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Charles Grandison Finney: The Social Implications of His Ministry

ROGER JOSEPH GREEN

INTRODUCTION

Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) was by all accounts one of the most remarkable persons in nineteenth-century American religious history. Even the most cursory reading of his life and influence would cause one to agree with Perry Miller's assessment of the impact of Finney's *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* that "No religious leader in America since Edwards had commanded such attention; no one was to do it again until Dwight Moody."¹ But it is possible to go further and to see Finney's impact upon American social history of the nineteenth century as well. Sydney E. Ahlstrom noted this broadened influence of Finney: "Finney is an immensely important man in American history by any standard of measure. His revivals were a powerful force in the rising antislavery impulse and in the rise of urban evangelism. He was an influential revisionist in the Reformed theological tradition, an enormously successful practitioner, almost the inventor, of modern high-pressure revivalism which, as it spread, would have important consequences for the religious ethos of the nation as a whole."²

A complete picture of Finney must include an understanding of him as both preacher and as social reformer, as both minister of the Word of God, and Christian citizen involved in varying degrees in many of the problems and possibilities of the nation's religious and social life. To see him only as preacher on the one hand, or only as social reformer on the other, is to fail to understand Finney. Likewise, there was a tension in Finney's own thinking between his allegiance to preaching salvation from sin and getting involved in social concerns. One also fails to understand Finney if this tension is not taken into account.³

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There are connections to be made between the ministry of Charles Grandison Finney and the social implications of that ministry, if by Finney's ministry we include his theology. It must also be noted that at times the social consequences of his ministry move beyond implications to concerted active engagement by Finney and those around him, brought about by obedient faithfulness to the gospel. I intend, therefore, to demonstrate in this paper the relationship between the ministry and theology of Charles Grandison Finney and his engagement in social ministry. I plan to demonstrate this, after a brief introduction to Finney and his times, by first reviewing Finney's thought on depravity on the one hand and perfectionism on the other hand. His doctrine of Christian perfection provided the theological basis for his vision of a new social order.

I will then show the connection between his theology and the social implications of that theology. There were many social reform movements in which Finney either directly or indirectly took part, ranging from the women's movement to the temperance movement to abolitionism. Because the latter was the predominant social crusade in Finney's time, and took the weight of Finney's attention, Finney's relationship to the abolitionist cause will be the principle focus of that section of this paper.

Finally, I will demonstrate that both Finney's theology and ministry, as well as his involvement in social change, were driven by an eschatological vision of a new age. Charles Finney was a postmillennialist, and that aspect of his theology was both a driving force for much of his ministry and desire for social reconstruction, and a drawing force, providing final legitimacy for the complete work of the gospel, as well as final fulfillment of such work.

I will conclude with some observations and criticisms. However, it is necessary, first, to lay the groundwork with some reflections about Charles Grandison Finney, his life and times, and it is with that introductory task that this paper begins.

CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY (1792-1875)

America had experienced a surge of awakenings in the eighteenth century, and would continue to do so in the nineteenth. What is generally referred to as the Great Awakening of the 1740s was led by such outstanding preachers and personalities as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, and was sustained in later years by the tireless, extensive ministry of Francis Asbury. The religious fervor of that awakening declined, however, as deism and Enlightenment thinking gained ascendancy in America, and as people's interests turned to political matters toward the end of the eighteenth century.

However, a second surge in religious life in America would be seen at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Second Great Awakening would not experience the leadership of personalities to match Edwards or Whitefield. It would be led in the East by Timothy Dwight, the grandson of Jonathan Edwards and president of Yale College, and in the West by Barton W. Stone, the Presbyterian pastor of Cane Ridge Church in Bourbon County, Kentucky. Settled convictions came to many people in the East as they heard the gospel of salvation preached and as they accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. The Awakening in the East reflected the culture—it

was basically calm, orderly and rational.

The Awakening in the West was another matter altogether, and as a social phenomenon was quite impressive. The West was socially untamed, and the Awakening would have to take on a different form if it were to meet the spiritual, social and emotional needs of the people. Keith J. Hardman, in his excellent biography of Finney entitled *Charles Grandison Finney: Revivalist and Reformer*, has aptly described the West this way:

But it was the West—that surging chaotic frontier that was moving sinuously onward—that disturbed the settled East most deeply. The Eastern seaboard might have its depressed periods religiously, but it still retained its churches, and they could be revitalized at any time. The West, however, was fundamentally different; it had never been won to Christian ideas, and it had no churches. There, lawlessness seemed to be the order of the day. Morals were low, the Christian faith was mocked and shunned, deism and atheism were rife, and the vast spaces and extremely low density of population stretched the resources of circuit riders and missionaries to the breaking point. The early settlers of Kentucky named some of their towns after prominent French infidels, as LaRue, Bourbon, Rousseau, Altamont, and other names indicate. It seemed beyond contradiction that several hundred thousand people on the frontier were “hair-hung and breeze shaken over the pit of hell.”⁴

Into this world came the “camp meeting,” and to such remote places as Red River or Gasper River or Cane Ridge, Kentucky, would go thousands of people to live in tents for many days and to hear the gospel preached. And so, for people living in sparsely settled areas of the West and with little social contact, life with thousands of other people was a refreshing experience. However, the manifestations of religious conviction at these revivals were often so extreme as to mitigate in the minds of many the genuine religious vitality experienced by those attending the camp meetings. Ahlstrom reminds his readers that Cane Ridge was “not only a landmark in the history of revivalism, but a cause of controversy and schism.”⁵

It is difficult to remember from a modern perspective that upstate New York was, in that time and world, part of the West. And although Charles Grandison Finney was born in Warren, Connecticut, when he was two years old his family migrated to Oneida County, New York. After being reared in this area, and after teaching in public schools in Warren and in New Jersey, Finney returned to Adams, New York, where successively he would train for the legal profession, give himself over to God and enter the ministry.

It would be this man who would become the chief agent in continuing the Second Great Awakening, beginning in upstate New York and, throughout his life, preaching in such distant and diverse places as Oberlin, Ohio, and London, England. Indeed, Finney was “eventually recognized as the head of the latter phase of the Second Great Awakening, and the real inheritor of the mantle of Jonathan Edwards and Timothy Dwight.”⁶

Upstate New York was referred to as the “burned-over district.” Hardman wrote that “An entire gamut of experiments promoting the perfection of humanity and the bringing of millennial bliss, unorthodox religious beliefs, new cults, and new political

parties caused the area even then to be called a 'burnt' or 'burned-over district.'" It is possible that Lyman Beecher "in his published letters may have been particularly responsible for the expression gaining currency."⁷ Finney himself, later in his *Memoirs*, referred to this area as "a burnt district."⁹ One author labelled this area rather ungraciously as a "psychic highway."¹⁰

Finney was ready for the task of converting the sinner, however, even in, and perhaps especially in, such a place as upstate New York. Finney enjoyed almost immediate popular success, and revival followed him wherever he went. By the time of the conclusion of the "Oneida County Revivals" in April of 1827, "a new star was blazing brightly in its orbit in the religious firmament of America."¹¹ It is the task of this paper now to understand this "new star" and to do so especially by establishing the relationship of Finney the revivalist and Finney the reformer. However, the basis for both his revivalism and his vision for a new social order can be found only by first examining his theology.

FINNEY'S THEOLOGY: THE BASIS FOR A NEW ORDER

As has been mentioned, Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield were two of the guiding lights of the First Great Awakening in America, and both were committed to Calvinism, a term which, although originally a term used derisively by German Lutherans of the sixteenth century, by the eighteenth century was one of honor.¹² It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the several critical tenets of Calvinism, but it is sufficient to reflect on two issues which were greatly debated in Finney's day: sin and free will.

The Calvinist believed in original sin. People participate in the fall of Adam, which is a fall from original righteousness, and the result is that human reasoning is seriously contaminated and human will is in bondage to sin, always choosing evil, always deliberately rejecting any obedience to God. The image of God is mutilated in fallen humanity, and even people's apparently good actions are motivated by selfish intentions. People are both incapable and unwilling to save themselves, and so God saves his elect solely by his unfathomable grace in accordance with his inscrutable will. The awakening, the revival, by which God's intentions for people are made known, is solely the work of God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Such revivals cannot be planned, but arise, as it were, spontaneously, by God's grace and his grace alone.

Vying for theological attention in the eighteenth century, however, was Arminianism, with varying emphases and beliefs about human depravity and freedom of the will. An important distinction should be made between "evangelical Arminianism," after the thinking of John Wesley, and "rationalistic Arminianism," held by someone like the influential Charles Chauncy of the First Church of Boston.¹³ Wesley's emphasis was certainly upon God's grace in salvation, but Wesley did not believe that original sin so bound the will of people that they were unable to respond to God's universal prevenient grace in their lives. Wesley believed that the image of God was marred in humanity at the fall, but that free will was retained by which to accept or reject God's grace.

However, rationalistic Arminianism also was influential, giving rise to a growing

democratic spirit in America after 1740, and likewise being nurtured by that social context. This form of Arminianism

took an optimistic view of human nature, and its departure from the basic spirit of Calvinism was apparent. Its adherents in New England believed that humans are born with the capacity both for sin and for righteousness, and they can respond to one as well as to the other; that life is a discipline by which, with God's aid, the bondage to sin may be gradually broken.¹⁴

Finney was theologically all on the side of evangelical Arminianism, but culturally was influenced by rationalistic Arminianism. He did not believe in original sin as taught by the Calvinists (or by the Wesleyans), and he accentuated freedom of the will, both in his theology and in his ministry. The groundwork for his theology had been laid, ironically, by the followers of Jonathan Edwards, variously referred to as Edwardseans, Edwardeans or New Divinity men. Two examples will suffice here.

Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790), although a graduate of Yale and a former student of Jonathan Edwards, departed from Edwards in essentially denying responsibility for Adam's sin and affirming not a sinful disposition but sinful acts alone. People become sinners in their sinning and not because they are born in sin. Sin is, however, inevitable, and in that sense alone is original. Here Bellamy consciously steered clear of Pelagianism. He also, quite naturally, affirmed the freedom of the will to choose good or evil.

Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), on the other hand, actually denied original sin outright, and concentrated in his theology only on actual sins. For Hopkins, free will reigns in humanity in choices between good and evil, and people are held responsible for such choices. "Conversion' was then made to rest wholly upon the active exercise of the human will, which leads to growth in positive holiness."¹⁵ Such "Hopkinsianism" well set the stage not only for some of Finney's theology, but for his practical understanding of how conversions took place in revivals, although there were some aspects of Hopkinsianism with which Finney disagreed. "In preaching I sometimes...took occasion to denounce Hopkinsianism,"¹⁶ Finney wrote in his *Memoirs*.

Finney reacted both to Calvinistic theology and to the Calvinistic disposition to see revivals as brought about solely by God's grace. Finney followed in the line of the dominant New Haven Theology, and affirmed that the essence of sin lies not in people's disposition to sin because they are one with Adam in his sin and hence have original sin. Sin, for Finney, was voluntary choice, but was universal in that each human being chooses to sin. The voluntary nature of sin did not make it any less destructive for Finney, did not make people any less enemies of the cross, and did not vitiate the need for forgiveness.

Freedom of the will was accentuated in both Finney's theology and his ministry, and thus he reflected that New Haven Theology mentioned above. Also, however, rationalistic Arminianism was dominant in the broader culture, a strict Calvinistic view of life having become a minority position in spite of the efforts of Charles Hodge at Princeton. Jacksonian democracy emphasized free choice, as did Finney's earlier legal training which taught him that people freely choose to disobey the laws of the land, incur guilt, and therefore deserve punishment. Finney's own experience of conversion underscored

his later-developed theology. He expressed his own conversion as freely giving his heart to God. In that now-famous passage in Finney's *Memoirs* where he wrote about his conversion experience in the woods in Adams, New York, Finney expressed himself this way: "As I turned to go up into the woods, I recollect to have said, 'I will give my heart to God, or I will never come down from there.' I recollect repeating this as I went up—'I will give my heart to God before I ever come down again.'" ¹⁷

Two consequences came from Finney's teaching of liberty of choice. First, he was accused of Pelagianism. Perhaps the most forthright accusation was written by Albert Baldwin Dod (1805-1850), a Princeton graduate and an ardent Calvinist. His accusation took the form of a ninety-seven-page article entitled "Review of *Lectures on Revivals of Religion and Sermons on Various Subjects*," published in volume seven of *The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review* in July and October of 1835, of which Charles Hodge was the editor. Second, Finney's theology logically led him to deny the eternal security of the believer. Just as human beings are free to choose God in conversion, so Christians are free to reject God after conversion. For this Finney was condemned even by many of his friends, let alone his Princeton enemies. Finney had gone too far. "One may say that to deny the security of the believer is the inevitable tendency of the doctrine of natural ability run rampant, but it is also to say that here Finney had abandoned a crucial article of faith for most New Englanders and New Yorkers." ¹⁸

Finney's emphasis upon freedom of the will would affect not only his view of conversion, but his understanding of revivals, which were designed to bring about such conversions and were likewise the result of these conversions. The revival, in Finney's view, was not only the work of God's grace, but also the work of people, involving careful preparation and deliberate measures. Here, as is popularly known, Finney changed the course of revivals for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by declaring forthrightly in his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* that a revival "is not a miracle, nor dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means—as much so as any other effect produced by the application of means." ¹⁹

Conversion could come at such revivals simply as it had come to Finney—at a brief encounter with God at a point of time at one place. "All of this dramatically changed the old Puritan idea of a prolonged period of conviction to one in which conversion could come within a relatively brief period." ²⁰ On the one hand, a revival set the stage for the working of the Holy Spirit in individuals to bring about conviction, and the sinner then and there freely repented and believed the gospel of Christ. But on the other hand, a revival was the result of both divine and human effort.

There are two areas where Finney's theology of sin and his theology of free will would most influence his developed thinking. The first was in his theology of perfectionism and the second was in his theology of social reformation. Because the two are so integrally related, this paper will deal here with Finney's view of perfectionism, and will devote the next entire section to the social implications of Finney's theology and ministry.

For Finney, perfectionism was the ultimate realization of freedom of the will. By this perfectionism the cycle of sinning and repenting was finally broken in the life of the Christian. Finney's brand of perfectionism was also the basis for a new social

order in two ways: it was a sign in the individual believer of the ultimate perfection of a new society; and it was necessary towards establishing such a society because only a holy people could do a holy work.

The issue of perfection had been raised in the eighteenth century by John and Charles Wesley and their teaching of perfect love. While not denying the centrality of the doctrine of justification by faith in the Scriptures, they also asserted that the Bible promises that it is possible for all believers to be sanctified by faith whereby the intention of the believer is motivated by perfect love—loving the things which God loves and hating the things which God hates. Wesley wrote:

This it is to be a perfect man, to be “sanctified throughout”; even “to have a heart so all-flaming with the love of God” (to use Archbishop Ussher’s words), “as continually to offer up every thought, word, and work, as spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ.” In every thought of our hearts, in every word of our tongues, in every work of our hands, to “show forth His praise, who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.” O that both we, and all who seek the Lord Jesus in sincerity, may thus “be made perfect in one!”²¹

This was not, for the Wesleys, a form of either human perfection or sinless perfection. The believer, after receiving perfect love, is still beset by fears, doubts, temptations, infirmities, ignorance and even the possibility of sinning. The Wesleys’ theology was rooted in eighteenth-century Anglican notions of sin as willful transgressions of the known law of God, of an understanding of the freedom of the will of all rational human beings to choose either good or evil, and of a belief that the tradition of the Church as well as our own reason and experience confirms and brings to life the teachings of the Bible.²²

This Wesleyan theology came to America via lay missionaries, the most important of whom was Francis Asbury (1745-1816) who was ordained at the famous Christmas Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, on December 24, 1784. It was propagated through the teaching and preaching of Methodist circuit riders, especially throughout the frontier, but also in the cities in the East. By 1844, at the heart of a very active and public ministry by Charles Grandison Finney, “the Methodists had become the most numerous religious body in America, with 1,068,525 members, 3,988 itinerant preachers, 7,730 local preachers, and an incalculable number of regular hearers. Even in New England, where its progress was slowest, it had become the second largest denomination.”²³

While the preaching of entire sanctification by the Methodists brought genuine piety and renewal to believers, and thereby to the body of Christ, there were other disingenuous strands of perfectionism, often connected with various communitarian movements. John Humphrey Noyes (1811-1886) taught that a reconstructed society provided the ideal climate for perfectionism on the one hand, and a worthy goal on the other hand. He founded the Oneida Community in New York in 1848. There he taught a strange mixture of sinless perfection (having claimed his own sinlessness in 1834), the impossibility of believers falling again into sin, and a form of primitive Christian communism which included a sharing of marriage partners. And so perfectionism was, as it were, “in the air” in America during the time of Finney’s active life and ministry—ranging from

the teachings of John Wesley to that of John Noyes, with everything in between.

Charles Grandison Finney believed in perfectionism, taking his clue largely, but not entirely, from the teachings of John Wesley.²⁴ Finney's was a gradually developed view of sanctification, but it definitely had ramifications for his theology of social and moral reform. Finney's understanding of perfection was grounded in his beliefs on sin and free will. Sin consists of actions, of transgressions; and free will demands that we can choose for or against God. Likewise, for Finney, it is possible to choose not to sin, although he did not believe in a sinless perfection whereby the believer, after sanctification, cannot sin. Finney held that one's free will is still active after holiness, and that even in that state one may reject the continuing influence of the Holy Spirit, thereby falling from grace and needing to come once again to repentance and obedience.

In response to decidedly unbiblical views of perfectionism expounded by people like Noyes, in response to a popular misunderstanding of the word "perfectionism" which was used widely at Oberlin College and by Oberlinites, and in response to a perception of an anemic Christianity of the kind which Wesley encountered in England a century earlier, Finney had to give some definition—some shape and form—to perfectionism. He preferred the term sanctification, and defined it this way in his work entitled *Lectures on Systematic Theology*: "Entire and continued obedience to the law of God....It is self-evident, that entire obedience to God's law is possible on the grounds of natural ability."²⁵

Finney held that this experience was normative for every Christian. He likewise believed that there are only two basic moral choices to be made in this life, and that such choice has consequences for all succeeding choices in life. Either one chooses entire sanctification and thereby does not continue in sin; or one chooses sin and falls under the judgment of God. Nevertheless, the decision for or against entire sanctification became the critical one for Finney. In this way his theology of sanctification fell back again to his presuppositions of the nature of sin and the nature of the freedom of the will. In that regard he was in company with Wesley. However, a case could be made that he parted with Wesley by lodging sanctification within human natural ability and a kind of legalistic obedience to the law rather than in the grace of God redeeming human depraved natures, and also by defining his theology of sanctification within a legal context rather than within a framework of love. Such observations would not escape the notice of even Finney's Calvinistic opponents such as Benjamin Warfield.²⁶

Finney's theology of sanctification, along with that of Asa Mahan, the first president of Oberlin, dominated Oberlin theology and became known as Oberlin perfectionism.²⁷ Such a position found critics not only among the old Princeton Calvinists, but among various moderate Calvinists found in Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. Nevertheless Finney persevered, finally experiencing the second blessing himself and bearing witness to this as "my new and enlarged experience."²⁸ He wrote, "What I had been praying for for myself, I had received in a way that I least expected. Holiness to the Lord seemed to be inscribed on all the exercises of my mind."²⁹ And so Wesley's contention that experience, as well as tradition and reason, should confirm the teachings of Scripture and bring to life and vitality those teachings

became true in Finney's own life with respect to the doctrine of entire sanctification. What he believed intellectually and what he had been preaching consistently since 1837 he now experienced personally.

Asa Mahan experienced a second blessing in his life in 1836 and bore witness of this to Finney. Mahan claimed to know that Finney finally enjoyed a similar experience:

"When my associate, then Professor Finney," he says, "became aware of the great truth that by being 'baptized with the Holy Spirit' we can 'be filled with all the fullness of God,' he of course sought that baptism with all his heart and with all his soul, and very soon attained what he sought." According to Mahan, it was at this time that Finney received 'the second blessing,' and the effects on the two of them were dramatic, giving a greater urgency and power to their preaching.³⁰

The question now needs to be asked: "Perfectionism for what?" Finney's understanding of perfectionism was not of the Roman Catholic monastic variety, which saw perfectionism as the holy life in a closed society apart from a sinful world. Likewise, Finney's perfectionism steered clear of Noyes's communitarian notion which held that a reconstructed society was needed to create a proper climate for freedom from sin, which climate might in turn have some kind of influence in establishing a perfect world.

Finney's belief was that sanctification, while experienced by the individual, had social ramifications. Only a holy people, whose moral character manifested itself in holy actions, could do a holy work. And that work demanded a reconstructed millennial society. In order to achieve such an end, however, there was work to be done in the social fabric of American life, and Finney, in varying degrees, was active in that work. This leads to the central focus of this paper—the social implications of Finney's theology and ministry.

THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF FINNEY'S THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY

Finney began his active ministry strictly as an evangelist and preacher, with the single mission in mind of converting the sinner and raising up the saint. He was in the company of other rising stars in nineteenth-century evangelicalism, and especially of Asahel Nettleton. This preacher was well-known as an evangelist by the time Finney came on the scene, and his Calvinistic theology caused him eventually to be an outspoken opponent of Finney. Some personal jealousy of Finney may have played a part in Nettleton's contention with Finney, and there is no doubt that Finney's popularity eventually far outshone that of Nettleton in the American evangelical experience.

The other important evangelist, a nemesis of Finney and a person whose relationship with Finney was up and down, was Lyman Beecher. It is impossible within the scope of this paper to do justice to Lyman Beecher, but he does set the stage for the journey of piety and social action in nineteenth-century America and therefore, in large measure, for both the general atmosphere in which Finney preached as well as the emphasis of Finney's ministry.

Beecher was one of America's most prominent pastors, first at the First Church in Litchfield, Connecticut, and then at the Hanover Street Congregational Church in Boston, and was the heir apparent for leadership in the Second Great Awakening after

the death of his mentor, President Timothy Dwight of Yale. He became the first president of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio, and throughout his ministry was a tireless organizer, popular public speaker and indomitable leader.

Beecher saw no discrepancy between preaching the gospel to the individual and leading causes for the improvement of the social order. Indeed, for Beecher, one led to the other. "A founder of the American Education Society and the American Bible and Tract Societies, he endlessly promoted home and foreign missions, almost single-handedly began the temperance movement in New England, and was a major figure in the crusades against Sabbath-breaking, deism, dueling, theater-going, profanity, and other causes of the day."³¹ Sydney Ahlstrom noted this about Beecher: "Pursuing his career as a revivalist during these years at Litchfield, Beecher brought to fullness a conception that most distinguishes the evangelical resurgence of the next half-century: the ultimate association of evangelism in its broadest sense with moral reform and social benevolence."³²

When Finney commenced this revivalistic preaching he began to see that there was a connection between conversion and moral and social regeneration. Not only did the sinner turn to God, but expressed that conversion in his or her conduct, which often meant a reformation of one's actions and habits. With the example of the ministry of Lyman Beecher before him, Finney expected such reformation to be the natural consequence of conversion. Early in his preaching ministry such results were often seen in individualistic ways, but would evolve into corporate and social reforms as Finney's ministry broadened and as his theology developed to embrace a concept of the Kingdom of God as the creation of a new order and not merely as the conversion of one person at a time.

Finney conducted a successful evangelistic campaign in Rome, New York, early in 1826, and the moral reformation of the converts was apparent to all. "The sabbath was now strictly observed. Drunkenness and profanity seemed to be things of the past. Quarreling and fighting stopped, and the church was blessed with peace and harmony, opposers apparently being nonexistent. The new converts were eager and earnest, and a delight to all."³³ Here we see personal responses to the gospel, but there is hardly yet an institutional reformation going on, even with the issue of observing the sabbath. In 1826 Rome, New York, had a population of about four thousand, many of whom were either Christians or recent converts to Christianity.

However, social reformation would begin as Finney's ministry expanded. One area of social reform which would have institutional consequences was that of women publicly praying and speaking. Indeed, from 1826 on, one of the "new measures" which Finney did not invent but would use effectively, much to the consternation of opponents such as Asahel Nettleton and Lyman Beecher, would be that of women praying in public with men present. For this he found useful the example of the Methodists, as well as the encouragement of Theodore Weld, the best known convert of Finney's and an inveterate crusader for a variety of causes, including the practice of women praying in public. Such was no small matter, for women would eventually enter into public life in other areas affecting society, such as the abolitionist movement. The New York Female Moral Reform Society was organized in 1834 in Finney's first church in New York City, the Chatham Street Chapel. And when Oberlin College was founded in 1835 it became "the first coeducational college in the

world and one of the few places encouraging women to get a college education."³⁴

Finney found support for this from his first wife, Lydia, who became an example for such activity as she conducted visitation campaigns and female prayer meetings. In these activities she received the full encouragement of Finney, and people perceived the ministry of the Finneys as a shared ministry. It has been noted that "by the 1820s changes began to affect the minister's wife, and it was Charles and Lydia Finney who expanded the possibilities for her role. These allowed her public leadership and personal growth while encouraging the perception that she was not merely his support but a real adjunct to his ministry, operating even in areas of the church's work where he rarely intruded."³⁵

The Finneys gave rise to a feeling of ministerial and theological equality of women with men, a viewpoint which would be even more clearly articulated later by Phoebe Palmer, the Methodist, and Catherine Booth, co-founder of The Salvation Army. Charles Finney lost his partner in ministry late in 1847 with the death of Lydia. However, his second wife, Elizabeth Ford Atkinson Finney, also took an active part in ministry, speaking to a mixed congregation on behalf of poor and unchurched women in London during Finney's first visit to England in 1850. Her speaking was very well received by men as well as women. Her ministry expanded, and she had an even larger hearing during Finney's second visit to England in 1859. "Elizabeth and Charles Finney were truly engaged in a team ministry which was extremely effective."³⁶ There was a conservative side of Finney on this issue, however. At his New York churches, the Chatham Street Chapel and the Broadway Tabernacle, women were admitted as members but they could not hold office or vote. It would take a Catherine Booth later in the century to see the full social implications of women in ministry as the Christian Mission and The Salvation Army opened up all ministerial offices and appointments to women as well as men. In any case, the social consequences of Finney's ministry and theology were becoming evident.

Early in his ministry, Finney saw that there was a connection between Christianity and social reconstruction in other areas as well, and perhaps the clearest example of this direct connection was seen in Finney's great revival in Rochester, New York, in 1830, where Finney gave leadership to a growing temperance movement in that city. Finney called on Theodore Weld to help lead the crusade against the liquor traffic, and even suspended his evangelistic meetings for a brief time to devote his speaking and energies to the cause of temperance. Converts, as a sign of their new faith, were asked to demonstrate that faith by moral uprightness, including a pledge of total abstinence. Finney asked for an economic boycott of stores selling liquor, and grocery owners voluntarily gave up selling alcohol.

Finney and Weld were elated at the success of their first determined attempt at reform. Praises crowded upon them from near and far. Because both of them possessed innately the reforming instinct, one success would lead to greater determination, and the wedding of individual conversion to societal renewal and reform was thus established as an ongoing principle of the new measures.³⁷

But there were two events in Finney's life which would galvanize his interest not

only in the growing temperance movement, but in other reform movements as well. First, he would become intimately associated with the "Benevolent Empire," a loosely amalgamated group of societies which were formed specifically for the alleviation of social ills and which engaged in such activities as temperance and abolitionist movements. An "Association of Gentlemen" was formed of wealthy merchants and bankers to support the activities of the "Benevolent Empire."³⁸ Two leaders in these groups were the extremely successful and wealthy Connecticut silk merchants, Arthur Tappan (1786-1865) and Lewis Tappan (1788-1873). Indeed, it was largely through the invitation as well as the financial backing of the Tappans that Charles Finney went to New York City where he ministered first in the Chatham Street Chapel, a renovated theater holding twenty-four hundred people, and then at the Broadway Tabernacle, built especially for Finney. The Tappans continued their support in their provision of funds to found and build Oberlin College. The social reform impulses of the Tappans and their friends found an able spokesman in the person of Charles Grandison Finney.

Secondly, Finney's eyes were opened to the many social diseases of nineteenth-century industrialization and urbanization when he became the pastor of the Chatham Street Chapel. The chapel was established on the free church movement pattern which eliminated pew taxes and the sale of pews, and which effectively changed the face of church membership, now including the poor as well as the wealthy, and blacks as well as whites. Finney saw firsthand the devastation not only of an unbridled liquor traffic, but of the plight of women and children working in factories over long hours in unsafe conditions—lacking food, clothing and shelter. He witnessed the effects of unemployment, the consequences of prostitution and the treatment of blacks in pre-Civil War America.

He had the support of wealthy reform-minded Christians, and now, at the Chatham Street Chapel, a platform from which to speak. The stage was set, and Finney's converts, under the influence of his powerful and persuasive preaching, were ready for action. "When this impetus toward social reform began to take hold in the new and impressionable converts of Finney's revivals, under his careful tutelage, it began a thing of immense power. Gilbert Barnes, in *The Antislavery Impulse*, found that revivalism, and especially Finney's own preaching, provided the roots for the abolition movement."³⁹ A word of caution, however, is in order: "Evangelism and the conversion of the individual remained the first priority with Finney, and without that nothing further could be done."⁴⁰

The great social burden of nineteenth-century America was the issue of slavery. This divided not only a nation, but denominations as well, and it became the dominant problem for Charles Grandison Finney and for the institutions with which he was identified—his churches in New York, the Benevolent Empire and Oberlin College. All other concerns were overshadowed by the significance of this one, and abolitionism became the great test of the social implications of Finney's ministry and theology.

Many Christians from the perspective of the modern world might be surprised to find what Finney's attitude toward blacks was, and it is important to understand this before considering Finney's abolitionist stand. Finney clearly believed in the separation of blacks from whites. He was all for the liberation of the blacks. About that there was no question. However, he respected the contention of many white people that the races should not in

any way intermingle. His friends, such as the Tappan brothers and Theodore Weld, strongly disagreed with Finney on this matter. They wanted not only the freedom of the blacks, but the full integration of the blacks into the predominately white society.

The Tappan brothers, the chief financial supporters of Finney's churches in New York, insisted that blacks be free to attend those churches. To this Finney wholeheartedly agreed, "but throughout his ministry at the chapel and the Broadway Tabernacle, blacks were segregated at a place reserved for them to the side of the sanctuary,"⁴¹ and in the balcony. Finney admitted blacks into church membership, but, like the women who were admitted, they could not hold office or vote. Even the powerful Tappans could not convince Finney to open all seating to blacks, or place a black man on the board of trustees of the Chatham Street Chapel. Hardman has noted that "Finney had strong support in his view among a large majority in his congregation, who felt that social mixing of the races had no particular purpose."⁴²

However, Finney's condemnation of slavery in principle was strong, and as Finney grew older he attacked slavery not just because of personal preference, but from a firm ideological base—the moral law of God, to which nations as well as individuals are subject, forbid the enslaving of human beings. He practiced what he preached, and he would not allow slaveholders to take communion at his New York churches. Of this Finney was sure: slaveholding was sin. "He refused to give communion to slaveholders, and he proclaimed slavery to be a sin and immediate abolition of all forms of slavery to be the duty of the slaveholders, the church, and the government."⁴³ When the New York City Anti-Slavery Society was formed in October, 1833, the organizational meeting was held at the Chatham Street Chapel. Finney's "views were definite and well known, so that no one could accuse him of evasion or cowardice."⁴⁴ He later reflected in his *Memoirs*, "When I first went to New York I had made up my mind on the subject of the slavery question, and was exceedingly anxious to arouse public attention to the subject. I did not, however, turn aside to make it a hobby, or divert the attention of the people from the work of converting souls. Nevertheless in my prayers and preaching I so often alluded to slavery and denounced it, that a considerable excitement came to exist among the people."⁴⁵

However, it is beyond question that Finney many times felt a clash between his revivalistic interests and his social ones. Perhaps he felt a conflict of interests, and this caused him in the long run to be moderate not only in the antislavery issue, but in other social issues as well, and he generally advised such moderation to his friends. "Slavery, like all other social problems, was but a symptom of the inner malignity of sin, and the priority was to attack the sinful heart with the cure of conversion; once that was done, the symptoms would begin to take care of themselves."⁴⁶

Here he parted company with some of the people closest to him. He especially felt that the Tappan brothers and his disciple, Theodore Weld, were giving too much attention to social causes, and thereby diminishing the evangelistic enterprise of the church. The Tappans, Weld and others tended to see evangelism and social ministry as a balanced ministry, each having its equal place, and indeed believed that some social ills were so threatening as to demand immediate attention. Finney, on the other hand, was the voice of moderation. He saw the conversion of the sinner as the priority, from which

would naturally flow social concerns.⁴⁷ But this was a singular ministry in Finney's mind, and he believed that nationwide revivals were the ultimate answer to social problems. "Evangelism was the mainspring from which all else must be energized!"⁴⁸

However, Finney was also sure that, while revival automatically brings about reform, an improper view and attitude toward reform can hinder revivalism simply because reform, like revival, is part of God's agenda for the world. Donald Dayton has written that "This conjunction of reform and revival was also reversible. Finney not only argued that revivals should produce reforms, but also that resistance to reform was one of the great 'hindrances to revival.'"⁴⁹ Indeed, Finney wrote in his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* that "Revivals are hindered when ministers and churches take wrong ground in regard to any question involving human rights."⁵⁰

Oberlin College was founded as an abolitionist institution. Finney had no problem with that, but insisted, as one of the first professors and the shining light at Oberlin, that the college take a moderate, and what he considered to be, biblical abolitionist position. Furthermore, Finney argued that Oberlin was founded primarily to promote evangelism throughout the land, and his first priority was to train people for the ministry of preaching the gospel. He feared that anything which detracted from that was problematic. It is possible that Finney's carefully studied moderate position proved to be the salvation of the institution itself, and that "the school was prevented from veering into several extremes by Finney's moderate position on slavery."⁵¹

The point is, nevertheless, that this moderate position was difficult to maintain. Finney often expressed his condemnation of slavery, and lashed out against the slaverholders' guilt for the perpetuation of such an evil. But the cure was ultimately to be found in preaching and in converting the sinner. The convert, with the regenerated and cleansed heart, would repent from his or her evil ways, even if that meant freeing slaves, and would enter into social reform as a sign of salvation and inner transformation. Keith Hardman has best summarized Finney's position (and pointed out Finney's dilemma) in this way:

For Finney the most pressing insight (and also the most elusive) was to comprehend that all evils that afflict human society—wrongs done to women, slavery, drunkenness, war, and all the rest—were but natural consequences of sin, and that if faithful pastors attacked this central evil by the cure of conversion, in time all subordinate evils would begin to diminish. To him, mounting campaigns against various problems was a noble thing, but if it was done at the expense of the central Christian mission, evangelism, then it was like spanking the giant dragon but not slaying it. And he simply could not understand why of all the intelligent Christians he knew, including Weld and the Tappans, so few could grasp this insight.⁵²

Oberlin's founding brought into focus several reform movements, including anti-slavery. "The Oberlin College and community was from the day of its founding in 1835 the seedbed of American Christian radicalism, not only on the question of slavery, but of radical brotherhood, women's rights, peace, prohibition, and a whole range of concerns for the creation of a righteous social order, in the nation and in the

world."⁵³ Oberlin's first president, Asa Mahan, had been on the board of trustees at Lane Theological Seminary, the only board member to defend the students' abolitionist cause and their forming of an antislavery society.⁵⁴

Oberlin became a place where all reform issues could be discussed openly and without fear of recrimination. Blacks were admitted to the student body, although the Tappans undoubtedly wished that the percentage of black students was higher than the actual number. In any case, Oberlin College was begun and maintained as a place of distinction for its many reform movements, of which antislavery was one.⁵⁵

However, the college gained an international reputation primarily for its abolitionist position. In fact, some of the early financial supporters of Oberlin were English Quakers who recognized the leadership of Oberlin College in the abolitionist cause. The Oberlin Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1835, of which Finney was a charter member, followed by the Young Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, the Female Anti-Slavery Society and the Young Mens' Anti-Slavery Society. Likewise, the presence of the likes of Theodore Weld with "his gripping series of lectures on abolition"⁵⁶ gave continual visibility to abolitionism at Oberlin.

However, when all is said about the beginning of Oberlin College and the first few decades of its existence, the great attraction to Oberlin was Charles Grandison Finney. His growing reputation in America caused people to associate him with Oberlin College, and as one of the first professors and as successor to Asa Mahan as president, Finney was a critical influence on the life and thought of that institution in its formative years. His theology, especially his developing theology of perfectionism, shaped the thinking of many Oberlinites for years to come, and provided the foundation for Finney's considered opinions about social reform.

Nevertheless, Finney was convinced that there was a grand eschatological vision which both shaped his notion of perfectionism and drew him into social reform. Likewise, his views of perfectionism and social reformation made straight the way of the Lord for a great millennial kingdom, and it is to Finney's vision of the millennium that this paper now turns.

POSTMILLENNIALISM: THE VISION OF A NEW ORDER

Charles Grandison Finney was a postmillennialist. He believed, along with others in pre-Civil War America, that it was the work of the Church to usher in the millennial kingdom, at the end of which Christ would return. This optimistic vision was radically different from other forms of millennialism which waited passively for the Second Advent of Christ. Finney's millennialism was a natural conclusion to the other elements of his theology: his doctrine of sanctification which envisioned the perfection of every Christian, the sign of which was perfect obedience to Christ in good works; and his doctrine of social redemption, which would come about through the efforts of perfected saints as they went to war against the evil principalities and powers of this world. Such activity would eventually bring about the millennium.

On the other hand, Finney's millennial vision provided the goal which drew the saints into such rigorous efforts at social reformation as temperance crusades and the abolitionist movement, and also provided the theological motivation for such efforts.

God needed their help in converting the world, and America would have a special part to play in that grand scheme. "All the causes that he advanced, and all the words that he ever wrote, assumed this postmillennial scenario."⁵⁷

Finney wrote in *Lectures on Revival of Religion*: "Only let them feel as the heart of one man, and be agreed as to what ought to be done for the salvation of the world, and the millennium will come at once."⁵⁸ At the time of the writing of the *Lectures*, Finney was a rising prophetic voice in America. He was becoming a well-known revivalist and evangelist with a growing reputation in both the West and in the eastern cities. He had already entered into reforming activities particularly through his preaching in his New York churches and the leadership he provided to the extensive activities of the powerfully influential Benevolent Empire. Eventually his writings were widely read, and through his writings he became an internationally known Christian leader. Upon his association with Oberlin College, his views of perfectionism became clarified, and, as Finney discovered, nicely complemented his developed theological thinking.

Needless to say, as conditions seemed to be improving in American society, largely through the efforts of the Benevolent Empire and the Association of Gentlemen, Finney was not only encouraged in his millennial theology, but such theology gained more and more focus as the social agenda moved forward. And so Finney gave impetus to Jonathan Edwards's eighteenth-century idea of "universal benevolence" by advising all believers to seek and to do the will of God for their lives in this world in service to their neighbors toward the goal of establishing the millennial kingdom. Naturally, any borrowing of Edwards's ideas rankled Finney's Calvinist opponents, who saw Edwards as at the opposite end of the theological spectrum from their chief American mentor. The continuing generosity of the Tappans and the Association of Gentlemen provided the financial resources needed to maintain Finney's vision.

Finney assumed that progress was inevitable, as did many Americans of that day. Ironically he did meet William Miller, the premillennial Adventist, in Boston, who challenged the prevailing millennial assumptions of Finney and others by claiming that the world was decaying rather than progressing, and that the Lord's Second Advent, which was imminent, would be the only event that could reverse that process. Only Christ could establish the millennial Kingdom. All attempts by Christians to do so were fruitless.

Finney, after hearing Miller speak, confronted Miller with the errors of his ways. "I attended Mr. Miller's Bible class once or twice," Finney later wrote in his *Memoirs*, "after which I invited him to my room, and tried to convince him that he was in error."⁵⁹ In speculating on this scene, Hardman wrote:

That would have been a confrontation to witness as the fiery-eyed Finney, confident that progress was inevitable and that the reforms he and his friends had undertaken were surely bringing in the millennium, crossed verbal swords with the chief exponent of the view that the efforts of Christians were insufficient, and only the Lord's impending return could vanquish the forces of evil and decay!⁶⁰

Finney was undaunted by the likes of William Miller and the Millerites. He contin-

ued to rouse the sleeping Church to action. He envisioned the Church as a voluntary society of Christians committed to the notion of cooperation with God in conquering evil and converting the world. His understanding of the Church partly reflected an age of increasing voluntary agencies striving in varying degrees toward a better world, and an age of Jacksonian democracy. Finney both influenced, and was in turn influenced by, a culture which moved away from a doctrine of election to a doctrine of free will, and away from a sense of control from above (by the elect) to control by the consenting will of the people, whether this manifested itself in civil government or in church polity. It comes as no surprise, parenthetically, that, although Finney was ordained into the Presbyterian ministry, he found Presbyterian polity to be too controlling and restrictive, and in 1836 he transferred his ordination to the Congregationalists, a fitting move for Finney.

Finney helped to change the thinking of the Church in insisting that every Christian—laity and clergy—had to participate in ushering in the great millennium. Here he was following the lead of the Second Great Awakening. The First Awakening in America, notable as it was, is remembered for the clergy who led that awakening: Edwards, Whitefield, Frelinghuysen, Tennent and others. However, the Second Awakening was less clergy-oriented and led by clergy and laity, especially in the southern camp meeting expression of that Awakening.

Many preachers who had no formal training—but simply a passion for preaching and saving the lost—were, for all intents and purposes, laity. The burgeoning democratic spirit in America found expression also in the democratic life and ministry of the Church. And, although Finney was a leader in continuing the Second Great Awakening, he gave voice to the ministry of the Church being a cooperative one between clergy and laity. And in turn his spirit of optimism was fuelled by the participatory nature of the ministry.

It is possible to say that some of Finney's millennial optimism diminished during and after the Civil War. "It was apparent, however, as he looked back, that the progress of forty years had done nothing to bring the Millennium any closer."⁶¹ It was clear to many, as a result of the devastation of that national conflict, that the world was not getting better and better. Indeed, the opposite could be concluded—that there was an increase of evil. Postmillennialism would be replaced predominately by premillennialism, and the attendant beliefs that the world was getting worse and that only the Second Advent of Jesus Christ could save such a miserably fallen world.

Along with the evidence of a sinful world was the concomitant evidence that mankind, given choices between good and evil, often choose evil. Finney always maintained a high view of sin, and continued to view sin in the light of evil choices which people make. But he also believed in institutional evil which was more than the sum of sinful individual choices. Just as there was the possibility of universal social benevolence, so there was the possibility of institutional evil, represented most glaringly for Finney by the institution of slavery. Finney eventually hoped that slavery could be combatted not only by the Church, but by the civil government as well, and his opposition to both the election and the reelection of Abraham Lincoln was because he wanted someone more dedicated to radical abolitionism in the highest

office in the land.

And so Finney, ever the practical man, “was always mindful that sin blighted every attempt to make a better world.”⁶² But Finney continued undaunted after the Civil War. He was still the evangelist, the revivalist, the educator, the writer. While his postmillennial vision may have dimmed a bit, basically his theological and ministerial concerns remained the same, and the social reform impetus to which he had given leadership and direction continued, not only in America, but in England as well.

CONCLUSION

There is, gratefully, a revival of interest in Charles Grandison Finney and his religious and social impact upon America in the nineteenth century. Witness, for example, the publication of the recent excellent biography of Finney by Keith Hardman entitled *Charles Grandison Finney: Revivalist and Reformer*, or the recently published critical edition of *The Memoirs of Charles Grandison Finney: The Complete Restored Text*. Along with this, there is a renewed interest in the history of Evangelicalism and its religious and social impact. Scholarship is indebted to such works as Timothy Smith’s classic *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War*, and Donald Dayton’s *Discovering An Evangelical Heritage*. Other scholars such as George Marsden and Mark Noll have developed a high level of serious scholarship and reflection upon the history and continuing development of Evangelicalism.

I have attempted to demonstrate in this paper what the social implications are to the ministry and theology of Charles Grandison Finney. I have tried to see that relationship by first spelling out Finney’s understanding of the human condition with his doctrine of sin, and of human potential with his understanding of perfectionism. People have freedom of the will to make two ultimate choices in this life: they either choose for themselves and for sin, or they choose for God and righteousness. Their actions and affections follow from these choices, and saying “yes” to God means deciding for God’s agenda for his creation—bearing witness by purity of heart and purity of will to reform and redeem a fallen world in concert with a benevolent God.

This leads, naturally, to Finney’s notion of social reform. In an age of reforming impulses, Finney became a leader and spokesman, not of general humanitarian reform, but of Christian reform done as a natural consequence of one’s right relationship with God. While Finney was engaged in many reform activities, the abolitionist cause was uppermost in his mind, as it was on the forefront of the national agenda during Finney’s life and ministry. However, as demonstrated, Finney was careful to see evangelism and revivalism as the dominant task of the Church, and believed that complete reformation of society would be the natural result of revivalism. His primary allegiance throughout his long life and ministry was to revivalism.

It has also been demonstrated that part of what drove Finney in both his revivalistic and reforming ministries was his ultimate vision of a new world, which was part of his postmillennial theology. His efforts in converting the sinner, raising up the saint, and putting all to work would lead, he believed, to the dawning of a new millennial day. Likewise that final goal provided impetus and drive for both his preaching and for the causes which his preaching inspired. It is understandable that some of his

postmillennial emphasis would diminish given the catastrophic events of a Civil War, but Finney's basic theology remained whole, and he could still wish for a new heaven and a new earth, with perhaps more emphasis on God's part than on ours. Nevertheless, his preaching and teaching ministry continued undaunted until he died shortly before his eighty-third birthday on August 16, 1875.

Charles Grandison Finney was a remarkable man by all accounts, not the least of which was that he was faithful to what he perceived to be God's direction in his life. In spite of criticism, some of which was well justified, of his "new measures" and social reform, he nevertheless tried to maintain the delicate relationship of revivalism and social reform.

NOTES

1. Perry Miller, *The Life of the Mind In America from the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1965), p.9.
2. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 461.
3. The titles of many works about Finney demonstrate the concern to understand him fully. There is an excellent recent biography of Charles Grandison Finney by Keith J. Hardman entitled *Charles Grandison Finney 1792-1875: Revivalist and Reformer* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990). See also David L. Weddle, *The Law as Gospel: Revival and Reform in the Theology of Charles G. Finney* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1985); James E. Johnson, "Charles G. Finney and a Theology of Revivalism," *Church History* 38 (1969): 338-358; Garth M. Rosell, "Charles G. Finney: His Place in the Stream," in Leonard I. Sweet, ed. *The Evangelical Tradition in America* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984). See also the many references to Finney in William G. McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959); William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978); and Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).
4. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 6.
5. Ahstrom, *Religious History*, p. 434.
6. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 146.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
8. Garth M. Rosell and Richard A. G. Dupuis, eds. *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney: The Complete Restored Text* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), p. 78, n. 24. It is important to note that Finney's *Memoirs* were not written while many of the events of his life were taking place. He was persuaded to do so by the board of trustees of Oberlin College and by many of his friends in order that his biography could be written. Finney also believed that a correct picture of the revivals in which he took part be drawn, especially since distortions of those revivals had been put into print by Nettleton and Beecher. And so he began his *Memoirs* "sometime in the summer or autumn of 1866" (p. xxviii). After a series of revisions and corrections, the *Memoirs* were first published on January 27, 1876, under the title *Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*. Written by himself.

The *Memoirs* were edited by James H. Fairchild, Finney's successor to the presidency of Oberlin College. However, Fairchild's editing decidedly toned down some of Finney's colorful language and omitted important passages. The task of restoring the original text was undertaken by Rosell and Dupuis, and *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney: The Complete Restored Text* provides the reader with the original text, copious footnotes, invaluable information about the

original manuscript, and various changes and corrections which were made before publication.

Because the *Memoirs* were written toward the end of Finney's life, his selective memory of events and people is evident, and so the *Memoirs* must be used cautiously. In any case, the *Memoirs* became "Finney's third great contribution to literature" (p. xxviii) after his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* and *Lectures on Systematic Theology*.

For the sake of uniformity in this paper, this work will be consistently referred to as Finney, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, whether the reference is to the text itself or a note by Rosell and Dupuis.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

10. Carl Cramer, *Listen for a Lonesome Drum: A York State Chronicle* (New York: McKay, 1950), p. 115, quoted in Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 25.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

12. Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), pp. 202-203.

13. See Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 14.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, p. 409. See also Finney, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, p. 251, n34.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 251.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

18. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 345.

19. Charles Grandison Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (Oberlin, OH: E. J. Goodrich, 1868), p. 12. There are many editions of these lectures, and this paper will use the 1868 edition. "The twenty-two lectures which make up the volume, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, were delivered on successive Friday evenings at the Chatham Street Chapel and recorded by Joshua Leavitt, editor of the *New York Evangelist*. After they were edited by Finney himself, they were published as a series in the *New York Evangelist* to boost a sagging circulation brought on by Leavitt's strongly abolitionist editorial policy. Later, in 1835, they were published as a book. The volume was revised and reissued in 1868" (Garth M. Rosell, "Charles Grandison Finney and the Rise of the Benevolence Empire" [Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1971], p. 181, n2). See also John Stanley Mattson, "Charles Grandison Finney and the Emerging Tradition of 'New Measure' Revivalism," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1970).

20. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 20.

21. John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1966), p. 37.

22. The conjoining of Scripture, tradition, reason and experience was something which John Wesley did often in his sermons and writings. The Wesleyan scholar, Albert Outler, labelled this the Wesleyan quadrilateral. For two excellent treatments of the quadrilateral, see Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20:1 (1985): 7-18; and Donald Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990).

23. Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, p. 437.

24. See Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 332. Hardman is not entirely correct in his assessment of Wesley's "evangelical perfection." For Finney's remarks, see *Memoirs*, pp. 391-393, which includes the Wesleyans' disagreement with Finney and Finney's disagreement with the Wesleyans. See also Charles Grandison Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (Oberlin, OH: E. J. Goodrich, 1887), lectures 37-42; and Timothy L. Smith, ed., *The Promise of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1980), which is a compilation of writings by Finney on the subject of sanctification first published in the *Oberlin Evangelist* in 1839 and 1840. I

agree with David Rightmire's assessment, which states that "Finney's reaction to Methodist emphases was negative, as he misconceived Wesley's concept of 'perfect love,' and misconstrued it to mean a stress on the emotions" (R. David Rightmire, *Sacraments and The Salvation Army: Pneumatological Foundations* [Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1990], p. 136).

For further reading on this subject see James H. Fairchild, "The Doctrine of Sanctification at Oberlin," *The Congregational Quarterly* 18:1 (April 1876):237-259; John L. Gresham, Jr., *Charles G. Finney's Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1987); and B. B. Warfield's thorough response and criticism in his work entitled *Studies in Perfectionism*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931), especially vol. 2, chap. 1.

Note, also, Timothy Smith's remarks in *Revivalism and Social Reform*, p. 112: "The keynote of Finney's later crusades was the plea that Christians should consecrate themselves fully to the Lord. Everywhere he found them living in partial consecration and half-hearted love. A brave evangelist indeed would have been required to announce in the Park Street Church in 1857 that such persons had never really been converted before. The only practical alternative was to urge them to seek a higher work of grace."

25. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, pp. 406-407.

26. See, for example, Warfield, *Studies in Perfectionism*, 2:59-60.

27. When Oberlin was built in 1835, a large white canvas tent was erected prominently on the Oberlin campus for use by the college and for evangelistic crusades, with a seating capacity of three thousand. The inauguration of the first president, Asa Mahan, was held in this tent. The center pole, protruding far above the peak of the tent, bore a long, blue banner on which were inscribed the words "Holiness to the Lord." Perfectionism was indeed preached at Oberlin, and as early as 1836 Oberlin students bore witness that they had put sin out of their lives and were seeking lives of holiness.

28. Finney, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, p. 459.

29. Ibid. For an excellent treatment of this, see, Timothy L. Smith, "The Cross Demands, the Spirit Enables," *Christianity Today* (16 February 1979): 22-26.

30. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 329. Timothy Smith reminds his readers that "The man chiefly responsible for the adoption by American Wesleyans of the terms 'filling' or 'baptism of the Spirit' to describe the experience of sanctification was Charles G. Finney" ("The Cross Demands, the Spirit Enables," p. 23). For an account of Asa Mahan's own experience of holiness, see Edward H. Madden and James E. Hamilton, *Freedom and Grace: The Life of Asa Mahan* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1982), pp. 59-67.

31. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, pp. 122-123.

32. Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, p. 422. See also J. Earl Thompson, "Lyman Beecher's Long Road to Conservative Abolitionism," *Church History* 42 (March 1973): 89-109.

33. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 74.

34. Donald Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976), p. 88.

35. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 101. For a more complete treatment of this, see Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth Century American Evangelicalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), chap. 4. See also Nancy A. Hardesty, *Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Revivalism and Feminism in the Age of Finney* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishers, 1991); and Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, p. 82.

36. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 438.

37. Ibid., p. 205. See also Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse 1830-1844* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973), p. 11: "Among Finney's converts this gospel released a mighty impulse toward social reform."

38. For a complete treatment of this, see Rosell, "Charles Grandison Finney and the Rise of the Benevolence Empire."
39. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 185.
40. Ibid. Note the comments of Timothy L. Smith in his *Revivalism and Social Reform*, pp. 149 and 180: "Charles G. Finney...inspired many an abolitionist. But he never thought of himself primarily as reformer." "Charles G. Finney probably won as many converts to the cause of William Lloyd Garrison, even though he shunned the role of political agitator for that of a winner of souls."
41. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 262.
42. Ibid., p. 274.
43. Finney, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, p. 362 n29.
44. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 263.
45. Finney, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, p. 362.
46. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 263.
47. Ibid., p. 321.
48. Ibid., p. 273. This was one of the reasons why Finney gave himself increasingly in his ministry to the training of ministers and evangelists. In "Charles Grandison Finney and the Rise of the Benevolence Empire," Garth Rosell noted that "Finney's growing preoccupation with education, which ultimately led him to Oberlin College, grew out of this basic shift in strategy. Prior to the voyage (taken to recuperate from physical illness), Finney's primary concern had been upon his own evangelistic efforts. Upon his return, however, he began to talk increasingly of training younger men to take up the cause" (p. 181). See also Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, pp. 177-184.
49. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*, p. 18.
50. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, p. 272.
51. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 365.
52. Ibid., p. 316.
53. Smith, "The Cross Demands, the Spirit Enables," p. 24.
54. See Madden and Hamilton, *Freedom and Grace*, pp. 35-44.
55. See Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 361, where he mentions that even health issues were important at Oberlin.
56. Ibid., p. 363.
57. Ibid., p. 152.
58. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, p. 312. See also Finney's remarks in *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, pp. 164, 544 and 312, n. 65.
59. Ibid., p. 453.
60. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 374.
61. Finney, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, p. xx.
62. Hardman, *Revivalist and Reformer*, p. 370.

Feminine Language About God?

WOLFHART PANNENBERG

It is a peculiarity of ancient Israel that its faith obliged the people to worship only one God. Therefore, the Old Testament language about God differs in many ways from that of surrounding nations. While it was a common feature in ancient cultures to conceive of the divine reality as male or female in analogy to human society, the one God of Israel could not be understood to have a divine consort lest monotheism be lost. As a consequence, the God of Israel could not be a male person in the strict sense, because that would imply sexual correlation with a female consort. There are some examples, most notably in the prophecy of Hosea, where the people of Israel function in the role of the bride of Yahweh. It is in these cases where the biblical language about God comes closest to attributing to God a male role in the sexual sense. Otherwise, even where God is talked about as a quasi male person, the point of comparison is the social rather than the sexual role, that is, connected with being the head of a clan. It comes to expression most characteristically in the father-son relationship, when God is said to relate to the king like a father relates to his son. Later on, the application of the image could be expanded to include the whole people of Israel in terms of sons or daughters of God. It expresses not the natural relationship of procreation, but rather the social function of providence and care, as it is appropriate in the head of the family.

In a similar way, Jesus talked about the fatherhood of God as God cares for all creatures and provides for them (Matt. 5:45). Like the head of an archaic family, God is in complete control of his people (Matt. 6:4) and is ready to forgive their

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faults. In turn, they are required to unequivocally obey him.

In this way, the Lord's Prayer addresses God as "Father," and correspondingly Jesus himself relates to God as an obedient son. There was no sexual connotation involved. Even in the story of Jesus' baptism in the Gospel of Luke, where Psalm 2:7 is quoted ("You are my son, today I have begotten you" [Luke 3:22]), we have a formula of adoption or solemn recognition rather than a statement on physical procreation. It was somewhat unfortunate, therefore, that later on the trinitarian doctrine of the church chose precisely the image of generation to identify the distinctive character of the father-son relationship in the Trinity. Of course, the church fathers did not mean to say that the son was brought forth by a physical act of begetting, but the connotation was there when this image was selected and isolated from other ways of describing the father-son relationship that occur in the New Testament.

It may be stated, then, that the biblical language about God avoids sexual connotations, and necessarily so; because such avoidance was required in order to protect biblical monotheism. The conception of God as *father* does not have sexual, but social implications, and so does the use of the word *son*. Although in popular Christian piety there always has been a tendency of imagining God the Father as an old man, the intention was generally not to say that God was male. To introduce such a sexual element into the idea of God was to abandon the orthodox Christian faith in the one God.

It was left to the modern feminist movement to reintroduce the element of sexuality into the language about God. Contrary to tradition, the sexual connotation of the words *father* and *son* have been highlighted, as if they expressed a specifically male conception of the divine reality. If that were granted, it would be plausible consequently to ask for a better balance in the gender aspect of our language about God.

It is an imprudent proposal, nevertheless. It not only disregards the fact that the biblical language about God the Father dwells upon social rather than sexual connotations, but it also risks the surrender of the monotheistic emphasis of the biblical tradition. In addition, the proposal seems to operate on the assumption that religious language, in general, mirrors the social experience of human persons; that a change toward equality in the social status of women must be reflected in religious talk about God or even preceded by a change in religious language in order to remove obstacles that may prevent the genuine acceptance of the new status of women in the society. Whoever stresses this argument should be aware, however, of employing a Feuerbachian type of conceiving of religious language; as if such language would essentially consist of projecting the prevailing human and social experience of a period into our images of the divine reality, so that a change in social conditions would require a corresponding change in religious language. This assumption endangers the truth claims of religious language by reducing it to human projection. While it is undeniable that the social climate of patriarchy conditioned the choice of the word *father* in characterizing the divine functions of government, providence and paternal care, this fact belongs to the contingencies of God's revelation in history. It is conceivable that, in a matriarchal society, the word *mother* could have served a similar purpose. But in fact the word *father* came to be used in this way. That is part of the con-

tingencies of historical revelation, just as the fact that the Son of God became incarnate as a Jew rather than a Chinese or German. As the Nazi Germans were bothered by Jesus' Jewishness, so are our contemporary feminists bothered by the contingency of language about God as father. It is a new form of the old scandal of historical particularity that is the burden of the Christian faith in God's incarnation in history. As we have to accept other contingencies of that historical incarnation, we have to realize that the word *father* in Jesus' own language functioned not as an exchangeable image, but as the name he used in addressing the God he proclaimed. Therefore, in the Christian church the name father, and its use as Jesus used it, belongs to the identity of the Christian faith. It cannot be changed without abandoning that identity, because it is by entering into Jesus' relationship to God as father that we share in his sonship and—because of our communion with him—obtain the hope of eternal life.

Finally, the discussion is not without its humorous notes. At some occasion a participant of a discussion seriously claimed that women would be marginalized by a religion that worships God as father, since women could not relate to God by such a male image. Obviously, it did not occur to the questioner that—even if God were conceived as male—it would be not so extraordinary that a woman should relate to a male person. Easier perhaps than to a female authority. The relationship of daughters to their fathers is often less complicated than that between sons and fathers. On the other hand, if they could choose the gender of their God, men might be inclined to adore God in the image of a beautiful woman rather than a father. And a female goddess might be prejudiced in favor of her sons, as it sometimes happens with human mothers. For better or for worse, the Christian faith does not provide such a choice.

Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew: What the Reader Knows

MARK ALLAN POWELL

We learn how to read stories at an early age. We recognize when a story is not affecting us in its intended fashion. We perceive that the story is supposed to be humorous, even though we do not think it is funny. We realize that the story is supposed to be scary, even though we are not scared. When this happens, we usually regret the distance between the story's intended and actual effects, and may attempt to bridge this gap to make the reading experience more satisfactory.¹

If the fault lies with the narrative itself, little can be done. Perhaps the story is just not a very good one, at least in our estimation. Or, perhaps, the story itself is all right, but is not told well. We think the story could be funny, or scary, or whatever, if only it were told by a more gifted author.

At other times, the fault may lie with us. The story may be a good one, exquisitely told, but over our heads. There are too many big words that we don't understand, too many obscure concepts or allusions that escape our grasp. We recognize that we are not appreciating the story as we would if we knew everything that we are expected to know. What do we do? If the story is important to us, we try to increase our knowledge in order to appreciate it more fully. We look up words in the dictionary, do some research on the period of history in which the story takes place, or do whatever else is necessary to gain the knowledge we are expected to have.

Then again, stories sometimes fail to affect us as they might because we know too much. If we have seen a motion picture version of the story or talked with a

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friend who has read the book, we may find our reading experience compromised. Associations imported from the film or advance knowledge regarding how the story will turn out may prevent us from appreciating the narrative as intended. What do we do? If the story is important to us, we may pretend that we do not know whatever we are not expected to know. We approach the story on its own terms, pretending to forget whatever extraneous information we have acquired. Thus, we may think it sad when the hero appears to have died, even though we know that the apparent death is only a ruse. If we realize that we are not supposed to know something, we pretend that we don't, and so allow the story to affect us in its intended fashion.

Narrative critics attempt to read the Gospel of Matthew as a story.² In doing this, they recognize the gap between the effect that this Gospel is intended to have on its readers and the effect that it actually does have on many real readers today.³ Narrative criticism attempts to bridge this gap by enabling readers to experience the story in the manner expected of its "implied reader"; that is, the reader presupposed by the narrative.⁴ The implied reader of Matthew's Gospel may be defined as an imaginary person for whom the intention of the text always reaches its fulfillment.⁵ The implied reader of Matthew's Gospel knows everything that the Gospel expects him or her to know, but does not know anything that the Gospel does not expect him or her to know.⁶ According to this model of literary criticism, interpretations offered by real readers may be called unexpected readings⁷ if they (a) fail to take into account knowledge possessed by the implied reader, or (b) depend upon knowledge not possessed by the implied reader.

What does the implied reader of Matthew's Gospel know? At the very least, this implied reader must possess linguistic competence to receive the text, in Greek if that is the narrative we are to imagine being read, or in some other language if we prefer to discuss reception of a translated version.⁸ In addition, four other types of knowledge⁹ may be assumed to belong to the repertoire¹⁰ of Matthew's implied reader.

I.

The implied reader of Matthew's Gospel has **knowledge that might be considered universal**; that is, knowledge that is generally assumed for all people everywhere.¹¹ Matthew's implied reader knows that five loaves and two fish would not normally be enough food for 5,000 people (14:17), and so regards what happens in 14:15-21 as extraordinary. Similarly, Matthew's implied reader knows that a camel is larger than a gnat and cannot really be swallowed by a human being; therefore, Jesus' comment in 23:24 must be taken figuratively. This type of knowledge does not need to be spelled out within the narrative itself, but can be taken for granted, because it is based on universal human experience.¹²

With regard to this type of knowledge, real readers should be at one with the implied reader. By definition, this knowledge derives from universal human experience and, so, the knowledge of real readers on such matters should coincide with what is expected of the implied reader.¹³

II.

The implied reader of Matthew's Gospel also has **knowledge of what is revealed within the narrative**. Matthew's implied reader pays attention to what he or she reads

and accepts what the narrator reports as reliable.¹⁴ Thus, the implied reader of this Gospel knows that Hezron was the father of Ram (1:3), that John the Baptist was beheaded at the command of Herod (14:9-10), and that the Sadducees say there is no resurrection (22:23). All this knowledge is conveyed to the reader within the narrative.

Real readers are typically less attentive to what is revealed within the narrative than the implied reader is expected to be. Many people who have read Matthew's Gospel several times may find it difficult to recall whether Hezron was the father of Ram or vice versa. The narrator states this clearly in 1:3 but, unlike the implied reader, real readers tend to forget.

One reason, then, that real readers arrive at unexpected interpretations is that they fail to notice or remember information provided within the narrative. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus identifies himself with needy people whom he describes as his "brothers." He says that deeds of mercy performed for these people are done for him. Real readers of Matthew's Gospel may interpret this to mean that all people throughout the world are Jesus' brothers, and that any deeds of mercy performed for the needy qualify as ministry to Jesus himself. Matthew's implied reader, however, would not be expected to interpret the passage in this way. Matthew's implied reader would be expected to recall that, earlier in the narrative, Jesus' "brothers" were defined as people who do the will of God (12:50). Accordingly, Matthew's implied reader understands Jesus' reference to "the least of these, my brothers" in 25:40 as applying not to all needy people everywhere but, specifically, to needy people who do the will of God.¹⁵

But now we must pause to consider another option: is it possible, ever, for real readers to miss the interpretation expected of the implied reader because they are more attentive to what is revealed within the narrative than the implied reader is expected to be? We know that this can happen with some narratives. In a recent film,¹⁶ for example, the leading female character asks a doorman for the apartment number of a man she wishes to visit. The doorman replies, "2D." Later, we see the woman being admitted to the man's apartment, but the number on his door clearly reads, "2A." A host of questions might flood our minds: Was the doorman lying? Did the man change apartments? How did the woman find the right one when she had been given wrong information? Actually, all of these questions are irrelevant. The mix-up of numbers in the film is simply a mistake, a gaffe that the audience is not supposed to notice. When members of the audience do notice the numbers and try to read some significance into them, they are interpreting the film in a way that its implied audience would not.

In Matthew 12:40, Jesus tells the religious leaders of Israel that, "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." This saying is a prediction by Jesus of his own resurrection, which is reported later in the narrative. If one reads very carefully, however, one may notice that Jesus does not actually spend "three days and three nights" in the heart of the earth as he predicted. At most, he is in the tomb for portions of three days and two nights. Does the implied reader of Matthew notice this discrepancy and wonder what it means? I suspect that, at this point, the implied reader is less attentive than some real readers have been. The implied reader is expected to hear this prediction as parallel to other statements Jesus makes, statements that indi-

cate he will rise from the dead “on the third day” without bothering to enumerate the exact number of nights (16:21; 17:23; 20:19; cf. 27:63-64).¹⁷

Real readers, then, may miss the interpretation expected of the implied reader if they are either more or less observant than the implied reader is expected to be. How can we tell just what the implied reader is expected to notice? Absolute certainty with regard to this matter may not be possible, but we can at least test our suppositions according to certain criteria:

(1) **Recurrence.** Is the knowledge that we suppose the reader is expected to notice found more than once in the narrative? This criterion suggests that the reader is more likely to notice information that is repeated within the narrative, although this certainly does not mean that the reader is never expected to notice information that is provided only once. Our supposition that the reader is expected to notice a connection between 12:50 and 25:40 would be strengthened if Jesus also identified his “brothers” as people who do the will of God elsewhere in the narrative. The fact that he doesn’t, however, does not prove our supposition false. Likewise, the fact that Jesus refers only once to the Son of Man being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth does not, in and of itself, indicate that the reader is not expected to notice the discrepancy between 12:40 and 27:57-28:10. But our supposition that the reader is not expected to note this discrepancy would be less tenable if the “three days and three nights” information was provided more than once.

(2) **Thematic coherence.**¹⁸ Does the knowledge that the reader is expected to notice yield a reading that seems reasonable within the context of the narrative as a whole? To presume that the implied reader does notice the connection between 12:50 and 25:40 seems reasonable, because for Jesus to identify himself with needy persons who do the will of the Father in heaven would match his identification elsewhere with (a) humble children who are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (18:2-5), (b) disciples who gather in his name to pray to the Father in heaven (18:19-20), and, (c) people who baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (28:19-20). To presume, however, that the implied reader notices a discrepancy between the saying in 12:40 and the actual narrative of the resurrection in 27:57-28:10 does not seem reasonable. Jesus is not elsewhere portrayed in this narrative as a person who fails to get his predictions right.¹⁹

Even professional readers²⁰ of Matthew’s Gospel who follow such criteria may sometimes disagree in their conclusions regarding just what Matthew’s implied reader is expected to know. One question that has evoked some discussion, for instance, is whether the implied reader should be thought of as a person who is reading the narrative for the first time.²¹ In other words, when we focus on any particular passage in Matthew’s Gospel, should we assume that the implied reader will understand this passage in light of the entire Gospel? Or, should we assume that the implied reader knows only that portion of the Gospel that precedes this passage? Different answers to these questions may yield different interpretations.

We may illustrate these different interpretations with reference to Matthew 9:15. When Jesus is challenged to explain why his disciples do not fast, he responds, “Can the wedding guests fast as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.” The implied

reader may be expected to recognize this saying as a prediction of Jesus' death, which will be narrated later in the Gospel. If, however, the implied reader is assumed to be reading this narrative for the first time, the passage will simply be mysterious, for nothing in the narrative up to this point has told the reader that Jesus is going to die.

The question of whether Matthew's implied reader should be thought of as experiencing the narrative for the first time remains unresolved, but may not be as significant for our appreciation of the Gospel as it first appears. For one thing, suspense is not a major motif in Matthew's Gospel. Even if we do posit a first-time reader for Matthew, the saying in 9:15 will not remain mysterious for long. Jesus soon predicts his death in terms that are much more explicit (16:21; 17:23; 20:19), and even a first-time reader would be expected to remember the earlier saying and interpret it in light of these new revelations. Thus, the question regarding 9:15 is not whether the implied reader understands the saying as applying to Jesus' death, but when the implied reader comes to understand this. In neither case is the implied reader envisioned as being held in suspense concerning what will happen to Jesus until the story reaches its conclusion.

Another reason this question is not as crucial as it might at first appear is that real readers must be able to adopt the perspective of one who does not know how the story is going to turn out regardless of whether or not this is the perspective ascribed to the implied reader. Even if we do not assume that Matthew's implied reader is reading the story for the first time, we must recognize that the implied reader is able to understand the perspectives of the various characters in the narrative. To focus on 9:15 again, even if Matthew's implied reader recognizes the saying immediately as a reference to Jesus' death, the people to whom Jesus is speaking in the story cannot be expected to understand what he says in this way. The implied reader knows that the characters who hear Jesus' response in 9:15 find that response mysterious. Accordingly, our task as real readers is the same regardless of whether we assume Matthew's implied reader is experiencing the story for the first time. In any case, we must be able to pretend that we do not know how the story will turn out in order to hear the words of Jesus the way the characters in the story would hear them.

To summarize the main points of this section, real readers who wish to receive Matthew's narrative in the manner expected of its implied reader must (a) be attentive to information within the narrative that the reader is expected to notice; and (b) be willing to overlook certain things in the narrative that the reader is not expected to notice. We should be cautious in ascribing knowledge revealed within the narrative to the latter category, but we may find warrant for doing so when such knowledge is not provided repeatedly and when consideration of such knowledge leads to an interpretation inconsistent with the narrative as a whole.

III.

The implied reader of Matthew's Gospel also has **knowledge that is presupposed by the spatial, temporal and social setting of the narrative**. Such knowledge is not explicitly revealed within the narrative, nor can it be derived from universal human experience. Rather, it is knowledge intrinsic to this particular narrative, assumed by all of the characters as well as by the narrator to be common knowledge within the world of this story.

Matthew's implied reader knows some geography. He or she knows what is meant by references to Judea (2:1), Galilee (2:23), Egypt (2:14), Israel (2:21), the Decapolis (4:25), Gennesaret (14:34), Magadan (15:39), and many other locales. These places are cited in the narrative with such brevity of detail that some familiarity must be assumed. At the very least, the reader is expected to know which place names refer to nations and which to cities. Beyond this, the reader is expected to have some inkling of the distances traversed as the characters move from place to place, and to know, for instance, that Egypt was not a part of Herod's jurisdiction (2:13-14). Some of the stories also seem to assume particular associations regarding settings. Matthew's reader is expected, for example, to know that Jerusalem is "the holy city" (4:5; 27:53).

Matthew's implied reader also knows some history. He or she knows what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah (10:15; 11:24) and understands what is meant by the expression, "deportation to Babylon" (1:11, 12, 17). This information, of course, would be available from the Hebrew Scriptures that are cited repeatedly throughout the narrative (see Section IV below), but other historical information would not be. For example, Matthew's reader apparently knows who Caesar is (22:17, 21) and recognizes what time period is meant by the phrase, "in the days of Herod the king" (2:1). Characters such as Simon the leper (26:6) and Mary Magdalene (27:56) are introduced so casually that their names alone may be expected to strike a familiar chord.

Matthew's implied reader has knowledge concerning the social and cultural realities of life in Palestine during the time of Jesus. This reader knows what synagogues are (4:23), and understands what it means for a person to be crucified (20:19), or for a man and woman to be betrothed (1:18). The reader is expected to know the difference between broad and narrow phylacteries (23:5), and to understand why someone would whitewash a tomb (23:27) or pour ointment over another person's head (26:9). If Matthew's reader can be assumed to know that two sparrows sell for an assarion (10:29), then surely this reader can also be counted on to know that 10,000 talents are worth more than 100 denarii (18:23-35). Indeed, when our English Bibles report that Peter was accosted by collectors of "the temple tax" (17:24; NEB, NRSV, REB, TEV), they are being generous to modern-day readers. The Greek text of Matthew's story refers only to those who collect the didrachma. The implied reader of Matthew's Gospel not only knows how much a drachma is worth, but also knows that two drachma was the amount charged for the temple tax. In the same way, the implied reader of Matthew's Gospel is expected to know something about many other areas of life: sowing (13:3-9), harvesting (13:3-9), winnowing (3:12), fishing (4:18-21; 13:47-50), shepherding (25:32), tenant farming (21:33-46), court proceedings (5:25-26, 40-41), and customs associated with weddings (25:1-13) and funerals (9:23).

Matthew's reader is also expected to understand symbolic language that is used throughout the narrative, even though the meaning of such language is often culturally determined. Matthew's reader knows that being called "the salt of the earth" (5:13) is a compliment, while being called a "brood of vipers" (3:7) is not. This much, of course, might be determined from narrative context, but the fuller sense in which such metaphors and epithets²² are to be understood derives from the social context of the narrative's setting. The same is true for euphemisms: Matthew's reader knows that

the saints who have "fallen asleep" (27:52) are actually dead,²³ and understands the expression "kingdom of heaven" to be synonymous with "kingdom of God."

Symbolic speech also includes religious words and phrases. Matthew's narrative makes reference to abstract religious concepts without providing any precise definition of what is meant. A partial list of such concepts would include blasphemy (9:3), forgiveness (26:28), gospel (4:23), hypocrisy (6:2), judgment (10:15), law (5:17), piety (6:1), repentance (3:1), righteousness (5:20), salvation (1:21), sin (1:21), wisdom (11:9), and witness (10:18). Matthew's reader is expected to understand these concepts in a manner appropriate to the social and cultural setting of the narrative. When Jesus says, "Do not give dogs what is holy" (7:6), the reader is not just expected to know what dogs are, and to recognize that the reference to dogs here is metaphorical rather than literal. The reader is also expected to know what Jesus means by the phrase "what is holy."

What is said of symbolic speech also holds true for symbolic actions. When Jesus falls on his face in Gethsemane (26:39), the reader does not think he is clumsy but realizes he has assumed an appropriate posture for prayer. When the high priest tears his robes (26:65), or when Jesus' disciples are instructed to salute a house (10:12) or to shake off the dust from their feet (10:14), Matthew's reader is expected to understand the symbolic meaning that attends these gestures.

One can easily imagine how unexpected readings may result when real readers of Matthew lack knowledge presupposed by the setting of the narrative. People who are frequent victims of spouse abuse, for instance, might read Matthew 5:39 as counseling passive acceptance of their fate. But in Matthew's story, when Jesus says, "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other as well," he does not mean that victims of violence should allow themselves to be repeatedly brutalized. Matthew's implied reader is expected to understand the reference to a slap on the cheek as more of a ritual insult than a physical attack.²⁴

What happens, then, if information that is assumed for the setting of Matthew's narrative is no longer available to us today? We may find that it is impossible for us to assume perfectly the role of the implied reader that is expected of us. If this is the case, our most honest response should be an admission of inadequacy. Such an admission, I believe, is more responsible than the suggestion that unresolved ambiguities be embraced as indications that the text is open to multiple interpretations. Robert Fowler, for instance, has suggested that since Jesus' metaphor of the wineskins is not clearly defined within the narrative of Mark's Gospel (Mark 2:21-22), we are "encouraged to launch out on our own" in making sense of this particular metaphor.²⁵ I suspect, rather, that the metaphor is not clearly defined because Mark's implied reader is expected to understand it without explanation. In other words, the metaphor may be ambiguous to real readers today, but it is not ambiguous to Mark's implied reader. If we are unable at this point to achieve the goal of reading Mark in the manner expected of its implied reader, so be it. Let us at least admit this, and not take the easy way out by claiming that the text is supposed to be ambiguous and that, accordingly, we are not supposed to know things that are difficult (or impossible) for us to know.²⁶

Unexpected readings may also result when the real reader possesses knowledge of the setting that is not presupposed by the narrative; that is, knowledge that the implied reader is not expected to have. The most obvious manner in which a real reader might be over-informed in this way is through the acquisition of false knowledge. We may imagine a reader who has been told that there was a narrow gate in the walls of Jerusalem called "the needle's eye," through which a camel could conceivably pass with difficulty. Matthew's implied reader would not know about this gate, which, in fact, never existed. Matthew's implied reader understands Jesus' comment in 19:24 as hyperbolic speech stressing the complete impossibility of a rich person entering the reign of heaven without divine intervention (19:26). The over-informed real reader, however, may take Jesus' words literally and arrive at an interpretation at variance with that expected of the implied reader.

Real readers may be over-informed in other ways as well. Some real readers may know that salt cannot actually lose its flavor (5:13) and that mustard seeds are not the smallest of all seeds (13:32). While this knowledge is not incorrect, it is inappropriate for the setting of Matthew's narrative. The implied reader of Matthew's Gospel would never evaluate Jesus' words regarding salt and mustard seeds in light of such knowledge. In the same way, modern-day readers of Matthew may sometimes find that they know more details about matters referred to in this story than the implied reader would be expected to know. Matthew's implied reader, for example, is probably not expected to know which Caesar's image was found on the coin shown to Jesus in 22:19. Interpretations that build on such an identification may pursue directions that the implied reader would not follow.

We said earlier that, because unexpected readings can result either from under-observance or over-observance of what is revealed within the narrative, real readers must struggle to determine what the implied reader is expected to notice. The same principle holds for knowledge presupposed by the setting of the narrative. Unexpected readings may result if readers are either under-informed or over-informed concerning the narrative's setting. Thus, real readers who wish to read the narrative in the manner expected of its implied reader must struggle to determine what information the reader is assumed to possess.

Once again, certain criteria may guide us in making these determinations:

(1) **Availability.** Was the knowledge we are to regard as assumed for the setting of the narrative available to the author?²⁷ It makes sense to assume that the reader is expected to know that 10,000 talents are worth more than 100 denarii, because the author of Matthew's Gospel probably would have known this. It does not make sense to assume the reader is expected to know that orchid seeds are smaller than mustard seeds, because the author of Matthew's Gospel probably would not have known this.

(2) **Recurrence.** Is the knowledge we are to regard as assumed for the setting of the narrative relevant for understanding the text in repeated instances? The likelihood that the reader is expected to have certain knowledge increases when this knowledge appears to be presupposed more than once. This does not mean, however, that we can assume the reader is not expected to know things that are presupposed only once. Both the relative value of talents and denarii (18:23-35) and the identity of the Caesar

whose image is on the coin (22:19) may be classed as information that would be relevant only once in Matthew's narrative. Still, we have said the former information is presupposed, while the latter probably is not. This decision takes other criteria into account. But, if the identity of the Caesar whose image appears on the coin was information that would be relevant several times in the narrative, then our supposition that this information is not presupposed would be less tenable.

(3) **Thematic Coherence.** Is the reading gained by assuming that the reader possesses certain knowledge related to the setting of the narrative consistent with the narrative as a whole? The supposition that Matthew's reader is expected to know the identity of the Caesar whose image appears on the coin would fail to meet this criterion, for nowhere else in this narrative is Jesus presented as a critic or supporter of any individual ruler or authority.

These criteria do not allow for certain results. The struggle to determine what knowledge concerning the narrative's setting the reader may be expected to know is not always an easy one. We might ask, for instance, whether Matthew's implied reader is expected to know that the temple in Jerusalem will be destroyed within forty years of Jesus' death. Jesus predicts in the story that the temple will be destroyed (24:2) and many real readers today know that this did in fact occur in 70 A.D. Matthew's narrative, however, ends without reporting the event. So, does Matthew's implied reader understand 24:2 in light of what is known to real readers today, or does Matthew's implied reader simply take the prediction as an imprecise forecast regarding something that still lies in the future?

The supposition that the reader is expected to know the temple will be destroyed within a generation of Jesus' death can be defended with regard to all three criteria suggested above. If, as most scholars believe, Matthew's Gospel was written later than 70 A.D., then this information would have been available to the historical author. References to predictions by Jesus of an impending destruction of the temple are found not only in 24:2, but also in 26:61 and 27:40. And, finally, the supposition that the reader has this knowledge yields an interpretation that regards Jesus as a reliable prophet whose predictions are fulfilled, an interpretation that coheres well with the presentation of Jesus elsewhere in the narrative.

The problem in supposing that the reader is expected to possess this particular knowledge is that the knowledge is not really presupposed by the setting of the story Matthew tells. None of the characters in the story hear Jesus' words in the way that we are suggesting the reader is expected to hear them. In literary terms, we have shifted from a focus on the setting presupposed by the narrative's story (its content) to a focus on the setting presupposed by its discourse (its rhetoric).²⁸ In other words, we are now assuming that the reader is expected to have knowledge presupposed by the setting in which the story was written, even if this knowledge is not presupposed by the setting of the story itself. Is this valid?

Literary critics sometimes face analogous questions in their consideration of secular literature. A recent book by William Demby²⁹ is set in the early 1960s and has John F. Kennedy as one of its characters. Real readers of Demby's book say they experience a sense of impending doom as the story progresses because they know that Kennedy

is going to be assassinated when the events of the novel reach November 22, 1963. Since the story itself does not contain any advance warnings that this is going to happen, one may ask whether this response of real readers is at variance with the anticipated response of Demby's implied reader. Critics such as Peter Rabinowitz and Wayne Booth have concluded that it is not.³⁰ Because the book was written at a time when the fact of Kennedy's assassination was well known, knowledge of this event may be regarded as presupposed for the narrative.

The same logic employed by Rabinowitz and Booth in consideration of Demby's book may be applied to the question of whether Matthew's implied reader knows the details concerning how and when Jesus' prediction of the temple destruction would be fulfilled. The facts of the temple destruction could have been considered common knowledge at the time when this book was written. But what Booth and Rabinowitz are really suggesting is that the criterion of availability discussed above be extended to apply not only to a work's author, but also to its original audience or first readers. I am uncomfortable with this suggestion because the concept of the implied reader is a heuristic device that should not be defined with reference to any real audience, original or otherwise.³¹ The use of this device is not compromised by the fact that no real person may ever be found who fulfills the narrative's expectations perfectly. So what if Matthew's real readers have from the very first possessed knowledge not available to the implied reader? Perhaps Matthew (and Demby, too, for that matter) has created a narrative that will never be received by real readers in the manner intended, unless they pretend not to know any more than what is presupposed for the setting of the story. Perhaps Matthew's narrative invites its readers to hear Jesus' prophecy in 24:2 in the same way that it would be heard by the characters in the story—as a vague forecast rather than as a precise prediction.

I would like to say, in defiance of Rabinowitz and Booth, that Matthew's implied reader knows only what is presupposed for the story itself. I do not believe that knowledge presupposed by the narrative's discourse should be ascribed to the implied reader in most cases. With regard to the text at hand, however, there is an overriding factor to consider. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus offers what is probably a further reference to the temple's violation³² and, this time, the narrative is interrupted by a direct appeal to the reader. The narrator interrupts Jesus' speech to say, "Let the reader understand." This rather remarkable narrative interruption would seem to have the opposite effect of what was suggested above. Rather than being invited to hear Jesus' words in the same way that they are heard by characters in the story, Matthew's implied reader is explicitly invited to hear Jesus' words with understanding that transcends what is available to those characters. We should conclude, therefore, that Matthew's implied reader probably is expected to know what happened to the temple in 70 A.D., even though this knowledge is presupposed by the narrative's discourse rather than by its story. This conclusion is made cautiously, however, and is based on the exceptional circumstance of an explicit cue to the reader provided within the narrative itself.

Should we ever assume that the implied reader's knowledge extends beyond what is presupposed for the setting of the story when such cues are not provided? I can think of one more instance in which such a move might be justified: the use of

anachronism. One of the most famous instances of anachronism in all literature is Shakespeare's reference to a clock striking in the play *Julius Caesar*. Many members of this play's real audiences have known that such clocks are inappropriate for the setting presupposed by the story, but the play's implied audience (like the characters in the play itself) do not consider the clock to be remarkable.

Does Matthew's Gospel contain any anachronisms? The references that Jesus makes to a "church" in 16:18 and 18:17 should probably be understood as such. Real readers may know that no such institution existed during the lifetime of Jesus, but the characters in the story are not the least bit puzzled by Jesus' references to this institution. Accordingly, Matthew's reader is probably expected to understand these references in light of the setting presupposed for the discourse of the narrative rather than in light of that which would actually be appropriate for the story.

To summarize the main points of this section, real readers who wish to receive Matthew's narrative in the manner expected of its implied reader must (1) have the knowledge concerning the spatial, temporal and social setting of the narrative, that the reader is expected to have, and (2) amend or pretend not to have knowledge concerning the narrative's setting that the reader is not expected to have. Real readers may consider such criteria as availability, recurrence and thematic coherence when determining which knowledge concerning the setting is presupposed. Typically, the knowledge that the reader is expected to have will be that which pertains to the narrative's story or content. In some exceptional circumstances, presupposed knowledge might also include that which pertains to the narrative's discourse or rhetoric.

IV.

The implied reader of Matthew's Gospel has **knowledge of other literature that is cited (by reference or allusion) within the narrative**. Such knowledge might be considered basic to this story's spatial, temporal, and social setting, in which case this class of knowledge is but a sub-set of what has already been mentioned. Still, this type of knowledge is worthy of special mention because it exemplifies what literary critics refer to as "intertextuality"; that is, the presumption that readers of one text have prior acquaintance with another.³³

Most instances of intertextuality in Matthew's Gospel are references or allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures; that is, to the several writings that Christians now refer to as "the Old Testament." Occasionally, these citations are explicit, such as when the writings of David (22:43-44), Isaiah (3:3), or Jeremiah (2:17-18) are referred to by name. More often, however, the reader's ability to make this connection is simply assumed. When Jesus responds to Satan three times by declaring, "It is written..." (4:4, 7, 10), the implied reader is expected to realize that what follows are quotations from Scripture. Other phrases used to introduce scriptural quotations include "Have you not read...?" (12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31) and "Have you never read...?" (21:16, 42). The use of the latter two phrases is ironic, playing off the assumption that the implied reader has indeed read the texts that characters within the story have neglected to consider. But Matthew's implied reader is able to recognize scriptural citations even when no such phrase is used. When John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask Jesus whether he is

“the one who is to come,” Jesus replies, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them” (11:3-5). Jesus does not specify here that he is quoting Scripture, nor for that matter that he is quoting at all, but Matthew’s implied reader recognizes that he is responding to John’s question with words drawn from Isaiah (35:5-6; 61:1). Similarly, when Jesus tells the religious leaders to “go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (9:13), the implied reader recognizes that he is quoting Hosea (6:6) and that the referent for the first-person pronoun “I” is therefore God rather than Jesus himself.

Matthew’s implied reader also knows the Hebrew Scriptures well enough to recognize subtle allusions to them. When Jesus is offered vinegar to drink on the cross, the implied reader notices the connection to Psalm 69:21. The description of John the Baptist as dressed in camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist (3:4) summons images of Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). When Judas is paid thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus (26:15), the implied reader thinks of Zechariah 11:12, and when Joseph of Arimathea places Jesus in his tomb (27:57-60), the implied reader thinks of Isaiah 53:9.

Unexpected readings may result, then, if real readers of Matthew’s Gospel do not know the Hebrew Scriptures as well as is expected of the Gospel’s implied reader. A real reader who is not familiar with Deuteronomy may have trouble making sense of Jesus’ conversation with the Sadducees in Matthew 22:23-32. In the latter passage, the Sadducees, who do not believe in resurrection (v. 23), try to stump Jesus with a trick question. Drawing on the teaching of Moses presented in Deuteronomy 25:5-6, they describe a scenario through which one woman becomes the wife, successively, of seven different men. Then they ask Jesus, “Whose wife will she be in the resurrection?” When Jesus says the Sadducees do not know the Scriptures (v. 29), an uninformed reader might conclude that he thinks the description of Moses’ teaching they have offered in the preceding verses is incorrect. The implied reader knows that this is not the case. Moses really did say that a man should marry the childless widow of his brother, just as the Sadducees have described. The Sadducees’ error lies elsewhere, in their failure to understand that the Scriptures teach a resurrection of the dead.

Or, again, when Jesus cries out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (27:46), readers who do not know the Hebrew Scriptures might think he has lost hope or abandoned trust in God. The implied reader is expected to recognize that, even in his hour of desolation, Jesus understands his destiny in terms of the Scriptures he must fulfill (Psalm 22:1).

We must also ask whether unexpected readings may result when real readers know the Scriptures too well; that is, to a degree not expected of the implied reader. This can certainly happen when readers bring a modern critical understanding of the Old Testament to bear on Matthew’s narrative. Real readers, for instance, might question whether David was really the author of the words ascribed to him in Matthew 22:43-44. They might attribute laws concerning levirate marriage (22:24) to the “P” strata of the Pentateuch rather than to Moses. But Matthew’s implied reader is expected to regard David as the author of Psalm 110 and Moses as the author of the legal material in Deuteronomy.

Unexpected readings may also result when real readers scrutinize the texts cited in Matthew in a manner not expected of the Gospel's implied reader. Matthew says that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem fulfills a prophetic saying: "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah" (2:5-6). Modern readers of Matthew often discover that the words "by no means" are not actually found in Micah 5:2. The implied reader is not expected to notice this. Again, Matthew 27:9-10 quotes the prophet Jeremiah as saying, "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me." Real readers have been unable to find this quotation anywhere in the writings of Jeremiah, or anywhere else in the Old Testament for that matter. Instead, the citation appears to be a composite quote, based primarily on Zechariah 11:13, with some assistance from such passages as Jeremiah 18:1-12 and 32:6-15 and, possibly, some phraseology drawn from the Pentateuch.³⁴ But Matthew's implied reader would never argue with the narrator over such details. If real readers want to read the Gospel of Matthew in the manner expected of its implied reader, they will sometimes have to set aside their own knowledge concerning the Scriptures and simply take what Matthew says about the Scriptures at face value.

We move on now to the question of whether Matthew's implied reader has knowledge of texts other than the Hebrew Scriptures. The best candidate for such consideration would be the Gospel of Mark, which most scholars believe was written prior to the Gospel of Matthew and used as a source for the composition of that work. Matthew's Gospel does draw heavily from the Gospel of Mark, but the indebtedness is never acknowledged. In other words, Matthew's reader is never told that some of the material in the narrative is derived from Mark's Gospel, or even that the latter work exists. Furthermore, the material drawn from Mark is often presented in redacted form without defense. For example, the account in Matthew 22:34-40 is derived from Mark 12:28-34. The story in Mark's narrative tells of a scribe who asks Jesus an apparently sincere question, agrees with the answer that Jesus gives, and is commended by Jesus for his insight. In Matthew's story, however, the scribe is presented as an opponent of Jesus who attempts to put him to the test (22:35). Readers familiar with Mark's Gospel would find it difficult to accept such a reinterpretation without explanation, but no explanation is provided. The assumption seems to be that Matthew's reader does not know about the Gospel of Mark and, so, does not wonder why such changes have occurred.

Since most real readers of Matthew today are familiar with Mark's Gospel, we must recognize that this familiarity may result in unexpected readings. In fact, much of the work of redaction criticism, which has dominated biblical studies for three decades, produces unexpected readings in the sense in which we are employing that term. Redaction critics typically compare Matthew's Gospel to that of Mark and attempt to explain the reasoning behind the changes that have been made. This approach has enhanced modern understanding of the Bible in significant ways but has not managed to read Matthew's narrative in the manner expected of its implied reader.³⁵

Unexpected readings result from what we may call "extratextuality"; reading the narrative in light of texts not known to the implied reader.³⁶ Matthew's implied reader is not expected to know the identity of the disciple who cuts off the ear of the high

priest's slave in Gethsemane (26:51; cf. John 18:10), or that the slave was subsequently healed by Jesus (cf. Luke 22:51). Matthew's implied reader is not expected to know that one of the two robbers crucified with Jesus rebuked the other and appealed to Jesus for mercy (27:38; cf. Luke 23:39-42). Real readers who are familiar with the entire New Testament must pretend that they do not know these things if they wish to experience the effect that Matthew's narrative is intended to have on its implied reader.

We recognize, then, that misreadings may occur when real readers have either too little or too much knowledge of other texts. Accordingly, real readers must struggle to discern which texts the implied reader is expected to know and how well the implied reader is expected to know them. As with other types of knowledge discussed above, this struggle is not always an easy one. Four criteria are significant for determining whether the implied reader of Matthew's Gospel is expected to recognize a proposed intertextual connection.³⁷

(1) **Availability.** Was the alleged precursor text available to the author of the successor text? There is no question that the Hebrew Scriptures were available to the author of Matthew's Gospel, for he refers to them explicitly. It would be ludicrous, however, to infer from Matthew 12:25 that the implied reader of this narrative is familiar with the speeches of Abraham Lincoln, for those texts did not exist at the time when Matthew's Gospel was written. Lincoln's claim that "a house divided against itself cannot stand" should be regarded as an intertextual allusion to Matthew's Gospel, rather than the other way around.

(2) **Degree of Repetition.** To what extent are features of the alleged precursor text repeated in the successor text? Jesus' citation of Hosea 6:6 in Matthew 9:13 rates high in this regard because the words "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" are repeated verbatim. The allusion to Psalm 22:18 in Matthew 27:35 is less direct, although the reference to dividing garments and casting lots in both passages suggests a possible connection. Our suggestion that Matthew 3:4 alludes to 2 Kings 1:8 is also tenuous, but the descriptions of both Elijah and John the Baptist as persons who wore hairy garments and leather girdles is noteworthy.

(3) **Recurrence.** Does the successor text refer to the alleged precursor text elsewhere? The supposition that Matthew 27:35 is an allusion to Psalm 22:18 is strengthened by the observation that Psalm 22 is also referenced by 27:46 ("My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?") where the degree of repetition is extremely high.

(4) **Thematic Coherence.** Is the meaning or effect suggested by the proposed connection consistent with that produced by the narrative as a whole? The proposal that Matthew 3:4 alludes to 2 Kings 1:8 is likely (in spite of the low degree of repetition) because John the Baptist is identified with Elijah elsewhere in the narrative (17:11-13).

With such criteria in mind, we may examine three potentially difficult cases. First, what is the implied reader to make of Jesus' comment in Matthew 5:43, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" The introductory phrase, "You have heard that it was said..." implies that what follows is a citation familiar to the reader. The implied reader knows, furthermore, that the phrase, "you shall love your neighbor" is a quotation from Leviticus (19:18). The degree of repetition here is almost exact and the factor of recurrence is also strong (Lev. 19:18 is also cited in Matt. 19:19 and 22:39). But what of the phrase, "hate your enemy"? It has

been suggested that this derives from Essene writings, where children of light are directed to hate children of darkness (1 QS 1:4, 9-11).³⁸ But it seems unlikely that Matthew's implied reader is expected to know these texts. We have no evidence that they were available to the Gospel's author. The degree of repetition between 1 QS 1:4, 9-11 and Matthew 5:43 is slight, consisting more of parallel ideas than of similar wording. Recurrence is nil, for the Qumran text is not cited anywhere else in Matthew's narrative. Nor would the criterion of thematic coherence be satisfied by this connection, for Jesus is not presented in Matthew's narrative as a critic of Essene doctrine.

Another suggestion makes more sense: the implied reader regards the entire phrase, "you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy" as deriving from the Hebrew Scriptures. The only problem with this proposal is that the degree of repetition for this full phrase is low. The words "hate your enemy" cannot be found explicitly in Leviticus or anywhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures. The basic thought, however, is present. Psalm 139:21-22 reads, "Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them as my enemies." The degree of repetition here is at least as great as for the Qumran passage, and other criteria are met as well. In terms of availability, there is no question that the Gospel's author would have had access to the book of Psalms. In terms of recurrence, obvious quotations and allusions to Psalms are found throughout Matthew's narrative. And in terms of thematic coherence, the presentation of Jesus as one who supplements what has been revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures with new insight is consistent with his characterization throughout the narrative (5:17). In fact, the very phrase used to introduce this citation, "You have heard it said..." occurs several times in the narrative material immediately preceding this passage (5:21, 27, 33, 38; cf. 5:31) and in every instance is used to introduce a citation from the Hebrew Scriptures. For these reasons, we may conclude that Matthew 5:43 offers no warrant for concluding that the implied reader of Matthew's narrative has knowledge of Essene writings. The verse can be understood in terms of the implied reader's knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Another potentially difficult case involves the reference to the "tradition of the elders" in Matthew 15:2. Pharisees and scribes who come to Jesus from Jerusalem ask him, "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." Since no further explanation is given (cf. Mark 7:3-4), we might assume that the implied reader is expected to know what the tradition of the elders says about washing hands before eating. The content of this tradition would probably have been available to the author, and explicit reference to the tradition counts as a high degree of repetition. In addition, Matthew's narrative probably alludes to this tradition of the elders elsewhere, although the phrase itself is not used again.³⁹ Some knowledge of what is contained in this tradition of the elders is necessary for thematic coherence. If, for instance, the reader thinks the scribes and Pharisees are concerned about hygiene rather than ritual purity, he or she will miss the significance of Jesus' comments on defilement in 15:10-20.

It seems safe, then, to assume that the implied reader of Matthew's Gospel is expected to know what the tradition of the elders says about the washing of hands. The prob-

lem for us is that we do not possess any definitive copy of this tradition of the elders today.⁴⁰ Reading this text in the manner expected of its implied reader may be impossible, because the implied reader is expected to have knowledge of a precursor text no longer available to us. The significance of this lapse is difficult to determine. Perhaps the implied reader is expected to know no more than that the issue was one of ritual purity. If this is the case, we may be missing nothing.⁴¹ But, perhaps, the implied reader is expected to have more detailed knowledge concerning the tradition of the elders, knowledge that would introduce nuances of meaning real readers cannot discern today.

A third difficult case involving questions of intertextuality concerns the references in Matthew 26:61 and 27:40 to Jesus' claim that he is able to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Jesus himself is never quoted as saying this. In 26:61, witnesses at Jesus' trial accuse him of having made this claim,⁴² and in 27:40 the charge is taken up by mockers who deride Jesus as he hangs on the cross. Real readers of Matthew may know that, according to John 2:19, Jesus really did make such a claim. Still, the implied reader of Matthew's Gospel is not expected to know the Gospel of John. What, then, is Matthew's implied reader expected to make of the charges that Jesus made this claim? Is the implied reader expected to regard them as false charges, since Jesus is never represented in the narrative as saying what he is accused of having said?

Another possibility exists. Perhaps Matthew's implied reader is expected to be familiar with a body of oral tradition that attributes this saying to Jesus. This body of oral tradition would then be regarded as the precursor text from which an intertextual connection is now drawn. Such tradition may certainly have been available to the Gospel's author. The high degree of repetition between what Jesus is alleged to have said in Matthew 26:61, 27:40 and what he is quoted as saying in John 2:19 argues for the likelihood of such a saying being known in contexts independent of either Gospel. With regard to the criterion of recurrence, we must admit that there are no other instances in Matthew's narrative in which the reader is expected to know sayings of Jesus not reported in the narrative itself. As we have previously noted, however, there are instances in which the reader might be expected to have some prior knowledge of Christian tradition. The implied reader may be expected to understand Jesus' reference to the bridegroom being taken away (9:15) as an allusion to his impending death. The implied reader may be expected to have already heard of such persons as Simon the leper (26:6) and Mary Magdalene (27:56), who are introduced without description. And, the implied reader is expected to know what the "church" is (16:18; 18:17). Is it too far-fetched, then, to assume that Matthew's reader might also be expected to know that Jesus claimed he could destroy and rebuild the Temple in three days? The assumption that the reader knows Jesus did make such a claim coheres thematically with other information in the narrative. Jesus does, after all, claim that his ministry represents "something greater than the temple" (12:6), and he does predict an eventual destruction of the temple (24:1-2).

Thematic coherence, however, can also be ascribed to interpretations that do not assume the reader has intertextual knowledge of Jesus making this claim. The reader may, for instance, be expected to regard the charge in 26:61 as a somewhat mangled version of what Jesus has said previously: he has claimed the temple would be

destroyed (24:1-2), that he would rise from the dead in three days (16:21; 17:23; 20:19; cf. 12:40), and that he would build a church (16:18). In light of sayings such as these, the implied reader may take the charge that Jesus said he was able to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days as the witnesses' misconstrual of what Jesus has actually said.⁴³ The reader would thus regard the charge as false in a literal sense (Jesus did not really say this), but as ironically true in its representation of what will now take place. Jesus' death will in fact signal the demise of the temple cult (27:51), and his resurrection after three days will grant him the authority to begin a new community of disciples from all nations (28:18-20). This interpretation does not require knowledge of traditions about Jesus that are not reported within this particular narrative.

The question of whether Matthew's implied reader is expected to interpret 26:61 and 27:40 in light of intertextual allusions to a body of oral tradition cannot be answered with certainty. Personally, I believe that it is best not to presume intertextual connections to a body of material that is not clearly cited or referenced, when a meaningful and consistent interpretation can be obtained apart from such connections. Still, the possibility that knowledge of traditions not preserved within Matthew's narrative may be presupposed by it cannot be entirely discounted and may provide a viable explanation for these particular verses. Richard Hays says

we must reckon with varying degrees of certainty in our efforts to identify and interpret intertextual echoes. Sometimes the echo will be so loud that only the dullest or most ignorant reader could miss it; other times there will be room for serious differences of opinion about whether a particular phrase should be heard as an echo of a prior text and, if so, how it should be understood. Precision in such judgment calls is unattainable....⁴⁴

Still, we note as before a distinction between admitting unresolved ambiguity due to the ignorance of modern readers and supposing intentional ambiguity in the expected perceptions of Matthew's implied reader. Uncertainty is not expected of Matthew's implied reader. When we are unsure of what connection the text is making, it is not because we have succeeded in exposing the text's openness to multiple interpretations. Rather, we have failed to read the text in the manner expected of its implied reader. Admission of such failures is necessary for methodological integrity.

To summarize the main points of this section, real readers who wish to receive the Gospel of Matthew in the manner expected of its implied reader must (1) have the knowledge of texts cited by quotation or allusion that the reader is expected to have, and (2) be willing to set aside knowledge concerning these texts that the reader is not expected to have, as well as knowledge concerning other texts that the reader is not expected to know. Criteria such as availability, degree of repetition, recurrence and thematic coherence help real readers to determine which intertextual connections the implied reader is expected to make. Even so, detection and interpretation of intertextuality can be a struggle, and determination cannot always be made with certainty.

The foregoing observation may apply to other types of knowledge attributed to the implied reader in this article. Determining what the implied reader is or is not expected to know is not an exact science, but neither are such determinations made arbitrar-

ily. As we have reviewed four types of knowledge that Matthew's implied reader may be expected to have, the determinations regarding which knowledge can be ascribed to the implied reader have become progressively more difficult. At the same time, the number of criteria available for guidance have also increased.

The goal of reading Matthew's Gospel in the manner expected of its implied reader remains legitimate even if it cannot be attained with perfection. By monitoring the narrative's expectations of its reader's knowledge, real readers gain the opportunity to increase or limit the knowledge with which they approach the narrative. Reading Matthew's narrative in light of the knowledge expected of its implied reader allows real readers today to appreciate the Gospel on its own terms.

NOTES

1. Sometimes, however, we do not regret this distance, but celebrate it. We may, for example, be proud of the fact that we are offended by sexist or ethnically insensitive features that we are expected to experience as humorous. I will explore this phenomenon of "resistant reading" in another study. See Judith Fetterly, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).
2. See, for example, Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988). On the methodology of narrative criticism, see Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).
3. Discerning the intended effect of narrative is, to be specific, the task of formalist literary criticism of which narrative criticism is one variety. Other types of literary criticism have other goals. See Mark Allan Powell, Cecile G. Gray and Melissa C. Curtis, *The Bible and Modern Literary Criticism: A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992).
4. On the concept of an implied reader, see Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), esp. pp. 421-431; Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), esp. pp. 149-150; Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); and *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).
5. Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story*, p. 38. See also Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, esp. pp. 19-21.
6. The implied reader of Matthew's Gospel also believes everything that the Gospel expects him or her to believe but does not believe anything that the Gospel does not expect him or her to believe. What the implied reader of Matthew believes will be the topic of a subsequent article.
7. The neutral term "unexpected reading" is preferable to the pejorative label, "misreading." An unexpected reading is one that would not be adopted by a narrative's implied reader. Unexpected readings are not necessarily undesirable or wrong. The implied reader of Isaiah, for instance, would never be expected to interpret Isa. 7:14 as a reference to the virgin birth of Jesus, but Christians today often affirm the legitimacy of this unexpected reading. Similarly, feminist, Marxist and other ideological interpretations may produce unexpected readings that are regarded as legitimate within the interpretive communities that embrace those ideologies. On "interpretive communities," see Stanley E. Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).
8. On assumption of linguistic competence, see Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 123-124; Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, pp. 48-49. Note that, contra Culler and

Fish, I do not assume literary competence on the part of Matthew's implied reader. Literary competence is a presumption of the modern era that should not be imposed on ancient texts, whose implied and actual audiences may have consisted of more hearers than readers. The very term "implied reader" is admittedly anachronistic in this regard. Matthew's implied reader is one competent of receiving the text in a language that he or she understands, regardless of whether that text is received aurally or visually.

9. These categories of knowledge are roughly analogous to Philip Wheelwright's classes of symbolic speech, especially as the latter are interpreted by R. Alan Culpepper. Cf. Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), pp. 99-110; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 184.

10. On the concept of a reader's "repertoire," see Iser, *The Implied Reader* (see subject index for references).

11. I am not interested (here) in entering epistemological debate as to whether any knowledge is truly universal (i.e., free of cultural determination). The point, simply, is that some knowledge has been typically regarded as universal by both authors and readers, in ancient times and the present.

12. Actually, in the examples cited, both universal knowledge and cultural knowledge are assumed. The reader must know what loaves, fish, camels, and gnats are, and this knowledge is not universal but, rather, is intrinsic to the social setting of the story. What is defined here as universal knowledge is the expectation that readers who know what these entities are will be able to recognize as incongruous the functions ascribed to them in this text.

13. We are, of course, assuming an audience that does not contain infants, the severely retarded, the insane or other exceptional persons who, hypothetically, might not possess what is typically regarded as universal knowledge.

14. On the notion of "reliable narrators," see Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, esp. pp. 169-209; Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, pp. 25-27.

15. Of course, Matthew's Gospel makes it clear elsewhere that disciples of Jesus are to do good to all people, even their enemies (5:44). But the point of Matthew 5:31-46 seems to be that an especially close identification can be made between Jesus and needy persons who do God's will. The thinking is parallel, perhaps, to that expressed by Paul in Gal. 6:10.

16. *Soapdish*, 1991. *Premiere* magazine runs a regular column listing such gaffes in feature films.

17. Poststructuralist schools of literary criticism have a heyday with inconsistencies that occur in texts, citing them as evidence of the inevitable tendency for texts to "deconstruct" and resist interpretation. On the opposite end of the methodological spectrum, redaction criticism has often ascribed large scale textual phenomena, such as doublets, to compositional sloppiness. Narrative criticism takes a middle, more realistic approach. The repetition of Matt. 12:38-39 in Matt. 16:1, 4 is too conspicuous to be dismissed as a mistake that the reader is not expected to notice. But to assume with the deconstructors that the reader is troubled or confused by every unexplained detail no matter how trivial is to beg the argument in a way that abandons reasonable discourse.

18. Iser talks about the process of "consistency building," by which the implied reader will always strive to fit everything in a narrative together into a coherent pattern. See *The Implied Reader*, p. 283.

19. Compare, for example, 26:21 with 26:47-49, 26:31 with 26:56, and 26:33 with 26:69-75.

20. George Steiner distinguishes between typical readers and professional readers (or "critics"). See "'Critic'/Reader", *NLH* 10 (1979): 423-452.

21. For a reading of Matthew from the perspective of a "first-time reader," see Richard A. Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

22. Epithets may include names and nicknames, which in this narrative would include the so-called titles for Jesus (such as "Son of God," "Son of Man," "Messiah"). In Matthew, however, the meaning for names and nicknames is sometimes provided within the narrative itself (for "Jesus" see 1:21 and for "Peter" see 16:18, cf. 7:24-25) and, at other times, is influenced by intertextual connections to the Hebrew Scriptures (see Part IV of this article).
23. By contrast, the implied reader of John's Gospel is not necessarily expected to understand this euphemism, since an explanation of it is provided within the narrative (John 11:11-13).
24. David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956), pp. 260-263; Joachim Jeremias, "The Sermon on the Mount," *FBBS* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 29. Even Ulrich Luz, who rejects Daube's and Jeremias's interpretations, agrees that "the insult and not the pain stands in the foreground." See *Matthew 1-7* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), p. 325.
25. Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 179.
26. Fowler attributes the ambiguity of the wineskin metaphor in Mark 2:21-22 (as well as many other ambiguities in Mark's Gospel) to the rhetoric of the narrator rather than to the ignorance of modern readers. Although I suspect that this judgment is too hasty even with regard to Mark's Gospel, I am all the more certain that it cannot apply to Matthew's use of the same metaphor in 9:17. Even Fowler agrees that Matthew's Gospel does not display the sort of "rhetoric of indirection" that he thinks he sees in Mark (pp. 233-260). When Matthew's and Mark's narratives are compared, it can be seen that numerous potential gaps and ambiguities in Mark's Gospel are closed or resolved in Matthew's. For example, the "leaven" metaphor in Matt. 16:12 is clearly defined, while the same metaphor in Mark 8:15 is not. Accordingly, we must assume that the wineskin metaphor in Matt. 9:17 is undefined because the reader is expected to understand it. Matthew's narrative is not intentionally ambiguous. Matthew's implied reader understands everything relevant to the setting of the narrative, even when Matthew's real readers do not.
27. Narrative criticism tries to interpret texts without reference to the historical intentions of a work's "real author." Rather, narrative criticism strives to determine the intention of the "implied author," whose perspective is embodied within the text itself. See Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, pp. 66-77; Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, pp. 157-151; Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, pp. 5-6. Still, narrative criticism recognizes that the implied author is a literary creation of the real, historical author. Accordingly, the implied author cannot possibly intend for the reader to know something that was not in fact known by the real, historical author.
28. The distinction between "story" (what the narrative is about) and "discourse" (how the narrative is told) comes from Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 19, though he himself derives it from various structuralist theorists.
29. *The Catacombs* (New York: Random House, 1965).
30. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 21. Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, p. 423.
31. On distinguishing the implied reader of Matthew from the book's original readers, see Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Reflections on 'the Reader' of Matthew's Gospel," *NTS* 34 (1988): 442-460.
32. The only scholars who doubt that this verse alludes to Titus's invasion of the Temple in 70 A.D. are those who, for various reasons, date the composition of Matthew's Gospel earlier than this. If a post-70 date for Matthew is accepted, the connection becomes inescapable.
33. This somewhat narrow definition suits our purposes. Some literary critics use the term "intertextuality" to include the full range of knowledge to which a work alludes—the "texts" taken up in the work may be cultural scripts or codes rather than actual documents. I prefer the narrow definition, for clarity's sake, though I am willing to grant that some texts may be oral rather than written.

34. See Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew's Use of the Old Testament*, NovTSup 18 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), pp. 122-127.

35. We should not think that redaction criticism has "failed" in this regard, for reading Matthew in this manner was never a goal of this methodology. An approach should not be denounced for failing to accomplish what it never attempted.

36. Gérard Genette uses the analogy of a palimpsest to understand this phenomenon. In ancient times, parchment manuscripts were sometimes reused, resulting in manuscripts called "palimpsests" that actually had two texts written on them, one on top of another. See Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*, CP (Paris: Seuil, 1982). Readers treat Matthew's Gospel as a palimpsest when they read it in light of knowledge gained from the other Gospels.

37. These criteria correspond to four of the seven tests for hearing intertextual echoes suggested by Richard B. Hays in *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 29-33. What I call "degree of repetition," Hays calls "volume." Two of Hays's tests (historical plausibility, history of interpretation) strike me as too concerned with responses of real readers to be of help in determining what is expected of the implied reader. And another of his tests (satisfaction) seems redundant with thematic coherence. I note that Robert L. Brawley came to similar conclusions regarding Hays' tests in "Intertextuality in John 19:28-29," a paper presented to the Literary Aspects of the Gospels and Acts Groups at the 1991 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.

38. E. Stauffer, *Die Botschaft Jesu. Damals und heute* (Bern: Francke, 1959), pp. 128-132; O. Seitz, "Love Your Enemies," *NTS* 16 (1969/70): 39-54. See also the discussion by W. D. Davies in *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 245-248.

39. See 16:12; 23:2-3, 16, 18, 23; 24:20. Jesus' attitude toward this tradition is ambivalent. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 2d ed., PCB (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 88-89.

40. Although some portions of this tradition were no doubt incorporated into such writings as the Mishna, Gemara and Talmud, the "tradition of the elders" referred to in Matt. 15:2 was, by definition, an oral code, and we cannot know how faithfully it has been preserved in the later written versions.

41. A vague or general knowledge of the tradition of the elders would fall into my category of "knowledge presupposed by the setting of the narrative," discussed in part III of this article.

42. Some scholars think that Matthew's reader is expected to accept the charge as accurate because (1) Matthew does not explicitly describe the persons who bring it as false witnesses (contrast Mark 14:57-58); (2) the presence of two witnesses satisfies the requirement for reliable testimony according to Deut. 17:16; and, (3) the wording of the claim attributed to Jesus ("I am able to..." as opposed to "I will..." in Mark 14:58) is in keeping with something that the Matthean Jesus would say (cf. 12:6). See e.g., Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1985), pp. 92-93. Other scholars think that Jesus' silent response is an indication that the charge should be regarded as false. See Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story*, p. 87.

43. One problem with this explanation is that Jesus' words about the temple's destruction, his own resurrection and the building of the church were all directed to the disciples in contexts where the witnesses at the trial would not have been present. But this might explain for the reader why the witnesses' testimony is so far off the mark. The reader, who was present with the disciples, knows what Jesus really said and is able to compare the actual sayings with the mangled report of persons who weren't even there. Note that the witnesses do not claim to have been present or to have heard with their own ears the words that they allege Jesus said (26:61; cf. Mark 14:58).

44. Hays, *Echoes*, p. 29.

Reflections on Some Theologico-Ethical Norms for Prison Ministry: A Response

J. DARYL CHARLES

As one who is vocationally associated with an organization committed to prison ministry, I was fascinated by an essay appearing in a recent issue of the *Journal* (vol. 47, no. 2, 1992). In that essay the writer presents what he considers to be compelling insights for prison ministry that are to be gleaned from personalist behavioral theory and liberation theology. The author is to be commended for his desire to see prison ministry—certainly not a prime focus of traditional Christian ministry nor of essayists—move beyond “a weekly or monthly sermon or Bible study at the local jail or prison.” That the reader is reminded by the author of the inherent worth of the inmate in the sight of God is also meritorious. Divine redemption is indeed people-focused. Such is the movement of the Incarnation: God took the form of human likeness, humbled himself and became obedient—even to the point of death.

Early in his essay the author states an important truism that governs the development of his thesis: the serious Christian must be clear about his or her theologico-ethical assumptions and consider the attendant implications for prison ministry. We could not agree more. It is at the point of the author’s underlying presuppositions for “ministry,” however, that our agreement ceases.

The author initially credits his dependence on insights stemming from liberation theology as the basis for his approach to “ministry.” This approach, rooted in an African-American liberation perspective, we are told, is instructive as we reflect upon “the tragedy that is the American penal system and the general failure of professing Christian peoples and their institutions to respond with a sense

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of moral outrage and urgency both verbally and substantively.”

In the mind of the author, the locus for the tragedy of the American criminal justice system, not surprisingly, is the fact that the majority of the prison population today consists of African-American males. The necessary conclusion for the author is that these individuals have been “marginalized”; the implicit assumption here is that “poor people” have been unjustly incarcerated, since God, unlike the penal system, is not a “respector of persons.” Strangely, nowhere in the essay does the author interact with the “first things” of law, morality or criminal justice. Nor does he consider the events leading up to the incarceration of those imprisoned in the first place. With one sweeping inference, undergirded by sufficient “moral outrage,” the author posits that these individuals suffer from a fate undeserved, that they are deprived of “equal rights” and thus, through a unique twist, qualify as candidates for the proverbial “preferential option.”

Sadly, this intriguing essay suffers from several notable deficiencies. Chief among these are a failure to interact with even the most basic of criminal justice precepts and an uncritical espousal of a liberationist critique that transmutes Christian theology and genuine Christian ministry. It is not incidental that the author studiously avoids discussion of the fundamental principles of biblical ethics, from which the Christian interpreter/ethicist derives foundational notions of mercy, justice, guilt, repentance and restoration. For the liberationist, theology is routinely subordinated to economic and social analysis in the mythic quest for transforming society.

Prison ministry, of all varieties of social witness, is dependent on the insights and truths of historic Christianity that have withstood diverse social currents for nearly two millennia. Christian anthropology alone furnishes a basis for understanding human behavior and formulating an effective model for Christian social witness. To postulate a theory of “ministry” that not only neglects a clearly Christian approach to the human predicament but actively subverts the enduring foundations issuing from biblical theology, is to obliterate any possibility of truly helping the inmate. To be sure, we can acknowledge the right of all people, representing all points of view, to “minister” to the needs of America’s prison population. Nevertheless, we acknowledge with unreserved conviction that any approach to “ministry” that is gelded of biblical theocentric, christological and anthropological truths is in fact no Christian ministry at all. Thus, we shall consider briefly the flaws of the “liberationist” perspective, to the extent that they fail to meet divine standards as regards the human predicament.

PRISON MINISTRY AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

Semantic Subterfuge

The primary defect of liberation theology lies in the way it proposes to alleviate the human plight. Without question, the project of seeking social justice in contemporary culture is one of supreme legitimacy. The paradigm for “ministry,” however, that views political-economic-sociological status as normative, whereby the fashioning of a new trinitarian conception—race, gender, class (i.e., three errors in one)—supplants that of historic Christianity, is illegitimate, for it fails to be reconciled to the biblical foundations that undergird historic Christian faith. Unfortunately, liberation theology

(the genus of which is sociological and not theological) is inclined toward semantic manipulation. "Liberation," as contrasted with revolution, can be articulated so as to appear compatible with Christianity, particularly as it elevates the motif of "the poor and oppressed." The liberationist accent on "the poor and oppressed" reflects liberation theology's weakness in coming to terms with personal sin and individual moral accountability, since oppression is first of all an internal and spiritual matter. A flawed soteriology inevitably results in an equally flawed Christology, as well as a defective Christian practice. In the main, liberationists have followed Gustavo Gutierrez's imperative of deriving theology from social change instead of vice versa.

When liberationists speak of "the poor," they seem not to have all the poor in mind. Conspicuously absent in liberationist writings, for example, are needy groups that are as diverse as Laotian, Cambodian or Vietnamese emigres, Eastern Europeans, the many categories of the disabled, widows, or the unborn who are increasingly threatened in the womb. In American culture, the terminology *the oppressed* is normally reserved for certain—not all—blacks and women—specifically, those who do not espouse "conservative" political or religious views. Inasmuch as liberation theology embraces a radical—indeed, violent, if all other means fail—social upheaval, it hardly qualifies as bona fide Christian ministry—within the prison or without.

Hermeneutics and History

Moreover, liberation theology erroneously views the human predicament in terms of class struggle. In so doing, it imposes upon Christianity a Marxist/quasi-Marxist analysis of culture that calls for notably unchristian solutions. Because liberation theology reads the Bible through ideological lenses, it provides a religious front for a socio-economic agenda that is fueled by a long-entrenched modernist spirit. The twentieth century has been witness to the fact that as the so-called *Kulturprotestantismus* was progressively stripped of its theological integrity and credibility, it degenerated into a politico-economic enterprise. The relatively recent attempt to appeal to the Bible on behalf of "liberation" represents an attempt to reinfuse this program with divine sanction; hence, the invocation of a "theology" of liberation, in which politics and economics, not theology, act as the catalysts for social change.

Mainline Protestantism, without question, has suffered a fair measure of decline. As one sociologist observes, if it continues to decline, the reason will not be its reputed "prophetic ministry" (since much of this "prophecy" is geared toward educators, communicators and professional therapists). Nor will this decline be the result of "speaking truth to power"; rather, in the words of Peter Berger, it will be a case of "backing the wrong horse in a game of power politics."¹

Heretical as it surely might seem to the liberationist, there is no biblical basis, particularly in the New Covenant, for present political liberation as an integral aspect to the gospel. Rather, such is reflective of modern utopian constructs that fail to achieve biblical warrant. Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of God was both imminent and future in its orientation. In his message, moreover, the Kingdom has a uniquely interior dimension. While Marxists and neo-Marxists share with Christianity an eschato-

logical hope, the two eschatologies are antithetical. At war are two philosophies of history—one is Marxist, the other is biblical. The pursuit in the present life of salvation via political and economic change constitutes not only extravagant fantasy, but also fails to nourish the spiritual hunger of the human soul. The result is a colossal deception that in the end breeds severe and debilitating disillusionment. Neo-Marxist sociologists are notoriously prone toward blind-spots as they conveniently ignore the rubble of twentieth-century societies that were built upon gargantuan myths. Rank-and-file parroting of this utopian fable in seminaries is notable.

The Christian gospel, in marked contrast to the currently fashionable politicized version, offers true liberation because it opens the eyes of faith to transcendent reality that is beyond history. Liberation theology, on the other hand, returns people to a yoke of slavery; it imprisons us to our own tragic projects within history. It minimizes at the very least—and, at worst, obliterates—God's redemptive actions that have taken place throughout history. Precisely because the Christian is grounded in a realm outside of politics and economics can he or she handle political and economic realities soberly, in addition to being an effective agent of reconciliation to other people who are still under a yoke of spiritual bondage.

In light of the fact that liberation theology ignores personal virtue while deifying political involvement as authentic faith, it violates a fundamental principle of biblical interpretation. The hermeneutical crux of evangelical biblical theology is Christological and not sociological. Ontological salvation does not turn on political salvation. The life and ministry of Jesus were not calls for mere socio-political justice. Nor were the political and economic fortunes of Palestine eased following Jesus' death. In contrast to liberationists, Christ did not advocate a forced replacing of existing institutions. Jesus was not a Zealot who sought to subvert the power structure of Rome. Contrarily, it was his contention, recorded in the Gospel narratives, that the power structures of the world owed their very existence to the Father; in fact, human redemption was achieved because of the Son's submission to the political structures, even though they exercised no inherent authority over him. The Apostle Paul was inclined to describe this phenomenon as the "deeper wisdom of God." As one theologian has observed, those who impose an updated and "relevant" interpretive scheme on the Bible are obligated to share in the ongoing process that destines their own program to inevitable replacement.²

CONCLUSION

The preceding observations in no way dispute the need for a robust application of scriptural principles as they bear upon human social need. Lasting alternatives, however, to social injustices such as one finds in the American penal system must necessarily be rooted in a biblical view of the human predicament as well as a biblical basis for Christian ministry. A refutation of the liberationist model of Jesus does not automatically mean a passive Christ; rather, it leads to the espousal of a truly dynamic evangelical alternative.

The church has received a divine mandate to perpetuate the biblical heritage. Christianity insists that revealed truth is universally normative—even in the prison

system—and not perspectival. In its eagerness to be relevant before a watching world, the church at times has obscured historic creedal commitments, tended to relativize truth-claims, unwittingly promoted secularism over the supernatural, and substituted activism for intellectual and spiritual rigor—all this in an hour when American culture is becoming increasingly balkanized, when education is sinking to ethical relativity and values-clarification, and when surrounding culture is growing increasingly intolerant of classical Christian thought.

Christian theologians, pastors, and lay persons, in bold contrast, should be demonstrating intellectual and theological credibility by exposing the cognitive and ethical weaknesses of flawed religious and naturalistic assumptions that ultimately come to lodge in the church's own understanding of its identity and ministry. Postmodern culture, contrary to its mindset, expresses but one particular era in a historical continuum; it possesses no ultimacy apart from a foundation of and infusion with biblical truth.

We often are reminded that "ideas have consequences." The twentieth century is a sober and continuing reminder of the tragic effects of "bad ideas"—many of which were implemented by "compassionate" progressives—that have visited contemporary societies. The solution to injustices in America's criminal justice system does not lie in the "radical discipleship" of the liberationist model; such an approach to "ministry," fueled by pseudo-salvations of social existence, can only lead to greater contemporary injustices.

The challenge for the Church is to apply a ministry model that is faithful to the Father, expresses itself in love for the Son, and is fueled by the power of the Holy Spirit. Such a model is rooted in the redemptive reality of the cross, and it avoids the temptation to dissolve the tensions between immanence and transcendence, holiness and love, freedom and responsibility, dignity and depravity. It is cognizant of the fact that an individual's worth derives not from his utility in the world nor in a politico-economic scheme that forever cries out for "marginalized" status; rather, it issues from his nature as a being created in the *imago Dei*. Moreover, the value of the individual is balanced by an equal concern for society collectively. Any ethic that takes biblical authority seriously will necessarily correlate the moral actions of the individual with the welfare and moral good of the community.

The biblical regard for social justice should impel the Christian community to a sustained and dynamic social witness in a way that brings to contemporary culture the moral transformation it so desperately needs. The American prison population has yet to feel the force of the Christian community that adopts such a truly "radical" approach to caring ministry.

NOTES

1. Peter Berger, *Different Gospels: Social Sources of Apostasy* (Rockford: The Rockford Institute, 1987) p. 8

2. Carl F.H. Henry, *Twilight of a great Civilization: The Drift Toward Neo-Paganism* (Westchester: Crossway, 1988) pp. 66-68

James H. Cone: Father Of Contemporary Black Theology

RUFUS BURROW, JR.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to provide pastors, laypersons, students and academicians with a sense of the human being behind and in the thick of black liberation theology as well as his courage to both lead and change. I shall briefly discuss aspects of James Hal Cone's background, some early frustrations and challenges he confronted, and ways in which his theology has shifted.

Since the late 1960s, Cone has been among the most creative and courageous of the contemporary black liberation theologians. Although he has been writing major theological treatises since 1968, there has been no booklength manuscript published on his work. There have, however, been a number of dissertations written on his theology since 1974, some of which are comparative studies. Cone has been the subject of much criticism by white theologians, although few of them have taken either him or the black religious experience seriously enough to be willing to devote the time and energy necessary to learn all they can about these in order to engage in intelligent dialogue and criticism.

Considered the premier black theologian and the "father of contemporary black theology," it is strange that after more than twenty years of writing, lecturing on and doing black theology, no one has yet devoted a book to Cone's work.¹ To be sure, Cone's is not the only version of black liberation theology. However, it was he who introduced this new way of doing theology in a systematic way. Unbeknownst to him, his first book actually provided the theological outline for the action-oriented views of the black clergy radicals of the National Committee

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of Negro Churchmen (NCNC), later the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC).² Since Cone was not a member of this group at the time he wrote his first book, he had no way of knowing that this was just what that group needed as a ground for the theology they were acting out.

Thus it is fair to say that Cone's contemporaries—e.g., James DeOtis Roberts and Major J. Jones, who wrote their own versions of black theology—were primarily responding to the groundbreaking work of Cone, and that all works on black theology since are but a series of footnotes to him. Roberts and Jones differed from Cone in two important ways. They were, in the first place, more influenced by the integrationist model of Martin Luther King, Jr. But King was integrationist in the traditional sense only through the Chicago campaign of 1966. After Chicago, he began to be less integrationist in the aforementioned sense. Instead, he began to define integration in political rather than aesthetic terms. After Chicago he saw more clearly the need for blacks to be recipients of shared socio-economic and political power at every level of this society, rather than to merely hope and fight for a token job here and there.³ Unfortunately, none of these leading black theologians paid much attention to this more militant, realistic aspect of King's work. At any rate, although Cone, too, was greatly influenced by King, he was more stimulated and challenged by Malcolm X. Coneans, therefore, tend to be Malcomites rather than Kingians, although the influence of King is always noticeable. With the publication of Cone's most recent book, *Martin & Malcolm & America* (1991), none can deny the Malcolm-King influence on his thinking.

A second way Cone's black theology differs from that of Roberts and Jones is that, although they each emphasize socio-political liberation in their theological projects, they have a different understanding of reconciliation and its place in the liberation process. Cone has insisted from the beginning that as important as reconciliation is, it must be done on black rather than white terms. For him, reconciliation presupposes the work of justice and liberation. Liberation, then, is the necessary precondition of reconciliation. We cannot talk intelligently about reconciliation until we (especially white oppressors) have gone through the cross of establishing liberation and justice. So, while Cone understood Roberts and Jones (whose views are essentially the same) to suggest that blacks must be willing to work toward reconciliation with whites no matter what, they interpreted Cone to mean that reconciliation is not as important as liberation. In this sense they misunderstood Cone, who has always maintained that reconciliation is a Christian requirement. He simply added that as long as white Christians participate in the oppression of blacks and other groups, reconciliation cannot occur on white terms. On the other hand, Cone misunderstood Roberts and Jones, since neither of them actually claimed that reconciliation must be on white terms.

The point of all of this is that there was a great deal of healthy debate between these three black theologians and others during the early stages of black theology.⁴ After 1975 there is evidence of greatly reduced public criticism of each of them by the other. In part this is due to the concern that white theologians may do with these criticisms what blacks would not otherwise care that they do. In addition, since black theologians

have fought and won the battle of establishing black theology as an academic discipline, each has been freed up to pursue other interests in their theological projects.

Black theology is a form of liberation theology that seeks the total liberation and comprehensive empowerment of African American and other systematically and massively oppressed peoples in this country and other parts of the world. Initially concerned to liberate Blacks from racial oppression and economic exploitation,⁵ the black theology of Cone has expanded to include sexual, class, age and other forms of systemic oppression. Cone has long espoused the view *that the gospel requires that all of the captives be set free*, and because all persons are created and sustained by God, none can be free until all are free. Indeed, this was Cone's view even in the early stage of his theological development, despite his equally strong focus on the specific liberation of blacks.⁶ In addition, black theologians now realize that their work must also take seriously the legitimate concerns many blacks have for the more traditional spiritual liberation from sin,⁷ as well as liberation from psychological maladies such as depression.⁸

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Hal Cone was born in Fordyce, Arkansas, in 1936 and was raised a few miles away in Bearden. As a youngster, he and his brother, Cecil, struggled with the contradiction between the claims of the Christian faith and the actual condition of blacks in Bearden. They often wondered how it was possible for whites to be Christian on Sunday when they inflicted so much verbal, physical and other forms of brutality upon blacks during the week. How, they must have wondered, could otherwise Christian people pray for everybody on Sunday morning and then prey upon blacks during the week?

It was always a struggle to survive and to retain their sense of dignity and worth in that town of four hundred blacks and eight hundred whites. The whites, Cone recalled, seldom missed an opportunity to remind blacks who was in charge.⁹ It was as if they had determined the place of blacks in that community and expected that they be submissive and remain in the place in which whites had put them. Under no circumstances were they to question any white person or think that they could out-wit or out-smart them.

Cone's father found this dreadfully difficult to tolerate. He always believed that he could out-think white folks. He surely did not trust them, since he knew that few whites had earned the respect and trust of blacks. He knew what James Baldwin has written about so eloquently; namely, that no matter how often whites went to church, no matter how often and adamant their claims to be Christians, Christians simply did not act the way whites acted, and they certainly did not treat blacks the way whites did (and do!). Like Baldwin, Mr. Cone knew that inasmuch as whites do not even live according to their own professed morality, blacks are only being naive when they uncritically take the moral claims of whites as their own and proceed to live according to them.¹⁰ Therefore when white politicians came around trying to entice blacks into contributing to their campaigns and seeking their votes, Mr. Cone did not hesitate to invite them to go straight to hell.¹¹ In addition, he was adamant that persons should never allow themselves to be placed in the position of having to depend on their

oppressors for survival. As a child, James Cone asked his father why he preferred the uncertainty of self-employment (as a log and billet cutter) to that of a steady job in the local sawmill. The response given was: "My son, a black man cannot be a man and also work for white people."¹² In light of such a stance, it should not be difficult to see who was responsible, to a large extent, for the passion and energy that are so evident when James Cone discusses the oppression of his people and their quest for total liberation.

Cone's father was a religious man who taught his three sons that "...God will make a way out of no way, and...will also make your enemies your footstool."¹³ God, for him, was not only Love and the God of love, but the God of judgment, a point that African Americans have always taken seriously. God will not be mocked, and God's people will not forever be the victims of injustice and inhuman treatment.

In matters regarding relations between the races, Cone's mother tended to be more prone to endure racist pranks, although she was not altogether passive in doing so, since she would at least take the matter to God in prayer. She was, according to Cone, a praying woman who, along with her children, regularly attended Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church in Bearden. She, unlike her husband, who sometimes believed he had to take things into his own hands, was very spiritual in the narrower sense of believing that if one only prayed and trusted in God all would be well by and by. She possessed that simple faith that so many blacks possess at one time or another. At any rate, Mrs. Cone was more likely to trust in God when things got rough, and they often did. Cone remembers her as "one of the pillars of Macedonia, and a firm believer in God's justice."¹⁴

Cone, therefore, appears to be an admixture of his father's hardheaded realism, pragmatism and racial pride, and his mother's religious piety and belief that in the final analysis God's justice will prevail. The Cone family was a praying, church-going family. Mr. Cone's interpretation of the faith was more influenced by what Manning Marable has called the tradition of "blackwater";¹⁵ what Gayraud Wilmore calls the tradition of "black radicalism,"¹⁶ or the long tradition of black protest against racism and all forms of injustice. This explains why James Cone was troubled when, in graduate school, he heard professors and students using the black church as the prime example of the Marxist's view that religion is the opiate of the people. But this was not Cone's experience at Macedonia A.M.E. Church. Looking back on that period, he said: "The force of the Marxist logic seemed to fit perfectly the white churches in Bearden but did not appear to apply to the true essence of black religion as I had encountered it."¹⁷ Blacks in Bearden did not use religion as a means of passively accepting their oppressive condition. Religion did not narcotize them. They did not view it as an escape from the harsh daily realities of racism and economic exploitation. Cone was discovering in seminary what he would only later affirm explicitly, viz., that social location has much to do with how we see our reality, what we see in the Bible, etc. The oppressed and the oppressor are not likely to see things in quite the same way, given the same interpretation of the same data, or propose the same solutions to systemic oppression. I shall say more about Cone's relationship with the black church momentarily.

FROM BEARDEN TO GARRETT BIBLICAL INSTITUTE

When Cone completed high school in 1954, he entered Shorter College, a small two-year, unaccredited school of the A.M.E. Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas. Later he transferred to Philander Smith College, a Methodist school. Philander Smith was both larger and accredited. Having taken a major in religion and philosophy, Cone decided to seek admission to Garrett Biblical Institute (now Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary) in Evanston, Illinois. It did not take him and his brother, Cecil, long to discover how naive they had been in assuming that northern whites were not, like their southern counterparts, racists, and that blacks were "really free."

Aware that black students were not even expected to do better than average academic work at Garrett, Cone decided to discipline himself to be a very serious student. Despite the periodic racial slurs of some of the faculty and administrators, he passed his comprehensive examinations with distinction and was awarded the systematic theology prize for being the best student in the field. He had worked hard to sharpen his writing skills, and would later say that "anyone can be a good writer, if he has something to say and practices saying it."¹⁸ Upon graduation, his intention was to return to Bearden to pastor a church. However, when it became evident that no church was available for him, he began to rethink his career goals.

Cone was encouraged by William Hordern and Philip S. Watson, his teachers in systematic theology (both of whom are white), to pursue graduate studies. He therefore decided to apply for the Ph.D. program in systematic theology. Although there was resistance on the part of some professors and administrators, Cone became Garrett's first black Ph.D. candidate. He received no financial aid, although he was a straight-A student throughout his graduate studies. In addition, no text by black scholars was used as required reading. In any event, Cone put up with this and much more, and managed to save himself so he could do some good for his people. He received the Ph.D. degree in 1965.

STRUGGLES OF A YOUNG PROFESSOR

Cone returned to his alma mater, Philander Smith, to teach. He had written his dissertation on Karl Barth. But it did not take him long to discover that Barth, Tillich and many of the other European and Euro-American theological giants were not relevant to black students at Philander Smith, many of whom came from the cotton fields of the Deep South. This was a major concern for the young professor, and was only exacerbated by the black struggle for civil and human rights. He said: "The contradiction between theology as a discipline and the struggle for black freedom in the streets was experienced at the deepest level of my being."¹⁹ He struggled long and hard to overcome this by attempting to write articles on the theologies of the white men he studied. No journal editor accepted his articles for publication. Upon reflection years later, he said that his heart was not really in the writing of those essays anyway.

The publication of Joseph Washington's controversial book, *Black Religion in 1964*, was a turning point for Cone. He, like many black religionists, disagreed with Washington's contention that black religion was not Christian, since it identified Christianity with the black struggle for justice. Cone was asked to write a review of

the book, but he was not certain how to meet Washington's argument from an intellectual standpoint. He concluded that inasmuch as Washington was using the categories of white theology, and since he himself was still imprisoned by such categories, there was no way he could really oppose his argument. The only way he could intellectually take issue with Washington and the many whites who applauded his book was to turn the existing theological enterprise on its head. The problem was that he was not yet ready, nor did he quite know how to do this.

Cone's return to Philander Smith did not culminate in his warmest memories. He believed he was expected to always smile and bite his lower lip. He refused to do this, preferring rather to give black students the best he could give them. Consequently, he thought, the powers-that-be made it clear that he was not welcome to stay. Cone believed that the real aim was to keep the predominantly black Philander Smith inferior to another nearby Methodist-controlled institution, Hendrix College.

He left Philander Smith in 1966 and went to Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan. He had not forgotten Washington's book, and continued to rethink the meaning of theology and all that he had learned. As the only black on the faculty at Adrian, it appeared to him that little else was expected of him than to teach his white students a few basic courses in religion and theology. It was not required that he make any emotional investment. This left him free to give further consideration to Washington's thesis. Indeed, it was at Adrian that the clearest outline of what came to be his black liberation theology began to emerge. It was here that he wrote his first article on black theology. He wrote out of his gut; he wrote passionately. Indeed, as the only black on the faculty, that was all he had, since there was no one to whom he could turn to comfortably and trustingly spill his theological guts. He said years later that though Lester Scherer "was a good friend who shared my emotional hurts," he nevertheless was white, and therefore it was not the same as being able to share in this way with a black colleague. Since there were very few blacks in the city of Adrian, Cone had no emotional investment in the city either. In order to survive at Adrian he surrounded himself with black music of all kinds and with literature by black writers for whom the suffering of blacks was their sole concern. So he poured all his energy into the creation of the outline for what, unbeknownst to him, would explode like an atomic bomb in the theological and church arenas.

When Martin Luther King was murdered in 1968, Cone had taken all he could stand. He knew that he had to do something to help his people. Having initially considered returning to graduate school to get a Ph.D. degree in literature, he now knew that there was no time for this. He was literally enraged during this period. His rage only intensified when he heard white religionists verbally condemn black violence in response to the violence being perpetrated against them by whites and the structures they controlled. All of this, while saying nothing about the structural violence that produced the retaliatory violence of blacks. "They quoted to blacks Jesus' sayings about 'love your enemy' and 'turn the other cheek' but ignored their application to themselves. I was so furious that I could hardly contain my rage."²⁰ The still-developing creation within him was now ripe for birth.

THE BIRTH OF BLACK THEOLOGY AND BLACK POWER

While still at Adrian, Cone was invited by a former seminary classmate to deliver a

lecture at Elmhurst College in February 1968. This invitation prompted the writing of his first published academic essay, "Christianity and Black Power," which essentially served as the outline for his first book. Here, and against Washington, Cone explicitly identified Christianity with black power and the black struggle for dignity and freedom. Indeed, he maintained that if the gospel and Jesus have nothing to do with the black struggle for liberation, he himself wanted nothing to do with them. No faith was worthy to be kept around that was not liberating. In such affirmations one could hear clearly the influence of James Baldwin and Malcolm X. Indeed, Baldwin said in *The Fire Next Time*: "If the concept of God has any validity or any use it can only be to make us larger, freer, and more loving. If God cannot do this, then it is time we got rid of Him."²¹ As Malcolm said: "Despite being a Muslim, I can't overlook the fact that I'm an Afro-American in a country which practices racism against black people. *There is no religion under the sun that would make me forget the suffering that Negro people have undergone in this country.*"²² [italics added] Did Malcolm not imply that any religion or religious personality that failed to take the black struggle seriously needed to be gotten rid of?

By the time Cone sat down to write his seminal article on black theology, he was fed up with the articulations and writings of most white religionists on God and human suffering in general. He had made up his mind once and for all that he was no longer going to allow white theologians and ethicists to tell him how to write and do theology and ethics.²³ He would write and do theology and ethics for his own people, and only they could stand in judgment of his work. He knew now that most of what goes on in white seminaries and graduate schools has little or nothing to do with black self-determination and the eradication of black suffering produced by racist institutions. "Why," he wondered, "should I let the ethos of the white seminary or university control the content and the form of my writing?" He concluded that he should not, and contended that his "intellectual consciousness" and everything else about him should be controlled by the standard of his own socio-cultural and religious heritage, not that of the people who had sought to destroy his and the dignity of his people.

Cone put the finishing touches on *Black Theology and Black Power* during the summer of 1968. The writing of the book was itself cathartic and therapeutic. Indeed, he said it "was also a conversion experience," symbolizing the death of white theology and the birth of a theology commensurate with his own experience.²⁴ When Cone first began teaching and trying to write articles on theology it had been nearly impossible for him to make the connection between the theology he learned and what he and his people experienced every day. It could not be done as long as he was consumed by white theological categories. Since much of the dominant theology was racist, he had to accept the fact that "racists do not define theology in a way that challenges their racism."²⁵ Not the oppressor, but the oppressed themselves must make the connections between the gospel and their struggle to be fully human and free.

Needless to say, that first book was emotionally charged. It literally blew many white and black religionists out of their otherwise calm theological waters. Since Cone knew ahead of time that this book would not defeat racism and its menacing

forms, he decided that he would not hold anything back. That many would be angered by his book was of little concern. The point was to say and do something to help his people.²⁶ He wrote that book out of the depth of his experience, and he did so with a passion that seldom characterized theological treatises previously or since.

Black Theology and Black Power was a response to over four hundred years of systematically dehumanizing treatment of blacks at the hands of whites. It was a response to the humiliation suffered by Cone's parents and grandparents. Although controversial, the book zapped many religionists of all persuasions, but particularly professed Christians.

Many accused Cone of having produced more rhetoric than theology in his first book. Although I came to the book rather late, having allowed myself to be convinced by some ("respectable" and acceptable!) black religious scholars that there was not much to it, I found this not to be the case when I actually picked it up to read for myself. I immediately sensed that there was much more to this book than what some described as "a lot of meaningless rhetoric."

To be sure, Cone, like Malcolm X and many other African Americans, was angry, and he did not hesitate to inform his readers of the fact. Yet, as I read his book I could see that if one read with an open mind, if one tried to see the facts Cone explicated through the lens of the long history of black suffering, if one endeavored to place his thesis that the gospel is identical with black power in this context, one would see evidence of new and creative thinking, as well as the beginnings of a new way of thinking about and doing theology. I have long believed that if those who read Cone's first two books would make an effort to understand the reason for his use of the "either-or" approach and especially his penchant for referring to all whites as the enemies of his people, they would encounter a theological giant-in-the-making. Unfortunately, many who read those books became so incensed with Cone's approach, his language and his refusal in those days to point out that there may be a genuinely committed white person here and there, that they easily dismissed him as little more than a rabble-rouser. In fact, Cone really fit what Asian theologians would today call a "rumor-monger," which is a compliment to one who takes the prophetic tradition as seriously as he.²⁷

SHIFTS AND CONTINUITY IN CONE'S THEOLOGY

Cone's first book was a more significant theological treatise than many religionists recognized at the time or since. Although often encased in strong rhetoric and polemic, there was present in germinal form many of the themes that Cone would later develop in a more explicit, systematic way. For example, although he spoke almost exclusively of black suffering and racism in his first book, prompting many to accuse him of a too narrow view of oppression, a close reading reveals that he explicitly pointed to his awareness that blacks were not the only ones who were victims of suffering and pain.²⁸ He never contended that his people were the only poor. What he actually said was that "if any person attempted to do theology in North America in the 1960s and '70s but failed to speak of God's identity with the black struggle for freedom, he or she was not doing Christian theology."²⁹ This is quite different from

the accusation of critics that he was only aware of blacks being victims of oppression.

It is true that racism, for him, was the fundamental social issue adversely affecting blacks. However, a close reading of his first book gives one a sense that he was at least aware, albeit peripherally, that women were also the victims of oppression. This is why I maintain that when Cone finally took a public stand against sexism in the black community and church in 1976, this was not a completely new stance for him. He was, from the beginning, too good a theologian to be against the liberation of any systematically oppressed group. The point is that, during the early period, there were so many overt and brutal acts of racism perpetrated against all blacks—men and women—that his vision was partially jaundiced regarding other forms of oppression that affected groups—e.g., women—within his race. So his statement in 1976 was really a shift to an enlarged perspective or outlook on oppression. He was beginning to see more clearly the linkages between the various forms of oppression. The idea was present in embryonic form during the early stage of his writing, and became more pronounced as he developed.

In addition, critics have said that social analysis was not present in Cone's early writing. But I wonder whether Cone, who recognized even in 1970 that it was not appropriate to put new wine in old wine skins,³⁰ did not at that time have a sense that something more than an ethic of survival was needed if blacks were to be authentically liberated. Why build a new house on a faulty, deteriorating foundation or structure? Was he merely a reformist during that period, as critics suggest, or did he at least have an awareness of the need for the radical transformation of the socio-economic order, but simply did not have the tools necessary to provide a radical social critique?

Similarly, although Cone remained a capitalist for some years after the publication of his second book, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, is it not possible that he at least recognized that there was something fundamentally wrong with the economic structure in this country? That he did not have at the time the analytical tools needed to adequately critique it and to suggest the kind of political economy that should replace it is no reason to conclude that he was not at least aware of the need. Is it completely accurate to say, as some critics have, that he only hit upon the importance of social analysis when he began his dialogues with Latin American and other so-called third-world liberation theologians? I think not. Cone was too astute and had seen his people suffer too much as a result of greedy, power-crazed capitalists not to have seen in the early period that the economic structure of the country was essentially unsound and inherently against the fundamental Christian principle of respecting the dignity and worth of all persons.

Having read Cone's works systematically, it is evident that several of his more mature and more recent views appeared in germinal form in his first two books. To be sure, as he began to travel throughout the country and the so-called third world, to dialogue with women and other oppressed peoples, to channel his energy into more writing projects, and to delve deeper into African and African American religious and cultural sources, Cone was able to further develop some of these previously undeveloped views. Therefore, when I speak of shifts, transitions or changes in his thinking, I do not always mean that a presently held view is a radical departure from what Cone

wrote in earlier publications. Rather, there were shifts in focus, but there is a great deal of continuity between his earlier and later views. In part this is due to his commitment to truth and his willingness and courage to follow it wherever it led.

In an essay published in 1981, Cone acknowledged a broadening of his perspective, but contended that his basic position "has [not] changed radically. I still contend," he said, "that the gospel is identical with the liberation of poor people from sociopolitical oppression."³¹ In other words, although there have been both subtle and more pronounced shifts in his thinking, Cone's fundamental point of departure in theology remains unchanged. In this regard he has written: "I believe that my theological development will always be related to the historical projects of poor people as they struggle to build a new future not recognizable in the present world order."³²

SEXISM IN THE BLACK CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Two of the most courageous steps taken by James Cone were the announcement of black theology through his first book in 1969, and the public stance he took on black sexism in 1976. Having been invited by black women students at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary to talk on the theme, "New Roles in the Ministry: A Theological Appraisal," Cone said:

The time has come for us to deal honestly with our differences, our hurts, and our pains. We cannot pretend any longer that all is well and that the problem of male-female relations is limited to the White community. It is in the Black community as well; and it is time we face up to the need to speak openly and frankly about what is right and wrong in our community in relation to Black men and women....

It is a contradiction for Black men to protest against racism in the White church and society at large and then fail to apply the same critique to themselves in their relation to Black women....

If Black people are going to create new roles in the ministry, Black men will have to recognize that the present status of Black women in the ministry is not acceptable. Since the gospel is about liberation, it demands that we create new structures of human relations that enhance freedom and not oppression.³³

Insisting on self-criticism—and that black theologians ought always apply this principle—and willing to allow himself to be challenged by white and black women students at Union Theological Seminary in New York where he has taught for more than twenty years, Cone led the way in breaking the long silence of contemporary black men regarding the gender question. Inasmuch as Jacquelyn Grant, an A.M.E. minister and professor of systematic theology at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, was one of his doctoral candidates at Union, it is not surprising that Cone was challenged as he was to break the silence. Grant, herself a prolific writer and frequent speaker on the lecture circuit, is considered by many to be "the mother of black feminist theology." She is a leader in the fast-developing black womanist theological movement.

When Cone wrote *Black Theology and Black Power*, he became the victim of the wrath of white theologians and too many black-skinned ones as well. When he confessed his own male-oriented theological language and participation in sexist practices against his sisters, and accused the black church and community of participating in this dreaded sin against black women and humanity, he found that he often had to stand alone. Although some of his black male colleagues have joined him in standing against sexism, it is fairly evident that at this writing few have been as emphatic and outspoken on this issue as Cone.

IMPORTANCE OF CLASS ANALYSIS

Cone's more explicit inclusion of class analysis in his theological project emerged as he participated in some rather heated dialogues with Latin American liberation theologians who were socialists and Marxists, and for whom the chief social evil was classism. Initially they were as adamant about this being the basic social problem as Cone and black theologians were that the fundamental issue was racism. Ultimately both sides conceded the truth of the other and began to hear each other and to incorporate the other's analysis into their own. For Cone there was a real breakthrough at the Theology in the Americas Conference in Detroit in 1975. The occasion was a dialogue between Latin theologians and white North American theologians. Black theologians had not been invited to help plan the conference. This notwithstanding, Cone writes:

It was at that time that it became clear to me that either black theology would incorporate class analysis into its perspective or it would become a justification of middle-class interests at the expense of the black poor. Although claiming to speak for the poor, we actually speak for ourselves.³⁴

After that conference Cone could see that the problem of racism was even further exacerbated by socio-economic exploitation, and that members of a racially oppressed group might very well oppress less privileged members. Cone has been as dismayed that so few black theologians take classism in the black community seriously as he has at their failure to take sexism seriously.

How can we provide a genuine check against the self-interest of black theologians and preachers who merely use the language of liberation and the gospel in order to justify their professional advancement? Unless black theologians and preachers face the class issue, the integrity of our commitment to justice for the poor will remain suspect to other freedom fighters and to the poor we claim to represent.³⁵

Let it be understood, however, that Cone has never been an orthodox Marxist. He rejects Marxism as a worldview, but finds its critique of capitalist economies to be very valuable in critical social analysis. So, while rejecting the Marxist worldview and its atheism, he accepts aspects of Marxism as a tool for social analysis. In addition, he reminds us that, historically, blacks have been affiliated with the socialist tradition through black preachers such as the baptist George Washington Woodbey. Although

Peter Clark was the first black socialist, Woodbey was the first to actually join the socialist party in the United States and to play a leading role therein.³⁶ Indeed, most blacks of that period learned about socialism through two prominent magazines of the African Methodist Episcopal Church: *The Christian Recorder* and the *AME Church Review*. Those who submitted articles to the former generally held that blacks should have nothing to do with socialism. Contributors to the latter organ forcefully argued the socialist platform. They sought to ground their view from both a biblical and social scientific perspective.³⁷ One of the most prominent defenders of socialism was Reverend Reverdy C. Ransom, later a bishop in the A.M.E. Zion Church. His article, "The Negro and Socialism," was published in the *AME Church Review* (XIII, 1896-97 issue). Ransom equated the socialist vision of life in the world and its emphasis on the dignity, worth, rights and equality of the person with the teachings of Jesus Christ.³⁸

Although most black churchgoers still cringe when they hear the term socialism and attempts to connect it with the gospel, it is precisely the socialistic vision for the uplift of persons that will commend itself to all black Christians. Part of Cone's challenge, and that of other black theologians, is to present the socialist vision in language that will be more intelligible to African-American Christians.³⁹

CONE AND THE BLACK CHURCH

That Cone has remained in the church throughout his adult life is indicative of his deep love for the black church. But all has not been smooth sailing. It will be recalled that after he earned the basic seminary degree he desired to return to Bearden to pastor a church, but there was no church for him. Even after he earned his doctorate, the leadership of his denomination seemed to show no interest in his future.⁴⁰ One of very few recipients of the Ph.D. degree in the A.M.E. Church, Cone thought there would surely be a position for him in one of that denomination's schools. He always hoped his own denomination would eventually provide something for him.

Later on, when he had begun teaching, his forthrightness and critical stance became problematic with the leaders in his denomination. He was thoroughly disappointed with his own and other black denominations because of their lack of involvement in the liberation of blacks. Most, including the A.M.E. Church, seemed not to meet this criterion of the gospel, but instead were more interested in preaching "a 'spiritual' gospel that ignored the political plight of the black poor."⁴¹ Because he was not allowed to participate as a theologian in his denomination, Cone left to become a United Methodist, although his primary interest was to affiliate with the Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR). In addition, he sensed a level of acceptance by black United Methodists that he did not experience within the A.M.E. Church. His affiliation with the BMCR, the NCBC and other black caucuses provided intellectual stimulus and room to apply theology to the blood-and-guts issues confronting his people.

Cone's membership in The United Methodist Church did not last long, however. He was invited by the bishops of the A.M.E. Church to lead a retreat in 1974 in Galveston, Texas, on the theme "The Nature and Mission of the Church." This, he recalled, was the first time his former denomination had invited him to do anything

since he received his doctorate. This experience was so positive for both Cone and the bishops that they formally invited him to return to the A.M.E. Church and to lead another retreat. The second retreat proved not as exciting and fruitful as the first.⁴²

Cone's critique of the black church and its leadership had been scathing in his first two books, although less so in the second. He began to be concerned about what whites would do with these criticisms of a major black theologian. He continues to be critical, but more in the presence of black audiences. We can be sure about one thing, however. Cone is less appreciated in many black churches today because of his early criticisms of the church. To a large extent the people in the pews have only been given an interpretation of his earlier criticisms of the church by pastors, many of whom have not spent adequate time grappling with Cone's real message: namely, that the black church has gotten away from its historical linkage with a more prophetic black church. It places too little emphasis on setting the captives free, and too much on celebrating pastors' anniversaries and raising funds to build expensive church buildings, often right in the middle of the ghetto! This has been the real point of Cone's criticism. He has never criticized either his own denomination or the black church in general merely for the sake of criticizing them. One who loves the church as much as he would never do that.

BLACK LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS

Soon after Cone and other black liberation theologians began giving systematic expression to black theology in the late 1960s there was a conscious effort to move away from the use of technical theological and philosophical jargon. In addition, they claimed to want nothing to do with epistemology (theory of knowledge) and metaphysics (theory of reality). These were considered to be too much in the clouds, and therefore too far removed from the day-to-day, blood-and-guts issues of the black poor and oppressed. The primary dialogue partners of black theologians, then, were not philosophers and metaphysicians, but social scientists, political analysts, and social activists.⁴³

Thus, there emerged what amounted to a moratorium on metaphysics and epistemology. Fortunately some black theologians have come to see that we all possess an implicit metaphysics and epistemology. When black theologians make any claims about the interrelatedness between God, created persons and the rest of creation—or when claims are made regarding what black theologians think they know about God or the created order—they are making metaphysical and epistemological claims. It, therefore, seems a significant transitional move for black theology to lift the moratorium. This is a particularly acute point if black theology is to be a meaningful, viable option in and beyond the twenty-first century. Since 1969, black theologians have made numerous claims about God, all of which are based on metaphysical assumptions. This being the case, it is now time to uncover these assumptions and begin the critical task of considering their implications for the liberation and empowerment of African Americans and all systematically oppressed peoples.

African American liberation theologians who have already made this shift to taking metaphysics seriously include such persons as Henry J. Young, Theodore Walker, Jr.,

and Archie Smith, all of whom have been influenced by the process metaphysics of Alfred N. Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne.⁴⁴ Although Young and Walker do an impressive job of clarifying the points at which process thought and black theology can strengthen each other, it seems to this writer that the personalistic metaphysics and ethics of Borden P. Bowne (1847-1910) and Edgar S. Brightman (1884-1953) are ones towards which most African Americans would more likely resonate. Personalism is the view that ultimate reality is personal and the only intrinsic values are persons. This has been a dominant view throughout African American religious and cultural tradition. Blacks have historically believed both in a personal God who is able to deliver them from bondage, and that they and all other persons are sacred and of infinite worth because God loves and cares about them. At least historically, the centrality of the person has been at the center of African American religious and ethical thought.

One wonders what James Cone's present thought is on this matter. We know that he led the way in repudiating metaphysics, and that as late as 1975 he was an adherent to the classical solution to the problem of evil and suffering, and insisted that God is omnipotent and omnibenevolent. Cone rejected any theory which qualified either God's goodness (as represented in the thought of William R. Jones) or power (as represented in the thought of Edgar S. Brightman). God, for Cone and most black liberation theologians, possesses absolute power.

Black Theology, while recognizing the seriousness of the problem [of evil and suffering], cannot accept either logical alternative for solving it. It is a violation of black faith to weaken either divine love or divine power. In this respect Black Theology finds itself in company with all of the classic theologies of the Christian tradition.⁴⁵

At least by this period Cone appeared unwilling to subject this more traditional view to serious critique and to consider the implications of such a stance. Indeed, even in his most recent book he appeals to the tradition and faith of the black religious community. "But [Martin Luther King, Jr.] rejected Brightman's concept of the finite God as an explanation for the existence of evil. King's commitment to the faith of the Negro church was too strong to allow him to embrace a limited God."⁴⁶ Although writing about King, this appears to be Cone's position as well. There is no indication in Cone's public writings that he has seriously grappled with either Brightman's or any non-traditional views of God and the positive suggestions for black theology that may be gleaned from some of these. However, I have discovered what may be a minor concession or capitulation regarding his view of divine omnipotence:

Omnipotence does not refer to God's absolute power to accomplish what God wants. And John Macquarrie says, omnipotence is 'the power to let something stand out from nothing and to be.' Translating this idea into the black experience, God's omnipotence is the power to let blacks stand out from whiteness and to be⁴⁷ [italics added].

Although Cone seems aware of the need to redefine the traditional meaning of divine omnipotence, he does not go far enough here. He seems to imply that God does not in fact possess absolute power, but that God shares power with the rest of creation. Yet we can be certain that for Cone there is no power in the universe that surpasses God's.

What is important here is that Cone himself may be wondering about the intelligibility of uncritically adhering to the classical view of God. If this is the case, then he may also be reconsidering the significance of metaphysics. But whether he is or is not, it is clear to me that black theology will have to move in this direction.

NOTES

1. However, it should be noted that I have written a book on transitions in Cone's theology. This manuscript is presently in the hands of a publisher. It should also be pointed out that Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, published a comparative dissertation on Cone and Howard Thurman: "God, Being and Liberation: A Comparative Analysis of the Theologies and Ethics of James H. Cone and Howard Thurman" (University Press of America, 1989). The chief weakness of this text is that of most published doctoral dissertations, namely; it reads like a dissertation and is filled with technical theological and philosophical terms that will be troublesome for the average lay reader. Apart from this, and the fact that he is comparing Cone with another major African-American thinker, Stewart's is the best text out on Cone's theological method.
2. Gayraud Wilmore has written that Cone was "the first to suggest the broad outlines of what the NCBC theological commission was looking for—a theology that took the black experience seriously, including the search for countervailing power, while based upon an essentially classical interpretation of the Christian faith." See Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983 [1973]), p. 214.
3. Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Testament of Hope," *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: Harper, 1986), p. 317.
4. Cone provides an extensive summary of some of this and other important areas of debate among black theologians in "An Interpretation of the Debate among Black Theologians," *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*, ed. Gayraud Wilmore and James Cone (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979), pp. 609-622.
5. "Black Theology," in Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 101.
6. See Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970), p. 21. We get a clearer indication of this in a dialogue between Cone and his former teacher, William Hordern, in 1971. Here he said:

God's stand against oppression is his affirmation that all men have a common humanity in freedom. This means that I cannot be free until all men are free. And if in some distant future I am no longer oppressed because of blackness, then I must take upon myself whatever form of human oppression exists in the society, affirming my identity with the victims. *The identity must be made with the victims not because of sympathy, but because my own humanity is involved in my brother's degradation.* [italics added] (See Cone and William Hordern, "Dialogue on Black Theology," *Christian Century*, 88 [15 September 1971]:1085).

We see in this early statement some real theological savvy on Cone's part, which refutes the criticism that his was an exclusivist theology.

7. See Calvin Bruce, "Black Evangelical Christianity and Black Theology," in *Black Theology II*,

- eds. Bruce and William R. Jones (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1978), p. 173.
8. Henry Mitchell and Nicholas Cooper-Lewter stress this in *Soul Theology* (New York: Harper, 1986).
 9. James H. Cone, *My Soul Looks Back* (New York: Seabury, 1982), p. 21.
 10. James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket* (New York: St. Martin/Marek, 1985), p. 330.
 11. Cone, *My Soul Looks Back*, pp. 20-21.
 12. Cone, "The Gospel and the Liberation of the Poor," *Christian Century* 98 (18 February 1981):163.
 13. Cone, *My Soul Looks Back*, p. 21.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
 15. See Manning Marable, *Blackwater: Historical Studies in Race, Class Consciousness and Revolution* (Dayton, OH: Black Praxis Press, 1981). See especially chap. three. He also provides a very helpful and enlightening discussion of the distinction between the accommodationist and more radical strands in the history of the black church in "The Ambiguous Politics of the Black Church," in his, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* (Boston: South End Press, 1983), chap. 7.
 16. See Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*.
 17. Cone, *My Soul Looks Back*, p. 22.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
 21. Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Dial Press, 1961), p. 61.
 22. Archie Epps, ed., *The Speeches of Malcolm X at Harvard* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1968), p. 164.
 23. Cone, *My Soul Looks Back*, p. 45.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
 25. *Ibid.*
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
 27. Preman Niles discussed this term in a lecture given at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis in the Spring of 1986. Niles said that rumormongering is "a form of minjung political activity." On this view truth is circulated throughout the community in the form of rumors. The concept of rumormongering is dealt with at length in an article by Hyun Younghak entitled, "Theology as Rumormongering," *CTS Bulletin* (December 1984 - April 1985): 40-47.
 28. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury, 1969), p. 141.
 29. Cone, "The Gospel and the Liberation of the Poor," p. 166.
 30. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, p. 117.
 31. Cone, "The Gospel and the Liberation of the Poor," p. 166.
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. Cone, "New Roles in the Ministry: A Theological Appraisal," in *Black Theology*, eds. Wilmore and Cone, pp. 397, 395.
 34. Cone, *For My People* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), pp. 94-95.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
 36. Philip S. Foner, ed., *Black Socialist Preacher* (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1983), p. 5.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
 38. See his article in *Ibid.*, p. 286.
 39. Cone provides excellent discussions of socialism and the black church in *My Soul Looks Back*, pp. 122-138, and *For My People*, chap. 9.
 40. Cone, *My Soul Looks Back*, p. 65.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-92.

43. Cone, "Black Theology: Its Origin, Methodology, and Relationship to Third World Theologies," in *Doing Theology in a Divided World*, eds. Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), pp. 100-101.

44. See Henry J. Young, "Process Theology and Black Liberation: Testing the Whiteheadian Metaphysical Foundations," *Contemporary Philosophy*, 12 (May 1989): 26-30; *Hope in Process: A Theology of Social Pluralism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); Theodore Walker, Jr., "Theological Resources for a Black Neoclassical Social Ethics," *The Journal of Religious Thought*, 45 (Winter-Spring 1989): 21-39; Archie Smith, *The Relational Self* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982).

45. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 163.

46. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), pp. 29-30.

47. Cone, "God is Black," in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, eds. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), p. 93.

Book Reviews

Stout, Henry S., *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism*. Library of Religious Biography. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991. xxix, 301 pp. ISBN 0-8028-0154-4.

A volume without the normal scholarly apparatus of footnotes and fulsome references to secondary literature would not normally merit a review. *The Divine Dramatist* is clearly an exception. Written by one of the premier scholars of American religious history, this biography of Whitefield is not to be passed over lightly. In this work, Stout proffers a daring interpretation of the evangelist and of his role in England, Scotland and America. It is a decidedly American interpretation which minimizes the importance of Whitefield's theological perspectives and develops him as the foremost salesperson of religion in a market economy. If the arguments presented here are sustained by later research, the common understanding of Whitefield, his role in the revivals of the eighteenth century, indeed, even the scholarly treatment of the revivals themselves, will need to be revised.

Stout begins his analysis with a quote from Whitefield's diary which points, quite without subtlety, to parallels between his life and that of Jesus (as in the biblical infancy narratives), including the importance of the role of his mother in his calling to ministry. Before ministry came an aggressive participation in theater, in which Whitefield acted with significant success. After theater came an equally intense participation in the Oxford Methodist group under Wesley's tutelage. Stout's thesis is that Whitefield's life is to be understood as an effort to fulfill his mother's explicitly stated goals for upward social mobility, within the context of the church, and that the theatrical presentation of the gospel—geared to the realities of the market and promoted as a consumer product—informed the Wesleyan love/hate relationship with the established church, propelled him into evangelistic stardom and a role as an American hero who sympathized with and spoke for the fractious colonists.

Throughout the volume, Stout asserts that intellectual pursuits were only guild requirements—that Whitefield was a mediocre student, a preacher who never prepared sermons, a leader who had no inclination or ability for theological reflection. Whitefield's primary goals, argues Stout, were to preach to as many people as possible, promote, interpret and insure his success, and to gain the attention and approbation of the rich and powerful. His charitable activity and preaching are presented as sincere but as calculated for public relations

value as well as for ministry. A comparison, one suspects, with Edwards's turgid scholarly prose lies behind these judgements.

The carefully detailed discussion of Whitefield's work in America provides the data for Stout's appreciation of his role as an "American icon," and is perhaps the most important contribution of the volume. It was he, it is suggested, who taught the owners of the newly deregulated newspapers how to use them to control images and market a personage and/or ideas. This—combined with careful advance preparation of the contexts of future evangelistic campaigns, extemporaneous preaching, the use of controversy, the refined theatrical presentation of the gospel and the publication of his diary in various media—guaranteed his success and the reinforcement of his reputation.

In this the mutually beneficial and supportive relationship with Benjamin Franklin (chapter 12), characterized as "an uncommon friendship," is illuminating. Their sincere efforts to grapple with social realities (Whitefield sought conversion and piety; Franklin sought reasoned life and civic virtue) drew them together into an intimate friendship, shared methods and mutual assistance. Both, Stout suggests, were quintessentially American.

Four features of the volume cause concern even when one, as this reviewer does, grants the essential thesis as sustained by the data. First, can a highly stylized diary which is avowedly self-promoting and first written as publicity for his evangelistic efforts—be accepted, without supporting data as revelatory of Whitefield's character and youth? Probably not! Are there, for instance, tax and court records which would support or bring into question Whitefield's narration of his youth? No (published) effort has been made to explore this possibility. Second, it would appear inappropriate to give Wesley such a minor role in the Whitefield story in favor of an expanded role for Jonathan Edwards. Here Stout's commitment to the New England thesis of American religion and society excessively colors the analysis.

Third, if Whitefield was, as Stout repeatedly suggests an essentially shallow evangelist intellectually (over against most interpretations), how does one explain the extended and heated debates between Calvinist and Arminian Methodists? Stout offers no answer; but, from his "market" perspective, options would be that Whitefield's Calvinism was only a badge to distinguish himself from Wesley, a foil to gain access to the pulpits of Scotland as well as those of high church Anglicans and Presbyterians in America, or the means to lay claim to the Lady Huntington's largess. Or, do the sources suggest that the intellectual development of an itinerant evangelist, dependent on the popular press and orality (Whitefield preached 40-50 hours per week), requires an analysis different from the scholarly, sedentary Edwards or the Anglican divines? It would seem that popular culture research suggests the latter. It would appear, as it is presented, that the ideological structures of Whitefield are inadequately addressed.

Fourth, the book in its subtitle would appear to promise reflection on "the rise of modern evangelicalism." While implicit parallels to the present will suggest themselves to most readers, the comparison and formulation of trajectories of development are left to another volume or author.

These caveats aside, Stout has produced a scintillating and suggestive new interpretation of the life and ministry of Whitefield. It will, of necessity, be considered in

all future work on the evangelist and will probably be the vehicle by which most students of American religious culture meet Whitefield. The book is refreshing and provocative. Franklin and Whitefield would have approved.

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Bebbington, David, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain; A History from the 1730's to the 1980's*. London: Unwin Hyman/Routledge, 1989; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992. xi, 364 pp. ISBN 0-8010-1028.

British Evangelicalism, in all its facets except Methodism, has generally been neglected by historians of British religious culture. Bebbington seeks to redress the problem with a magisterial survey of a century and one-half of the complex collection of institutional and voluntary associational participation identifiable as "evangelical." These are defined as groups which reflect the qualities of conversionism, activism (regarding the expression of the gospel), biblicism (albeit rarely subscribing to American-style inerrancy theories) and crucicentrism (stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross). The Wesleyan revivals provide the initial benchmarks of the definition, although the Wesleyan (and other's) emphases on developmental spirituality are curiously downplayed. This functional definition of Evangelicalism allows Bebbington to provide an evenhanded scholarly approach to the range of phenomena normally understood as Evangelicalism and helps him avoid the ideological pitfalls into which many American scholars fall. This phenomenological approach cannot be too highly praised.

The thesis which governs the volume is that Evangelicalism, quite in contradistinction to its own self-perception, is "allied with the enlightenment." It is a thoroughly modern movement which "has altered enormously over time in response to the changing assumptions of western civilization" (p. 19). Chapter two describes the first century of the tradition. The Wesleyan phenomena dominate this chapter. Wesley's heritage in Puritanism, continental Pietism, the philosophers of the Enlightenment and "high church" Anglicanism is presented. Unfortunately the work of the Caroline divines, which arguably provided the grounds upon which the "evangelicals" would find latitude to function within the Anglican tradition, is not mentioned. Such consideration would have required some nuancing of the assertion that the "Evangelical Revival represents a sharp discontinuity in the protestant tradition (p. 74)."

After chapters suggesting the changing theological and social emphases of the evangelicals, Bebbington devotes a chapter to the Holiness movement in Britain focusing on Keswick. He is careful to note the early American contacts, the perfectionistic elements and the roots in the interdenominational Mildmay conferences of William Pennefather.

The Keswick convention receives perhaps too much credit for the period prior to 1895 when F. B. Meyer began his campaign to baptistify Keswick and the efforts of the American A. T. Pierson to create a "Keswick movement" over the protests of most Keswick leaders. Surveys of the periodicals *The Way of Faith*, *The Christian* and *The King's Highway* suggest Keswick was one of many annual (or more frequent) conferences devoted to the promotion of "scriptural holiness." Insufficient attention is devoted in this chapter to the role of R. C. Morgan and his periodical *The Christian* in defining the evangelical reality. It is arguable that, more than any other factor, *The Christian* defined Evangelicalism in the British empire. The roles of Primitive Methodism, Free Methodism and The Salvation Army are not discussed in this context.

It is also interesting that the development of Pentecostalism in Britain receives minimal attention (pp. 196-198) and that the development of the "house church" movement of the 1950s and since is discussed on p. 230. The religious developments within the black communities or other immigrant groups (mostly Pentecostal and/or Holiness) are not discussed. This despite the assertion that Pentecostalism brought "vigorous reinforcement to the conservative wing of Evangelicalism" (p. 198). How was this the case? The treatment does not take into account most research on Pentecostalism from either within or outside the tradition. For example, Hollenweger's extensive analysis of British Pentecostalism is not cited (*The Pentecostals* [London: SCM, 1972] and *Handbuch der Pfingstbewegung*, Diss. Zurich, 1965).

Many specialists will want to quibble with the treatment given a particular group, idea or event in Bebbington's volume—as I have done! However, all of us will continuously use this work as the standard treatment of the whole against the backdrop of which all future research on British Evangelicalism must be set. Most scholars have examined the pieces. The major contribution of Bebbington is that he develops a thesis which can contain the whole. It is to be expected that Bebbington's effort will spawn a number of dissertations, scholarly articles and books which examine the role of individual movements, networks and the structures of interaction including publishing.

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Dayton, Donald W. and Robert K. Johnston, eds. *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991. 285 pp. ISBN 0-87049-659-X.

This volume grew out of a multi-year effort, within the context of the Evangelical Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), to describe the parameters of "Evangelicalism" within the context of American culture. It is a recent contri-

bution to the ongoing discussion of the nature of the phenomenon, arguing against the sufficiency of Reformed Fundamentalism as the essential normative core of the tradition and/or as the definitive intellectual framework expressive of Evangelicalism. A stellar cast of contributors surveys the role of Premillennialism (T. Webber), the influence of Fundamentalism (G. Marsden) and Pietism (C. J. Weborg), as well as Pentecostalism (D. Dayton), Adventism (R. Staples), Wesleyan/Holiness (P. Bassett), Restorationism (R. T. Hughes), African American religion (M. G. Sernett), Baptists (E. H. Ohlmann), Mennonites (C. N. Kraus), Reformed theology (M. Noll and C. Niemczyk) and Lutheranism (M. Ellingsen). Dayton and Johnston frame these chapters with an introduction and two chapters about the doubtful usefulness of the term "Evangelical" (Dayton) and suggestions for viewing the phenomenon sociologically as well as theologically as an "extended family" (Johnston).

Each discussant of an individual tradition made an effort to provide a careful theological analysis of the tradition, attempting, as it were, to "read" the specific tradition in light of its own sources, in order to ascertain and describe the inner logic of the system. The result of this inquiry is then compared and contrasted with what the individual author understands Evangelicalism to be. The lack of a comparative base line, while probably unavoidable, makes the informed reading of the volume a formidable exercise.

As in any anthology, the contributions are far from equal. The most striking inequality relates to the comprehensiveness of the vision for the particular evangelical tradition being examined. For example, Ellingsen was, astonishingly, able to discuss Lutherans and Evangelicalism with no discussion of the Missouri Synod and its role in American culture. Even more improbably, Ohlmann is able to discuss Baptists and Evangelicals with no attention to Southern Baptists. Weborg's chapter on Pietism gives minimal attention to the actual outworking of the pietist impulses in American society. Also curiously missing is a chapter on Methodism, which has retained a significant, well-documented evangelical and/or fundamentalist populace.

The chapter of primary interest to the majority of *Asbury Theological Journal* readers is, perhaps, that by Paul Bassett, professor of history of Christianity at Nazarene Theological Seminary, entitled, "The Theological Identity of the North American Holiness Movement: Its Understanding of the Nature and Role of the Bible." He begins by noting Harold Lindsell's generally unheeded 1977 call for the Holiness movement to join the "evangelical" Battle for the Bible, insisting that, despite "its presumed, even self-conscious identity with evangelicalism, the North American holiness movement, strictly speaking, inherits and propagates a history and a spirituality that finally make impossible...any essential synonymity, except in a very broad grassroots way..." (p. 72).

Bassett initially defines the Holiness movement institutionally; that is, as those which are part of the CHA (Christian Holiness Association), IHC (Interdenominational Holiness Convention) and the CHF (Canadian Holiness Federation). The only problem with this definition, as applied, is that it excludes the entire range of African American Holiness movements, the Holiness movements which became Pentecostal while retaining the Wesleyan-Holiness distinctives, such as the Church of God (Cleveland) and the Holiness Pentecostal Church. Such an expansion of the canon would have made Bassett's task more difficult. Even within the more narrow

definition of CHA/IHC/CHF, Bassett accurately depicts the diversity of ideas—even mutually exclusive doctrines and liturgical practices—of those who (1) adhere to the “Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification” and (2) recognize each other. Interestingly, there is no discussion here of the importance of the Keswickian view of sanctification and the tendency of the tradition to evolve toward that position.

Bassett then takes Phoebe Palmer and H. Orton Wiley as paradigmatic of the tradition and argues that their use of the Bible is on a significantly different trajectory from that of Reformed Evangelicalism. The analysis of Palmer and Wiley is magisterial and accurate. The only difficulty is the attribution of paradigmatic status. The analysis would, of necessity, be significantly nuanced by inclusion of Church of God (Anderson) and The Salvation Army writers, as well as theologians of the more conservative branches of the tradition such as Bowie, Joseph H. Smith, Stephen Paine and Charles Carter. It could also be argued that the nuanced approach of Wiley was lost on the generations which used his three-volume work as an introduction to theology as well as those who read his other writings in different contexts.

While I think Bassett’s analysis is essentially correct, the reality of the tradition is much more complex. At the same time, one has to start somewhere. Bassett’s effort is, even given the reservations expressed above, more adequate than any other to date as a paradigm for describing the phenomenon. It is probable that even expanding the base of analysis would not change Bassett’s conclusion that, “Here, then, is the center of holiness theological logic: not orthodoxy, but sanctidoxy. Not the enlightenment of the saints but the love of the Holy One” (p. 95). Bassett’s contribution is an important milestone in Wesleyan/Holiness historiography in addition to its crucial role in the present volume.

This is only one of the stimulating, sometimes provocative articles which the Evangelical Studies Group, under the leadership of Dayton and Johnston, produced. Taken together, they comprise a reliable guide to the evangelical landscape. The volume will be an essential part of the canon of the historiography of North American Evangelicalism.

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Rightmire, R. David. *Sacraments and The Salvation Army: Pneumatological Foundations*. Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1990. 327 pp. Hardback, ISBN 0-81 08-2396-9.

Professor Rightmire is well qualified to write on this subject. He brings both his understanding of The Salvation Army as well as his theological training and own careful scholarship to bear on the issues involved in this book, and he writes with both

skill and insight. *Sacraments and The Salvation Army: Pneumatological Foundations* is a fitting addition to the Studies in Evangelicalism series published by The Scarecrow Press, and correctly places the theological development of The Salvation Army within the context of nineteenth-century Evangelicalism.

The basic argument, which is both well developed and well sustained throughout the work, is that The Salvation Army's non-sacramental practice, which was instituted some eighteen years after the founding of the Christian Mission in 1865 (the forerunner of The Salvation Army), evolved primarily for theological reasons rather than for practical ones alone. Indeed, it is argued that even the apparently practical considerations had rootage in an ecclesiology. The author clearly states at the outset of the book that "the thesis of this work is that The Salvation Army's abandonment of the sacraments is theologically grounded in its pneumatological priority and the practical orientation of its missiology (p. ix)."

This is critical for at least two reasons: first, there is certainly institutional misunderstanding about the eventual non-sacramental position and practice of The Salvation Army. The most common misunderstanding is that the Army abandoned the sacraments for practical considerations only, and the theological history has either not been perceived or has been lost in some rather odd institutional historiography. Second, and related to the first, there is generally a lack of awareness of, and therefore appreciation for, the theology and history of The Salvation Army within the broader history of the Church, and even within the more narrowly defined history of Evangelicalism. This work illuminates, I think, a very important aspect of such history.

David Rightmire's thesis is developed basically within the context of the nineteenth century in the three settings which shaped Salvation Army thinking—the Victorian world, the Wesleyan tradition, and the nineteenth-century Holiness movement. One chapter diverts from that focus—chapter four deals with affinities with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century spiritualist theology, and the contents of that chapter are helpful, especially when considering some implicit influence which the Quakers had upon Catherine Booth, one of the founders of The Salvation Army and a chief architect of the non-sacramental position. Apart from that chapter, however, the central attention of this book, and rightly so, is upon the nineteenth century.

There is excellent analysis of both the historical/theological context, and of the leading advocates who guided the Army from the observance of both baptism and the Lord's Supper to a non-sacramental position, fully declared in 1883. The theological issues are constantly kept in view, especially as the author supports his thesis that pneumatological priorities eventually dominated the ecclesiology of the Army, and that the mission of the Army to the poor was governed by pragmatic revivalistic concerns.

The early leaders of the movement were not unaware of such subtle shifts, and due notice is given to the influence upon William Booth (the co-founder of The Salvation Army) by Catherine Booth, Bramwell Booth (the eldest son of William and Catherine and successor to William Booth as the second General of The Salvation Army), and George Scott Railton (a Wesleyan Christian attracted to the rigorous and forthright evangelism of The Christian Mission and one of the most important early leaders of The Salvation Army). Also, the concentration on Christian holiness as sacramental living was articulated carefully well into the twentieth century by an American Methodist

who joined The Salvation Army, Samuel Logan Brengle. Rightmire is correct in pointing out what these people held in common, such as "the interrelatedness of Booth's pragmatism and pneumatology in terms of sacramental living" (p. 167). He likewise made the proper connections, which many have missed, between the doctrine of holiness, the concern for holy living, and the Army's postmillennial theology in which sacramental living became the great present eschatological sign for the future kingdom.

Rightmire's basic thesis is an important corrective for some misinterpretations (including Begbie's, in his two-volume work entitled *The Life of General William Booth*) that Booth dropped the sacraments because such observances detracted from the central message of conversion and from the emotional drama of conversion. On the contrary, it was Booth's eventual understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the mission of the Army, rather than his understanding of regeneration, which led him to a non-sacramental position. Booth's successors were not as clearly theologically oriented, and so developed an apologetic for a non-sacramental position which was often weak. Rightmire points out such weaknesses.

The book concludes by providing some helpful suggestions for a proper theological framework for a contemporary reevaluation of the issue of sacraments and The Salvation Army. The question needs to be raised, however, as to whether the theological shifts in the Army's pneumatology are more subtle and less dramatic than Rightmire suggests, thus raising the subsequent question as to the viability of reconsidering the Army's sacramental theology. Is the case compelling enough to demand such reconsideration?

In summary, this is an important book not only because it raises critical questions and provides excellent analysis for institutional historical and theological awareness. It is significant also because it provides the broader academic world with more insight into an intentionally non-sacramental community of believers within the wider Body of Christ.

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Dunnivant, Anthony L., ed. *Poverty and Ecclesiology; Nineteenth-Century Evangelicals in Light of Liberation Theology*. Collegeville: Michael Glazeer/Liturgical Press, 1992. 104 p. ISBN 0-8146-5024-4

It is unusual when a volume comprised of essays surpasses the individuality of the separate contributions to actually develop and maintain a thesis. This book, which may be described as *multo in parvo*, edited by Anthony L. Dunnivant, associate professor of Church history at Lexington Theological Seminary, drew together the work of five noted scholars. The thesis and resulting analysis may be discomfiting both to evangelicals and to liberation theologians. The authors clearly demonstrated that there is a remarkable

correspondence between the concerns and rhetoric of contemporary Latin American liberation theologians and nineteenth-century evangelicals, and that in those similarities may lie ecumenical possibilities between mainline churches, which eagerly hear the liberation theologians, and the often-mocked evangelicals who are heirs to and maintain these traditions of social awareness and activism in a context dominated by the mainline churches. All of the authors were careful not to overdraw the comparison between the different "theological, social, historical and cultural" milieux of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They managed the comparative historiography with skill.

The editor's "Introduction" reflects upon the genesis of the project, presents the thesis and describes the methodology employed. The first essay, by the famed historian Justo L. Gonzalez, "The Option for the Poor in Latin American Liberation Theology" (pp. 9-26), argues convincingly that the Latin-American Catholic concern for the poor and oppressed does not begin with the liberation theologians. Sacrificial concern for the marginalized as well as for evangelism, he insists, has been a continuous, even determinative, part of the Christian presence in Latin America since the initial colonization by the Spanish and Portuguese.

Dunnivant's case study, "David Lipscomb and the 'Preferential Option for the Poor' Among Post-Bellum Churches of Christ" (pp. 27-50), explores the views of Lipscomb on the church and the poor, seeking to ascertain personal and ministerial priorities of the person who could be described as the founder of this primarily Southern, conservative ecclesial coalition. Out of his personal experience of devastating poverty after the Civil War, Lipscomb developed a sophisticated analysis of poverty and the churches' role in ministry. Dunnivant argues that Lipscomb recognized that "Christ is personified in the poor" (p. 32), valued a church of the poor, insisted that the poor are the more effective evangelists, invoked the *kenosis* theory as a model for Christian service to the "masses," and pleaded for a ministry which "lived poor" and associated with the poor. He warned that riches, and the social material tastes cultured by wealth, corrupt the church and its testimony.

The second case study is an essay entitled, "Benjamin Titus Roberts and the 'Preferential Option for the Poor' in the Early Free Methodist Church" (pp. 51-67), was written by William C. Kostlevy, special collections librarian at Asbury Theological Seminary. Kostlevy begins his analysis of the social theories and ministerial imperatives of the founder of The Free Methodist Church with a quote from the 1903 *Doctrines and Disciplines*, which asserted that Free Methodist "mission is two-fold—to maintain the Bible standard of Christianity, and to preach the gospel to the poor." This essay clearly demonstrates that the church had more than words of "Good News" in mind when the phrase was penned. By 1903, this Holiness church—founded over both social justice (free pews, ministry of women, anti-secret societies, anti-slavery) and theological issues (sanctification)—had labored for nearly a half century both in evangelism and in social ministry. For them there was no bifurcation.

Kostlevy describes the experiential and theoretical bases from which Roberts and other Free Methodist social/missional theorists worked. The historical circumstances and the expulsion of Roberts from The Methodist Episcopal Church are well known. Less discussed in the post-McCarthy era church are the severe critique of capitalism, the accumulation of wealth by members, the display of privilege, and deflationary money policies.

Roberts argued, as do liberation theologians, that the proof of easily-mouthed doctrinal assertions is in the self-sacrificial pouring out (he used the term *kenosis*) of life and goods for the poor. Roberts also lashed out against classism based, interestingly enough, on either social, material or religious attainments. To be a Free Methodist was to be a radical Christian. Writers such as Mary Alice Tenney, George Allen Turner, L. R. Marsten and Howard A. Snyder have continued this tradition of social and religious thinking.

Kostlevy has carefully documented his presentation of Roberts and has at numerous points compared and contrasted his findings with a reading of key liberation theologians and documents. It is hoped that others will further explore the Free Methodist ethical tradition as well as the attitudes and practices of Roberts, whose personal papers became available to scholars just after Kostlevy finished this important and suggestive essay. Unfortunately, many among the later generations of Holiness churchpersons have been so personally irritated with the "prudentials" of the tradition which made it impossible to be "like" the mainline churches, that they have failed to recognize a truly significant tradition of social, missional and theological analysis in their own church.

Bill J. Leonard, professor of religion at Samford University, contributed the final case study, "*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base and Autonomous Local Churches: Catholic Liberationists Meet Baptist Landmarkers*" (pp. 68-89), an analysis of another primarily southern evangelical church. It is an excellent essay in comparative ecclesiology.

The "Epilogue," provided by Donald W. Dayton, professor at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, makes explicit what has been implicit throughout the volume. That is, the stereotypes of evangelicals as passively oblivious to social and ecclesial injustices are untenable. He suggests that the term evangelical has become so contested and value laden that it has lost its usefulness and should be abandoned in favor of a concept of "radical Christianity."

The editor and contributors have made a carefully reasoned, meticulously documented argument. The parameters of the discussion could easily have been extended to the Lutherans, for example, when, after the Civil War, Pietist evangelicals in that tradition were officially persecuted because of their radical egalitarian social vision. Others, such as the pentecostal churches (for example, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, the Filadelfia Churches [Sweden], the Church of God [Cleveland] and the Assemblies de Deus of Brazil) and Holiness churches (for example, The Salvation Army, Wesleyan Church, Church of the Nazarene, Church of God [Anderson]) have traditions congruent with those studied here. To note that these were not examined is not a criticism, but a recognition of the historiographical contribution of the volume. It is hoped that, following suggestions of Dunnivant, et al., the stereotypes which have divided American Christianity into opposing religious cultures will be reexamined and overcome.

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Rivers, Isabel. *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780* Vol. 1: *Whichcote to Wesley*. Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Thought, No. 8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. xiii, 277 pp. ISBN 0-521-38340-4.

Isabel Rivers is a fellow of St. Hugh's College, Oxford University, and is the author of *The Poetry of Conservatism, 1600-1745* (Cambridge, 1973) and *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry* (London, 1979). Her "subject is the language of religious and moral prose" (p. 2) from the sermons of Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683) to the sermons and other works of John Wesley (1703-1791). Her "methods are those of the literary historian of ideas" (pp. 2-3); but she adds that her "aim has been to cross twentieth-century disciplinary boundaries and to encourage [her] readers to do the same" (p. 4).

An introduction and short first chapter are followed by four longer chapters. Chapter one provides historical background for the subsequent chapters, and covers the period of approximately 1640 to 1660. The second chapter treats a group of Anglican divines labeled "latitudinarians" or "latitude-men," the first of whom was Whichcote. Chapter three addresses the nonconformist reaction to the latitudinarians, and focuses on Presbyterian Richard Baxter (1615-1691) and Baptist John Bunyan (1628-1688). The subjects of the fourth chapter are congregationalists and dissenters Isaac Watts (1674-1748) and Philip Doddridge (1702-1751). Chapter five "looks at the thought of John Wesley from the 1730s to the 1780s and his attempt, drawing on many different traditions, to reform the Church of England from within and to create a new synthesis of the competing elements his predecessors had juggled with" (p. 2).

An overly-simple method of classifying the characters of this book (though Rivers is not herself guilty of such over-simplification) is to place each somewhere on a continuum between the poles of Calvinism and Arminianism. Whichcote's Calvinist teacher Anthony Tuckney (1594-1670) is introduced in Chapter one. Whichcote and most of the latitudinarians were trained as Calvinists, but became Arminians. Then, "in the 1660s, with the re-establishment of the Church of England, Calvinism came to be perceived very largely as nonconformist and Arminianism as conformist doctrine" (p. 12). Bunyan held "orthodox Calvinist beliefs" (p. 104); but Baxter adopted an "Aristotelian mediocrity" (p. 131) between the extremes of Calvinism and Arminianism. Watts and Doddridge followed Baxter in the "middle way of moderate Calvinism" (p. 203). Wesley was nearer the Arminian end of the spectrum.

Although Rivers provides structure for her analysis of the many texts she discusses, this structure suffers from a degree of imprecision. According to the first sentence of the Introduction, "this book is the first of two volumes dealing with the changes in which the relationship between religion and ethics was perceived" between 1660 and 1780 "and the kinds of language in which these changes were expressed." Rivers then identifies "two crucial shifts in ideas" that took place during this period: "The first is an emphasis in Anglican thought on the capacity of human reason and free will to cooperate with divine grace in order to achieve the holy and happy life. This optimistic portrait of human nature represents a rejection of the orthodox Reformation tradition,

which stresses the depravity of human nature and God's arbitrary exercise of his free grace in electing the few to salvation." The second shift, "which in part arises from the first," is "the attempt to divorce ethics from religion, and to find the springs of human action not in the cooperation of human nature and divine grace but in the constitution of human nature alone." The suggestion is that these two shifts correspond to the two volumes of *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*.

Rivers then adds: "Volume I deals with the rise in the second half of the seventeenth century of Anglican moral religion and the reaction against it of movements which attempted in different ways to continue or return to the Reformation protestant tradition in response to what was seen to be its betrayal by the Church of England. This volume essentially explores the tension between the languages of reason and grace. Volume II [not yet available at the time of this review] will deal with movements which took up ideas implicit in Anglican moral religion and developed them in the direction of naturalism, scepticism, and sentimental ethics, to which Anglican thinkers were necessarily hostile although they had to some extent prepared the ground which made these developments possible. It will essentially explore the tension between the languages of reason and sentiment" (p. 1)

But to say that both volumes deal with changes in how the relationship between religion and ethics was perceived slightes the central role of beliefs about human reason in the story Rivers tells. And to say that Volume I is about the languages of reason and grace downplays its concern with changing beliefs about ethics. I believe that a passage in the first chapter offers a more helpful way of organizing the ideas presented in the book. Rivers identifies two routes to atheism: "Those on the Calvinist wing warned of a slippery slope leading from Arminianism, Socinianism and Pelagianism to infidelity and atheism; conversely, those on the Arminian wing saw a different but equally dangerous slope leading from Calvinism and antinomianism to irrationality, enthusiasm, libertinism, and atheism" (p. 9). She then adds: "The disputes, which are essentially about the nature of the relationship between man and God, centre on the respective parts played by *reason and faith* as the basis of knowledge of God, and by *faith and works* as the basis of the Christian life" (pp. 9-10, emphasis added). The texts discussed in the four main chapters also contain many references to the roles of *reason and works*. Supplying this third side and constructing a faith-reason-works triangle is, I believe, the best way to approach these four chapters.

Rivers opens chapter two by explaining that "the terms 'latitude-men' and 'latitudinarian' were first used pejoratively...to describe an influential group of men who in terms of doctrine wanted to reduce the Christian religion to a few plain essentially moral fundamentals...and in terms of discipline were prepared to accommodate themselves to the church government of the day" (pp. 25-26). They believed that Christianity is reasonable, and "were united in their opposition to what they regarded as atheism, enthusiasm, and superstition, which they believed to be mutually supporting intellectual evils undermining rational religion" (p. 34). In the words of latitude-man Simon Patrick (1626-1707), "there is an eternal consanguinity between all verity; and nothing is true in Divinity, which is false in Philosophy, or the contrary" (p. 68). They also believed that "faith contains the idea of works" (p. 74), and "held man to

have been created and to remain, despite the effects of sin, a rational being endowed with innate knowledge of God, good and evil, and moral duties" (pp. 59-60).

Baxter and Bunyan disagreed concerning the relationship between reason and faith. "Like the latitudinarians, Baxter is interested in the place of reason in religion and in the relationship between religion and philosophy" (p. 124). Bunyan, however, was suspicious of the role of reason in Christianity, as is suggested by his "caricature of the latitudinarian point of view in the shape of Mr. Worldly Wiseman" in *The Pilgrim's Progress* (p. 87). Concerning the relationship between faith and works, however, "there is no dispute between them: the life of faith is the life of holiness" (p. 151). "Reason for Baxter is the means not only to knowledge but to putting knowledge into practice" (p. 145). Bunyan, however, "is altogether more suspicious of the head" (p. 146).

Rivers begins chapter four with a hint of what was later to become a serious problem for the reason-faith relationship: "Two basic tendencies can be observed in the attitudes and language of dissent in the first half of the eighteenth century, the first rational, the second evangelical" (p. 165). Both Watts and Doddridge "wished to combine rational free thought with evangelical orthodoxy" (p. 170). Unfortunately, however, "by the end of the century there was a gulf between rational dissent on the one hand and evangelicalism in its various manifestations on the other" (p. 204). The eighteenth-century protestant dissenters believed in a close relationship between faith and works: "True Christianity of the heart manifests itself in purity of life" (p. 195). One manifestation of the evangelical tendency in the tradition of old dissent was a decreased role for reason and an increased role for the passions or affections (used synonymously) to play in Christian ethics: "The function of reason is to judge and test, but it is too slow and weak to bring about action; the passions play no part in speculation or judgement, but they are essential to action" (p. 188).

As Rivers interprets Wesley, faith, reason, and works are all essential: "Faith working by love is a process in which grace and reason, faith and works, Scripture and experience, religion and ethics are indissolubly linked in order to produce the holy and happy life, the life of perfection, here on earth" (p. 252).

The phrase "holy and happy life," which occurs in the first and last paragraphs of the book, raises a problem closely related to that of the relationship between reason and works: the relationship between self-interest and morality. The two relationships are closely related, because there is a long tradition according to which it is rational to pursue one's self-interest.

In chapter two Rivers identifies Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) as one of the chief opponents of the latitudinarians: "The latitude-men had no doubt of the dangerous increase in atheist, infidel, materialist, Epicurean, and libertine views, stimulated by the influence of Hobbes" (pp. 44-45). And she correctly points out that they responded to Hobbes by appealing to the authority of Aristotle: "The latitude-men explicitly repudiate the Hobbesian view of the state of nature as a state of war, and associate themselves instead with the Aristotelian, anti-Hobbesian understanding of human nature as being in tension with their oft-repeated statement that it is in one's interest to be virtuous: "From one point of view this constant harping on prudence, profit,

advantage, and interest is extremely calculated, and it perhaps sits rather oddly with the latitudinarian conviction of the innately benevolent disposition of man. To some extent it may be seen as an attempt to undermine the persuasiveness of Hobbesian ethics by using Hobbes's vocabulary. This is obviously a different method from the simple stating of man's sociability as a fact in opposition to Hobbes's view of man's selfishness" (p. 85).

But to see a difference of method here is to ignore Aristotle's distinction (Nicomachean Ethics, IX, 8) between the true self-love of virtuous persons and the false self-love of vicious persons. Aristotle's belief that humans are naturally social is inseparable from his belief that it is in one's true self-interest to promote the good of other persons. The real problem with the latitudinarians' understanding of ethics is that they maintain both that it is one's self-interest to be ethical and that ethics is opposed to self-interest, without making the Aristotelian distinction between virtuous and vicious self-love. For example, in a passage that Rivers does not cite, Whichcote warns Christians to "be wary of self-interest: for a man should not trust himself, where he is concerned; we may take it for granted, that we love ourselves well enough; all the danger is on the other side, whether we indifferently hear what is alleged against our interest" (*Works*, 1751, 11, p. 69). In their attempt to refute Hobbes, the latitude-men contributed to the Christian ethical tradition's rejection of the belief that living rightly involves loving oneself properly (as in, for example, Matthew 6:19-20) and adoption of the belief that right living requires opposition to self-interest.

Anyone interested in the history of Protestant moral theology, and especially anyone interested in Wesley's understanding of the relationships among reason, faith, holiness and happiness, will profit from reading Rivers. As she puts it: "The reader of Wesley must always bear in mind the particular emphases of his various opponents" (p. 207).

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Padgett, Alan G. *The Mission of the Church in Methodist Perspective*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1992. Pp. vi + 180.

For several years the Wesley Fellows program has been supporting United Methodist scholars who are pursuing doctoral studies in the range of theological disciplines out of a vital commitment to the Church and the historic Christian faith. The present volume reflects the type of fruit that this effort promises to bear. All of the contributors are Wesley Fellows who are now taking their places in theological education and scholarship.

While the initial stimulus for this volume was surely their collegial connection, the

authors are to be commended for successfully gathering their individual contributions around a focal theme—offering Wesleyan perspectives on the mission of the Church. A distinct part of the credit for this coherence no doubt goes to Alan Padgett, who edited the volume and weaves the pieces together in his introduction.

The first essay is by Joel B. Green, a New Testament scholar. Green's specific focus is a study of the theology of Christian mission in the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. His central (and very Wesleyan!) theme is the wholeness of God's vision and, thus, the wholeness of the mission given God's people in scripture. A significant sub-theme running through the essay is Green's argument that, just as Christian mission should be rooted in and gain its bearings from scripture, serious biblical interpretation must be informed by and tested in the arena of that mission.

In the second essay, Ted A. Campbell considers "John Wesley on the Mission of the Church." Campbell develops his discussion in the context of the current Western debates over foreign missions as cultural imperialism. His major claim is that Wesley—like other early evangelicals—was less prone to impose his British culture blindly in the process of evangelizing other peoples, precisely because Wesley was sensitive to the "heathenism" in his own culture. This is why Wesley cast the Church's mission as first to reform his nation and then the world. Campbell also reflects on the implications of Wesley's affirmation of preventing grace for missions, and his insistence on the role of communities of accountability in nurturing progress in the "way of salvation."

Wendy J. Deichmann next provides an historical account of the development of missions structures within the predecessor bodies of United Methodism. Her account highlights the theological implications of the emerging institutionalization of Methodist missions—emphasizing particularly 1) the transition from understanding missions as the entire purpose of Methodism to structuring missions as one task among others, 2) the move from preoccupation with "home" missions to growing focus on world missions, and 3) the eventual structural separation of the tasks of evangelism and missions. Deichmann leaves for the reader to ponder which of these developments were inevitable and which inappropriately segmented or distorted the Wesleyan vision of the mission of the Church.

L. Gregory Jones and Michael G. Cartwright combine forces in the fourth essay. Actually, they combine individual essays that each published previously (the only previously published material in the book). The basic thesis of their combined work is the need for The United Methodist Church to recover the type of "community" that Wesley nurtured in the early Methodist movement. One prong of this thesis is directed to the "Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task" statement adopted at the 1988 General Conference—contending that a renewed practice of accountable community is necessary for recovering authentic theological reflection in the Church. The other prong of the thesis relates to the Vital Congregations/Faithful Disciples initiative launched by the United Methodist bishops in 1990—in this case arguing that the initiative does not adequately appreciate or recover the crucial role of discipline (via the General Rules, class meeting, etc.) in nurturing vital community life in the Church. While the interweaving of these two theses is not always smooth, the insight

into the multiple dimensions of the importance of authentic Christian community makes the effort worthwhile.

The next contribution is a survey of recent discussions of mission in ecumenical, evangelical, and Roman Catholic circles by Garry O. Parker. Parker highlights areas of both tension and convergence between these different arenas. He places particular emphasis on their convergence around the need for a more holistic sense of mission.

Alan Padgett then presents a concise and rigorous Wesleyan critique of the church growth movement. Padgett raises serious questions about apparent limitations or distorting directions in the movement, particularly the tendency to separate evangelism from social action or justification from sanctification. He contrasts these tendencies with some specific Wesleyan counter examples.

The final essay is by Roald Kristiansen, a Norwegian Methodist, who takes up the modern debate over the relationship of the mission of the Church to interreligious dialogue. Following a survey of the various proposed ways of dealing with religious pluralism, Kristiansen offers a defense of the need for and contribution of dialogue to the mission of the Church. He grounds this defense in a theology of God's embraveive covenants (with parallels to Wesley's Prevenient Grace). Kristiansen is clear that authentic dialogue must include witnessing to one's faith in Christ, though some readers will wonder if he is too reticent to advance any claim for the preferability of Christianity.

This collection of essays is a welcome addition to discussion of the mission of the Church. It also bodes well for the future vitality of debate over the theological dynamics of the Wesleyan tradition.

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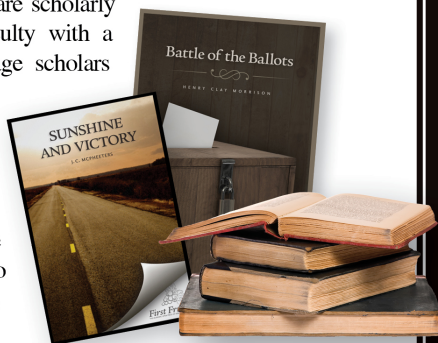
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