Searchings of Heart

By Ralph Earle

The period of the judges in Israel was a turbulent time of transition. The theocracy under Moses and Joshua had died, and the monarchy under David and Solomon had not yet been born. The key verse of the Book of Judges sums up the difficulties of the times: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Anarchy brought turmoil and trouble.

One of the recurring crises of this period produced the Song of Deborah and Barak. In it we find these suggestive words: "For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart." (Judges 5:16.)

Every student of history recognizes that we are now living in a period of transition. We are entering the air age, the atomic age. Thoughtful men are asking: "Whence?—Whither?. Why?" As man contemplates the mess that he has made trying to run the world without God, there cannot but be great searchings of heart. There are some reflections of this in the religious literature of 1948.

The outstanding religious event of the past year was the meeting of the first World Assembly of Churches at Amsterdam, in August. The Christian Century devoted practically an entire issue (October 6) to comments on and the reports of this historic occasion. Reprints were made in large quantities for wider distribution. Here one can read pretty much the whole story of Amsterdam.

But perhaps the keest comment on the Amsterdam meeting was made by one of the editors of Time. In the September 13 issue the Religion column is headed: "No Pentecost." Here we find one of the most significant paragraphs in recent religious reporting. Let us weigh the words carefully.

The watching Protestant world had hoped, in its dim and sentimental way, for something better. It had perhaps even hoped for another Pentecost. At Pentecost, there were tongues of fire from heaven, and human beings like ready lamps, waiting to be lit. At Amsterdam, there were committees, agenda, resolutions, debates, and trilingual earphones. The men of Amsterdam did not expect and did not receive flames from heaven. They had not met to be inspired but to "get something done." They were moved, not by tongues of fire, but by reasonable anxiety, cautious good will, Protestant practicality.

The great purpose and drive of the Amsterdam Conference was the attainment of ecumenical unity. A rather wholesome antidote to the present over-absorption in ecumenicity is Marcus Bach’s latest book, Report to Protestants. It is a supplement to his earlier volume, They Have Found a Faith (1947). Those who read that fascinating description of the various cults and sects of our country will need no urging to read Bach’s 1948 sequel.

The first three chapters of the book tell of his attempt in his first pastorate, at Fairfield, Kansas, to unite two churches across the street from each other. All his efforts ended in dismal failure. Then the town was invaded by a Pentecostal Church. Some of Bach’s members were swept into that aggressive movement, while others joined the Christian Science and Catholic Churches. Why? That was the question that plagued the young pastor, who finally resigned and quit the ministry.

After floating around for awhile looking for a job, he found himself directing the choir for a Pentecostal group in Milwaukee. The book’s fourth chapter, "The Latter Rain is Falling," describes his experiences in this strange association. Most amazing of all, Bach himself received "the baptism."

The fifth chapter, "The Cults are Coming," portrays the rapid rise of cults, especially the religious rackets in Southern California. While many of these can be classed
as sheer hoax, Bach points out that large numbers of people are finding help and satisfaction in Christian Science, Psychiana, Unity, and the like. The distressing thing is that most of the accessions to these movements come from the ranks of Protestant churches. What is happening to Protestantism?

Bach feels that the crux of the problem is to be found in Protestantism's neglect of the individual. While Protestantism is using up its energies constructing plans and programs for world unity of denominations, the cults are gathering in the thousands of hungry hearts that crave individual attention and personal warmth. Here is a book that forward-looking Protestants cannot afford to miss. It leaves one with uneasy feelings of conscience about our neglect of the needy man in the street, who too often doesn't find God in our Protestant churches.

The need for a revival of vital religious experience is also emphasized by D. Elton Trueblood in his Alternative to Futility. In The Predicament of Modern Man he diagnosed the ills of our day. In Foundations for Reconstruction he insisted that an enduring society must be built upon adherence to the ten commandments. In this third book of the trilogy, Dr. Trueblood has gone "Beyond Diagnosis" (the title of chapter one) to offer a cure. He says that something should be done now and advocates small groups meeting for fellowship. In this proposed method one senses the Quaker background of the author.

A blast against the present organizations for church unity is to be found in Ernest Gordon's book, An Ecclesiastical Octopus, published by the Fellowship Press, of Boston. The subtitle calls it "a factual report on the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America." It is an impressive exposure. Every minister in this country ought to read the book to balance current criticisms about the Federal Council.

Mention has been made of the Catholic invasion of Protestant ranks. Winning Converts, edited by John O'Brien and published by P. J. Kennedy of New York, tells the secret of this success. It is highly recommended to Protestants for its excellent suggestions on how to reach the unchurched millions of America.

Our Protestant Heritage contains seven lectures delivered publicly by members of the faculty of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. Two are on the Old Testament, two on the New, and three on church history. It is delineation of the essential Protestant tradition as represented in these three fields. Of interest to Old Testament students is the emphasis on the prophets as reformers rather than innovators.

William Warren Sweet of Chicago has given us another volume from his prolific pen. The American Churches is modest in size (153 pages) but gives a good summary of American church history. It presents a strong appreciation for the place of revivalism and the influence of the Methodist Church in the winning of the West. It also shows the reason for the emphasis on the social gospel in the United States. A mildly anti-Catholic tone pervades the discussion.

Perhaps the most outstanding church historian in this country today is Kenneth Scott Latourrette of Yale University. His seven massive volumes on The Expansion of Christianity have given him a preeminent place in this field. His new book, The Christian Outlook, is an authoritative treatment of the present and future of Christianity—Eastern, Roman, and Protestant. Because of his prodigious research, his generalizations are valid. The book is remarkably conservative theologically.

As the Lightning Flashes, by Frank Wilson Price, is a good up-to-date treatment of the importance of missions. Dr. Price is a Presbyterian missionary born in China and speaks from experience.

Among the many volumes of sermons, only a few can be mentioned. In Paul Scherer's book, The Plight of Freedom, we find a liberal criticizing liberalism. He says that it is our inordinate desire for complete freedom which has brought us into our present plight. Sin is pride, pride in our self-sufficiency. Here is a liberal searching his own heart and the heart of humanity.
Two of Paul Tillich's books were published in 1948. *The Shaking of the Foundations* contains sermons delivered, for the most part, in the chapel at Union Theological Seminary, where he is professor. These sermons are marked by a profound pessimism. If the reader finds sufficient enjoyment in these moving meditations on Scripture, he may want to tackle the more difficult book, *The Protestant Era*.

Clovis Chappell has given us another of his books of sermons, entitled *Questions Jesus Asked*. The illustrations in it are worth the price of the book.

*The Lost Gospel*, by Robert Lucock, is a unique volume of sixteen sermons based on short stories. It suggests an effective variation from usual sermon procedure and provides good illustrative material.

Kyle Yates, in *Preaching from the Psalms*, offers nineteen sermons on as many Psalms. The book is conservative, devout, and devotional. It provides a good background for a series of sermons on the Psalms.

Harper and Brothers is beginning a valuable series of selections of the best material written by pulpit princes of the past. The first, *The Best of John Howard Jowett*, edited by Bishop Gerald Kennedy, is a promise of good things to come. Pastors will certainly want to get this series.

Probably all would agree that the outstanding 1948 book of sermons is *No Uncertain Sound*, edited by Petry and published by the Westminster Press. The subtitle, "Sermons that Shaped the Pulpit Tradition" suggests this as a "must" book. Here are sermons by Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine, Bede, Anselm, Bernard, St. Francis, Aquinas, Wyclif and many others of the pre-Reformation period. It forms an excellent supplement to *The Protestant Pulpit*, by Andrew Blackwood, which we reviewed last year.

This year (1948) Andrew Blackwood has made another important contribution in *The Preparation of Sermons*. Written by a teacher of long experience in this field, it will be a standard work.

John Fritz, a Lutheran, has given us in *The Essentials of Preaching* "a refresher course in homiletics for pastors." One would need a refresher course in Latin and German to read everything in the book.

John Sutherland Bonnell's *Psychology for Pastor and People* is one of the best books on this subject. This is not an armchair, academic treatment, but rises out of wide experience of the author.

*I Would Do It Again*, by F. E. Davison, is filled with practical advice for ministers. While some suggestions could not be followed, the book is very readable and will incite one to take the ministry more seriously.

Turning to the Biblical field we note first a little volume of only 53 pages, an essay by Frederick Kenyon, entitled *The Bible and Modern Scholarship*. Its opening sentence reads:

The main thesis of this essay is that in the study of the Bible we have passed from a primitive stage of unquestioning and sometimes unintelligent acceptance, through a period of criticism and doubt, sometimes sound but often hypercritical, to a position where we are entitled to claim that the best and most untramelled scholarship can be shown to have vindicated its authenticity and trustworthiness.

*Still the Bible Speaks*, by W. A. Smart, professor of biblical theology at the Candler School of Theology of Emory University, is disappointing in its uncritical statement of the usual liberal viewpoint. The author considers the Bible to be merely a literary expression of the religious development of Israel culminating in Christ.

Robert M. Grant's *The Bible in the Church* traces the history of Biblical interpretation through the various periods of the Christian church. It presents good factual data, but is written from an unquestioning liberal point of view.

John Paterson of Drew has given us a very useful volume on the Old Testament prophets. Called *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets*, it is published by Scribner's. It is more thorough than Raymond Calkins' *The Modern Message of the Minor Prophets*, which we reviewed last year. While not endorsing some of the points of view, we do
recommend this as one of the best recent studies of the prophets.

Covering both the Old and New Testaments is Biblical Theology, by Geerhardus Vos, professor emeritus of Princeton. This is a thorough presentation of the conservative Calvinistic interpretation of the Bible.

Perhaps mention should be made at this point of the continued reprinting of Calvin's Commentaries. Eerdmans is doing a beautiful job and rendering a valuable service in this project.

In the New Testament field we find Gaius Glenn Atkin's From the Hillside, a study of the Sermon on the Mount. The book is worth reading for intellectual stimulus and for beauty of style, as well as its insights.

Charles W. F. Smith's The Jesus of the Parables emphasizes the Jewish background of the parables. It is liberal in tone, particularly in its treatment of passages as not being genuine, without manuscript evidence for such claims.

Jesus, Son of Man, by George S. Duncan, is a comprehensive study of the portrait of Jesus in the Gospels. One appreciates Duncan's assertion that "Jesus did regard Himself as (in a unique sense) the Son of God" (p. 106), but at the same time wishes the author were more specific in defining that sonship.

Johns The Gospel of Belief, by Prof. Merrill Tenney of Wheaton, is an excellent analysis of the contents and teachings of that Gospel. Here is a thoroughly conservative, constructive study of a book now usually misinterpreted. Another good commentary is J. C. Macaulay's Devotional Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Both these books are published by Eerdmans.

Before leaving the Biblical field we note two opposing discussions of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament. Understanding the Scriptures, by Montgomery Shroyer, is a study manual for use with that version. Oswald Allis, in Revision or New Translation?, has given a thorough criticism of the 1946 version. He demonstrates conclusively that it is an interpretive paraphrase rather than an exact translation. He holds that a translation should not seek primarily to be an interpretation.

The desire of recent years for the reprinting of devotional classics has continued through 1948. It appears to reflect the spiritual hunger of a confused generation, looking for a light in the darkness. It also indicates a reaction against the spiritual barrenness of much modern Protestant preaching.

The Life of God in the Soul of Man, by Henry Scougal of the seventeenth century, has been published by the Westminster Press. The early importance of this book is attested by the fact that "during the 18th century it was reprinted on an average of at least once in every three years, and during the first half of the 19th century the rate of publication more than doubled." (Preface, p. 5.) John Wesley put out an abridged edition, which went through seven printings. It still has value today.

Methodists should be interested in William Law's A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, since it had epochal significance for John Wesley. Westminster has published a good edition of it. Harper has also put out Selected Mystical Writings of William Law. We could only wish that the reprinting of these books might help to produce another Wesley for the twentieth century.

The outstanding anthology of the year is Thomas Kepler's The Fellowship of the Saints. Here one finds a varied selection of Christian devotional literature from across many centuries. This is probably the most valuable of Kepler's anthologies. One regrets the rather prohibitive price of $7.50.

Turning to the fascinating field of biography we find a very well written volume on General Evangeline Booth by P. W. Wilson, a newspaper man. He has produced an excellent factual presentation, with a sympathetic appreciation for the greatness of Evangeline Booth. It is forthright and frank, almost a model of what a biography should be.

Alexander Zabriskie has written about Bishop Brent: Crusader for Christian
Unity. Both the strong and the weak characteristics of Bishop Brent are presented.

Mahatma Gandhi has been praised rather extravagantly in the new interpretive biography by E. Stanley Jones. But again we feel the challenge of this Hindu who was in many ways more Christianlike than the majority of so-called Christians. One feels humbled and ashamed at every remembrance of this sad fact.

Edgar DeWitt Jones has presented an interesting study in his Lincoln and the Preachers. He documents his claim that Lincoln was a religious man.

One of the great missionaries of our day was Cecil Troxel, whose life has been written by his widow and Mrs. John Trachsel, both of the National Holiness Missionary Society.

The biography which stirred and stimulated me most was Giant Against the Sky, by Alfred M. Pierce. It is the story of Bishop Warren Akin Candler, who spent thirty-six years as bishop of the Methodist Church, passing away in 1941. "When he left us, it was as if a great tree had fallen in the forest, and left a lonesome place against the sky." Bishop Candler is here portrayed as a powerful preacher, evangelist, editor, college president, bishop, and university chancellor. As bishop he did a wonderful work in Cuba and Korea. He was a man of seemingly endless energies. Methodists today could well listen to this voice of one of their great bishops of a recent time. Here is what he said about revivals (p. 47):

The church which is without revivals is a church which is ready to die....That church will be most influential which has the deepest and most wide-spread revivals....We rejoice that Methodism makes much of her revival meetings.

Methodism is reminded that she was born in a revival, and that revivalism affords her most healthful climate for spiritual growth.

One of the more significant theological books of 1948 was The Creator and the Adversary, by Edwin Lewis. Although we would take exception to the main thesis of the book, there is a great deal of true and valuable material here. Dr. Lewis, professor of theology at Drew, is dealing with the ancient, and yet ever new, problem of the origin of evil. He gives us the result of his long mental struggle with this haunting question.

The first of the three sections of the book is called "Creation Through Conflict." Lewis asserts that God had to create. But creation inevitably involves conflict. The second section is called "The Creator as Participant." Here we find the distinctive view of Lewis. In this chapter on "The Adversary" he says: "Creation is creatively in strife with discreativity" (p. 132). Again he writes: "God cannot act creatively without making it possible for the demonic to act discreetively." (p. 138).

But it is on page 140 that Dr. Lewis comes out bluntly with his unorthodox view. He declares: "It is not to be taken for granted that in the beginning was God and nothing else. In the beginning was the Adversary as well." Again he says, on the same page: "God never began to be. The Adversary never began to be."

Edwin Lewis shows the influence of his great teacher and predecessor, the sainted Olin A. Curtis, who was a great divine even though he swerved aside from the truth at some points. Lewis follows in the tradition of Curtis in his appreciation of the incarnation. Here are two sentences (p. 155) that sum up the significance of the incarnation: "The final strategy of the demonic is to frustrate the divine where the very image of the divine has been stamped. The final strategy of the divine is to meet the demonic precisely where this image has been defaced."

We rejoice in the renewed recognition of the reality of sin and Satan. That has been one of the most significant developments in theology during the last ten or fifteen years. But it is a pity that Edwin Lewis has to swing clear to the other extreme pendulum fashion, and postulate the eternal existence of the devil and evil. It sounds at some points very much like Zoroastrian dualism, with the important exception that he posits a third ultimate, "the
It has been claimed that Brightman's conception of a limited God was forged on the anvil of deep personal suffering. The only solution he could find to satisfy his mind was that God must not be all powerful. And now Edwin Lewis has given us another portrait of a limited God. It comes out of deep searchings of heart and mind. But it seems to this writer that we cannot rest our restless spirits in any but the omnipotent One and Only.

Another outstanding theological work of 1948 is *The Faith of the Christian Church*, by Gustaf Aulén. The importance of contemporary Swedish theology is being increasingly recognized in America. This volume is one of the best representatives of that view. It is being hailed as a significant contribution for our day.

In *Resurgence of the Gospel*, T. A. Kantonen calls for a return to the central emphasis of Luther's theology in order to save the world of our day. His first chapter, on "The Contemporary Theological Scene," is a good analysis of the existing situation.

Harry E. Jessop, president of the Chicago Evangelistic Institute, has given a brief outline of what the National Holiness Association stands for in *We the Holiness People*. It is very brief, but sane and clear.

The co-winners of the 1948 Abingdon-Cokesbury Award were John Wick Bowman, with *The Religion of Maturity*, and Georgia Harness, with *Prayer and the Common Life*. Both books are well worth reading, though one would not agree with every position set forth.

One of the interesting developments of the present time is the revival of apologetics. For years the religion has dominated the theological field, but now a day has dawned. But now a new era has dawned. Erdmans awarded $5,000 to Edward J. Carnell for his *Introduction to Christian Apologetics*. The subtitle indicates the approach and method. It is "A Philologic Defense of the Trinitarian-Theistic Faith."

This reviewer's reactions were not all favorable by any means. Carnell is obviously much more at home in philosophy than in the Biblical field. He uses technical and obscure terms unnecessarily. He gives one the impression of being decidedly clever and brilliant, but immature. Then, too, the book is really a defence of Calvinism. One quotation will serve to underscore this point. Discussing the original manuscripts of Bible books he says (pp. 198, 199):

First, the clinching reason why the autographs are all lost is that God, the source of all wisdom and right decision, elected to have them lost....As to the more difficult question why God did not extend inspiration to the copyists, when He could have done so because He is the Almighty, first, He elected not so to do.

Another significant volume in this area was Alan Richardson's *Christian Apologetics*. Here is a book both stimulating and convincing. It gives a very good treatment of relation to philosophy, science, and history; the relation of general and special revelation; arguments from miracle and prophecy; the inspiration and authority of the Bible; and the relation of faith and reason. The last, in which he pays high tribute to Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, is especially helpful. While not every position of the book is acceptable to a conservative, yet its main arguments are eminently valuable.

Nothing superlative has appeared in the field of fiction during 1948. Lloyd Douglas' *The Big Fisherman* is being carried along on the momentum created by his real hit, *The Robe*. The new book is definitely inferior. Its distortions of Biblical and historical material, especially in relation to Pentecost, cannot but offend the lover of Scripture.

As *Trumpet Before Him*, by Nelia Gardner White, was the winner of the $5,000 Westminster Annual Award for Fiction. It is the story of a Methodist minister and his parishioners. The character
portrayals are excellent. The book has the qualities of a good, readable novel. But the final scene with Paul Phillips and Jeannie seems to let one down a bit. On the whole, however, it is a powerful book.

Argye Briggs' *Root Out of Dry Ground*, winner of the Erdman's $5,000 Fiction Award, is perhaps not quite as well written as a novel, but probably has a more helpful spiritual message. It is the story of the spiritual development of the underprivileged hunchback, Jansie Sanders, and her protege, Chrissie. It is interesting to note that the author, Mrs. Briggs, paid the church and sent $1,500 to the mission field. After giving another $1,500 to her long-suffering husband and paying the government tax, she had enough left over with which to buy herself a new typewriter. One hopes it may be used for the writing of another good book.

At the beginning of this sketchy review of the religious literature of 1948, we noted that this is a period of searchings of heart. We wish to conclude on the same key.

Charles Lindbergh, in his little book, *Of Flight and Life*, asserts that modern man needs both science and religion. Our present distress is due to our worship of materialistic science. We must be governed again by God's eternal truths.

*This Atomic Age and the Word of God*, by Wilbur Smith, is probably the best book on the significance of the atom bomb. It is very thorough and comprehensive. The author studies the concept of the atom among Greek philosophers and the church fathers. Then he gives a rather technical discussion of nuclear fission. The second chapter of Second Peter is treated carefully. Appendices give valuable reference data on the atom and atomic research. The book has three indices. One marvels at the erudition of this Bible teacher, who is now at Fuller Seminary.

One of the greatest historians of our day is Arnold Toynbee, of Oxford. His seven volumes on the *Study of History* are massive and impressive. They have been abridged into one volume by Somervell. But most readers will find the greatest pleasure and profit in reading Toynbee's latest book, *Civilization on Trial*. It declares that materialism is ruining civilization and only a return to religion can save it.