

BOOK REVIEWS

Ethics for Today, by Harold H. Titus and Morris Keeton. New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1973. Fifth Edition. 555 pages. n.p.

This volume represents a significant revision of the Fourth Edition. The introduction sets forth the major hypothesis of the work, which is to be more largely deductive than former editions and less geared to the method of deriving norms from societal behavior. The hypothesis is: that the sickness and disorder of today's society results from a loss of consensus within that society at the point of what is good and right. In place of the four divisions found in the Third and Fourth Editions, the Fifth edition consists of two parts, dealing respectively with "The Search for a Moral Philosophy" and "Specific Problems of Personal and Social Morality."

Underlying the volume is the feeling of the authors that loss of moral consensus results in general loss of confidence and social direction. This concerns them more largely than any possible basis for consensus, such as one based upon religious principles or upon convictions derived from them. There is a praiseworthy emphasis upon the need for an understanding of man beyond that attained from experiments upon laboratory animals, and upon the peril of a mere statistical and tabulated understanding of the human person, which is quite correctly (we think) productive of persons whose motivation comes from without rather than from within.

It seems to this reviewer that Chapter 5, "Why Right is Right" is the heart of the work. Here the so-called "situational" or "contextual" ethic is examined in the light of major ethical systems of the past, particularly the utilitarian and its polar opposite, the categorical. While the authors do not visibly "take sides," it is clear that they feel that morality must be reflective, and take into account a multi-faceted ethical approach.

The reader who expects here to find a book (or textbook) on normative ethics will probably end up being dissatisfied. The strength of the work lies in the breadth of its researches, the range of its subjects, and the depth of its insights into current issues. One is impressed by the fair-minded attitudes assumed toward many concrete issues; at nearly every point at issue in the moral life today, the authors provide materials with which the reader may formulate his own attitudes.

Impressive also is the absence of “scare” materials and of partisan advocacy of social panaceas. The objective seems clearly to be, to produce readers and hearers who are equipped to weigh issues and where necessary to suspend judgment. The general tone is constructive and at a high level; the suggestions for public policy which are made may be characterized fairly by the word “humane” in its best sense.

The chapters are followed by valuable lists of Questions and Projects. Here also the sensational, the idiosyncratic and the exceptional are avoided, and cases of believable and “usual” issues are adduced. This feature alone will commend the work to the teacher of ethics who desires to make his classroom work dynamic and meaningful. Alternative strategies and constructive experimentation are uniformly suggested.

The authors close their work with a call for “a moral and educational revolution” in which false values and confused priorities will give way to procedures which will reestablish order in society by route of the adequate development of the inner life of individual citizens. By way of criticism, one may ask precisely how the consensus sought as an objective in the Introduction can contribute to this end. Perhaps the connective tissue between these two elements is to be furnished by the reader himself.

Harold B. Kuhn

An Introduction to Contemporary Preaching, by J. Daniel Baumann. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972. 302 pages. \$6.95.

The seventeen chapters in the book are divided into three parts. Part One discusses communication, focussing on congregation, worship, and method. Part Two deals with the nature and preparation of the sermon. Part Three is an exposition of the end-goal in preaching (i.e., behavioral change) and how it is achieved. The last two chapters of Part Three relate to the role of dialogue in preaching and to the work of the Holy Spirit in effecting behavioral change.

Within the framework of the three main parts are many divisions and subdivisions, the whole covering rather thoroughly matters basic to our understanding of the preaching task, and all geared to relating the

Biblical message to the contemporary mind. The author's insights into the ministry of preaching **today** should prove stimulating to old and young alike. Not the least merit is Dr. Baumann's expertness in handling the wealth of background reading resources at his disposal. The book is replete with allusions and quotations in point. In lesser hands it might well be irritatingly encyclopedic. But here the "imports" are woven carefully into the fabric of the author's own thinking so that they do not call attention unduly to original sources. Here is pressed into service some of the finest homiletical thought in our literature. Dr. Baumann has a profound faith in preaching. He is convinced that preaching is still the best vehicle for proclaiming the Word of God. He urges preachers to keep their theology strong while using contemporary methods to give their sermons spontaneity and relevance. It is also his conviction that preaching has the potential for significant influence in our electronic era if the preacher keeps sensitive to the changes dictated by the sovereign movement of the Holy Spirit.

James D. Robertson

Human Fundamentals, by Paul Mason Frank. Phoenix, Arizona: Thunderbird Press, 1972. 512 pages. \$7.50. (Paperback)

The subtitle of this paperback, *A Personal Philosophic Guide*, serves to indicate the sweep of the author's planning for the work. It is projected in the Foreword that the writer, a layman in philosophy, will set forth a catalog of data which the individual—any individual—needs in order to structure his living in our kind of world. Part I, entitled "Philosophic Physics" contains an analysis of the phenomena which make up the content of sensory and ideational experience; its chief value seems to this reviewer to lie in its detail of break-down of experience elements.

Part II, dealing with Metaphysics raises the most serious questions in the Christian mind. Mr. Frank appears to view the world as self-explanatory, and our experience with it as being entirely nominalistic and existential. He doubts the reality of Time (at least as a continuum), and

rejects the usual views of causation, particularly views involving or implying the reality of the supernatural. As a substitute he proposes what he terms a “non-speculative view” of causal sequences, which stresses events and their immediate effect upon the one experiencing them—almost an espousal of Hume’s view of habituation.

Successive sections deal with Ethics, Aesthetics and Logic. In these, too, the point of reference is the experiencing individual and what seems to him to constitute his well-being. This is not to say that there are not many humane and penetrating insights. In general, the weight of the discourse falls upon human self-realization and the value judgments stated rotate about what produces the “good life” seen in terms of the realization of “the maximum in pleasure and satisfaction, and the minimum in pain and distress” (p. 441).

The practical parts of the volume embrace genial good advice mingled with personal hedonism and social utilitarianism. The role of aesthetics is, of course, included here, although the author seems to feel least at home in this phase of his discussion. The summary chapter outlines what Mr. Frank calls “Human Fundamentalism” and deals in maxims reminiscent of Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics* and the fragments which remain to us of the writings of Epicurus. On the whole, this is a rather rambling work, keen in its analysis, but of doubtful value for instruction in the Christian life.

Harold B. Kuhn

Politics of Guilt and Pity, by Rousas John Rushdoony. Nutley, New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1970. 371 pages. \$6.50.

The volume is written by an author of several books on religion and politics. He is a reactionary in the tradition of ultra-conservative Reformation theology. He admires Calvinism and is suspicious of Arminianism. Frequently he expresses keen and original insights which are thoroughly Christian. He champions views that are congenial to evangelical or Biblical Christianity. Typical of the author’s perspective

is his analysis of cultures of guilt and shame. He labels as hypocrite the person who “dredges up minor offenses to prove the refinement of his conscience, in order to escape his capital offense against God” (p. 15). Thus, by confessing the sins of his ancestors, the contemporary confessor proclaims his own relative innocence. Confession of sin may thus become an expression of pride. Cain murdered his innocent brother, Abel, not because of hostility against his brother but because of his hostility against God; since he could not attack God, he attacked his brother. Abel thus became a scapegoat for Cain. The author applies this to contemporary race relations, deploring the tendency of contemporary liberal spokesmen to salve conscience by confessing the guilt of their ancestors for their injustice to Negroes. Likewise, he adds, a guilt-complex over anti-semitism in the past encourages the present inclination to excuse the Jews for the death of Christ. Over against this he insists that the only release from guilt is through Christ. He warns that the encouragement of this guilt-complex has the effect of producing a submissive populace and of neutralizing Christian convictions by overstressing a tolerance of other religious and political opinions.

The United Nations is regarded as a modern Tower of Babel, doomed to failure because it makes humanism a substitute for God. The author’s main point is that the true freedom can be only spiritual, based upon Christ and that humanism expressing itself in socialism can result only in slavery to another person or group. Only the one whose supreme loyalty is to God is really free. John Calvin’s theocratic rule in Geneva is warmly commended.

This book may be read with profit because it abounds with provocative and stimulating insights.

George A. Turner

The Epistle to the Hebrews; A Commentary, by Homer A. Kent, Jr. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1972. 303 pages. \$5.95.

Kent understands the Epistle to the Hebrews to have been written in the sixties, before the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), to Hebrew Christians, probably at Rome. These Christians were wavering before

the temptation to leave Christianity and return to the safer haven of Judaism.

The author presents a well-worked-out outline of the Epistle. He furnishes three divisions: I. Doctrinal Discussion (1:1-10–10:18), II. Practical Exhortations (10:19–13:17), III. Personal Instructions (13:18-25). This outline, further divided into sections and points, is the framework for the commentary. In moving from one unit to another, Kent makes clear the thought structure of the Epistle and this greatly facilitates the student's study of the Epistle.

The commentary is based on the author's own literal translation of the Greek text. Kent points out the significances of Greek Grammar and the different emphases of Greek synonyms. Meanings of Greek words are well explained and often illustrated from other New Testament contexts. Even though a knowledge of Greek on the part of the reader is desirable, it is not indispensable to using the volume as a commentary.

Kent is Dean and Professor of New Testament and Greek at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana. His theological position is conservative, reflecting a high view of Scripture. Since he believes in "eternal security," he interprets Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-27 as dealing with a hypothetical case to illustrate the folly of apostasy rather than as a warning to the saved against the possibility of apostasy.

In commenting on Hebrews 2:2, Kent states, "The law was given by angels" (p. 48). Probably by this expression he means to say that the angels were mediators rather than legislators of the law; for in the same context are these words, "the angels mediated law," "the law mediated by angels." However, this can easily be taken, particularly by those who see Christianity as a version of Gnosticism, to mean that he advocates angelic origin of the law.

Joseph S. Wang

Gifts and Ministries, by Arnold Bittlinger. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973. 109 pages. \$1.95 (Paperback).

The author is Director of the Ecumenical Academy, Schloss Craheim, Germany. In this volume he seeks to relate the gifts of the

Holy Spirit to the ministries ordained for the church. He contends that spiritual gifts must be exercised in the context of ministry or else dangerous confusion results. He also contends that ministries must not be exercised without gifts or else the result will be an efficient organization that never moves anywhere.

He gives helpful insights into the nature of the church and offers insights as to how the Holy Spirit works through structures to accomplish his purposes. His work is balanced and he offers a real contribution to the renewal movements within the church today.

Kenneth C. Kinghorn

Hell and Salvation, by Leslie H. Woodson. Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1973. 128 pages. \$3.95.

Walter Hooper once told C. S. Lewis that he knew of a headstone on which the epitaph read, "Here lies an atheist, all dressed up but with nowhere to go." Whereupon the famous author replied, "I bet he wishes that were so."

In a sense, everyone wishes it were so. Who can find delight in the realization that persons who scorn God must face the prospect of an eternal hell? Certainly, the Christian finds no pleasure in the judgment of the wicked. As with our Lord, the contemplation of what it means for a soul to be lost can bring nothing but tears to the heart.

But it is still a fact with which we must reckon. However painful, there can be no evasion of the subject if we are to take seriously the teachings of Christ.

For this reason we can be grateful for this forthright treatment of doctrine too often ignored by modern churchmen. The author is not afraid to face the witness of Scripture. Yet he is not unmindful of points of view different from his own. Other interpretations and their implications are considered with the scholar's objectivity. Throughout there is a refreshing evangelical realism in his perspective.

The author is a United Methodist minister who has served his church faithfully for many years. I can imagine the dismay and irritation with which his book will be received by his brethren on the Board of Education at Nashville.

But for those who take it seriously, reading these pages should make us more aware of God's grace. Surely it is His desire that none should perish. Jesus has made a way through His blood by which all who come to Him may be saved. The choice is ours. And as we cannot avoid that decision, so we cannot escape its ultimate consequences.

Robert E. Coleman

Pulpit Giants, What Made Them Great, by Donald E. Demaray. Chicago: Moody Press, 1973. 174 pages. \$3.95.

Brief chapters furnish a readable account of the pulpit work of twenty-five outstanding preachers, representing many centuries and many Christian denominations—such names as John Bunyan, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Francis Asbury, Phillips Brooks, G. Campbell Morgan, Arthur John Gossip, Paul Rees, Peter Marshall, W. E. Sangster, James S. Stewart, and Billy Graham. The author finds that among the divergent backgrounds and personalities all had two things in common—“a burning in their soul that made it imperative to preach,” and a life that demonstrated “sheer godliness.” The reader becomes increasingly aware of the fact that, notwithstanding their natural endowment, these men became “pulpit giants” through the power of the Spirit. He is impressed again and again by the realization that God mightily uses men of distinctly varied personalities, talents, and backgrounds; and that, without loss of the individual as a person. In God's hands, even the preacher's idiosyncrasies shine forth.

The writer's style, lucid and intimate, heightens our interest. *Pulpit Giants* will prove stimulating reading for minister and layman alike. Helpful footnotes at the end of each chapter encourage to further reading. Dr. Demaray is Professor of Preaching, and Dean of Students at Asbury Theological Seminary.

James D. Robertson