full range of Byzantine devotional life, liturgical development, and artistic expressions, all of which are central to the christological faith developed during this century. However, we can be appreciative of this massive research project, which will be the basis of teaching and research in christology and ecclesiology for decades to come. The volume ends with an appraisal of the sixth century and the Justinian era. Also included are an extensive bibliography and four indexes for both parts one and two of volume two.

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On the Moral Nature of the Universe. Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics.

Nancey Murphy and George F. R. Ellis. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.

The cosmos as we know it today in the light of the sciences is an unfolding, chemical process that eventually generates life in the form of intelligent, free agents, at least on this planet. What might be the case beyond this planet we are not yet in a position to say. And when intelligent life emerges, it is a form of life which, as K. Rahner once wrote, is capable of taking into its own hands the very chemical process that begot it and of adjusting and manipulating the structure of that process itself, at least on this planet. One can hardly think of this seriously without being struck by the immense ethical questions which emerge out of such an understanding of the cosmos. What are we to make of the fact that the cosmos itself brings into being a form of life that is capable of such intervention not only in its own life, but in the life of all other creatures on this planet? We suggest nothing as to how far beyond this planet such intervention might eventually reach. It seems inevitable that one must eventually ask about the implications of contemporary cosmological insights for our understanding of human ethical activity. This is precisely the concern of this remarkable book in which the authors attempt to address the complexity and uncertainty of our times by bringing the sciences together with ethics and Christian doctrine.

The authors clearly lay out the scientific, philosophical-epistemological, ethical, and theological suppositions from which they work. Without hesitation, they state their conviction about the need for a functioning cosmology that can relate the vision of the sciences to the vision of theology and thus provide a framework for dealing with the larger questions of meaning and ethics. Against the claim that the experienced sense of moral obligation is a mere illusion, they argue that such is not the case, and that this experience itself provides important clues as to the nature of reality. They argue that only when our picture of reality moves beyond mere empirical description and analysis to the metaphysical and theological level does it become more adequate and begin to provide a basis for arguing against the deadly position of total moral relativism.

More precisely, their argument is shaped by specific forms of the Christian tradition, that of the Quakers and that of the Church of the Brethren. These traditions lead the authors to ethical insights of considerable significance in dealing with the problems of a socio-political culture shaped by the possibilities placed into human hands today by science and technology. Their argument moves away from the ethic of power and control which leads to the exploitation of nature and of our fellow human beings to a kenotic ethic of self-emptying for the sake of the other grounded in a kenotic concept of God. Human life is created not for domination and control but for other ways of relating that revolve around the issue of self-emptying. This line of argument will lead consistently to an ethic of non-violence. And non-violent ways of relating ought to be found not only in the context of inter-human relations, but in human relations to the rest of the world as well. A way of life for human beings characterized by a kenotic vision, they argue, is right for humankind because it coheres with the nature of the universe as perceived by the physical and the social sciences, and because ultimately it is grounded in the moral character of God which shines through in the moral sensibility of humankind. Beyond this, such an ethical insight helps shed light on the painful structures and the waste that seem to be involved in the begetting of life at all levels that we know on this planet. The position of these authors is not unlike that of Holmes Rolston III who presents a powerful case for the spiritual-ethical significance of suffering not only in the Christian context but in the cosmic context as well (cfr. "Does Nature Need to be Redeemed?" *Zygon*, 1994:205–29.) Thus, a theological, ethical theory helps to round out the insights of the sciences at the level of the boundary questions raised by the sciences.

Such a kenotic concept of God has appeared at times in theology, particularly in the case of Process-theologians who commonly speak of a dipolar concept of the divine. The ethical implications of such a kenotic view are recognized by a number of other important studies, but they are rarely discussed with such consistency and with such a sense of urgency. The authors of this study treat the kenotic ethic not only in its Christian form, but also in the form in which it appears in other religious traditions. Readers with a long sense of the history of Christian spirituality and theology may well recognize reverberations of the medieval poverty-debates in this discussion and overtones of the medieval understanding of voluntary poverty as equivalent to humility and as foundational for the spiritual life in any form.

Those familiar with studies on environmental problems are aware of the widespread conviction that a fundamental shift of values is crucial to the solution of the major problems in this area. This book can be seen as an extended argument about the nature of that shift. It is an argument that is well-informed, coherent, and convincing. It is also disturbing. And so it must be if, in fact, we are talking about reformulating the basic values by which we come to define ourselves and our place in the world.

This book is not light reading. It is directed to a public that is at least minimally literate in the sciences and concerned about environmental issues. The authors have presented an account of the moral nature of God and of God's will for human life that they believe is uniquely fitted to the universe as we now understand it. Not just any theology and not just any ethic is compatible in this

way with the contemporary scientific world-view. Clearly the implications of the ethic for which they argue fly in the face of much of contemporary, Western consciousness. These authors are brave. And their message needs to be heard.

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Ecclesiology in Context. By Johannes A. van der Ven. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996. xvi + 568 pp. \$29.00.

This book is rooted in unabashedly addressing the religious crisis of the West. It does not pursue liberation theology in third-world countries and that theology's application to first- and second-world countries. The focus is not poverty or issues of power, but the process of secularization which is the result of more global processes of modernization and rationalization. Provided the reader remains aware of the author's limited horizon, the book's focus is strong and is not meant to deny the gains of liberation approaches. The question which van der Ven poses refers to the self-understanding of the Church and its role in the process of rampant secularization.

Interdisciplinary in approach, the book employs biblical, historical and systematic thought, hermeneutical theory and semiotics, and empirical studies. It provides the uninitiated with a helpful introduction to the new field of Practical Theology with its marked reliance on the use of quantitative measurements in theology. Its Dutch author personifies the European roots of this emerging and increasingly important discipline, and he acts as a bridge between Europe and other parts of the world. J. A. van der Ven teaches at the Catholic University of Nimegen and is guest lecturer at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. For readers involved in pastoral activity, the book will prove useful in demonstrating the indispensability and the applicability of social and cultural analysis in ministry.

The book is divided unequally into two major sections. The first examines in eight chapters the crisis of secularization, defined as the loss of the centrality and self-evidential character of religion, and how a practical theology can address the issue by examining the notion of "function" from the social sciences and "codes" in the light of semiotics. These chapters are highly theoretical and demand a great deal of effort at understanding, but are essential to the book's later argumentation.

The thesis of the first section is that the process of secularization forces the Church to understand itself differently than in the past. Without ceasing to understand itself as Church, it must, however, simultaneously understand and explain itself in the sociological terms of a denomination and an association in particular. It is incumbent on the Church as association to communicate its religious message to the secularized world, which no longer offers the Church a privileged place in society. Communication, therefore, becomes the general function of the Church. The theory of signs, or semiotics, then, becomes the

way the Church of the West today fulfills the task of communication, in particular by applying the semiotic theory of codes and supercodes as religious signs to the empirical phenomena of the Church. The chief general codes for interpreting reality religiously are creation, liberation and completion. More specifically, the codes for interpreting the Church as association are the people of God, the Jesus movement, the body of Christ, the building of the Spirit and the Church of the poor. A supercode for interpreting this great variety of codes is the Church as sacrament.

In the second section consisting of sixteen chapters, van der Ven examines the four core functions of the Church in a time of radical secularization: identity, integration, policy and management. Employing the religious codes of the people of God and the Jesus movement, the core function of identity seeks to address the underlying issue of the Church's vision and mission in a time of secularization. Next, the religious code of the body of Christ addresses the issue of forming community which emerges out of the attendant individualization of the secularization process. Then, the religious code of the building of the Spirit aims at the core function of policy, i.e., the implementation of the vision and mission of the Church, and so addresses the issue of utilization. Finally, the religious code of the Church of the poor aims at the core function of management, which adapts the Church's resources to the attainment of its goals by examining service quality, personnel development and finances.

There is a great deal to be learned from this book. This reviewer especially appreciated van der Ven's carefully defining technical terms often used today but rarely explained. His distinctions and divisions of general terms was very useful. He is also to be commended for his frequent summaries as he works his way through complicated and cumulatively massive material. Longer summaries at the end of both major sections help the reader review the general lines of the book's argument.

Still the book is not without its flaws. North American readers will be put off somewhat at the author's heavy reliance on empirical studies of the Christian Churches of the Netherlands. How much can be extrapolated from them with reference to other countries? English translations of books and articles noted in the Bibliography have not been provided when this could easily have been done for the English edition of the book, which appeared originally in Dutch in 1993. Particularly glaring is the absence of indices of authors and subjects, given the length and textbook-like character of the book. Readers might want to list their own references to important concepts and subjects. This reviewer also found the method of referencing directly in the text to works in the bibliography, instead of using the more usual footnotes, particularly unhelpful. What is appropriate in a shorter article is very cumbersome in such a long work. Finally, the title strikes this reviewer as somewhat misleading. This is not a general work on ecclesiology but a specialized treatment from the point of view of practical theology. Perhaps the title should read "The Church in Practical Theological Perspective." This dense and demanding book is well worth the effort it exacts.

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Liberating Conscience: Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology.

By Anne E. Patrick. New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1996. xi + 252 pp.

The author, a professor of religion at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, is a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, has served as a director of the Society of Christian Ethics and has contributed a number of writings on religious, ethical and literary topics in books and periodicals, including *Commonweal*, *Concilium*, *The Journal of Religion* and *Theological Studies*.

The book is written in the light of a perceived state of lost confidence in Catholic moral theological discourse. "[W]e must grow to new levels of confidence and competence as moral agents. Our consciences must be freed from all that inhibits a generous response to ethical challenges we face." The book is located within the Catholic moral tradition which it challenges to accept the required radical conversion that Anne Patrick believes the tradition is capable of accepting on the fundamental condition that it acknowledges that it "still needs to integrate theological affirmations of women's full human dignity into its official moral teachings and ecclesiastical practices" (x). This honest acknowledgment is seen as the presupposition and context of the emergence of a process of "liberating conscience." "This book is offered as a contribution toward closing the gap between present realities and a hoped-for future of justice, peace, and ecological responsibility" (x).

The book has seven chapters: Conscience and Community: Catholic Moral Theology Today; Conscience at the Crossroads: Invitation to Radical Conversion; Changing Paradigms of Virtue: The Good Life Reconsidered; Contested Authority: The Cases of Charles Curran and the Vatican 24; Seeking Truth in a Complex World; Toward Liberating Conscience: Spirituality and Moral Responsibility; Conscience as Process: Choosing our Common Good.

The very preliminary condition of the possibility of the radical conversion that Catholic moral discourse needs to accept is a radical concreteness of the ethical discourse itself. Concreteness accrues to ethical discourse if it remains at all levels, within the world of historical experience. In other words, ethical discourse needs to remain a discourse between historically identified persons, on identified historical issues, carried out in visible and audible historical discourse. Anne Patrick provides this concreteness in an eminent way. She offers her honest, clear perception, her sincere reasoned discernment of the moral quality of concrete instances of moral discourse concerning well-known issues and persons. This peculiarity of ethical discourse is even more important when attention is given, as Anne Patrick does in the last chapter, to the fact that there is the need of a critical examination and discernment of the ethical quality of ethical discourse itself, including the teaching of ethics.

She offers that critical assessment and does so from her acknowledged perspective of a feminist, liberationist and dialogical standpoint. She does it as well from her experience interpreted and discerned through her professional expertise, her evident love for the Church and for humanity, and her attentive search for a more complete and accurate understanding of the Christian faith and hope.

In this sense, Anne Patrick has written a partisan book. But this is as should be for a Christian theological ethical discourse. She does so with the hope to help move all participants in the Catholic moral discourse to the very core of our human historical situation where the bush is still burning and the Voice from the bush is still speaking from hearing and seeing.

The book is clearly a North American book. This also is a merit of the book. For it is not "parochial." On the contrary, it gives credible words to the universal importance of the North American experience of the Church from the standpoint of originating in the Church an ongoing moral theological dialogical discourse that carries both sufficient truth present in our moment of history and power to reveal that truth convincingly.

Liberating Conscience is not about the definition of conscience in the manner of the manuals. It is about the process of regeneration of consciousness and conscience both individual and communitary.

Anne Patrick has written an important book, an urgently needed book, and hopeful book. *Liberating Conscience* could well be used as an introduction to the realization of that new form of ecclesial, ethical, competent and sincere conversation that Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago called the "common ground." The Catholic Church, the real subject of concern of the book, needs to recover the consciousness that the concretely historical acts of *bene orare* and the historically concrete acts of *bene credere* are in need to be understood and lived as distinct but inseparable parts of equally concretely historical acts of search of *bene vivere*. This recovery can only be realized as sincere and generous participants in the on-going historical experience of the human creature still in process of genesis, at the four levels of any act of true historical experience: psychological, social, cosmic, religious. It needs to be consciously lived in the light of the Power, the Word and the Spirit, critically and competently discerned by the contribution of all capacities for truth that are the various sciences which are gifts from God. I found this experience in the reading of Anne Patrick's *Liberating Conscience*. I can only say thanks and invite all concerned to read and have the same experience.

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Worship in Transition: The Liturgical Movement in the Twentieth Century.

By John Fenwick and Bryan Spinks. New York: Continuum Publishing Company 1995. 202 pp. Paper, \$17.95.

As authors John Fenwick and Bryan Spinks acknowledge there is no dearth of printed information about the modern liturgical movement. In testimony to this richness, they cite almost 150 English titles related to the topic in the course of their book. It is this plethora of information on the topic, however, which seems to provide at least in part the genesis for this modest volume. Fenwick and Spinks report in the foreword that through their teaching they

discovered the need for an accessible work for their students that would concisely yet adequately chart the diverse phenomena which characterize the movement (vii).

They have admirably achieved their goal in a book which provides both an historical and topical introduction to the 20th century liturgical movement from an ecumenical perspective. The brief opening chapter provides some definitional groundwork for the topic, and chapter two charts some of what the authors consider to be main characteristics of the movement (e.g., its emphasis on community, participation, the bible, social engagement, etc.). Chapters three through ten are an historical accounting of the movement. Instead of a strictly chronological tracing, however, the authors provide a historical sketch of the movement within particular ecclesial traditions. Thus there are chapters on Roman Catholicism (4 and 7), Anglicanism (5 and 8), South India (6), English Reformed and Methodist churches (9), and even the Eastern churches (10). It is this ecumenical perspective which certainly sets this work apart from most other English-language treatments of the liturgical movement.

The second half of the volume is more topical, although these chapters yet reflect a propensity for historical method. The authors first address the impact of the charismatic movement (11), and then consider developments in Eucharist (12), and baptism and confirmation (13). They follow with chapters on the language of worship (14) and inculturation (15). One of the more fascinating chapters in this section outlines some of the opposition and reaction to the liturgical movement (16). Chapter 17 discusses the daily office, pastoral offices and ordination, while 18 provides "snapshots" of the movement in North America. An all-to-brief concluding chapter queries "Where next?"

Much of the information contained in *Worship in Transition* is available in other sources. What Fenwick and Spinks have done, however, is collected and arranged it in an accessible and instructive manner. Furthermore they have effectively combined an historical and thematic approach in this volume. The consequence is not simply dry reporting, but insightful analysis. Finally, such is achieved through a seldom employed ecumenical lens. Yes, one does read about Roman Catholicism, Gueranger and the International Commission on English in the Liturgy. There is also, however, material on the Church of South India, the Church of Scotland, Syrian Orthodox Church and much on the Anglican communion.

If there is any disappointment for the North American reader it is the limited attention given to the liturgical movement on this side of the Atlantic. The book heavily emphasizes England and the Continent. While such is understandable — given that both authors are British and the book was originally published by T & T Clark — this reviewer yet hoped for more than the "snapshots" of North America provided in chapter 18. Apart from this minor caveat, *Worship in Transition* admirably achieves the goals of its authors and is perhaps the best one-volume primer on the liturgical movement in the English-speaking world in print today.

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Sharing Heaven's Music, The Heart of Christian Preaching. Essays in Honor of James Earl Massey. Edited by Barry L. Callen. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995. 230 pp. Hardcover, \$18.95.

Preaching on the Brink: The Future of Homiletics. Edited by Martha J. Simmons. Forward by Gardner Taylor. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. 180 pp. Paper, \$14.95.

Abingdon Press has honored two noteworthy African American homiletics with festschrifts. James Earl Massey, former Dean and Professor of Biblical Studies and Preaching at Anderson University School of Theology, has been a noted teacher, author, and preacher in the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). The title of the work that honors him, *Sharing Heaven's Music*, takes its inspiration both from Massey's early training as a concert pianist and his ultimate choice to spend his life embodying a preaching tradition in which music and preaching are inseparable. Massey is described as one who "pursued holiness, practiced ethical relevance, and preached under God's anointing." The work dedicated to him is divided into five major sections and a concluding interview with Massey. Barry L. Callan, the editor, is both a professor at Anderson University and an expert on the history and theology of the Church of God.

Sharing Heaven's Music includes general articles like Elizabeth Achtemeier's "Canons of Sermon Construction" and Donald E. Demaray's "Imagination: The Genius of Creative Sermon Construction," and more narrowly focused essays that address the needs of a particular audience like William Willimon's reflections on preaching to Generation X, "Hunger in This Abandoned Generation," and Justo Gonzalez's "Minority Preaching in a Postmodern Age." For this reader, the work's major contribution is to be found in the essays providing insight into the rich tradition of black preaching and today's challenge of addressing the life situation of the African American community from the perspective of the gospel. Frederick W. Norris reflects on the similarity of black preaching with that of the patristic tradition in "The Catholicity of Black Preaching," comparing a sermon of the fourth-century Church Father, Gregory Nazianzen, with one of James Earl Massey's. Cheryl J. Sanders reminds us of the rich tradition of black folk-preaching, providing a typology of its transcripts. And Ronald J. Allen and Jice-lyn I. Thomas focus on "The Challenge of Preaching on Racial Issues for Euro-American Preachers."

Preaching on the Brink honors Henry H. Mitchell, "the world's foremost Black homiletics scholar." Contributors include homiletics like Edwina Hunter, Eugene L. Lowry, and Samuel D. Proctor and pastors like Barbara Harris, J. Alfred Smith Sr., and Susan D. Newman. The editor Martha J. Simmons has previously collaborated with Mitchell on a study guide to his book, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*. Of particular interest for those engaged in preaching to a community that is African American or includes African Americans are the essays by Newman on preaching to baby boomers, Robert M. Franklin on the kind of preaching that reaches alienated African American men, Smith on "Preaching In Urban America," and Proctor on "Prophetic Preaching Now." The essays in this work make use of Mitchell's writings, so his presence is felt throughout the book. I would have liked to have heard Mitchell's voice in a

more extended fashion, as was done in the Massey volume through an interview—conducted by Henry Mitchell, no less.

If there is one absence in both books, it is the perspective of an Asian American. Otherwise, these works contain contributions by representatives of the dominant cultural segments in our country. Both volumes provide insights into the current state of homiletics at the turn of the millennium, into the challenge of preaching to the African American community, and into the enrichment that preaching has received from the Black tradition of talented preachers, men and women. Both volumes are a tribute to two great practitioners of a preaching tradition from which all preachers continue to profit.

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