Focus on the Religious Right

The Wicked Shall Not Bear Rule
Ralph Clark Chandler

The Power and Performance of Religious Interest Groups
Paul J. Weber and T. L. Stanley

The Education of the Christian Right
James L. Guth

Plus other resources

Shame
Tom Goodhue

The Churches and Peacemaking in 1984
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Homiletical Resources on the Parables
Harvey H. Potthoff

Review of Dix’s Shape of the Liturgy
Brother John-Charles
QUARTERLY REVIEW
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EDITORIAL

Counting

Roger Angell reported on one of history's trivialities by writing about last year's baseball season:

Early this August, the California Angels, playing a home game against the Minnesota Twins, appeared to have matters comfortably in hand when, already leading by 2-0, they put their first two batters on base in the bottom of the fourth, only to crash headlong into Yogi Berra's dictum. ["The game is never over until it's over."] The next California batter, Ron Jackson, hit a low line drive to third baseman Gary Gaetti, who flipped to second to double off the lead base runner, and in plenty of time for the relay over to first, which beat the other retreating Angel base runner to the bag. Triple play. The next pitch of the game—delivered by Tommy John to the Twins' Gaetti, the leadoff batter in the top of the fifth—was smashed over the fence, and the next pitch, to Tom Brunansky, also departed the premises, tying the score of the game, which the Twins eventually won by 4-2. Three successive pitches, good for three outs, two runs, one ruined game, and uncounted broken hearts. According to the records, this had never happened before in major-league baseball.

Creativity often seems to go hand in hand with counting. Perhaps we sense these things may occur during routines and we go through them waiting for something unforeseen: attending church Sunday after Sunday, getting up in the morning and going to the job, going for a walk down the same road for the umpteenth time. Yogi Berra could have been describing all our lives.

Yet the world weary us with its arithmetic. Must we forever be compiling reports, counting heads, figuring our dividends? And the endless clichés that we use only emphasize the point: things are more or less this way; we could call it six of one or half-dozen of the other; and whatever we are doing we know there is a clock ticking for us.

Certain tactics suggest themselves as ways to elude the preoccupation with routine and measurement. Some philosophers seek the essences of things, for example. Pure essence surely seems to be the very reverse of concerns for quantity. Turning to one
of our favorite essentialists, Thomas Aquinas, we however find at the very opening of his little work Concerning Being and Essence these words: "Therefore one should know, as the Philosopher says in the fifth of the Metaphysics, that being by itself is said to be taken in two modes: in the one mode, that it is divided into ten genera; in the other, that it signifies the truth of propositions." As for the Philosopher, few thinkers have surpassed Aristotle in a concern for proportionality, multiplicity, and taxonomies. His disciple Thomas continued that tradition by writing in question-and-answer form, by dividing questions into parts, and by making endless lists. Thus those who seek some way of reaching ultimate reality by avoiding numbers and mathematics will be disappointed if they try the essentialist route.

Spirituality, in the minds of some, may also suggest itself as a path that avoids mundane matters like counting. The Spirit may soar over all the frail human attempts to control reality by making such efforts finite, or the Spirit may be found in the heart, in the interior, where powers move out of the depths of things. Yet when we read about the Spirit in the Bible, the references often mention multitudes. In the famous passage in Isaiah 40 where the prophet posed one of the rhetorical arguments about the mighty power of God, he wrote: "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales." Then in the New Testament when the Spirit descends in power, Acts refers to the "multitude" that came together, and Paul cannot speak of the gifts of the Spirit without enumerating them. And so in Revelation: the Spirit directs John to list different gifts of the churches, and of course indulges in all kinds of symbolic combinations of numbers. Even in the Spirit, we must conclude, numbers have great meaning.

Still, many theological and religious thinkers seem to think that numbers and statistics are unreliable gauges to veracity. How often have we heard—or remarked ourselves—that statistics come only after lies and damned lies in the order of truth? We need to remember, however, what Pitirim Sorokin wrote in Social and Cultural Dynamics more than forty years ago: "If it be maintained, especially by the historians, that no quantitative appraisal is possible in this field, and therefore any scale is inadmissible, the answer is simple: Medice cura te ipsum. The point is that there is scarcely any historical work, whether in this or any other field, where, explicitly or implicitly, quantitative judgments are not given in verbal form." All he did, Sorokin wrote, was to use numbers
instead of verbal forms. And so he would actually count the number of erotic paintings in Prague or Paris museums in order to make the judgment that a given period of history was "sensate."

Sorokin was right, and because much theological and religious thought derives from history and philosophy, theologians have been a little pretentious in supposing that they could escape from the numbers game. For example, turn to Reinhold Niebuhr's discussion of the classical view of humanity in *Nature and Destiny of Man*: "Neither Greek nor Roman classicists had any conception of a meaning in human history. History was a series of cycles, a realm of endless recurrences." Here Niebuhr goes on to cite Aristotle, Zeno, and neo-Platonism. Yet notice the language: "Neither . . . had *any* conception." Actually history as a series of cycles is a conception, and furthermore, it is a conception that could be construed as having meaning. Probably what Niebuhr should have written was "Neither . . . had much conception." But then "much" implies a quantity also. Other examples from theological writings could be given to support Sorokin's assertion, but here I invoke the "et cetera" principle.

Does this mean that prooftexting must be used to substantiate our claims? I should hope not, since the prooftext is by its very nature the contradiction of numerical reports. To cite a single text and then generalize from it is prooftexting. But if we count several texts and then try to generalize, an intelligent person can detect whether the generalization will stand up. For a good example, see "Shame," by Tom Goodhue, in this issue.

The essays in this issue on the religious right were conceived of as an attempt to understand the phenomenon. And in trying to understand, several of the writers have used statistics. These citations may at first seem off-putting to many readers who like their English neat, unencumbered by complicating tables and the like. But reports on the religious right require statistics more so than other accounts. The right itself has indulged in hyperbolic language, what Theodore Bernstein called the "atomic flyswatters" of talk—invoking inflated language to serve purposes that sound suspiciously subjective. Any who try to be fair to the practitioners of such language must themselves be above reproach. Hence the statistics.

Ralph Chandler, for example, asks whether Jerry Falwell and others are truly fundamentalists. He takes their own self-definition, and he relies on the original document, *The Fundamentals,*
which is more than can be said of many who cuss and discuss Fundamentalism. Chandler analyzes the claims of the television preachers and finds some of these claims to lack accuracy. The real size of the audience of television preachers seems quite large, and one wonders why television preachers think it was necessary to inflate them to begin with. An electronic version of the "ministerial estimate," I suppose.

The counting that Paul J. Weber and T. L. Stanley do of religious interest groups, or RIGs, gives us an interesting variation. Counting seems dull, since it seems to be merely adding the same units in monotonous succession. But what if you can count the same units in different ways? Weber and Stanley do this on RIGs, and their analysis shows that nearly all of us are implicated in RIGs. You or someone you love belongs to a RIG, and your money probably supports one or more RIGs. Thus it becomes more difficult for us to become indignant about them. Furthermore, Weber and Stanley show that bigger is not necessarily more effective when it comes to RIGs. Apparently a David and Goliath principle is at work with RIGs, although not necessarily a principle that means the giant is slain. In this case David learns how to use Goliath for the service of the Lord. Power and righteousness. Where have we heard that before?

Then there comes before us the way of counting that goes up and peaks and then goes down again. When James Guth looked at the effect of formal education on Southern Baptists and their sympathy for the religious right, he found a curious pattern. No education and a great amount of education meant less sympathy for the religious right. But a little education? You guessed it. And how come? That is the question the statistics pose for us. We might also begin to wonder if United Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Disciples, and United Church of Christ clergy follow the same pattern. Perhaps someone else will volunteer to do a little counting in these groups and see what the result is.

These uses of counting in articles about the world out there may still seem rather devoid of interest and meaning to us. Are there any uses of numbers that have our names on them, so to speak, that enable us to find personal meaning in them? Repetitive acts may gain passionate meaning when our names are called during their enactment. For instance, when the bread and wine are given in Communion, to say the communicant's name may lend a greater sense of reality to the act. Kierkegaard wrote that we may be very casual about a letter until we discover that this letter has our name
EDITORIAL

on it: then our attention becomes focused on the letter, and we can hardly wait to find out who is writing to us and what the letter says. Harvey Potthoff, in writing about the parables in the homiletical resources in this issue, comes up with something very similar. Many of the parables are about what seems to count but has not been counted, what should not be overlooked, and how each of us is to be included in the kingdom. When the roll is called up yonder, we want to hear our names.

Yes, the kingdom is coming... there will be a time... that clock is ticking... And thus much of our counting is done with regard to time, how much time we have left, whether this is the critical time, how we can kill time. Or how time may be killing us: the countdown has become a modern reversal of the conventional way of adding things up. If instead we count backwards, we know something portentous will happen when we reach zero. Today nothing is more chilling than to know that the clock is running down, that it is going ten, nine, eight. Counting has become not only inevitable but fraught with anxiety. Alan Geyer's article in this issue on the nuclear deterrent debate suggests some constructive possibilities here.

Yet most of us will keep on counting, not only because of the clock or because we seek those patterns the Aristotelians loved, but also because we delight in it. "If you only missed me half as much as I miss you," Hank Williams wrote. And not only the form of music, its rhythm and its structure, depend on mathematics, but also its soul. Poets use meters and painters employ triangles and sports addicts are fascinated with statistics. We can count our blessings, count the days until our wedding or our release from prison or our vacation, count the persons in the Godhead, count the petals on a daisy, or merely ponder that most profound number one. Not only do we love to count but we count to love. So Browning could well have written:

How do I count thee?
Let me love the ways...

—CHARLES E. COLE
THE WICKED SHALL NOT BEAR RULE:  
THE FUNDAMENTALIST HERITAGE OF THE  
NEW RELIGIOUS RIGHT

RALPH CLARK CHANDLER

Do we really understand the new religious right by merely calling it "Fundamentalism"? A close analysis reveals some surprising ambivalence in the way right-wingers conceive of themselves.

The seduction of fundamentalist preachers by operatives of the political right in the late 1970s marked a new development in a long history of ambivalent relationships between Fundamentalism and the political order in the United States. Fundamentalism has been defined variously as "a catch-all label for reactionary religiosity," "orthodoxy gone cultic," and, the definition fundamentalists themselves prefer, "a twentieth century movement closely tied to the revivalist tradition of mainstream evangelical Protestantism that militantly opposed modernist theology and the cultural changes associated with it." Fundamentalism came to flower in the 1920s as a dramatically politicized movement directed against the Social Gospel, Bolshevism, and especially Darwinism. But its roots are deep in American colonial history.

The Puritans who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630 did so in conscious and thoroughgoing rejection of the frivolity, extravagance, and moral corruption of early Stuart England. The Puritans' Holy Commonwealth was established to preserve the liberties of free-born Englishmen, foster education and learning, preserve the distance between social classes that Englishmen of all eras seemed to value, and above all, to maintain true religion. That included an insistence on sobriety of manners, purity of morals, and an economy that would neither exalt the rich nor degrade the poor. To these ends the Puritans maintained a state church, the
The wicked shall not bear rule, it was said, and the Puritan divines decided who was wicked.

Alongside this early version of Moral Majority reasoning were other colonists, no less religious, who turned away from the moral imperialism of the Puritan party. They were the separatists: the Pilgrims of Plymouth and four groups of Puritan heretics who founded Rhode Island and the Providence Plantations in 1644. Roger Williams was one of them. He denied the authority of any civil or ecclesiastical hierarchy over one's conscience. He opposed the use of force to compel adherence to church doctrine. God alone was sovereign, he said, and God alone gives grace to erring men. He also asserted that "forced worship stinks in God's nostrils." He treated Indians as brothers, and Rhode Island became a haven for the persecuted.⁴

These differing early interpretations of the place of civil religion in America—theocratic versus separatist—have competed for fundamentalist allegiance ever since. Fundamentalists appreciate the authority structure of the Puritan model. Today it allows certified divines to pronounce on any moral question of interest, including abortion, permissive child-rearing, and prayer in the public schools.⁵ It also permits these divines to have revealed opinions on problems of national security and any perceived external threat to the kingdom of God in America.⁶

Yet the fundamentalist heritage also has a pietistic side which is highly individualistic and otherworldly and leaves political maneuver to the forces of Satan. A part of this heritage earlier followed Williams to Rhode Island, into the separation of church and state, and into civil libertarian tradition which holds that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."⁷

This article attempts to deal with the ambivalence of the intellectual history of Fundamentalism as it affects the new religious right. The old religious right, which was highly visible in the campaign to legislate against evolution immediately following
World War I, characteristically went into a period of pietism and withdrawal from the world with the Scopes trial humiliation and subsequent death of its champion, William Jennings Bryan, in 1925. Why did it emerge from its subculture status in 1979 with the founding of the Moral Majority and related organizations?

THE THEOLOGICAL LEGACY: THE SECOND COMING AND BIBLICAL INERRANCY

Let us delve a bit deeper into the twentieth-century origins of Fundamentalism. The word itself is derived from a twelve-volume paperback series entitled The Fundamentals published from 1910 through 1915. The series is an anthology of writings by conservative American and British scholars and popular writers, edited by Bible teachers and evangelists, and financed by Southern California oil millionaires Lyman and Milton Stewart. The writings are confessional and emphasize personal salvation, individualistic religion, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, the refutation of higher biblical criticism, the rejection of modern scientific method, the importance of foreign missions and evangelism, millenarian literalism, and attacks on "heretical" faiths such as Roman Catholicism and Mormonism. Several Fundamentals writers make reference to the dangers of communism, but the overall tone of the series is that the church should stay out of politics.

The Second Coming

The "millenarian literalism" noted above became a significant theological legacy of The Fundamentals. The three million copies of the series that Stewart money put into circulation profoundly affected the American religious consciousness and survives in the new religious right as a premillennialist scenario for the end of the world.

The scenario is drawn mainly from the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation, and was said by its original authors in the 1870s to begin when the Jews returned to Israel. Then the Beast and the Antichrist will together unleash the upheavals of the "Great Tribulation," in which the Jews will once again suffer persecution. Christ will then come with an army of saints to defeat the combined forces of the Beast and the Antichrist, and to install the millennial, i.e., the thousand-year, reign of peace and justice on earth.
Only true Christians will be saved from the tribulation. They will not have to suffer, for they will be pulled from the earth in "the second rapture" and will meet Christ in the air. Since the Second Coming succeeds the tribulation, fundamentalists devoutly hope for its onset. Because they regard the biblical prophecies as the literal truth, they look to current events for signs of the beginning of the drama and for the characters to cast in it. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 confirmed for many fundamentalists the earlier prophecy that the Beast would come from Russia. They are equally convinced that the United States will supply the army of saints. The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 fit in perfectly with the prophecy of the return of Jews to Israel. The tribulation will begin with a Russian attack on the city on the hill, Jerusalem.

For the old fundamentalists of the 1920s, the end was a giant battle at Armageddon. For the new fundamentalists, it is nuclear holocaust. They see various passages of Scripture as a prediction of thermonuclear war. For example, Zech. 14:12 in the King James Version: "And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth." As incredible as it may sound, nuclear war becomes necessary for God's plan of salvation. Since acceptance of nuclear warfare involves the acceptance of the science which makes it possible, the new religious right is often in a quandary about which part of modern science to equate with the ongoing activity of God.

Unless one takes seriously and tries to comprehend the curious doctrine of premillennialism, one cannot fully understand the national defense posture of the new religious right. Premillennialism helps to explain why Moral Majority President Jerry Falwell has made Israel one of his causes, why he has given money for the planting of a forest there, why he has established a "Christian Embassy" in Israel, why he has received an award from a national Jewish organization, why he preaches "to stand against Israel is to stand against God," and why Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin telephoned Falwell to explain his government's air attack on an Iraqi nuclear research reactor on June 7, 1981.

What Prime Minister Begin might have borne in mind is that Israel and Jews are critically important to millennialism, but only as signs of a Christian triumph. The only good Jew at the time of the rapture will be a Christianized one.
In *Listen, America!* Falwell speaks of Israel as a modern miracle, but labels Jews as a people “spiritually blind and desperately in need of their Messiah and Savior.”\(^\text{13}\)

The relationship between fundamentalists and American Jewry has always been an uneasy one. In 1920, Henry Ford published the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a faked document outlining a supposed Jewish plan for global conquest. The Christian Nationalist Crusade of the 1930s, founded by the Rev. Gerald L. K. Smith, circulated the *Protocols* and Ford’s equally spurious *The International Jew*. In the same period the Rev. Gerald B. Winrod’s *The Winrod Letter* was filled with anti-Semitic charges. As late as 1980 the president of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Rev. Bailey Smith, said that God does not hear the prayers of a Jew. Even in retracting the remark Smith said, “I believe Jews are God’s special people, but without Jesus Christ, they are lost.”\(^\text{14}\)

The militarized theology of the new religious right feels free to instruct the nation about national defense. “Nowhere in the Bible is there a rebuke for the bearing of armaments,” says Falwell. “Our government has the right to use armaments to bring wrath upon those who would be evil.”\(^\text{15}\) The first part of this statement is obviously untrue. In one of the most celebrated events of the New Testament, on the occasion of the arrest of Jesus, “one of the followers of Jesus grasped his sword and drew it; he struck out at the high priest’s servant, and cut off his ear.” Jesus then rebuked the follower with the words “ ‘Put your sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.’ ”\(^\text{16}\) The second part of Falwell’s statement also forces the question, who would be evil? To which the new religious right has a ready reply: the Soviets. The Soviets are liars and cheats, “and they are determined to conquer our free country and to infiltrate the American people with godless communism.” Further, the new religious right maintains that Jesus told us not to tempt God by placing ourselves recklessly in a position of jeopardy. Falwell refers to Matt. 4:7 as the obvious support of the right’s entire national defense posture.\(^\text{17}\) The verse is a quotation from Deut. 6:16, which Jesus used to reply to a temptation of Satan, “You must not put the Lord your God to the test.” It
The bellicose language of modern Fundamentalism is based on its paradoxical belief that aggression is the best expression of Christian love. One of the patron saints of the new right, the Rev. Carl McIntire, explained the matter this way: “Separation involves hard, gruelling controversy. It involves attacks, personal attacks, even violent attacks. . . . Satan preaches brotherly love in order to hold men in apostasy.”

The preachers of the right also declare that “Christ was a he-man!” Christ saw love as emanating from the strength of domination and power rather than from weakness and effeminacy. “Christ was not a lamb but a ram!” It is a short step from such statements of supermasculinity, with their conviction that might makes right, to Falwell raising money by selling American flags from the pulpit, as he did in 1980.

Biblical Inerrancy

The doctrine of the Second Coming was transmitted virtually intact from the old to the new religious right. The militarization of the doctrine was a new element, however, and represents one of the foundation stones for the alliance between the religious and the political right in modern America. Another doctrine from The Fundamentals which has undergone modification is that of biblical inerrancy.

Higher criticism of the Bible, by which is meant the study of the books of the Bible through literary, historical, and scientific analysis, was probably more responsible than any other modern development for the rise of Fundamentalism. A large segment of nineteenth-century evangelicalism accepted not only higher criticism but Darwinism and other forms of liberalism as well. The evangelical right wing separated itself from these developments and became Fundamentalism. The latter movement chose to prey on old evangelical themes in its reaction to modernity. The fear of Darwinism was that it might mean the denial of God. Interestingly, fundamentalists did accept Social Darwinism, because it undergirded laissez-faire individualism and capitalism.

The battleground, however, was the possibility that higher criticism would undermine the divine revelatory nature of Scripture. The more supernatural of the biblical themes became the testing points for sorting the sheep from the goats: the Resurrection
of Jesus, the Virgin Birth, the Second Coming, and the reality of hell, all understood by fundamentalists in literal and physical terms.

The paradigm which supported fundamentalists on inerrancy was not without intellectual and scientific respectability, more so at the turn of the twentieth century than now. It was based on the Baconian ideal and on Scottish common sense realism. Sir Francis Bacon said the world can be perceived exactly as it is. Scripture, by inference, is a compendium of facts with little need to go further. Reading Scripture is properly a process of listing and classifying. In 1887 William Hoyt, for example, saw biblical prophecy as "photographically exact...inerrant." Poetic images in the Bible were viewed as puzzles God put forth in anticipation of scientific discoveries. Hence, when the morning "sings," it is meant that morning light makes vibrations. A great effort was made by fundamentalists to harmonize modern science with biblical revelation.

The continuing split between evangelicals and fundamentalists on the inerrancy question is illustrated by a Jerry Falwell description:

Ask an Evangelical whether or not he believes there are really flames in hell, and after a thirty minute philosophical recitation on the theological implications of eternal retribution in light of the implicit goodness of God, you will still not know what he really believes. Ask a Fundamentalist whether he believes there are really flames in hell, and he will simply say 'Yes, and hot ones, too.'

For the old religious right, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy was a doctrine of exclusion. The testing system made the fence around Protestantism higher, the gate narrower, and the traps at the entrance more obvious. After being properly tested, therefore, fundamentalists of the old school could proclaim "the Bible says" with no doubt that they heard themselves speaking up for the unchanging will and word of God. They interpreted the inerrant Bible inerrantly.

That part of the legacy survives, but there is a new element in the inerrancy doctrine which has political overtones and manifestations. As late as 1968 Jerry Falwell was saying "the Bible says" all clergy should stay out of politics and the church should not take political stands. That was old Fundamentals talk. By 1979 he had entered wholeheartedly into the realm of legislation and the selection of political candidates. Falwell still appealed, however, to
the inerrant Bible which he claimed to be interpreting inerrantly.

The new religious right presents the Bible as a politics and economics text. It assures us that a Bible-based economy will be free enterprise capitalism. The man and woman of God will have nothing to do with socialism. (In contrast, one of the essays in The Fundamentals stated that "a genuine Christian profession" was entirely compatible with the personal advocacy of socialism.) "The free enterprise system is clearly outlined in the Book of Proverbs in the Bible."22

The new religious right presents the Bible as a politics and economics text.

The new religious right's frequent references to Proverbs is a parade example of the problem of prooftexting in the inerrancy tradition.

Perhaps the most difficult passage for the biblical economics of the new religious right is that of Acts 2:44-45. The early church was clearly not a free enterprise institution. "The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed."

The new religious right says "the Bible says" a Bible-based economy will not be co-operative but competitive, because "competition in business is Biblical. Ambitious and successful business management is clearly outlined as a part of God's plan for His people."23 The new Fundamentalism picks up the old Fundamentalism's alliance with big business, out of which came the curbing of labor unions in the 1920s,24 but adds to it opposition to almost all forms of government assistance to the poor. In Listen, America! Jerry Falwell uses flourishes of quotations from Milton Friedman and denounces the food stamp program and welfare. "There are now enough jobs to go around. Too many people who could work, do not. Have they forgotten what the word 'work' means?"25

We have considered two of the theological belief sets transmitted from the old to the new religious right. We have seen that certain elements of the doctrines of the Second Coming and biblical inerrancy were maintained virtually intact, but that in each case there were re-interpretations of the doctrines toward political interest group activity.
Modern technology has given the new religious right the equivalent of a vast revival tent. It also gives Fundamentalism yet another point of ambivalence about the modern world.

The electronic showplace of the old Fundamentalism was Charles E. Fuller's radio program, "The Old-Fashioned Revival Hour." Jerry Falwell says he was saved while listening to the program. It influenced him to the extent that he called the electronic showplace of the new Fundamentalism "The Old-Time Gospel Hour." The great difference, of course, is that now the communications medium is not radio but television. Modern technology has given the new religious right the equivalent of a vast revival tent. It also gives Fundamentalism yet another point of ambivalence about the modern world.

The old fundamentalists saw science as the instrument of Satan. The new fundamentalists see the electronic applications of science as a blessing of God, making it possible to bring God's word into every home in America. Electronics, computer programming, and medical technology are all scientific developments the new religious right embraces while trying to hold on to creationism and biblical inerrancy in a schizophrenic dance with déjá vu. Jerry Falwell and company are not schizophrenics, however. They are homeostatic personalities who observe, adjust, and adapt. One might reasonably expect that what some would call their theological antediluvianism will eventually be influenced by other data.

During the 1970s the new religious right took over the inexpensive religious ghetto hours of Sunday morning, and through efficient systems of distribution via satellite and cable networks, electronic church programs are now more widely distributed than the Johnny Carson show. In 1980 "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" was seen on 392 television stations. It brought in more than $51 million from all over the nation in response to Falwell's appeals. Send in $9.95, he said, and you will receive, in addition to your own special volume of inspirational literature, a
free Jesus First pin. You can become a Faith Partner at $10 a month, or you can receive a Crusader’s Passport for $100 a month. The crusade is the crusade against sin, which often takes specific forms. A favorite target, for example, has been television producer Norman Lear, whom Falwell has described as “the number one enemy of the American family,” because of Lear’s creation of such programs as All in the Family. In reruns the irreverent Archie Bunker continues to deliver such malapropisms as “you can smell incest in the church all the time,” which lead Falwell to fume that “incest, adultery, and homosexuality were only a few of the major themes that took Norman Lear to fame.” Falwell asked that friends “rush your gifts of $15, $25, or even $100 back to me immediately,” so that Lear can be put in his rightful place, which one can only assume is somewhere in Sheol.

Falwell is not the only superstar of the electronic church. Pat Robertson, another founder of the Moral Majority, presides over his own religious television network headquartered in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He has a talk show called “The 700 Club,” on which born-again celebrity guests appear. Robertson is a strong advocate of the self-fulfilling prophecy. Whatever you want people to believe, say it with enough imagination, and often enough, as though it were true, and it will become true, because people believe it to be true. Thus the sick are healed. After a recent interview with Charles Colson on “The 700 Club,” Robertson fell to his knees, lifted his hands to heaven, and said, “There’s a woman in Philadelphia who has cancer, cancer of the lymph nodes. It hasn’t been diagnosed yet, but God has just cured her of it.” The incident is particularly interesting to those who know from Arbitron estimates and Nielsen ratings that electronic church audiences are disproportionately southern and older female. Robertson was reaching for a wider audience, but staying close to home at the same time. On another occasion Robertson simply declared to the press that the new religious right has enough votes to run the country.

James Robison extends the sun belt televangelism axis to Texas, where he thunders against secular humanism and sexual perversion on the “Man with a Message” show in Dallas-Fort Worth. Robison believes in the single event, the touch and feel rally, and uses it brilliantly for his purposes. In 1979, for example, after station WFIA TV, Dallas, had taken him off the air for violation of the Federal Communications Fairness Doctrine, Robison organized the Dallas Freedom Rally. More than 10,000 people attended, heard his
explanation for his immoderate attacks on homosexuals, and contributed more than $100,000 for legal expenses to put him back on the air. In 1980, Robison and Edward A. McAteer organized a “public affairs briefing” for presidential candidate Ronald Reagan. More than 18,000 people came to hear Reagan and principal host speaker Jerry Falwell. Falwell knew he was dangerously close to violating the tax-exempt status of his religious enterprises by such overt political activity. He told the gathering he could not therefore openly endorse the Reagan candidacy, and then urged the religious leaders in attendance to “vote for the Reagan of your choice.”

Through the entrepreneurship of the electronic church, the new religious right has virtually driven mainline religious programming off the air and made television evangelism big business. The new fundamentalists apparently have few scruples about commercializing religion. “The Old-Time Gospel Hour” spent almost $11 million in 1979 for direct mail and promotion, employing some 800 people to administer its operations. There is ample reason to question whether “Gospel Hour” is a church activity or a business. In 1980, for example, Falwell spent $2 million to buy the entire shopping plaza in which the “Gospel Hour” offices are situated. He then leased space to a supermarket, a gift shop, and a restaurant-bar, but refused to pay property taxes to the city of Lynchburg, Virginia, because, he said, everything associated with “Gospel Hour” was “involved in the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

In the 1970s, expenditures for religious ministries in television rose from $50 million a year to $600 million a year. By 1980 there were thirty religiously oriented television stations, more than a thousand religious radio stations, and four religious networks, all supported by audience contributions. “The Old-Time Gospel Hour” has 2.5 million people on its mailing lists. Every week, more than 25 million people see evangelists Falwell, Robertson, and Robison (their estimates), and hear their appeals for money to sustain current causes. The message sent is the message received and acted upon by millions of Americans: God pays particular attention to the health and financial prosperity of those who send in contributions to new religious right television shows.

Interestingly, older religious television personalities such as Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, and Rex Humbard, who pioneered religious television in the 1950s, do not include themselves in the new fundamentalist movement and are mostly unwanted by it. The
reason is in the message and the tone of the message. It is important for the new religious right to give the impression it is being betrayed by someone. The sense of betrayal sustains the movement. It is equally important to view the world essentially as conspiratorial and to see the United States as having a messianic mission. It is still the purpose of the nation to build the kingdom of God in America, from sea to shining sea.

By this time in his life Billy Graham has changed his mind about a lot of things. "It was a mistake to identify the Kingdom of God with the American way of life," he said. "I've come to see that other cultures have their own way that may be of just as great a value." Oral Roberts and Rex Humbard have always been paternal and politically moderate figures in the pietistic tradition of separation from the world.

An indicator of the real numerical strength of the new religious right is the size of its electronic church audiences. Early in 1980 Jerry Falwell claimed that 25 million people watched his "Old-Time Gospel Hour" each week, a figure increased by an aide to 50 million. Arbitron figures for February, 1980, showed, however, that one could add together the viewers of all sixty-six syndicated religion programs on television and still not get 25 million, let alone the 50 million estimated by Falwell and associates. Table 1 is Arbitron's calculation of weekly audience size for the six leading televangelists on the air.

| (1) Oral Roberts | Audience size: 2,719,250 | (4) Jimmy Swaggart | Audience size: 1,966,000 |
| (2) Rex Humbard  | Audience size: 2,409,960 | (5) Jerry Falwell   | Audience size: 1,455,720 |
| (3) Robert Schuller| Audience Size: 2,069,210| (6) James Robison   | Audience size: 464,800 |
Roberts, Humbard, and Swaggart are fundamentalist and flamboyant, but not particularly political. Schuller is an apolitical mixture of mainline Protestantism and Norman Vincent Peale positive thinking. Only two programs in the top religious ten, Falwell’s “Old-Time Gospel Hour” (number six) and Jim Bakker’s “PTL Club” (number nine) are closely identified with the religious right. Between Schuller and Falwell are a gospel music show (number four) and a low-key, dignified exercise in Bible instruction called “Day of Discovery” (number five). Between Falwell and Bakker are another gospel music show (number seven) and a Lutheran children’s program (number eight). Tenth is a Catholic drama show produced by the generally liberal Paulist order of priests. Pat Robertson’s slick “700 Club” and James Robison’s “Man with a Message” do not make the top ten.

In May, 1981, the Television Information Office, an industry organization supported primarily by the television networks, issued a report based on the latest available Report on Syndicated Programs from the A. C. Nielsen Company. The analysis showed that the ten most popular religious shows lost more than 600,000 viewing homes during the previous year. The decline in households was most precipitous for Falwell, with “Old-Time Gospel Hour” dropping to 835,000. Even allowing for multiple viewers in a household, the difference between hyperbole and fact is roughly the difference between 25 million and one million per week. Alan Alda is still the leading preacher in America, even in reruns.

CONCLUSIONS

For all its exaggeration and rhetoric, the new religious right tells us something about ourselves. The United States is unique among Western industrial nations in the role religion continues to play in our national life. As Peter Steinfels has said, to try to understand America without paying attention to religion is like trying to understand contemporary Africa without paying attention to colonialism. Yet even educated Americans are generally unprepared to treat religion seriously and knowledgeably.

The alliance of religious fundamentalists with reactionary political movements did not begin with the founding of the Moral Majority in 1979. Its roots are in the Puritan vision of the new nation as a saving remnant. The Mayflower, the Fortune, and the other ships which brought our ancestors from the old world to the new
between 1620 and 1630 brought people who read the Old and New Testament on the way, not the Aeneid and the Republic. They heard John Winthrop preach about the idea of covenant, and they devised a story from the Old Testament that the new nation was a Holy Commonwealth.

Eventually Americans knew we were the elect because of the incredible success of the whole enterprise. Back in our collective subconscious, if there is such a thing, is the knowledge that the burying grounds of the Massachusetts Bay colony do not have names such as Eric and Karen, or even Charles and Kathleen, on their tombstones. The names are Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Rachel, and Increase and Patience. We live in the considerable moral residue of our Puritan heritage.

Part of the residue is that idleness is a sin. God's people are industrious. Good businessmen serve God well, provided they are honest. Although men and women are predestined for salvation or perdition, and although good behavior cannot change their fate, a good life might be a sign they are among the elect. Certainly economic failure is a judgment of God, and a sure sign of moral depravity. Historians Samuel Eliot Morison, Henry Steele Commager, and William E. Leuchtenburg have written that Increase and Cotton Mather and other Puritan divines elaborated this theme into "a social force so pervasive and permanent an influence in the United States that it extended far beyond New England and the colonial period."

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries religious leaders on the right continued to devise stories about the American as God's instrument in the wilderness. God could not be successful, however, if there was bastardy and if there were brothels and the displaying of naked necks and arms by women. Neither could God's work be done as long as day laborers and mechanics were unreasonable in their demands for wages. In the Great Awakening of the 1740s, George Whitefield, inspired by Jonathan Edwards's A Faithful Narration of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton (1737), introduced to the middle Atlantic and southern colonies the stage of revivalism which became characteristic of evangelical campaigns thereafter: sinners becoming vocally and violently "saved" from immoral and unproductive behavior. By the Second Great Awakening of the period 1795–1835, the doctrine of Manifest Destiny had overtaken the nation and preachers such as Charles Grandison Finney were saying not only that "westward the star of
empire paves its way," but that our task as a nation was to save the world for Christ.

No philosophic position has ever been better suited for the practical tasks of a new nation than Puritanism. Americans went to work on projects of nation-building, moneymaking, inventing, fighting wars, technologizing, and doing right in the world with unprecedented zeal, dedication, and luck. Things went splendidly for generations, and then Vietnam happened. The Vietnam War was a watershed in American history because it did not yield to technological solution. Even the computer simulations of force-field analysis did not work. We could not bomb out, nor subdue by attrition, the peasant who carried a single artillery shell from the Chinese border to the battle zone on his bicycle or on his back.

Our limited experience with intractable problems has depressed us as a nation. Theoretical discussions have always bored us. We do not know how to deal with scarcity or with limitations. We are tempted to retreat therefore to entertainments, and nothing is quite as entertaining as morally awful things.

A message that has always been close to the surface in American social and religious history is that when economic downturns come, they are moral judgments and precise punishments for the nation’s sins. Setbacks of any kind, in fact, are seen as failures of moral rectitude. In times of insecurity, when old certitudes are shaken and unanswerable questions are posed, people in this tradition look for simple answers, for visible enemies, and for assurance that they are right. Such a situation is ripe for the kind of authoritarian leadership the new religious right provides. During the Great Depression and the gathering storm of World War II, it was Charles E. Coughlin, Gerald L. K. Smith, Gerald B. Winrod, and William Dudley Pelley who combined religious fervor with economic nostrums and authoritarian pronouncements. In the 1950s, displaying the same mindset as Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, the Rev. Carl McIntire and the Rev. Billy James Hargis carried the same cudgel.

In the 1980s, insecurity is endemic in our society. Military security is no longer conceivable. National leaders do not know how to handle the combined problems of unemployment and inflation. Economists are much less sure of themselves than they once were. Social problems such as crime, drugs, and anomie threaten the society at its core.

Furthermore, history is almost sure to bring increased dangers and frustrations in the immediate future. American military power
will continue to decline, not because the throw-weight of weapons will decrease, unless there is a more satisfying SALT III than anyone now foresees, but because our affective power to control Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East will continue to dwindle. American economic supremacy, already weakened by dependence on oil imports and by competition from Japanese automobile manufacturers, will probably become more precarious year by year. So there will continue to be a market demand for religious suppliers of moral outrage.

In such an uncertain world, in which there is not a correct answer to every question, the solution is not to retreat from responsibility or to the atavistic sense of moral cause and effect which has long characterized religion in American life. If we believe simply in moral cause and effect, we might also believe there are shamans who have the magic to cure.

The modern fundamentalist interpretation of Scripture has been answered in these ways: Martin E. Marty, professor of religion at the University of Chicago, says, "OK, if you want the Bible in politics, use the whole Bible. For every inch in the Bible on pornography, there are 500 inches on poverty." Robert McAfee Brown of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, says:

The claim that the Falwell position embodies a biblical perspective must be challenged. It is biblicist, all right, evoking those stray verses here and there that support free enterprise, male domination, the death penalty, a hard line on homosexuals, the employment of physical force to bring unruly children into line and so forth. But it never subjects itself to the great biblical themes of doing justice or loving mercy, or acknowledging that God is truly Lord of all (even the Russians), or suggesting that peacemaking rather than warmaking might be an important task for believers. The Bible provides scant grounds to justify an obsession with welfare fraud or other alleged crimes by the poor against the rich. On the contrary, its pages tell us repeatedly, insistently, that the concerns of the poor rather than the concerns of the rich are of special importance to God and thus need to be taken seriously by God's children.

Listen, Mr. Falwell! Call your position an appeal to patriotism. Call it a plea for a male-dominated society. Call it the gospel of free enterprise. Call it an invitation for America to be policeman of the world. Call it a brief for the Pentagon. Call it what you will.

But don’t call it Christian, in such a way that nobody else can claim the name. Don’t call it biblical, when in fact it ignores central and pervasive concerns of the Scriptures.
Content analysis of new religious right literature does not reveal much about poverty, starvation, hunger, human rights, the extravagant and competitive use of the world's scarce resources, the crimes of the American penal system, and the torture of prisoners in many parts of the world. Therefore a group of fifteen church officials issued a statement in late 1980 saying simply, "we regard the theology of the new religious right, expressed in its choice of issues for Christian concern, as unfaithful to the fullness of Biblical witness." 

The Bible is so manipulated by everyone seeking to prove a point these days that it is embarrassing to make the suggestion that we all might read it more carefully. Nevertheless, the weightier matters of the law are that reality is distorted when we establish degrees of righteousness and circles of exclusivity where the righteous may reign. Scripture is always searching for inclusivity, a wider circle, the lost sheep, the poor in spirit, and the last to be first.

Let us demythologize the new religious right. Let us admit that unlimited national power is a myth, as is the perfectibility of man. The pax Americana cannot be imposed. The pax Romana was not imposed either. Not even Augustus could subdue Parthia. He discreetly abandoned his dream of defeating the Parthians and disguised a diplomatic settlement as another victory. Let us encourage the new fundamentalists to devise a diplomatic settlement with modernity and live with it in peace.

NOTES

3. George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), quoted as "an excellent definition of fundamentalism" in Jerry Falwell, editor, The Fundamentalist Phenomenon (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981), p. 7. Falwell and writer Edward Hindson and Ed Dobson ridicule British theologian James Barr for writing that "the people to whom the word fundamentalist is applied do not like to be so called." (Fundamentalism [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978], p. 2). From the citadel of American Fundamentalism, i.e., the 18,000-member Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, came the reply from the pastor, Falwell, and two of its sixty associate pastors, Hindson and Dobson. "Barr knows virtually nothing about real American Fundamentalism! It hardly seems appropriate for such a supposedly careful scholar to make such sweeping statements in light of the fact that thousands of American preachers gladly and loudly claim the title Fundamentalist" (The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, p. 2).
4. The close scrutiny of the Bible by each believer was the source of potential
arguments against the authority of the clergy. Given God's sovereignty, William's radical Calvinist conscience could conceptualize toleration as easily as it could the ideal of the Holy Commonwealth. William's unique contribution to early American political theory was that political competence and sainthood were not necessarily related. Indeed, the civil order could be so orderly that peace and heresy might co-exist.

5. A more complete list of issues which unite the new religious right is its opposition to abortion, busing, homosexuality, pornography, sex education in the public schools, and easy divorce. It is united in its support of prayer in the public schools, community ownership of textbooks, capital punishment, a traditional family, a strong national defense, and increased American support for Israel.

6. The phrase "certified divines" implies, of course, a process of obtaining credentials which may be assumed to involve a baccalaureate degree and a theological education, plus the equivalent of a professional or licensing examination, and perhaps the scrutiny of an ordination board. The Book of Order of the United Presbyterian Church, for example, specifies as requirements for ordination "exegesis of the Old and New Testaments, using Hebrew and Greek texts, ecclesiastical history, and dogmatic and practical theology" (chap. XIX, sec. 49.022).

This process is not necessarily descriptive of independent Baptist churches and other fundamentalist groups, however. A minister may have little formal education or be the graduate of a Bible college which is little more than a diploma mill. Ordination is by a local church, since there is no denominational authority. There is no other ordination requirement than that the candidate demonstrate a certain amount of fervor and be certified by the board of deacons as having been called by God to the ministry. The candidate's verbal skills and strength of personality are frequently the determining factors. Once ordained, the fundamentalist minister carries the title "minister" into the world as proudly, and often is given as much deference, as graduates of the most rigorous seminaries and divinity schools in the country. In the quonset huts of the Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, Jerry Falwell learned less about biblical exegesis than he did about "great preachers" with churches of three and four thousand members. He followed these preachers around, he says in Aflame For God, and ran errands for them, learning as much as he could from them. What he learned was the power of assertion. That will build large churches quicker than careful biblical exegesis.

7. Many ambiguities are hidden behind the enigmatic and terse wording of the First Amendment. It confirmed both Virginia republicanism and the post-Puritan survival of the Protestant establishment in New England. The meaning of that settlement has been re-opened in the angry debate between liberals and the new religious right. The reason for the debate is such statements as the following by new right theorist Richard A. Viguerie, who says in The New Right: We're Ready to Lead (Falls Church, Va.: Viguerie Co., 1981), "Separation of church and state... does not mean separation of God and government" (p. 126).

8. Although the Moral Majority and its spinoff organizations, the Moral Majority Foundation and the Moral Majority Political Action Committee, are perhaps the most visible of the new right religious groups, there are many others. Among the largest and most influential are the Christian Freedom Foundation, the Christian Voice, the Christian Voters Victory Fund, the National Christian Action Coalition, and the Religious Roundtable. Ideologically close to, and frequently interchanging personnel with, these religious organizations are conservative political groups such as the American Conservative Union, the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, the Conservative Caucus, the Heritage Foundation, and the National Conservative Political Action Committee.


10. Marsden, p. 120.

11. The idea of "the army of the saints" accounts in part for the militarized theology of the new religious right. In a sermon, Jerry Falwell spoke of his followers as "Marines" who "have been called of God to move in past the shelling, the bombing, and the foxholes, and, with bayonets in hand, encounter the enemy face-to-face and one-on-one bring them under submission to the Gospel of Christ." (Francis Fitzgerald, "A Reporter
at large (The Reverend Jerry Falwell)." New Yorker, 57 (May 1, 1981): 107. The enemy in this case is clearly human. It is everyone who does not subscribe to the purposes of the new religious right. In the mentality of militarized theology, dissent is not merely disagreement; it is evil, sin, and of Satan. It may be treason. In Falwell's 1979 book, America Can Be Saved, he said simply, "The liberal churches are not only the enemy of God but the enemy of the nation."

12. The new religious right also believes God would protect the United States in the event of nuclear war. Jerry Falwell says, for example, "If God is on our side, no matter how militarily superior the Soviet Union is, they would never touch us. God would miraculously protect America." Daniel C. Maguire, The New Subversives (New York: Continuum, 1982), p. 22.


14. Conway and Siegelman, p. 167. Rabbi Balfour Brickner of the Steven Wise Free Synagogue in Manhattan says, 'The fundamentalists' love for Israel is not a love for Zion. They are not interested in seeing the Jewish people survive in Israel. On the contrary, their ultimate goal is to see the triumph of good over evil in the battle of Armageddon, after which all men will be one in Christ. The moment that happens, good-by Jews. We're out of business.' (Conway and Siegelman, p. 170.)


16. Math. 26:63-65. This and following scriptural references are taken from The Jerusalem Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966).


19. Marsden, p. 56.

20. Fundamentalists still gather what scientific thought they can to support biblical literalism. Much of their current effort is centered in an organization called the Institute for Creation Research. The creationism controversy, based on the fundamentalist calculation that the world was created in the year 4004 B.C., was fueled considerably by reputable scientific doubts about evolutionary theory. In "Was Darwin Wrong?" (Lide, 5 [April 1982], Francis Hitching discusses the current theories which attempt to answer the question of the bothersome gaps in the gradual transition to ever more adaptive and higher forms in the theory of evolution. Hitching shares some of Darwin's own doubts about his theory in pointing out that the fossil record has not provided the transitional forms Darwin predicted. Hitching suggests, therefore, that we should not close the book on any reasonable theory, including "catastrophism" or bombardments from the cosmos, earthquakes, and floods which cause stress on life forms. "If, after more than a century, natural selection has been tested and found wanting, and if we are left once again with a sense of ignorance about origins, Darwin would not have minded. Science is a voyage of discovery, and beyond each horizon there is another" (p. 52).


24. Out of the original alliance of big business and nativist Protestantism came the Prohibition amendment (1919) and Republican administrations in the 1920s that restricted labor so effectively that union membership declined from 5.1 million in 1920 to 3.6 million in 1929. When the Federal Council of Churches labeled "inhumane" the twelve-hour days and seven-day weeks required of steel workers, the fundamentalists answered with the words of the Negro spiritual sung by the socially and economically dispossessed every day in the mill towns of the South: "This world is not my home. I'm just passing through."

25. Falwell, Listen, America!, p. 78. Theologian Robert McAfee Brown in responding to Listen, America!, says: "I submit that any person who can write such lines has never had to face the demeaning experience of being an unemployed adult, trying work after week, month after month, to find work, nor has he truly imagined what it would be like. The notion that most people would rather accept welfare checks than work is a fiction invented by those who have never had to accept welfare checks." "Listen, Jerry Falwell!" Christianity and Crisis, December 22, 1980, p. 362.
27. Robertson has a protege in North Carolina, Jim Bakker, who has copied Robertson’s style. “The 700 Club” has become “The PTL Club.” It has performers and staff members dressed in their Hollywood best, with Bakker’s wife, Tammy, always in the latest fashion. Bakker chides his wife on the air for being “a little too worldly,” aware that students of fundamentalist schools must observe strict dress codes. He refers on occasion to the old fundamentalist slogan: “We don’t smoke, and we don’t chew, and we don’t go with girls that do!”

28. Fitzgerald, p. 95.

29. Graham has also said, “It would disturb me to see a wedding between the religious fundamentalists and the political right. The hard right has no interest in religion except to manipulate it.” (“Falwell v. Graham and Jefferson,” <i>Church and State</i>, 34 [March 1981]: 10).

30. Peter Steinfels, “Diabolus ex Machina,” <i>Columbia Journalism Review</i> 21 (November / December, 1981): 64. This is a review of Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles E. Swann, <i>Prime Time Preachers: The Rising Power of Televangelism</i> (New York: Addison Wesley, 1981), required reading in this subject area. Steinfels notes that the big spurt in religious television audience growth occurred between 1970 and 1975, when the audience more than doubled. In the next five years the numbers leveled off. The current decline points out the extent to which the religious television revival may have been a technological phenomenon, because 1970-75 were years when video production costs dropped. Assisted by lower costs, enterprising evangelists bought up the time that broadcasters had previously provided gratis to theological mainliners. With production costs now going up again, televangelists often feel they must resort to hardsell money-raising tactics that turn off a part of their potential audience.


THE POWER AND PERFORMANCE OF RELIGIOUS INTEREST GROUPS

PAUL J. WEBER AND T. L. STANLEY

Interest groups that seek to influence government policy at the national level do so in many different ways, and the possibilities for the exercise of power are very real.

Recently there has been a remarkable expansion in the number of studies of religious interest groups (RIGs). At the 1982 American Political Science Association convention, for example, various papers studied RIG relations with Congress, with the presidency, and with the courts. Other papers looked at the more general issue of religion and politics from a historical perspective, and from what might be called a statistical perspective. One paper dealt specifically with the emerging issue of the churches and nuclear arms. Despite these seminal works much remains to be done to enhance our understanding and assessment of the importance of RIGs in American politics. This article is an attempt to complete part of that work by exploring those components which are determinative of the power and performance of RIGs in the policy-making process.

RELIGIOUS INTEREST GROUPS

By religious interest groups we mean groups which are active in national politics and which identify themselves as religious, have a largely religious membership, and/or are active in areas traditionally considered to be of significance to religious groups, including but not limited to classic church-state issues. By active in national politics is meant groups which attempt to influence, directly or

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RIGs

indirectly by some positive, material means, the content and
direction of one or more national public policies. Although most group membership in the U.S. has a strong
upper-class bias, the one exception is church membership. Being part of a religious group is a mass phenomenon in the United States. In fact, the lower class dominates, at least in terms of sheer numbers, church membership. Although somewhat dated, the importance of this distribution is graphically illustrated in figure I:

FIGURE I
Associational Membership in the United States

One hundred and sixty-one million of the 226 million citizens of
the United States (71 percent) are Christian, and 7 million are Jews. Of the Christians, roughly 59 million may be considered
Evangelicals and 51 million Roman Catholic. According to a recent survey, some 59 percent of all citizens are not only believers, but
belong to a particular church group. The potential for enormous political power is clearly present. Numerous individuals and organizations have attempted to tap that potential, with more or less success, for political purposes, almost invariably in the name of some high moral objective. Further, there is considerable political activity among small groups drawing support from and representing various religious interests. According to a study made in
the summer of 1981, there were seventy-four such groups which
While Table 1 would seem to indicate a predominance of conservative Protestant groups, this was only true of theological identification. When the same groups were distinguished in terms of political identification a slightly different configuration appeared, as Table 2 illustrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservative RIGs</th>
<th>Liberal RIGs</th>
<th>Mixed RIGs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term not applicable</td>
<td>Term not applicable</td>
<td>7</td>
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Turning toward finances, RIG budget figures are consistently unreliable since many are multifunctional organizations, and personnel who engage in lobbying or testifying also have other, nonpolitical duties. Even with this caution in mind, RIGs seem to be remarkably small in comparison to interest groups representing commercial enterprises, unions, and even trade and professional associations. For example, of the organizations reporting, only nine had budgets in excess of a million dollars and five had budgets under a hundred thousand dollars. Six of the nine million-plus groups are classified as liberal, two as conservative, and one as mixed. By contrast, as long ago as 1978, the National Education Association’s Washington office staff exceeded 500 and had eighteen registered lobbyists and an annual budget exceeding $48 million. The American Petroleum Institute had a yearly budget of some $30 million and five full-time lobbyists plus numerous
part-timers (mainly top executives of API). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce had an annual budget of roughly $16 million and a staff of four hundred. Even the Sierra Club had a budget exceeding $5 million.\(^6\)

A somewhat indirect but equally revealing fact is the staff size in the national headquarters of the various RIGs. The staff sizes are considerably lower, only a fraction of those of the groups just mentioned.

Finally, it has been traditional to divide interest groups into private and public groups. RIGs are almost invariably considered to be among the latter class of interest groups, groups which seek collective goods of all members of society, along with such entities as Common Cause and the American Civil Liberties Union. However, it is more useful and accurate to distinguish five types of RIGs: individual, denominational, subscription, trade, and coalition, based on membership type and organizational structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3 Distribution of RIGs by Membership Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denominational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscription</td>
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<td>(N = 74)</td>
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</table>

If this brief review of currently active RIGs indicates anything, it is that there exists a broad distribution in the religious and political orientations of groups, as well as in their membership types. Those who favor the development of such groups may find their relative size a disappointment, and those who fear such groups may find the same data consoling. However, RIGs do not easily fit into traditional categories. Granted this note of caution, we may turn to a far more controversial area: an assessment of the power and performance of RIGs.

THE POWER AND PERFORMANCE OF RIGs

A discussion of RIG power may profitably begin with a description of the political environment within which such groups
operate. Perhaps the most important initial factor to describe is the sheer size and complexity of the national policy-making enterprise. Those wishing to influence the formation of policy have four arenas within which to work: the Congress, the courts, the presidency, and the bureaucracy, and each arena has types and combinations of formal and informal rules for access.

Since most interest groups focus their efforts on Congress, our own description may also be limited to this branch, recognizing that it then presents only a partial picture. While Congress has only 535 formal policy-makers, 435 in the House and 100 in the Senate, each congressperson is surrounded by a relatively large staff which not only limits the access of others to the member, but advises the member on what positions to take on most policy issues. Further, Congress is divided into committees and subcommittees where the vast majority of the mundane work of investigation, public hearings, bill-writing, negotiating, and compromising actually occurs. The House of Representatives has a total of 25 standing committees and 138 subcommittees. The Senate has 20 standing and select committees and 105 subcommittees. Each standing committee and most subcommittees have their own staffs, which have substantial control over what information is given to the committee members and by whom.

Not only is the congressional policy-making structure large and complex, but the number of bills introduced in each session of Congress averages roughly 20,000. The bills cover or affect almost every aspect of human endeavor and determine the allocation of hundreds of billions of dollars. In other words, the stakes are high and the results are enduring. It is not too much to say that the very shape and form of American society rests on the outcome of the policy process. Not surprisingly there are substantial numbers of interested parties attempting to influence the content and direction of public policy. While no one knows for certain just how many interest groups there are, “the editor of the Encyclopedia of Associations has enumerated over 14,000 national nonprofit organizations.” Not all such groups can be considered political interest groups, but we do know that several thousand do register under the Lobby Registration Act of 1946, and that many groups which actually lobby do not register. It is not unreasonable to “guesstimate” that there are roughly 7,000 groups attempting to influence the congressional policy-making process. Seen in this context, the existence of about seventy-four RIGs does not seem
very substantial. In fact, they constitute only about 1 percent of all
interest groups.

One might conclude from this brief review of the complexity and
competitiveness of the policy-making process that RIGs are
relatively powerless and ineffective. However, this is simply not
true. One must look at how the policy-making process works to
understand RIG power. First, each RIG tends to focus on relatively
few policy areas, usually no more than three or four, and often only
one. Table 4 indicates the distribution of single- and multiple-
interest groups across the political spectrum. Because they focus
their efforts, RIGs are able to marshal their resources more
effectively than broad-based interest groups. Second, RIGs focus
their efforts on the appropriate committees and subcommittees
during the early stages of the bill markup process. They rarely
attempt to lobby the Senate or House as a whole. Within the
subcommittees efforts are directed at those who are the undecided
swing votes, not on those completely in favor of or completely
opposed to RIG positions on issues. Normally this means that
lobbying efforts can be directed at no more than five or six members
of Congress at a time! Since the same subcommittees are likely to
handle the same issues over a period of time, lobbyists become
quite familiar with the appropriate members of Congress and their
staffs. Such an ability to focus can do much to overcome the size
and resource advantages of corporate and labor lobbies.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single-Issue</th>
<th>Multi-Issue</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label not applicable</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>(N=74)</td>
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</table>
The large campaign contributions of groups like political action committees (PACs) may seem at first glance to be an insurmountable barrier to RIG influence on legislators, but again, the reality is more complex. Religious interest groups enjoy a strong political linkage with grassroots voters that serves as a tremendous and powerful asset. The purpose of a PAC is to help finance election of sympathetic senators and representatives, that is, to persuade voters through campaign funding. Many RIGs are also in the business of persuading voters but through their direct contact. They can stimulate voters at election time, generate calls, letters, telegrams, and visits by constituents between elections while prospective laws are in committee. A groundswell of support from a representative's constituency at critical stages can have substantial influence on a wavering member of Congress. Therefore, while they may not be able to provide campaign funding, RIGs can provide votes. This is a more significant power than may at first appear. Organizations which can provide funding may not have the kind of "image" or policy position which will be persuasive to voters, e.g., the chemical industry trying to weaken or defeat a toxic waste law, or the National Automobile Dealers Association attempting to defeat a used-car evaluation report bill. It is safe to say that the kinds of issues around which RIGs rally are far more salient to far more voters than the issues pursued by General Motors, the NADA, and similar interest groups. RIGs have access to voters and must be taken seriously.

It is also important to point out that members of Congress and their staffs depend heavily on interest groups of all types. There is a symbiotic relationship that adds to the power of each. Interest group representatives are often asked to do basic research on an issue, draft proposed legislation (or more likely, amendments to legislation), develop strategy, stimulate publicity, and most important, stimulate voter pressure on appropriate members of Congress. It has been alleged that some RIG members are given access to free phone service to contact supporters in key districts.

Finally, when evaluating the power of interest groups, social scientists are fond of relying on quantifiable measures such as membership, financial resources, staff size, etc. While this reliance is not unreasonable, it is important to recognize that there are intangibles which may be particularly significant for RIGs, such as the religious convictions and fervor of particular members of Congress or staff members, the personal feelings of members or staff toward individual lobbyists, and the interest members or staff
have in a particular issue, intangibles which are not always reducible to constituent pressures. Such intangibles add to the complexity of the policy-making process and neutralize some of the tangibles such as size and financial resources.

Granted the size, complexity, competitiveness, and intangibles of the policy-making enterprise, it becomes necessary to modify one's idea of what constitutes "power." Rarely can one interest group claim credit for a particular, clear policy outcome. Successes are usually achieved by the efforts of a variety of groups who "outinfluence" a variety of groups on the other side. Both power and success are relative terms. Rarely is there a clearcut victory or defeat. Success may be the addition of a qualifying word in an amendment, an exception to a general law, an increased monetary figure in an appropriations bill, a delay in implementation. Even limiting the damage done by a bill one opposes but cannot defeat is a form of victory. It is hard to overstate the extent of competition among groups in the development of policy, including competition among RIGs. If one lesson can be drawn from observing RIGs in operation it is that even small successes require great efforts. Some groups approach the policy-making process with very limited objectives and are able to achieve near total success using this method. The Christian Science Committee on Publications, for example, in addition to publishing the Christian Science Monitor, observes government action in the area of health regulation in order to protect the interests of Christian Science practitioners. Such protection usually consists of religious liberty exemptions written into legislation and regulations. With a Washington staff of three and an annual budget under a hundred thousand dollars, the Committee on Publication must be considered a "powerful" religious interest group in that it attains its objectives with near total success. It is small in size and resources, of minimal importance in the overall political order, and represents social rather than business or political interests. At the same time it does not attempt to push or block legislation or regulation, but simply to add exemptions which affect relatively few people and require little, if any, financial commitment by the government. It is concerned with issues of low salience to political parties and faces little or no opposition from other interest groups. Yet its existence is crucial for achieving the objectives of the parent church.

Leaving aside such specialized groups, we are left with something of a dilemma. Taken among the full range of Washington interest groups, RIGs are remarkably small and poorly
Perhaps nothing adds to reputation as much as the ability to handle information. Information is power.

The Washington Office on Latin America, for example, built its reputation on its ability to gather more trustworthy information on
RIGs

Nicaragua and El Salvador than could the government. Its ability to provide reliable information to both policy makers and the media gave the organization power far beyond what its staff and budget would seem to provide. Image is an equally important part of reputation. Policy makers are often overloaded with communications; they learn to listen selectively, and prefer to listen to those who appear reasonable, credible, and understanding of the problems and pressures under which policy makers work. Therefore, it is important not only to have information, but to know how to present it. Management skills are an important, if unheralded, component of interest group effectiveness. As used here, it is a general term meant to include expertise in the development and maintenance of an efficient organization for information-gathering, the training and supervision of lobbyists, the development and pursuit of strategies and liaison with the membership it represents and the coalitions to which it belongs. Finally, effective leadership requires public relations skills not only to manage the public image of the religious interest group, but to define the issues in an effective manner. Nothing better illustrates the importance of this skill than the current struggle to define the nuclear freeze issue: is it a matter of "trusting the Russians" or "the seeking of a safe and sane alternative"? Defining the issue is half the battle.

It is the combination of these leadership skills, or the lack of them, which to a large extent determines the relative power of individual RIGs. The other component of such power is organizational structure.

The relationship of interest group structure to power is somewhat complex. As a general principle, all other things being equal, groups range in political power in the order illustrated by Figure 2:

FIGURE 2
Comparative Strengths of RIGs by Structure Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Powerful</th>
<th>Least Powerful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coalition</td>
<td>Subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denominational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Membership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37
Each type of group structure has certain costs and benefits. Overall, the elements which determine any group's power are size, financial resources, intensity of commitment to a policy objective, distribution of the group, and stability over time. Denominational groups have several advantages over other RIGs: they are very stable over time, have relatively predictable financial resources, and for major denominations at least, have significant numbers of members distributed over wide geographic areas with established communications patterns. Because the interest group component of the denomination is somewhat removed from denominational members, it tends to have more freedom in choosing policy positions, i.e., those in which church members are only mildly interested or in which there may even be disagreement among members. A critical question for denominational interest groups is always when, whether, and to what extent leadership positions can be translated into membership votes.

Individual membership groups, on the other hand, are far more dependent on membership dues and views and therefore are less free to pursue objectives not desired by its members. The range of issues they can pursue tends to be quite narrow. Their strength, however, is that issues which are acceptable to the membership are much more salient than to denominational membership. Members tend to be more willing to make contact with policy makers and vote on the basis of the group's positions. What they have is what denominational groups lack: intensity of interest.

Coalitions are made up of both denominational and individual membership groups. They provide size, expertise, and financial resources by piggybacking on other groups. While they tend to be relatively unstable in terms of longevity, this is not necessarily a sign of weakness. Many groups are formed for specific purposes and even for specific terms of Congress. While they can pursue only those objectives on which membership agrees, most are established for specific purposes and this is not a problem. The average RIG belongs to four coalitions, and it is not unusual to see groups working together on one issue in one coalition and against each other as members of other coalitions on other issues. Coalitions provide distribution not only geographically, but across religious, political, ethnic, and class lines. Coalitions can provide a means by which denominational leadership can support causes and policies which their membership opposes or over which it is divided. They may give the impression of more power than they actually possess and thereby increase their power. Coalitions pool
their resources and divide their labors. All in all, they are a very cost-effective means to influence policy.

Trade groups are much like nonreligious trade groups. Their primary function is to act as a co-ordinating watchdog organization; they tend to be reluctant to lobby actively except on issues of particular interest. Their staffs are professional, chosen for expertise rather than ideological commitment, and their membership is primarily institutional, i.e., made up of hospitals, Christian schools, colleges, and universities. They are the least likely of all RIGs to enter into coalitions and apparently the least creative or innovative of the groups.

Subscription groups are those most likely to be started by an "entrepreneur" with a vision; while there were only four in the survey they were among the most interesting. They tend to have the least resources and are self-supporting for the most part, but they do have great flexibility to pick their targets and choose their weapons. They can be highly specialized and highly innovative. They also tend to be most likely to join coalitions, but be among the least active in them (due primarily to a lack of resources, presumably). One, the Christie Institute, comprises primarily attorneys and has had remarkably good success by taking cases to court. While generally less powerful, trade and subscription groups can allocate their efforts without needing to educate large numbers of members or depending on denominational support.

In brief, the elements of power internal to religious, or indeed, any interest groups involve both leadership characteristics and membership organization. Yet the internal elements depend enormously on external factors over which groups have only limited control. In addition to the policy-making process in Washington, D.C., described previously, the factors include the nature and salience of the policy issue for the public, the number and strength of a group's allies, and the strength of the opposition.

By the nature of an issue is meant the size, complexity, cost, benefit, and certainty of attaining the desired result of a proposed policy change. Successful policy changes are invariably made in small increments. Interest groups advocating fundamental changes are rarely successful except over long periods of time.

The most fascinating and difficult of these political concepts to pin down is salience, the relevance an issue has to people. Freedom of Christian schools from governmental regulation, for example, or a new world economic order, are simply not very salient to most citizens. Civil rights seems to be losing its salience while nuclear
power is gaining. At one point in American history Prohibition was very salient; it no longer is. One challenge to RIG leadership is to make its own issues salient to sufficient numbers of people in order to influence policy-making in that area. On many issues this may simply not be possible.

Two further considerations remain: under what conditions can religious interest groups function most effectively in the determination of major national policy issues, and what resources do they bring to the process of policy formation precisely because they are religious? If one looks at the historical successes scored by RIGs, including the abolition of slavery, Prohibition, civil rights, and the anti-Vietnam war movement, as well as at some current failures (at least so far) including the push for tuition tax credits, the school prayer, and right-to-life amendments, certain patterns emerge.

The characteristics of the policy issue are the most important factors for the success of RIGs. The issue must be perceived by both the general public and policy makers as broadly moral rather than strictly religious. It is helpful if the issue can also be cast in constitutional terms, particularly if it can be seen as a defense of religious liberty. The issue may be supportable by an appeal to Scripture; it must be supportable by an appeal to reason. The issue must not be identified with one sect nor be an attack on one sect’s core beliefs or practices. Above all, it cannot pit major religious traditions against each other. Support must cut across all major denominational lines. Although an issue may cause dissension and splits within particular denominations and congregations, these are less damaging than splits between major traditions. Although most policy issues eventually are seen in “liberal” and “conservative” terms, the less easily an issue can be so categorized, the better. Likewise it must be seen as nonpartisan as much as possible. An issue must be clear, focused, and perceived as achievable in some tangible way (a constitutional amendment, a declaration of peace, a withdrawal of troops, a piece of legislation passed, construction stopped, a court decision handed down, etc.), but it must allow for a variety of strategies by different support groups, each of which can claim some part in the victory. The issue must appeal to a broad grassroots constituency, much of which may not be religious. One could even argue that a policy objective which drew the support of only religious groups and individuals could not be successfully made and implemented, with the possible exception of a clear religious liberty issue.

Quality of leadership is the second major determinant of the
RIGs

success of a RIG in achieving its objectives. In dealing with major national issues, group leaders must be seen as reasonable, competent moderates able to compromise and move incrementally. Equally important, in the development of allies and coalitions they must be careful not to let the movement be identified with radical groups or symbols. The issue and its supporters must strive to be seen as the leading wave in the mainstream, not backwater eddies. They must create or capture credible symbols and cast the issue in positive terms. Leadership must do what it can to keep opposing forces disorganized and defensive, making sure the opposition is answering charges rather than making them, defending positions rather than advancing them, reacting to initiatives rather than taking them, appearing to be on the side of evil and obstruction rather than on the side of justice and progress.

In “making and tending of coalitions” what do religious groups have to bring that makes them attractive to other groups? Some, particularly the denominational groups bring access to large numbers of citizens. They are credible, value-forming, linkage institutions between opinion leaders and ordinary citizens. They have ready-formed, stable, grassroots communities in most state and congressional districts, established communications networks and relatively well-educated leadership skilled at introducing ideas to people, leadership which is able to use regular working hours to pursue group goals. They have established support staffs, meeting and duplicating facilities, and often enough, access to mass media. While in absolute terms this may not seem terribly significant (only 58 percent of Americans are regular churchgoers), there simply are no other groups in America with similar linkage institutions.

RIGs bring a perceived legitimacy to coalitions. The value of an imprimatur is considerable. No religious groups would be expected by its adherents to support a policy which was evil, dishonest, destructive, exploitative, or unjust. Therefore, a claim can be made that what they support is worthy of support. RIGs bring a particular kind of motivation to coalitions, that is, moral idealism. While a proposed policy may have material consequences, people like to have their “better selves” appealed to, particularly if it coincides with material benefits, but even if it does come at some cost to themselves. Along with the motivation, RIGs can provide rituals, symbols, and images, helping people see they are involved in something much larger than themselves with a transcendent meaning and significance.

Many coalitions depend heavily on the financial resources of
churches, funneled through, or at least stimulated by, RIGs. While individual congregations and denominations may lack the quantity of resources available to major business and labor organizations, they are based on and have developed a tradition of voluntary giving. Granted the sheer quantity of local congregations in the United States, this giving can amount to substantial sums.

RIGs can provide stability and longevity through their association with larger religious groups. Since social change is almost always made incrementally, major changes sometimes take decades to accomplish. Attitudes take years to form and are changed only with persistent effort over time. Religious institutions, once established, are among the most stable in society. They can function as change agents, bringing policy objectives from the unthinkable, from the backwaters to the mainstream. Finally, in viewing the range of current RIGs, one might argue that some groups seem to bring simply their titles and prestige. If nothing else, this can add an appearance of size and distribution of support behind a policy objective.

A major theme must be stressed in conclusion. RIGs are an important and enduring phenomenon in American politics. Although they tend to be quite small, they are powerful within limited policy areas and in combination with other groups. Their power depends primarily on the quality of leadership and organizational structure. The direct access of many RIGs to voters does something to balance the financial strengths of corporate and other groups. In policy battles the potential RIGs have for activating substantial numbers of citizens can and occasionally does make them decisive forces.

NOTES

1. These definitions are not entirely satisfactory in that they still require an element of personal judgment. For example, the American Civil Liberties Union is included even though its policy agenda is quite broad, since no group is more consistently active and influential in church-state issues. The National Education Association, the NAACP, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference are excluded although the first two are involved in some church-state issues related to education and the latter retains a religious name. The definitions are meant to exclude a substantial number and variety of state, local, and ad hoc religious groups organized to influence specific public policy issues on state and local levels, as well as groups which are solely educational. This admittedly excludes a substantial number of groups, but was done for several reasons: to stay within accepted definitions of what constitutes interest groups, to keep the study strictly national in scope, and to factor in an element of stability, that is, to exclude groups which have only fleeting or ephemeral influence. Not least among the reasons, of course, was the impossibility of locating state, local, and ad hoc groups with any hope of completeness.
RIGs


5. A conservative Protestant group was considered to be one which professed a belief in the literal inerrancy of the Bible or claimed to be made up of people who could reasonably be expected to hold such a view or which has traditionally been identified as such. A liberal Protestant group was considered to be one which was explicitly Christian, but, did not profess, or require its members to profess, a belief in the liberal interpretation of the Bible. An ecumenical group was identified as such only if a substantial number of its members belong to at least two of the three major religious traditions. A group was considered to be secular if it claimed no religious heritage or rejected any supernatural or transcendent meaning to life. The National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors seems to be a group which does not fit in any of these categories.

Politically liberal groups were considered to be those which generally support an expansive role for government, are in favor of government-supported social welfare programs, and express a particular concern for the poor, minorities, and the Third World. They may also be pro-choice in the abortion issue, suspicious of defense spending, opposed to the draft, and opposed to aid to private schools. Conservative political groups were considered to be those which generally support a contracted role for government and emphasize profamily and prolife issues. They may also be anti-Communist, for expanded national defense, and generally favorable to private schools. Mixed groups are those which pursue a variety of policies, some of which are conservative, others liberal.

Unfortunately no attempt at definition and classification is entirely satisfactory, and few groups fit purely into one or another category. When questions arose the first criteria for classification was self-selection. When that proved unsatisfactory the authors interpreted the various identity and policy statements issued by the group under consideration.


JAMES L. GUTH

Moderate amounts of education, it seems, lead some clergy to become immoderate in their attitudes on social and political issues.

Despite the centrality of ministers in the organization and activities of the Christian right, there has been virtually no analysis of the possible role of education in this mobilization. Classic studies of the politics of mainline Protestant ministers have often slighted the topic, presumably because of the uniformly high educational achievements of their subjects, the difficulties in assessing more subtle influences emanating from different "kinds" of professional training, or their focus on conflict over ministerial political involvement between the clergy on the one hand and the laity on the other.

Whatever its importance for mainline clerical politics, education may be crucial to an understanding of the new Christian right. This movement draws much of its support from sects and denominations with a nonprofessional or partially professionalized clergy. Profiles of many Christian right clerics such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Robert Grant, and Tim LaHaye (all independent Baptists) suggest that most ministerial rightists have bypassed the classic mainline educational lockstep from high school to college to divinity school. If their unorthodox educational careers are shared by local Christian right activists, this fact may illuminate many features of the movement.

The Southern Baptist clergy provides a crucial case study for several reasons. First, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is badly split between a powerful contingent of Christian right leaders

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and a substantial faction of "moderates," who are resisting their incursions. The right has dominated the last few annual meetings, but moderates still control the denominational bureaucracy, most state conventions, and the political action arms. Second, the Southern Baptist clergy is in the process of transition from a poorly educated, "called" ministry into a college-educated and seminary-trained "profession." Roughly half of the SBC's ministers still lack seminary degrees, while a third have not been graduated from college. But Baptist seminaries are now teeming with prospective ministers. In 1981, the SBC supported four of the five largest American seminaries (and two others), enrolling about one-fifth of all the seminary students in the United States and Canada. These schools differ in prestige, academic rigor, and theological orientation. In addition, some perspective pastors attend independent "fundamentalist" schools, often run by and for Southern Baptists.

Thus, if education in some way contributes to Christian right politics, that contribution should be evident in a polarized denomination undergoing clerical "professionalization." This paper draws on a 1980-81 mail survey of Southern Baptist ministers to address two major questions: (1) How does education influence attitudes toward the Christian right? (2) How does education shape the theological and ideological antecedents of pro-right attitudes?

THE EDUCATIONAL LOCUS OF THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

In 1980 Southern Baptist ministers were badly split in their evaluation of Moral Majority and its related organizations. Although only 3 percent of the respondents actually belonged to Moral Majority, another 43 percent "had heard of and generally approved" of Moral Majority, while 47 percent had "heard of and generally disapproved" of Falwell's lobby. Total support (members plus sympathizers) varied considerably by education: from 47 percent approval among ministers with a high school diploma or less, to 57 percent among those with some college, to only 43 percent among college graduates. Seminary education reduces support for the right, but more unequivocally: ministers with no seminary give Moral Majority 52 percent approval, those with seminary, 48 percent, and those with seminary degrees or postgraduate work, 45 percent and 37 percent respectively. Of the
Why do educated middle-class ministers move so dramatically against the right, while their blue-collar peers do not?

Why do educated middle-class ministers move so dramatically against the right, while their blue-collar peers do not? Perhaps their college and seminary experiences differ. Those from very modest backgrounds may attend less prestigious institutions, study different subjects, major in business and technical fields in college, or—perhaps—do less well in school, factors linked to continuing conservatism or dogmatism among college students. The same factors may affect theological education. A college education (customarily in liberal arts) has long been required for entry to theology programs at SBC seminaries, but other educational routes to the ministry have always been available. For those ill-prepared or
EDUCATION OF CHRISTIAN RIGHT

financially strapped, programs in pastoral care, church administration, Bible studies, and religious education are popular options. Such programs may well have a different impact than the theological track, heavily populated by middle-class students. For example, a recent study at Southern Seminary showed that 32 percent of theology students had "problems" with one or more items of Christian orthodoxy in the "Baptist Faith and Message," while only 19 percent of religious education and 13 percent of ministry of music students had the same difficulty.\(^3\)

On most such issues, we can only speculate. But we do have information on one crucial educational difference: seminary attended. The SBC's seminaries differ in prestige, rigor, theological orientation, and missionary fervor. Debate may flare over whether Southern Seminary (the SBC's "flagship" institution) or Southeastern Seminary is the most "liberal," but few doubt that, in size and zeal at least, Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, anchors the conservative end of the spectrum. Smaller and newer schools, such as Midwestern in Kansas City and Golden Gate in California, exhibit more moderate traits, while New Orleans gravitates toward stolid conservatism. In both political and theological terms, Southern Seminary professors supply intellectual leadership for Baptist "left" groups like the "Baptist Peacemakers," while Southwestern professors are often found among the "Evangelical Right."\(^4\) Of course, the faculty is quite diverse at both institutions; moderates are found at Southwestern and conservatives at Southern. And the student "output" varies as well. Southwestern has produced both some notable Baptist liberals—such as Foy Valentine of the Christian Life Commission and James Dunn of the Baptist Joint Committee—and the last two SBC presidents, both rightists.

Many Southern Baptist pastors are also trained at traditional fundamentalist bulwarks like Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary or "alternative" institutions built recently by SBC fundamentalists: the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, Mid-America Baptist Seminary, and Luther Rice Seminary. Presumably, these schools should create Christian rightists in overwhelming numbers. Indeed, Glenn Hinson sees them as "the headquarters for the effort to disseminate fundamentalism and eventually to take over the Southern Baptist Convention."\(^5\)

Each seminary does have a distinctive political impact. As Table 1 shows, Southern and Southeastern graduates firmly reject the
right. Midwestern and Golden Gate alumni (grouped to provide enough cases for analysis) are less hostile, while those from New Orleans and Southwestern give pluralities and majorities to the right. And, as expected, fundamentalist schools produce mostly rightists.

Table 1

MORAL MAJORITY SUPPORT BY SEMINARY ATTENDED

|                         | Southern | South- | Midwest- | New | South- | Fundamentalist |
|-------------------------|----------|eastern|ern/Golden|Orleans|Western|               |
| Column % (Number of cases) |          |        | Gate     |      |       |               |
| Members                 | 0        | 0      | 5        | 0    | 4      | 6              |
| Sympathizers            | 17       | 24     | 33       | 49   | 47     | 57             |
| Opponents               | 79       | 73     | 57       | 42   | 44     | 26             |
| Not Heard               | 3        | 3      | 5        | 9    | 4      | 11             |
|                         | (58)     | (57)   | (21)     | (45) | (97)   | (35)           |

The percentages in each column represent the proportion of graduates of that seminary who are members, sympathizers, or opponents of Moral Majority. Columns do not always total 100% because of rounding.

Missing cases = 13

There are, of course, several possible explanations for this pattern. First, conversations with dozens of ministers, other seminary graduates, prospective students, and preministerial career counselors indicate that students sort themselves out according to their own theological leanings and the seminaries' reputations. Thus, "liberal" schools get "liberal" students (in the Baptist context, of course). Selective recruitment by region also plays a role. The Southeast (home territory for the "liberal" seminaries) is the citadel of Baptist moderates, while rightists begin to mass south of Atlanta and west of the Appalachians. Indeed, except for the South Atlantic region—Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Kentucky—where pastors are 2-1 against Moral Majority, Baptist ministers everywhere give the right a solid majority. But influence also runs the other way. These seminaries (and Baptist liberal arts colleges like the University of Richmond,
Wake Forest, Furman, and Mercer) have no doubt conditioned the doctrinal and political sentiments of the region's clergy, preventing domination by archconservatives.

Of course, the longer a student remains at a school the more he or she should reflect its "biases." And as students at "liberal" institutions are much more likely to undertake advanced degrees, the overwhelming anti-right sentiment among postgraduate students is understandable. (Ironically, however, graduate work at conservative seminaries does not add to ministerial conservatism.) And, social class bias in recruitment also plays some role. Southern Seminary draws a much larger proportion of middle-class students than the more conservative schools, which attract primarily from farm, blue-collar, and business families—all more amenable to appeals from the right. But each school still imposes its distinctive perspective. Students from all social classes are consistently more anti-right at Southern and Southeastern than their counterparts at Southwestern and New Orleans.

THEOLOGY AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

What is the source of the clear link between education and attitudes toward the Christian right? A minister's theology is a good (perhaps the best) predictor of his or her politics: theological conservatives tend to be political conservatives, while theological liberals lean to the political left. In an earlier work, we confirmed this relationship among Southern Baptist ministers and showed that both political and theological conservatism were associated with Moral Majorityism.4

How does education influence ministers' theology and politics? We found little dispute over traditional Christian doctrines; Southern Baptist ministers are, indeed, a pretty orthodox lot. But ministers differed in theological self-identification: 23 percent claimed to be "fundamentalists," 60 percent "conservatives," and 15 percent "moderates" or "liberals." Both secular and seminary education, but especially the latter, reduces the number of self-identified "fundamentalists," increases considerably the "conservative" majority, and strengthens the "moderate" and "liberal" minority. For example, of ministers with neither a college or seminary degree, 37 percent are fundamentalists, 52 percent are conservatives, and only 8 percent are moderates. Pastors with both degrees are 13 percent fundamentalist, 62 percent conservative,
and 23 percent moderate or liberal. (Conservatives are just as orthodox as fundamentalists by standard tests, but tend to be more tolerant and less dogmatic. For example, they are much less likely than fundamentalists to say that it would be "hard to be a true Christian and a political liberal." )

Again, education's impact varies with social class. As a group, farm and blue-collar pastors without either degree tend to be fundamentalists or conservatives, while those with both degrees are overwhelmingly conservative. White-collar ministers without either degree are even more fundamentalist, but education markedly reduces their numbers, producing not only more conservatives, but a very substantial bloc of theological moderates and liberals. (Here, again, this change in the middle class is more evident among those from clerical, ministerial, and professional backgrounds than among the sons of businessmen.)

The same class bias turns up in looking at graduates of each seminary. Those of middle-class origins are everywhere the most "liberal," although in degrees that vary in the expected way, with Southern and Southeastern producing the most moderates in each class. Thus, both social class and seminary do make a difference in producing a minister's theological outlook. It should also be noted that only the non-SBC seminaries actually train more fundamentalists; attendance at any denominational school reduces Fundamentalism in all social class groups.

Does education produce moderation in politics as well? At least with respect to self-identified political ideology, the evidence in Table 2 is mixed. Secular educational advancement actually seems to enhance conservatism in some categories, but seminary training tempers ministerial conservatism, either alone or in combination with a college degree.

And, as expected, Southern and Southeastern produce a majority of political moderates and liberals, while the other schools all boast overwhelmingly conservative alumni. These findings are buttressed by ministers' reported 1980 presidential vote. Reagan won handily over Carter (54 to 41 percent), but was especially strong among ministers with intermediate levels of education. Carter did best among ministers with both degrees or advanced work, but actually beat Reagan only among Southern and Southeastern graduates.

Education also molds ministers' views on individual economic, social, and political issues—albeit in rather complex ways. First,
### Table 2

#### SECULAR EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column % (Number of cases)</th>
<th>High School or Less</th>
<th>College Some</th>
<th>College Degree</th>
<th>Postgraduate Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(58)</td>
<td>(86)</td>
<td>(86)</td>
<td>(254)</td>
<td>(29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### SEMINARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column %</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Postgraduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(154)</td>
<td>(75)</td>
<td>(133)</td>
<td>(98)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### COMBINED DEGREES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column %</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Seminary</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(119)</td>
<td>(95)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(188)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### SEMINARY ATTENDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column %</th>
<th>Southern</th>
<th>Southwestern</th>
<th>Midwestern/ Golden Gate</th>
<th>New Orleans</th>
<th>Southern</th>
<th>Fundemntalist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(58)</td>
<td>(37)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(45)</td>
<td>(45)</td>
<td>(97)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the percentages in each column represent the proportion of ministers in that category who consider themselves conservative, moderate, or liberal. Thus, 66 percent of those with a high school education or less consider themselves conservative, 26 percent moderate, and 0 percent liberal. Columns do not always total 100 percent because of the failure of some ministers in each category to answer the political ideology questions.

college education does not always have a "liberalizing" influence. College graduates seem less "intolerant": they often concede that other economic systems might be compatible with Christianity and that a liberal could be a "true Christian." But they are distinctly more conservative when asked whether the federal government should act to solve problems of poverty, hunger, and poor housing. This common disjunction between civil libertarianism and economic liberalism also shows up on "social issues," where the better-educated are more liberal on abortion, homosexuality, school prayer—the core of the Christian right agenda. On defense
policy, most ministers are surprisingly "hawkish"; college produces little added resistance to increased defense spending. The poorly educated are more prone to a "just war" (or perhaps, an isolationist) position, while both those with limited educations and college graduates supported Carter on SALT II, against a majority of those with some college. Here, again, we see the rightist propensity of ministers with "some" higher education.

The results for theological training are quite similar, except for the noticeable moderation of postgraduate students—especially on social issues. Indeed, the gap between pastors with no seminary and those with advanced work is quite wide on abortion, liquor, homosexuality, and school prayer.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLITICAL ISSUES AND SEMINARY EDUCATION</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Degree Postgraduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political and Economic Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only free enterprise is compatible with Christian values (agree)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to be Christian and political liberal (agree)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal government should do more on social problems such as poverty (disagree)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defense Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. should spend more on defense (agree)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. should use force only when attacked (disagree)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter's SALT II was a mistake (agree)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Policy Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws on pornography should be tougher (agree)</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws on liquor should be tougher (agree)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need anti-abortion amendment (agree)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws on homosexuality should be tougher (agree)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need school prayer amendment (agree)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Number of Cases)</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages in each column represent the proportion of ministers in that category who take the Moral Majority position (agree or disagree) on each question. Thus, 74 percent of all ministers with no seminary agree that free enterprise is the only economic system compatible with Christian values.
It is not without truth that some wags claim that the “war between the Baptists” is a “war between Baptist seminaries.”

wags claim that the “the war between the Baptists” is a “war between Baptist seminaries.”

We have seen that education, especially seminary education, often influences a minister’s theology and politics, producing views that may color his or her response to the Christian right. But education may also enhance the linkage between theological and political orientations, or, in Philip Converse’s terminology, create higher levels of “attitude constraint.” Table 4 suggests that not only does seminary study reduce the number of “fundamentalists” and swell the ranks of “moderates,” but it facilitates the proper “choice” of attitude toward the Christian right.

Fully 82 percent of fundamentalist seminary graduates support Moral Majority, while a minuscule 12 percent of moderates do (down from 42 percent among moderates with no seminary). College and seminary together produce the same dramatic results. The distinctiveness of each seminary is also shown in the way theological orientation influences Moral Majoritarianism among alumni.

These results (and other more elaborate statistical tests not reproduced here) show that higher education not only modifies a minister’s basic theological and political stance, but produces a tighter and more coherent “ideology,” with consistently “conservative” or “liberal” attitudes across an array of issues. The recent
Table 4

MORAL MAJORITY, THEOLOGICAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION, AND EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SEMINARY</th>
<th>COMBINED DEGREES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalist</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate and Liberal</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalist</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate and Liberal</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMINARY ATTENDED</th>
<th>Southern</th>
<th>South-eastern</th>
<th>Midwesten</th>
<th>Golden Gate</th>
<th>New Orleans</th>
<th>South-western</th>
<th>Fundamentalist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalist</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate/Lib.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The percentages in each column represent the proportion of ministers in each category who are members or sympathizers of Moral Majority. For example, 57 percent of all ministers with no seminary education who call themselves “fundamentalists” favor Moral Majority.

A conservative political movement may, then, be attributed in part to better education, which prompts Baptist ministers to view issues in a larger perspective. Of course, the same tendency affects “moderates” as well, laying the basis for ideological, theological, and political factionalism.

The significance of this ideological polarization is buttressed by two other effects of higher education. Better-educated Baptist ministers are also much more likely to approve of, and participate in, political activities—both inside and outside the SBC. Thus, upward educational mobility creates two opposing camps among Baptist ministers and simultaneously encourages more political activism by the antagonists. 8
EDUCATION OF CHRISTIAN RIGHT

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

A focus on the educational backgrounds of Southern Baptist ministers helps us understand the struggle between the Christian right and its foes within the SBC and, by extrapolation, perhaps, in other traditional denominations and sects whose clergy may also be undergoing a similar process of professionalization.

First, the right's strongest support is among ministers who have taken the first few steps on the professional mobility route and acquired a modest degree of higher education—some college or seminary, perhaps, or one degree without the other. Opponents consist primarily of traditionalists who have not even begun the trip and, especially, those who most closely approximate the model of the professional, seminary-trained minister long prescribed by the mainline Protestant denominations.

Secondly, educational advancement of the clergy simultaneously cuts down the breadth of Christian right appeal, while creating conditions for successful mobilization. Seminary training, especially, tends to reduce the attitudinal correlates of Moral Majorityism, i.e., theological Fundamentalism and political conservatism, while at the same time encouraging ideological thinking among remaining conservatives and the growing moderate minority. These trends, no doubt, explain in part the rise of bitter factionalism in this traditionalist denomination.

Finally, we perceive that the impact of ministerial education depends on the nature of specific institutions and programs. To an outsider, SBC seminaries look very much alike. Yet, the diversity of political attitudes and behavior among their alumni suggest that theological programs, the nature of instruction, and the intellectual atmosphere at specific institutions make a big difference, one that requires further and more detailed examination. And yet, we must be reminded that education is capable of remaking prospective ministers only to a limited extent. The raw material coming to collegians and seminaries has been drawn there by thousands of mysterious decisions to answer the "call," made by many kinds of youth (and adults), reacting to forces we do not begin to understand.

Here, perhaps, we may hazard a look into the future. A simple projection of trends would suggest that in the short run the pangs of professionalism will exacerbate the current ideological battles, as traditionalists are gradually replaced by better-educated ministers with strongly held but conflicting perspectives. Nevertheless, over
the long run a largely professionalized clergy, drawn primarily from white-collar families and ensconced in the growing number of middle-class Baptist congregations, should be a solid bulwark against the right. But as John Maynard Keynes pointed out, in the long run we are all dead, and so are most trends. Baptist seminaries

Baptist seminaries are being flooded by conservative prospective ministers, who may well tax the transforming power of even the “liberal” schools.

are being flooded by conservative prospective ministers, who may well tax the transforming power of even the “liberal” schools. Of course, this trend, too, may soon pass. But whether such selective self-recruitment or professional socialization triumphs may determine the future of the Christian right—and that of the Southern Baptist Convention.

NOTES

1. The data for this study were collected in a mail survey of a random sample of 756 Southern Baptist ministers between November 15, 1980, and April 1, 1981. The final total of 460 responses represents a return rate of 62 percent from those 740 pastors still living and in the ministry. Further details concerning the survey are available from the author.

2. For a review of such studies, see Dean Hoge, Commitment on Campus (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974).


SHAME

TOM GOODHUE

Could the biblical sense of shaming have some therapeutic uses for individuals and society?

One of the more spectacular failures of Western Christianity has been its mission to men. The ranks of pastors, theologians, and church executives have been dominated by men, but the pews have been filled primarily by women. Men in our society are encouraged to give a certain lip service to the church but are not encouraged to participate seriously. And it is precisely at the points of greatest anxiety about becoming a man—adolescence and young adulthood—that males are most reluctant to identify themselves with Christ and church: a glance at almost any youth fellowship group will confirm their conspicuous absence. Moreover, modern Christianity provides little restraint upon masculine excesses in war, business, and politics—the “man’s world.” Why is Christianity so irrelevant to masculinity?

Psychoanalysis has focused primarily on the relief of neurotic guilt-feelings and has largely ignored shame, as the paucity of analytic writing on shame attests. Western Christianity has generally followed suit. In worship, we mainly confess our guilt over moral transgressions. Our atonement theology speaks of Christ’s triumph over our guilt. Our training in pastoral care seldom speaks about shame at all. Our assurances of pardon have conjured up images of a court’s verdict and a governor’s reprieve. Seldom in either confession or assurance have we dealt with our sense of shame.

Tom Goodhue is a United Methodist clergyman in the Pacific and Southwest Annual Conference and in 1982-84 was teaching in a weekday school at Riverside Church, New York. He has written for a number of publications, has worked as a youth minister and counselor in California, Vermont, and New York, and got the idea for this essay while serving in Hawaii and noticing how Asian-Americans, Polynesians, and Anglos felt a sense of shame.
Women may be socialized in our society to avoid transgressions, but men are socialized to avoid failure. Hence, men tend to fear that nonachievers will be abandoned. Men worry that defeat indicates abandonment by God, as is expressed in Psalm 44, for example. Because of this socialization in a competitive, judgmental society, men worry more about failure and loss of social esteem than about transgressing moral limits. We fear not so much being bad as we fear not being good enough, being inadequate, and losing face: losing a job, going bankrupt, going limp in bed. Thomas Negri’s study of college students confirmed this difference in male and female conditioning: men scored much higher on a measurement of shame, women were higher in guilt. (See references at the end of this article for this and other citations.)

Indeed, much of the wrong men do, much of the oppression in which we participate, and much of our male self-destructiveness grows out of attempts to prove ourselves, to amount to something, to live up to the male goals and ideals which we have accepted. Anthropologists once divided the world into “guilt cultures” and “shame cultures” and put us in the former and most Third World societies in the latter category. It may not have been correct to count “Western Civilization” among the guilt cultures. Le Roy Ladurie has demonstrated, for example, that in a fourteenth-century Occitan village, it was shame, not guilt, which was the most powerful factor in the moral sense of the villagers (Montiallou, pp. 174, 199-200). Even in Puritan Massachusetts, shame, in form of fear of not pulling one’s weight, weighed at least as heavily as guilt. Robert Crowell reconstructed a typical day in the life of an Essex family of 1676 for his History of the Town of Essex and put these words in the mouth of my great-great-great-grandmother, indicating the power of shame both in the seventeenth century and in his own
day: “Come, girls, you know the law requires that we spin three pounds of flax, three of wool, and three of cotton a month, or pay a fine. But the worst fine would be the shame of not doing so well as our neighbors.”

Any doubts about the importance America attaches to shame should have been laid to rest by our willingness to waste thousands of lives and billions of dollars in Vietnam. Many soldiers, preachers, and politicians were troubled less by our guilt in blocking Ho Chi Minh’s election, bombing Hanoi on Christmas, or napalming children than they were by the supposed shame of losing a war. Prophetic preaching against the war was weakened by the tendency to denounce our guilt in Vietnam; shame, for many people, was the stronger emotion. We who opposed the war ignored the biblical resources which might have helped us deal with this misplaced sense of shame. In truth, we were ignorant of these resources.

Perhaps it is understandable that we have stayed away from Scripture passages concerning shame. Shame makes us want “to run and hide,” as people say they wish they could do when they feel ashamed, “to crawl in a hole and disappear,” “to curl up and die.” This is why it is so hard to talk—or preach—about embarrassment. Unlike guilt feelings, which may vanish upon confession, shame often increases with exposure. Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggested that shame causes a feeling of lacking something because it grows out of our disunion with God (Ethics, pp. 20-21). In the face of this disunion we tend to withdraw further from God, and from other people, and try to conceal our lack, our failure, our inadequacy. Shame can, of course, be intertwined with guilt. What do Adam and Eve do when their violation of moral standards makes them aware of their inadequacy? They hide in the woods.

Men, who have been raised to fear failure and defeat, particularly need the reassurance of God’s loving presence in times of failure or defeat. One former parishioner spoke bitterly about how other worshipers avoided him when he lost his job (because of a stand of conscience, no less). Probably they were frightened by the thought of their own unemployment, by the consequences of conscience, but what they communicated to him is that the unemployed will be
abandoned. Things should be different from this in a Christian community.

It is important that we listen to feelings of embarrassment without dismissing them as irrational. Shame has its own logic. Helen Merrel Lynd pointed out that overpowering shame often arises out of natural, unavoidable circumstances which for some reason make us feel inadequate—fear in battle, being awkward in a new social setting, having immigrant parents who seem peculiar to those of the dominant culture, having some physical abnormality, or having children who fail to live up to our expectations. While it might be irrational to feel guilty about any of these things, it should be expected that these circumstances will produce a sense of shame. How often have parishioners said, “I am so ashamed of what my son has done,” and I have replied, “But you’re not to blame—it’s not your fault!” Such replies do not address the source of their pain. Fault has little to do with what the parent feels, so absolving parents of wrongdoing will not erase their feelings of weakness, helplessness, inadequacy, and failure.

We ignore “irrational” feelings of shame at our own peril, for shame leads easily to hate. In C. S. Lewis’s *Screwtape Letters*, a Senior Tempter remarks that “hatred is also a great anodyne for shame.” We can come to hate those who occasion our embarrassment. Germany’s humiliation after World War I was mobilized by the Nazis into militarism and the persecution of Jews, gypsies, gays, Poles, and other. America’s “loss” of China to Communism may have triggered McCarthyism during the 1950s, as shaming by Chinese Communists was turned into hatred of every suspected leftist at home.

The church’s prophetic and healing ministry is badly needed now, at a time when many feel our nation has been humiliated by Vietnam and Iran, if we are to avoid a repetition of this mutation of shame into hate. Most Americans are now mature enough to realize that China was never ours to lose. The church could help the nation see that we did not have Vietnam or Iran as a possession to be lost, either. In the lingering wake of our Iranian trauma the church could help remind us that vulnerability to terrorism is not a sign of weakness but an immutable fact of life in the modern world.

I have been talking so far about the type of shame which grows out of an alienation which is imposed on us by the false values of our society. Our obsession with esteem, for example, makes us ashamed of losing face. Our obsession with success makes us fear failure. Our need to feel strong makes men ashamed of their
SHAME

weakness, whether the personal weakness of vulnerability to muggers or the national weakness of vulnerability to hostage-takers. Sin is present in the brokenness which gives rise to these obsessions.

There is, however, a second sort of shame which comes not out of failure to live up to false goals but rather out of turning away from God. According to the Bible, the most important sources of shame are shunning God’s wisdom (Prov. 3:35 KJV) and devotion to false idols.

Of course, what the Bible calls idolatry was not usually a fringe-group cult but rather the dominant civic religion of the day, the morals of the majority. Idolatry is more subtle in most cases than the invitation to bow down before a golden calf. Many people today seek security and salvation not through God but through devotion to status, success, nation, power, and respectability. Not only do they not feel ashamed of this misplaced devotion, they want the church to bless those idols, as many in the church are happy to do.

We must recognize, too, that in our time, as was often the case in biblical times, this idolatry leads to promotion more often than to prophetic denunciation. Devotion to these deities is widely applauded, and it pays well.

The prophets warn, however, that in the long run trusting idols leads to shame. (See, for example, Isa. 42:17; 44:9, 11; and Hos. 4:7, 19; 10:6.) Ezekiel and Jeremiah warn that the worst shame of all is to fall under God’s judgment (Ezek. 5:14-15; 7:18; and many other places; Jer. 2:14-19, 36; 12:13; and other places.) Throughout the Old Testament we are warned that the failure which we should most worry about is the failure to do justice (as examples Neh. 5:9; Hab. 2:6-19). Around 180 B.C. Sirach summarized much of the Old Testament’s teaching on shame, making a distinction between true and false shame and concluding that it was important not to be ashamed of following God’s teaching (Ecclesiasticus 42:2).

The conflict between these two forms of shame is illuminated by Sophocles’s ancient drama Antigone. I was taught as a freshman at Stanford that Antigone represented the transition from shame-morality to guilt-morality in ancient Greece, an interpretation which contributed to a belief that shame-based societies were inferior to guilt-based societies. Rereading the play recently, I discovered that it does not, in fact, turn on a conflict between Antigone’s shame-morality and Creon’s guilt-morality. At the core of their conflict lie two different understandings of shame, one
Our culture has an agenda for men which gives low priority to doing justice and heeding God's wisdom.

Our proclamation of the good news that God graciously delivers us from shame must include a recognition that our culture has an agenda for men which gives low priority to doing justice and heeding God's wisdom. We are expected to provide financial security for our families in a financially insecure world, to climb "up
SHAME

the ladder’ even though hierarchies in our society are shaped more like pyramids than ladders, to be willing to die and kill for country even when our country is wrong. It is no wonder that men pay more homage to patriotism than justice, that we serve our careers more zealously than we serve the Lord. We have been set up to feel that our nation is not strong enough, that we are not rich enough, that we have not advanced far enough in our occupations. Our sin—our alienation from God, from other people, and from ourselves—produces shame in two ways: we turn to idols for security and we accept the false values of the world which ultimately label most of us inadequate.

What is the good news that we have to offer concerning shame? As Bonhoeffer wrote in Ethics, shame can be overcome by the restoration of our relationship with God. This restoration is possible because Jesus is not ashamed to be our brother; God is not ashamed to be our God (Heb. 2:11; 11:16). Reconciliation with God allows us to grow free of the false values which have been imposed on us. Jesus, in being mocked and scourged, shows us that there are some things worth being humiliated for. God in human flesh endured the worst shaming humanity can inflict: desertion by followers, public ridicule, condemnation by civic and religious leaders, and capital punishment by the most humiliating means ever devised. Yet this humiliated God was then raised to new life. Having seen Christ triumph over shame, his discouraged, ashamed followers were transformed into a confident, courageous movement. The followers of Christ are filled with the power to share in his shame and even despise it (Heb. 12:2; 13:1-14). These first Christians learned to value strength, success, and public esteem less highly; through Christ they found an end to their idolatry.

We modern Christians could learn as the first Christians did that God often chooses the weak and foolish to shame the wise and powerful, that to be reproached by others for our faith is not really shameful (Matt. 5:11 // Luke 6:22; Titus 2:8; I Pet. 3:16, and that we must not be ashamed of bearing witness to the gospel (Mark 8:38; Rom. 1:16; II Tim. 1:12).

Of course, it is easy to be ashamed of being different from other people, to be embarrassed about having Christian values and principles which set us apart from others. One friend confessed that during her pregnancy she often said “I don’t care for a drink just now,” when she was, in fact, abstaining due to a concern for her future child’s health which grew out of a deep sense of
discipleship. She was afraid of seeming moralistic if she explained her true reason for declining a drink. Later, she confessed, she said she was foregoing throwaway diapers “to save money” when the decision actually was based on her desire to be a good steward of God-given resources. Perhaps the community of faith could be a place where we learn to bear witness without pomposity and without being ashamed of our obedience.

How could the church embody the victory over shame which we receive from God? We might sing such hymns as “I Look to Thee in Every Need”:

Discouraged in the work of life,
Disheartened by its load,
Shamed by its failures or its fears,
I sink beside the road;
But let me only think of thee,
And then new heart springs up in me.

Sermons could explore biblical material about shame. One parishioner repeatedly declined invitations to be a lay reader, saying that women should not be near the altar. All attempts to “reason” with her proved futile. I happened to preach some weeks later on Mark 5:27-34. I suggested that this woman may have been too ashamed to approach Jesus directly because her flow of blood made her “unclean” and that she might have been particularly embarrassed if she had something like a heavy, nearly continuous menstrual flow, yet she found both healing and victory over her shame. My parishioner realized that her own menstruation had been a source of shame and that she had feared to defile the altar! The biblical witness gave her a victory of her own; she became one of the best lay readers the congregation has ever had.

We could also encourage worshipers, particularly men, honorably to express weakness, need, and confusion in worship. Our prayers of confession and assurances of forgiveness could include shame and victory over shame. Communion could be celebrated as the messianic banquet in which shame is wiped away (as in Isa. 25:6-8).

Our Christian education efforts might also begin to give shame its due. In the first place, we might respond to anti-social behavior with the tools of shame rather than the tools of guilt. Saying “I am disappointed. You can do better,” often works with children who cannot restrain themselves through guilt and fear of punishment. Many of us have avoided any direct criticism of children for fear of
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“cutting down” those whom we seek to nurture, but proper shaming may do just the opposite: it affirms that we believe the child can do better. Second, we can stop making children ashamed of those things over which they have no control: physical abnormalities, lack of fluency in our language, coming from a home which does not fit the norms of the dominant culture. Accessible church classrooms, bilingual instruction, and materials reflecting the economic, familial, and ethnic diversity of our students are some ways to lesson this misdirected shaming.

The church could help lift the burden of shame which has been carried by men by directly challenging the false goals which society has presented to men and by challenging our narcissist-omnipotent fantasies. These fantasies (I can do anything, so I am a failure if I do not succeed at all things; our nation can do anything, so it is a failure if it does not dominate the world economically and militarily) produce much of our misplaced shame. The church could challenge the ideals of conduct which have been given to men (“be tough”) and the standards of success we have been given (“you ought to be a doctor when you grow up”). Because shame tends to lead us to isolate ourselves from others, the community of faith can be particularly healing when it experiences shared assurance of God’s acceptance.

If we can bring biblical resources to shame-burdened persons, the church will do the world a real service.

REFERENCES

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 20-24, 184-185. Rare among theologians, Bonhoeffer refers to shame, although only in passing.


On the ways in which shaming can further moral development.

"The battle lines for peace issues are more clearly drawn in the elections of 1984 than at any time in two decades."

Five years ago, an official of the Carter administration with special responsibility for the SALT II Treaty complained that the churches had failed to generate a constituency on nuclear issues and that treaty ratification was then in doubt. He added that even most church leaders he had encountered who professed concern about nuclear disarmament seemed ill-prepared for serious public debate on the issues.

The SALT II Treaty did, in fact, fail of ratification—partly because the Carter administration gave up the fight for it, partly because the Reagan administration viewed the treaty as "fatally flawed." While the treaty's terms continued to be more or less honored into 1984, the delays and defeats suffered in the arms control process after 1974 (when President Ford and Chairman Brezhnev agreed on a treaty framework in Vladivostok) have marked the most ominous period in the nuclear era.

The churches can hardly disclaim all responsibility for this perilous pass. A quarter of a century has already passed since Karl Barth declared that the churches' failure to take an unequivocal stand against nuclear weapons was their greatest theological failure since their inadequate resistance to Nazism. During most of the nuclear years, the mainline American churches have tended to limit their nuclear concerns to pronouncements, resolutions, and occasional
spurts of lobbying. In 1978-79, a Religious Committee on SALT was formed to lobby for the SALT II Treaty, but that effort never received more than marginal funding, staff, and leadership attention. The mobilization of a constituency for nuclear disarmament was never defined as a missional priority—except in the historic peace churches.

Something has happened in the past five years. The first broad-based public movement for disarmament since the Strontium 90—mother’s milk outcry of the early 1960s—an all-too-brief episode which helped attain the partial test ban of 1963—has emerged.

The churches are clearly a major part of that movement. How much the churches are the engines of the movement, or the cabooses, is a touchy question of political and historical analysis. The Roman Catholic Bishops’ 1983 Pastoral Letter on War and Peace, celebrated by The Christian Century as the prime religious news story of 1983, modestly acknowledged that it was scientists and physicians who had done most to generate public consciousness of nuclear issues. The “Pastoral” had also been preceded by the nuclear freeze movement which was launched in 1980 and which the bishops more or less endorsed. George Kennan’s electrifying Einstein Prize address of 1981 (“Like Lemmings Heading for the Sea”) and Jonathan Schell’s articles in The New Yorker in February, 1982 (later published as the book, Fate of the Earth), had greatly empowered the new movement. The Europeace movements formed in position to NATO’s 1979 decision to deploy 572 new intermediate-range missiles in Europe had also sought, with only limited success, to energize the American churches and public over the demise of détente.

So triumphalism over the American churches’ influential role in the new peace movements of the 1980s may be unwarranted. Still, most of the mainline churches of this country have become significantly engaged in peace and disarmament issues since 1980. Many have officially launched new peacemaking programs and have made unprecedented commitments of budget and staff to develop them. Perhaps it may be said that the Holy Spirit has been working through groups and forces outside the churches to help move the churches themselves toward a more prophetic ministry.

There is yet another, perhaps even more important, political factor to be acknowledged. Never in a half-century has there been a greater gulf in social perspectives between church leaders and pronouncements, on one hand, and a U.S. administration, on the
other. President Reagan clearly views himself as a devotee of peace and nuclear arms reductions. In ways he surely never intended, he has perhaps done more to energize the peace movement than any of his post-1945 predecessors. Movements thrive on polarities. The sharpness of Reagan's anti-Soviet verbiage, his commitment to "rearmament" and steep increases in military spending at the expense of other priorities, vexing rhetoric about nuclear weapons and civil defense, the transparent nonnegotiability of administration arms control proposals in Geneva, downgrading of the United Nations and human rights, and military intervention in Central America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East—all have evoked critical responses from church leaders, sounded arms in Congress and the general public, and provided tempting symbols for European peace groups.

Some of these trends were well under way in the last two years of the Carter administration. Ronald Reagan did not inaugurate the arms race. What he has done is to accelerate these trends and personify them in such dramatic fashion that the battle lines for peace issues are more clearly drawn in the elections of 1984 than at any time in two decades. Whether his opponents in presidential and congressional campaigns will really offer convincing foreign policy alternatives in the autumn of 1984 remains to be seen. Whether peace issues themselves will be at all decisive, in any case, is unclear: if most Americans feel that their standard of living is on the rise again, even if millions remain unemployed, economic satisfactions may loom larger than nuclear anxieties.

Given the contradictions between church policies and administration policies, churches and their pastors are confronting the pressures of partisanship to an especially acute degree this year.

Three salient expressions of the churches' current engagement in peacemaking, all of which point to conflicts with current U.S. policies, are:

1. An unprecedented critique of nuclear deterrence as the basic principle of national security.
2. An emerging and widespread commitment to exchange, dialogue, and reconciliation with the USSR and Soviet churches.
3. A mounting insistence that peacemaking be defined in terms of justice to Third World peoples.

Each of these merits considerable elaboration.

One of the largely unquestioned assumptions of U.S. foreign policy for three decades has been the notion that nuclear war can
best be prevented by the possession of, and threat of retaliation with, nuclear weapons themselves. That is the doctrine of nuclear deterrence—a doctrine which can neither be proved nor disproved, logically or historically. Yet faith in deterrence as the cornerstone of national security has been remarkably persistent and virtually mystical. Its exotic mathematical and psychological formulas for maintaining peace through mutual terror have lent a seemingly transcendent quality to nuclear strategy which has tended to discourage the common citizenry from challenging its high priests. James Fallows, Washington editor of The Atlantic Monthly, recently mused:

The "best" minds of the defense community have been drawn toward nuclear analysis, but so were the best minds to be found in the monastery, arguing the Albigensian heresy, in the fourteenth century. A novel theory about how the Kremlin might respond to nuclear strikes may be advanced, may make the author's name, and may lead to billions in expenditures without entering any further into the domain of fact than did the monks' speculations about the nature of God.

Those "Christian realists" most influenced by Reinhold Niebuhr since 1950—and indeed most nonpacificists—have justified nuclear deterrence as an essential element in maintaining a balance of power versus the Soviet Union. It was in 1950 that the Federal Council of Churches' Dun Commission, named for Episcopalian leader Angus Dun and clearly dominated by Niebuhr's perspectives, pleaded for an arms buildup, discounted the possibility of disarmament, and rationalized not only nuclear deterrence but the possible use of nuclear weapons. The successor agency, the National Council of Churches, has yet to undertake a thorough re-examination of the issues of nuclear strategy, although its 1968 policy statement, Defense and Disarmament: New Requirements for Security, addressed many particular issues having to do with weapons and security. That statement continues to provide the policy base for NCC resolutions on such subjects as the nuclear freeze.

Until the past several years, the major critics of deterrence have been traditional pacifists and opposite to those nuclear strategists such as James Schlesinger and Fred Iklé who have argued that deterrence must be supplemented by counterforce—by threatening and preparing to use more "thinkable" nuclear weapons than those which are targeted on cities. Among Christian theologians, Princeton's Paul Ramsey has perhaps been the most articulate advocate of counterforce, largely by appeal to the rational criteria of
discrimination and proportionality in traditional just war doctrine. But others have claimed this to be a specious moral argument, given the power and unpredictability of nuclear weapons. The Reagan administration has somewhat toned down its early rhetoric about "nuclear war fighting" and "winning." Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger suggested that it might be more discreet to speak of "prevailing" in a nuclear war rather than "winning" it.

Without entering into such semantic squabbles, much less into strategic disputes between moderate advocates of deterrence and aggressive devotees of counterforce, we must note the recent entry of some church bodies and leaders into the deterrence debate. What is particularly noteworthy at present is the new challenge to deterrence which has come from nonpacifists.

An unplanned ecclesiastical debate over deterrence occurred at the United Nations in June, 1982. During the Second UN Special Session on Disarmament, the Vatican Secretary of State, Agostino Cardinal Casaroli, speaking in the name of Pope John Paul II, offered a provisional legitimation of deterrence. Nuclear deterrence, said Casaroli, might be "a step towards progressive disarmament" and therefore could be judged "morally acceptable"—although not an end in itself.

That statement was regarded by the U.S. Catholic bishops as a direct and authoritative intervention in their deliberations over their much-heralded Pastoral Letter on War and Peace, then in its early stages of development. When in their second of four drafts, they obediently invoked this papal language, they nevertheless proceeded to spell out what they regarded as the "negative dimensions of deterrence." Those five dimensions were:

1. Deterrence requires the intention to use strategic nuclear weapons which would violate traditional just war criteria of discrimination and proportionality.
2. If deterrence fails, the human consequence of nuclear war would be morally intolerable.
3. Deterrence requires a relationship of radical distrust.
4. There is no assurance of limits on weapons use if deterrence fails.
5. Maintaining large and costly nuclear arsenals for deterrence requires the diversion of resources from compelling human needs.

This contradiction between papal legitimation of deterrence and the bishops' critique could not long endure. Following consultations at the Vatican and further deliberation by the bishops, the five-point critique was deleted in the third and fourth (final) drafts.
That deletion was seized upon by Reagan administration officials as a vindication of U.S. deterrence policy, but the bishops insisted that their tolerance of deterrence was "strictly conditioned." Their support for a nuclear freeze and a comprehensive test ban and their rejection of first strike and nuclear war-fighting strategies clearly kept them at odds with administration nuclear policies, at least in detail.

In April, 1983, an unprecedented Pan-Christian World Conference on Life and Peace was held in Uppsala, Sweden. Hosted by one of the six presidents of the World Council of Churches, Archbishop Olof Sundby, the conference brought together Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and evangelical bodies. In the process of drafting and deliberating over its final "Message," the Uppsala gathering also brought deterrence to the forefront of ecumenical controversy. The conflict had been foreshadowed by the UN debate between the Holy See and the WCC. Catholics, Lutherans, and some Anglicans sought to mute the critique of deterrence which developed through four drafts. The drafting committee sought to balance its prophetic impulses with its pluralistic conference but only partially succeeded. There were eight abstentions and one Roman Catholic negative on the final draft of the Message, which read, in part:

The current military and political doctrine of nuclear deterrence must be challenged. The dangers of nuclear proliferation and accident, and the increasing sophistication of weaponry, leading to the concept of the so-called "limited nuclear war," all render the doctrine of nuclear deterrence increasingly dubious and dangerous from every point of view. Most of us believe that from the Christian standpoint reliance upon the threat and possible use of nuclear weapons is unacceptable as a way of avoiding war. Some are willing to tolerate nuclear deterrence only as a temporary measure in the absence of alternatives. To most of us, however, the possession of nuclear weapons is inconsistent with our faith in God, our concept of creation, and our membership in Christ's universal body. Nuclear deterrence is essentially dehumanizing, it increases fear and hatred, and entrenches confrontation between "the enemy and us." Most of us therefore believe that the existence of these weapons contradicts the will of God. For all of us obedience to that will demands a resolute effort within a specified time limit for their total elimination.

A third 1983 event, the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, also substantially addressed the topic of deterrence. With Amsterdam, the Sixth Assembly declared: "We believe that the time has come when the churches must
unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds."

As Protestant churches have been developing new peacemaking programs around disarmament issues in the early 1980s, they have repeatedly and increasingly confronted their constituents’ question: "What about the Russians?"

It has taken some time, even for the churches, to realize that peacemaking has less to do with weapons and their technical characteristics than with human beings and their attitudes toward other human beings. The Russian people have been regarded as America’s Number One enemies since 1945—yet the churches have been slow to develop educational and exchange programs to overcome that enmity. Perhaps the geography of missions partly explains that neglect: countries of heaviest missionary investment, like China and India, have received much more attention in the churches than have the Soviet Union or the Islamic states of Southwest Asia. Moreover, the official atheism of the Soviet Union, along with the repressive and sometimes aggressive conduct of the Soviet regime, has tended to incite religious antagonisms from many American Christians.

Beginning about 1982, the American churches have experienced a surge of interest in Russian churches and Soviet peoples. As official U.S. policies have regressed toward the animosities of the harsh Cold War of the 1950s, church leaders and congregations have become increasingly caught up in programs related to the USSR. This is hardly to say that the peacemaking programs are shaped by Communist influences: it is to recognize that at least some Christians, some of the time, earnestly seek to overcome hate-mongering—and even to love their enemies. Indeed, the development of a “theology of the enemy” has been a main theme in the new peacemaking programs.

A landmark event in the genesis of this new seriousness about US-USSR relations was the March, 1979, Consultation on Disarmament in Geneva, the first of the “Choose Life” consultations between U.S. and Soviet church leaders. Those leaders took their initial text from Deut. 30:19.

The 1979 meeting was a result of associations between U.S. and USSR members of the World Council of Churches Central Committee who shared a common concern about the nuclear arms race and who believed that the ratification of the SALT II Treaty was
the most important next step in curbing that race. Accordingly, they agreed to meet in Geneva in an effort to frame the very first joint theological statement ever made by official representatives of the churches of these two nations. The full text of “Choose Life,” about 500 words, was published in the official Soviet newspaper, Izvestie—strange place for Christian theology!

Participation in the “Choose Life” consultations unquestionably has been a transforming experience for some denominational heads who subsequently helped launch the new peacemaking programs of their communions and sought to strengthen the National Council’s work in this field. A second consultation in Geneva in August, 1980, took its text from Eph. 2:14: “[Christ] is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility.” This time there were more programmatic recommendations for interchurch relations across that dividing wall of hostility. As a result, the NCC established a US/USSR Church Relations Committee, chaired initially by Arie Brouwer, head of the Reformed Church in America, one who had been a principal drafter of the original “Choose Life” statement and who openly testified in the 1979 consultation as a kind of conversion experience.

When Brouwer left his post to become Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches in 1983, the chairmanship of the US/USSR Committee was given over to Bruce Rigdon, church historian and Russian specialist at McCormick Seminary in Chicago. The most spectacular fruit of Rigdon’s work has been NBC-TV’s two one-hour specials on “The Church of The Russians,” narrated by Rigdon, broadcast originally in July, 1983, and scheduled for reruns in June, 1984. These programs, drawing on more than fifty hours of videotaping in the USSR, are an extraordinary resource for confronting the vitality of Orthodox churches in an atheist, antireligious state. Vivid scenes of worship and liturgical music, holy days, seminary training, and interviews with church leaders challenge the ignorance and stereotypes of many Americans about the Russian people.

Another of Rigdon’s 1983 enterprises was a 40-member peacemaking seminar in the USSR under Presbyterian auspices but also with Reformed and United Church of Christ participation. After six months of required preparatory studies and two days of advance briefings, this group spent several weeks in May visiting Russian churches. Upon returning, they averaged about fifty programs per member during the rest of 1983, interpreting to
American churches their experience of the Russian Christian reality—probably more members of the Russian Orthodox Church alone than in all the member communions of the National Council of Churches. Many American congregations are now seeking to establish special ties with sister congregations in the USSR. Hundreds of church people now want to visit Soviet churches and communities, thereby becoming a growing burden upon the leadership and resources of Russian churches themselves. It may be doubted whether any single encounter between Russian and American Christians has had more immediate and widespread impact than that 1983 seminar.

One of the seminar participants, Don Nead, a campus minister at Purdue University, has since organized a special center to help church groups prepare for such exchanges. Named for a former United Presbyterian moderator noted for his peacemaking ministry, John Conner (who died in 1983), the John T. Conner Center for US-USSR Reconciliation at Purdue has recruited academic specialists in Russian studies as well as church leaders experienced in exchange programs to guide the center's work.

This new interest in all things Russian on the part of many American Christians may be a passing fancy, given the habits of novelty and the limits of attention span which are notorious in our churches and culture. But that interest just might help to generate public support for a renewal of détente and a more steadfast commitment to peacemaking.

Back in the 1950s, some "Christian realists" insisted that the word peace should never be allowed to stand alone: it should always be fortified by justice. "Peace with justice" was a common phrase three decades ago. Justice in that formulation usually referred to strong military forces to preserve freedom against communist tyranny. It tended to have conservative connotations. It was often invoked to defeat proposals for disarmament negotiations.

In the 1980s, "peace" once more is claimed by some Christians to be too weak or one-dimensional to stand alone. Again it is justice which is invoked to fortify peacemaking. "Peace with justice" has almost become the required language in American churches as well as in the world church. Only this time, justice has anything but conservative connotations: it insists on the need for radical social change on behalf of oppressed peoples.

Some Christians working for peace have contributed to this depreciation of the very word peace because they have been inattentive to the injustices suffered by the poor and by racial
minorities in our own society or to the chronic impoverishment of many Third World peoples. But the biblical word for peace, *shalom*, if it is fully understood, is hardly a weak or one-dimensional word. It connotes health and wholeness in the entire community where justice and love are the normal state of human relationships. The individuality of peace, justice, and security is powerfully and radiantly expressed in Isaiah 32 and the 85th Psalm.

These perspectives were clearly reflected in the final draft of the “Statement on Peace and Justice” adopted by the 1983 WCC Assembly. Vancouver declared:

Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace cannot be built on foundations of injustice. Peace requires a new international order based on justice for and within all nations, and respect for the God-given humanity and dignity of every person. . . . The ecumenical approach to peace and justice is based on the belief that without justice for all everywhere we shall never have peace anywhere.
"The most authentic sermons, I believe, are those which become theological events for both preacher and listener. The preacher ought to be intentional in seeking to preach in such ways that his or her sermons may emerge as theological events. When, then, is a sermon a theological event?"

Dean Willard Sperry once said to a class that "the chief purpose of the church is to make God real to human beings." A sermon becomes a theological event when through it persons come to a new and deepened awareness of the reality of God in their lives.

Some years ago while in the pastorate, Prof. Charles Milligan made copies of a number of his sermons available to his congregation. In an introductory statement he said:

The purpose of them [the sermons] has not been primarily to urge people to be good and religious. It has been to illuminate the significance of life, the thought being that a value or an opportunity clearly pointed out will do more to inspire and urge than any amount of verbal pushing or moralizing. . . . If from these or other of my sermons anyone has gained a deeper realization that it is in God we live and move and have our being, or that his life is richer than he knew, or that life is real and zestful and good if we have courage to make it so, or that wise persons trust the Ultimate Destiny implicitly, then they have neither been spoken nor heard in vain.

Professor Milligan evidently was thinking of the sermon as a creative, theological event, potentially kindling an awareness of...
God, disclosing a dimension of depth and wonder and possibility in existence often withheld from those who have missed the reality of God. Truly to preach is to proclaim the reality of God's active involvement in the world and in human lives. It is to help persons discern the presence of God in the experience of adversity, in struggles with self, in decision-making, in the search for meaning, in the quest for a deepened spirituality. The preacher is called not simply to interpret a text, but to interpret life itself—theologically.

Another way of putting it is to say that a sermon becomes a theological event when it kindles faith, nurtures growth in faith, relates faith to life. Samuel Miller once said that "faith is the total relationship of the total person with the total world." In contrast to the will to flee from the world or to fight the world, faith is the affirmation of the world as God's creation and the will to be a participating co-creator in the world. Faith is not a static reality; it is a style of being in the world. It is a swimming relationship to life and death.

Bishop J. A. T. Robinson wrote, "We need not fear flux; God is in the rapids as much as in the rocks, and as Christians we are free to swim and not merely to cling." (Christian Morals Today, Westminster Press, 1964, p. 20.) Faith sometimes involves clinging to the rocks; at other times it is manifest in trust and openness and commitment and expectancy as one moves through the flowing experiences of life. Sermons not only ought to kindle awareness of the holy in the ongoing experiences of life, they ought to evoke and nurture the will to participate with meaning in that sublime reality in which "we live and move and have our being." God is a pervasive reality to be discerned in the familiar and the unfamiliar, in growth and diminishment, in joy and sorrow, in work and play, in life and death. The sermon becomes a theological event when it leads to discernment of the holy and the will to move ahead in the light of the holy.

There are persons of simple faith and persons of struggling faith. Both are to be found in every congregation. There are persons who seldom if ever raise the tough theological questions, such as the problem of evil. Believing in the presence and goodness of God they go on their way with inner serenity, facing adversity and good fortune in a calm spirit, trusting that in the ways of God things somehow work together for good. On the other hand, there are those for whom the faith journey is not an easy one. They agonize over intellectual questions and doubts. They wrestle with tides of
the spirit. They struggle over ethical issues, wondering what the appropriate action is in a given situation for the person of faith.

Some of the giants in Christian history have been persons of struggling faith. There was much of the struggler in Paul, Augustine, Luther, Wesley, and others. In his *Confessions* Augustine gave expression to many of his spiritual struggles, addressing what he had to say to God. He lifted his struggles to the level of devotion. His faith grew out of the matrix of struggle, and his faith was large enough to include the experience of struggle. It is well for the preacher to remember that in almost any congregation there will be persons of simple faith and persons of struggling faith and some persons who experience elements of both. In addition there are some persons of little or no faith at all. All need to be affirmed. The sermon needs to communicate sensitivity to the uniqueness of each person's faith journey. It needs to communicate an invitation to take the next step beginning where he or she is.

**PREACHING AND THE COMING OF FAITH**

We know that many factors are involved in the coming and not coming of maturing faith. The nature of one's earliest experiences with one's mother has something to do with it. One's experiences of rejection and acceptance have something to do with it. Cultural conditioning has something to do with it. The presence or absence of models and mentors has something to do with it. Success and failure in enterprises undertaken has something to do with it. Participation in the life and languages of a community of faith may have a great deal to do with it.

What does the sermon have to do with it?

There is often a surprise element in the coming of faith. There is an element of wonder and mystery in the life of faith. But some of us are convinced that faith is often kindled and nurtured in the preaching-event.

In mainline churches most preaching is done in the context of corporate worship. Worship, in turn, presupposes a living tradition, a historic community of faith, symbols and images which express and communicate the reality of faith. An important difference between a cult and a church is the absence and presence of a sense of history and tradition. The preaching of which we are now speaking takes place in the context of worship and presupposes the living tradition of the church.

It would be difficult to produce scientifically tested data to prove
the relationship of preaching and the coming of faith. However, there are many persons who bear witness to what good preaching has meant in their lives and what it continues to mean in their lives. On the basis of personal experience and on the basis of what I know of the life stories of some persons, I am convinced that theologically grounded preaching is often a major "means of grace" in the life of faith.

Good preaching touches the three constituent elements of faith: belief, trust, and lived commitment. Good preaching facilitates maturing belief, deepening trust, outreaching commitment. Philips Brooks spoke of preaching as the conveying of truth through personality. Preaching does indeed involve a deeply personal element. It is a wondrous thing to see and hear a person bear witness to faith, interpret the meaning of faith, share the insights of a great tradition and offer the good news that there can be newness of life.

Paul spoke of the high privilege of being "approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel." He went on to say, "We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us" (I Thess. 2:4, 8). The preaching event is unique in bringing together the resources of tradition and experience in the context of worship, with a strongly personal dimension. Much enters into true preparation for preaching. Much sometimes flows from authentic preaching. For more persons than we know the sermon is a vehicle of faith-creating grace. It is a theological event.

RESOURCES AND GUIDELINES FOR PREACHING

If preaching is to be a theological event, kindling awareness of God and nurturing maturing faith, the question of resources and guidelines becomes a matter of paramount importance. To what norms is the preacher subject? If the sermon is a theological event from what sources is it to be derived? Whence comes the theological perspective which the preacher presupposes? What is the source or what are the sources of Christian theology?

In his book A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible, Robert Grant set forth an issue to be faced by every serious preacher:

The Bible is not the sole source of Christian theology, though it may be a primary one . . . But Biblical theology, even when successfully reconstructed, is not a substitute for Christian theology, the product of many
centuries of Christian thinking. Biblical theology can supply norms apart from which the church cannot remain Christian, but these norms do not constitute the whole of theology . . . the tradition is both prior and posterior to its written formulation, and it is just as important as scripture is, as a witness to the church's faith and life. To put the point another way, scripture is nothing but the written expression of tradition. (Macmillan, 1963, pp. 201, 202, 198.)

Grant makes it clear that in his judgment theology ought to be informed by living tradition, Scripture, and reason. The ongoing experience of the church through the centuries has its contribution to make.

When the United Methodist Church came into being in 1968, bringing together the former Methodist Church and the former Evangelical United Brethren Church, a commission on doctrine and doctrinal standards was requested to formulate a statement setting forth the theological stance of the new denomination. The commission brought its report in the form of a position paper to the 1972 General Conference, where it was adopted almost unanimously. It has appeared in the 1972, 1976, and 1980 editions of the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

Of particular interest is the perception of the church as a faith-affirming community, with room for a diversity of theological perspectives. The principle of pluralism is affirmed at the same time that guidelines for theological reflection are set forth.

The statement speaks of the "four main sources and guidelines for Christian theology: Scripture, tradition, experience, reason." The primacy of Scripture is affirmed, with the need of bringing "scholarly inquiry and personal insight" to the reading of Scripture. The statement says the Bible "is the primitive source of the memories, images, and hopes by which the Christian community came into existence and that still confirm and nourish its faith and understanding. Christian doctrine has been formed, consciously and unconsciously, from metaphors and themes the origins of which are biblical." The important roles of tradition, experience, and reason in theological reflection and the coming of faith are then considered.

Of great importance for anyone who would use these guidelines in facilitating theological reflection is the emphasis on bringing the four guidelines into interaction. We read that "theological reflection may find its point of departure in tradition, 'experience,' or rational analysis. What matters most is that all four guidelines be brought to bear upon every doctrinal consideration."
What does all this have to do with preachers in the Wesleyan tradition and others who would subscribe to the Wesleyan quadrilateral in their sermon preparation? The point is obvious. If the sermon is to be a theological event, if it is to speak of God and God’s relationship to the world and human experience, if it is to speak of faith and faith’s illumination of life and death, if it is to facilitate serious theological reflection and open the way to a new life in Christ, the resources of Scripture, tradition, experience and reason in interaction are to be employed. From this perspective biblical exegesis and interpretation are not enough. The preacher must seek to employ the fine art of communicating the good news “revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason” (Par. 67, 1980 Book of Discipline). Indeed, the preacher is called to be one who provides a model in the utilization of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason in interaction.

STORIES AND PARABLES IN PREACHING

When the sermon becomes a theological event it is partly because of the use of language. We are linguistically formed creatures. We live with and in language. There is a connection between the richness of one’s linguistic equipment (images, symbols, myths, metaphors) and the qualitative richness and depth of one’s faith experience. Language is a gateway to growing experience. In this awareness let us consider the power of stories and parables in preaching.

A story well told is a wondrous thing. A good story, like beauty, is its own excuse for being. Any day is enriched by the hearing or telling of a good story. Sometimes stories entertain. Sometimes they inform us of interesting, significant facts. Sometimes they kindle awareness of qualities and dimensions of life we might otherwise have missed. Sometimes a story reminds us of something in our own experience and helps us see that experience in a new perspective. Stories sometimes make us aware that we too have our stories.

Every preacher has learned by experience the importance of stories in preaching. Stories capture attention. Many persons who have difficulty following a carefully designed argument immediately identify with a story. Stories are frequently remembered long after the rest of a sermon is forgotten.

A parable normally takes story form. It is usually brief and is used
for teaching purposes. It may suggest a lesson or suggest the application of some truth. It may be used to illustrate or clarify a point. It may throw new light on a familiar experience by means of a striking simile or metaphor. It may kindle awareness of the divine in the secular.

It is interesting to reflect on what image of Jesus we would have if we knew nothing about him except the parables he told. We would know that he had a vivid imagination. He was not restricted by a literalistic way of seeing or expressing things. There was an element of playfulness and sometimes humor in calling attention to the way things are. He was not threatened by life's ambiguities. He was a person of compassion, feeling with and for persons. Looking at life through the lens of God's kingdom, he saw life as a gift, full of surprises, with God actively present. The kingdom, as Jesus perceived it, was not so much a place or region or community as the activity of God expressed in deeds. He kept inviting persons into a transformed and transforming quality of life. In so doing he often used the language of the parable. He communicated hope.

If the common people heard Jesus gladly was it not in part because he was such a good storyteller? He took the ordinary events of life and clothed them with meaning. He used languages and images which kindled, called into account, reversed some usual ways of thinking, evoked a response. In his use of parables Jesus turned many situations into theological events. Persons came to a deepened sense of the reality and presence of God. Faith was kindled and nurtured.

In his use of parables Jesus created a community of storytellers. It often communicates through these stories. The Christian community shares a treasury of stories. It invites persons to appreciate the significance of their own stories. As the community of faith shares in the preaching event it sometimes experiences the creative power of story in the form of parable. Perhaps a series of sermons drawing on the parables we are about to consider might help some persons to see more clearly and to walk more courageously as they make their spiritual journeys.

SUNDAY, JULY 15, 1984

Matthew 13:1-23

This parable is also found in Mark (4:2-20) and in Luke (8:4-15). In his book In Parables, J. D. Crossan presents an analysis of the versions of the parable (Harper and Row, 1973, pp. 39 ff.). In all
three versions of the parables we find the same essential elements: the sowing of the seed; the dire consequences of seed being sown along the path, on rocky ground, and upon thorns; the abundant harvest following the sowing of the seeds on good soil.

What features of the parable strike you most forcibly? Readers will respond differently. That fact suggests one of the distinguishing features of the parable as a teaching form. Persons can bring their own experiences and perceptions to the parable and in dialogue with the parable emerge with distinctive responses. There is reason to think that Jesus was aware of this fact and was intentional in leaving the door open to variations in the way persons experienced the parables. Later users of the parables have sometimes been more fixed in their utilization of the material.

Among my own response to the parable I find the following points to stand out:

(1) the use of the images of planting (sowing) and growth rather than apocalyptic imagery;

(2) the suggestion that growth is not automatic or inevitable; growth takes place along with activities and processes which thwart or prevent growth;

(3) hope and harvest may be found in a world where loss is real; and

(4) God is present in a world of polarities and seemingly contradictory forces.

Scholars are not of one mind in responding to such questions as who (in Jesus' thinking) was the sower? What was the seed? What is the main thrust of the parable? Is the major emphasis intended to be on the seed which did not issue in harvest or on the seed which fell in good soil? Is the harvest regarded as a present fact (calling for immediate action) or is it a hope for the future, calling for patience and diligence? I do not presume to know the answer to all these questions, but I am convinced that what we do know about Jesus would lead us to the conclusion that he told this and other parables against the background of his conviction of God's initiating action in the world and in human affairs; his belief that the kingdom of God (heaven) is at hand and persons are called to respond in hope and commitment and trust to that good news; that the reality of devouring birds, the scorching sun, and choking thorns cannot thwart a good harvest or destroy the presence of the kingdom in the present or prevent its further coming in the future. God règne.

In verses 10-17 we find a response to the question of the disciples, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" Jesus' baffling reply
suggests that there are insiders and outsiders, those to whom it is
given to know the secrets of the kingdom and those to whom the
secrets are not given. "This is why I speak to them in parables,
because seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear, nor do
they understand" (13:13). Is the implication that parables are used
to obscure the kingdom message? Or is the point that since there
are those who cannot comprehend the literal message of the
kingdom another form of communication must be used? One can
think of several possibilities.

In Mark 4:11-12 we read, "And he said to them, 'To you has been
given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside
everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not
perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they
should turn again, and be forgiven.' " Then follows an interpreta-
tion which is essentially the same as that found in Matt. 13:18-23.

C. H. Dodd questions the theory that these words reflect the
thought of Jesus.

Now this whole message is strikingly unlike in language and style to the
majority of the sayings of Jesus. Its vocabulary includes (within this short
space) seven words which are not proper to the rest of the Synoptic
record, . . . These facts create at once a presumption that we have here not
a part of the primitive tradition of the words of Jesus but a piece of apostolic
teaching. (Parables of the Kingdom, Scribner's, 1936, p. 3.)

Let us return to the parable itself. The emphasis is not on the
sower: we hear no more about him after the initial statement that he
went out to sow and "as he sowed. . . ." The main thrust is on
what follows: the dire results of seed falling along the path, on
rocky ground, upon thorns, and the happy results of seed falling on
good soil. If Jesus is referring to his own mission he may well have
reference to the importance of receptivity on the part of the hearer
and the abundance of the harvest which now calls for laborers. A
hopeful note is strongly indicated. The fact of some seed being
devoured or scorched or choked does not preclude the possibility of
a good harvest. There is some loss in the process of sowing. Thus,
there is the point that certain conditions are to be fulfilled if there is
to be harvest and harvest does indeed come when the right
conditions are fulfilled. If the sermon is to be a theological event,
nurturing maturing faith and hope in the community of faith, the
parable of the sower offers rich resources, in conjunction with
insights from tradition, experience, and reason.

Two features of the parable speak to the contemporary search for
faith. The first has to do with the reality of devouring birds, the scorching sun, and the choking thorns. The parable simply reports these realities but does not pass judgment on them. They are there. Indeed, they are there in human experience and sometimes seem to pose a threat to faith. Loss occurs in the processes of sowing. Not all efforts are productive. It is evident that human beings do not constitute the whole of reality; there are the birds, the sun, and the thorns. In the divine order birds, the sun, and thorns have a place. Human life is to be understood in a matrix of events; it is not the center of everything. There is an ecology of the universe to be taken into account.

These facts have a stern side to them. Many persons would like to think that the human creature is the center of the universe and the culmination of all nature, with the attendant right to control and exploit the rest of nature. Not so. Faith in its deepest sense has to do with a sense of sanctity in all creation and reverence for life in its wholeness. The call to faith is the call to life-affirmation in a world in which struggle and loss and wastage and risk and chance are facts. If we are to find meaning in life it is to be found in a world in which there seem to be cross-purposes and in which our realizations are partial. Life is the art of the possible.

The parable invites us to a more holistic view of life and the universe in which we live. Modern astronomy is opening our view to a universe of change and complex relationships, of change and transformation and surprise. J. B. S. Haldane said, “My suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose.” Our desire for a neat universe in which everything is predictable and there are few surprises is called into question by what we are learning; indeed, such a desire is called into question by the parable.

A second feature of the parable has to do with the harvest: “Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” If the parable is to be understood against the background of Jesus’ message of the kingdom, one’s interpretation will be influenced by one’s understanding of the kingdom. Did Jesus teach that the kingdom would come soon (Schweitzer)? Did Jesus teach that the kingdom had already arrived in his deeds and words (Dodd)? Did Jesus teach that the kingdom and end-time is in process of realization (Jeremias)? Scholars are not of one mind on this matter. But that persons are called to respond in hope and with a sense of responsibility to the vision of the kingdom is quite clear.
The parable is a parable of hope. God is indeed present and active in the course of events. There has been a “prevenient grace” manifest in the past. The harvest (becoming manifest and still more fully to be revealed) calls for more than a passive or waiting stance. It calls for a positive response of entering into the new day which has come and is coming. Any sermon which kindles the vision and call implied in the parable of the sower will indeed be a theological event.

Preaching in today’s world is done against the backdrop of two persistent threats: nuclear war and dehumanization in a completely mechanized society, with the human being a relatively helpless cog in the machine. Vital preaching is both realistic and hopeful. Jesus’ message of the kingdom was a hopeful message, but it also reckoned with facts one might wish were not there. Authentic Christian preaching in our time reckons with the dark side of the world’s picture, but what is more important, it affirms the hope which is based in God’s active presence in the world, in human capabilities and responsibilities, and in a coalescing of the divine and human factors.

The parables we are considering are helpful in illuminating the hope which can be the Christian’s. They do not say all that is to be said, but they identify factors which are often overlooked.

The parable of the sower is a case in point. It is a call to responsible action in a world which is less than ideal in the conviction that it is ultimately God who gives the growth. It speaks of the need for sowing in a world where there is loss and in which the outcome of some sowing is not guaranteed.

Martin Luther King, Jr., told the story of the elderly black woman who was trudging to work during the Montgomery bus boycott. Someone offered her a ride. She replied, “No, I want to walk. I’m not walking just for myself but for my children and my grandchildren. My feet are tired, but my heart is glad.” She was sowing the seed that she could sow. Who can tell the measure of the result?

Every Christian is called to place his or her stamp of hoping on the world. Some can make important decisions in high places. Some can speak through personal relationships. Some can be instruments of hope in their work and citizenship. Some can walk. We all can do something.

Toward the end of her life Margaret Mead spoke of the need for responsible hope in our troubled world. She said, “All these present-day difficulties are desperately important, but they are not
irreversible. We can do something about them all but it will take the combined efforts of all four generations.” We need human beings who act on the assumption that their sowing, their contributions make a difference.

In similar spirit Teilhard de Chardin called for a nobler view of the human being’s role in the cosmic processes. He spoke of the human being “not as a static centre in the world, but as the axis and leading shoot of evolution.” Granted the elements of risk and loss in the world, constructive efforts can go on, and some sowing issues in a harvest beyond human understanding.

About A.D. 100, Rabbi Tarphon said, “The work is not upon thee to finish, nor art thou free to desist from it.” All human beings are called to share in God’s ongoing work of creation. In many instances the undertaking is so vast that we cannot see the outcome; yet, it is not for us to “desist from” the enterprise. Each person can be an instrument of God’s agency in the world.

From prison Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “It is becoming clearer every day that the most urgent problem besetting the Church is this: How can we live the Christian life in the modern world? Must not that question be answered by each individual Christian in the light of his or her circumstances? But whatever the answer may be, surely it must be an expression of hope and personal decision. It was Dante who said “the hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who, in time of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality.”

In the parable of the sower Jesus pictured the kingdom as issuing from or related to processes of sowing. Where shall we look for sowers today? Being Christian in the modern world has something to do with placing our personal stamp of hoping on the world. It has to do with our own share in the sowing which is needed. In speaking of the various ways in which Christians bear their witness and make their contributions, Kenneth Boulding has said, “the Christian ethic flows from the agony of the cross, repeated continually in the life of human beings. Out of the agony can come surprisingly different answers. . . . But we can at least ask at the end of each day, ‘What have we done for humanity?’ And what we have done for humanity we have done for God.”

SUNDAY, JULY 22, 1984

Matthew 13:24-43

The parable of the wheat and the tares is found only in Matthew. The parable of the mustard seed is found in Matthew, Mark, and
Harvest is both the ingathering of the crop and the separation of wheat and tares. (Parables of the Kingdom, pp. 149, 163.)

One can leave the door open to varieties of possible exegesis and interpretation and still find in this parable statements of great importance. Evil intentions are real. Growth of good often takes place in the face of opposing realities. God's future is not prevented from coming by various kinds of weeds. Harvest involves both ingathering and judgment. Crossan has suggested that parables “give God room” (Dark Interval, Argus, 1975, p. 121). The parable of the wheat and the tares clearly affirms the presence and sovereignty of God in a world in which evil intentions, evil deeds, and opposing forces are facts.

Human beings must live in a world which is less than ideal. All persons live within limitations of some sort. There are factors and forces which seem to thwart efforts for good and growth. Life is the art of the possible. Living faith is the affirmation of the venture of life in hope even when there are difficult obstacles. To believe in God is to take the step or steps one can take in the conviction that
one is not alone in the enterprise of living courageously. God is in the midst of the struggle.

The parables of the mustard seed and leaven raise the question of the nature of the divine agency and providence in a world in which there is both good news and bad news. The theme of hope is implicit in the parables. They are parables of encouragement and assurance.

Crossan compares three versions of the parable of the mustard seed: that in Mark, in Q, and in the Gospel of Thomas (In Parables, pp. 45-49). He writes, "The original image was a contrasting diptych of the proverbially small (smallest of all?) mustard seed and the large branches of the grown mustard shrub beneath which the birds can find shade" (p. 49). Some interpretations of the parable place primary emphasis on the idea of small or insignificant beginnings issuing in large and significant results. Mark and Matthew, for example, may have used the parable to suggest that the church, small in its beginnings, is the germ of the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, if the earliest form of the parable did not stress the point of smallness and largeness the emphasis comes to be placed on the blessings of the kingdom being now available to all persons. The Psalmist said, "By them the birds of the air have their habitation; / they sing among the branches" (104:12). The parable may suggest that the kingdom is akin to the harvest; growth has accomplished its end; the large shade of the plant is available. In pursuing this line of thought Dodd writes: "That multitudes of the outcast and neglected in Israel, perhaps even of the Gentiles, are hearing the call, is a sign that the process of obscure development is at an end. The Kingdom of God is here: the birds are flocking to find shelter in the shade of the tree" (The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 154). Thus, the parable includes the theme of growth, but it also introduces the theme of surprise and the gift-like character of nature. The largeness of the shade issuing from the small seed bears witness to the wonder and surprise and hope of the kingdom. It also bears witness to the nature of God's active presence.

Let us turn now to the parable of the leaven (Matt. 13:33). It has been pointed out that the use of the figure "leaven" is surprising in that this figure is used by rabbinical writers and also Paul (I Cor. 5:6-8) and Gospel writers (Matt. 16:6 and Mark 8:15) as symbolic of evil influence. The use of leaven in a positive sense in the parable might in itself evoke attention. The contrast between a small amount of yeast with the large amount of dough is often noted.

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In reading what scholars have to say about the parable of the leaven, one is struck by the diversity of analyses and interpretations. Jeremias notes the contrast between the "tiny morsel of leaven" and the mass of meal. How incredible that the kingdom of God could issue from such simple and small beginnings! Jeremias writes of the kinship of the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven in suggesting that "out of the most insignificant beginnings, invisible to the human eye, God creates his mighty Kingdom, which embraces all the peoples of the world" (The Parables of Jesus, p. 149).

Dodd finds the central idea of the parable of the leaven to be focused on the process of fermentation; so the kingdom works in the world. The divine power is manifest not so much in spectacular events as in gracious words of preaching and in gracious deeds of service and healing. Dodd writes, "There is a power which works from within, like leaven in dough, and nothing can stop it" (The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 160).

Drawing on the work of Bornkamm, who held that the essential mystery of Jesus was in making the reality of God present, bringing the present world to an end, Robert Funk suggests that the parable of the leaven gathers up essential elements in the message of Jesus: loss of the received world (leaven); the mystery of the kingdom (hidden); the presence of God (three measures of meal). (Jesus as Precursor, Fortress Press, 1975, p. 66-68.) Of special interest is his reinterpretation of the apocalyptic mode of speaking, stressing the shattering effect of Jesus' image of the kingdom on a world dominated by the law and traditions of the fathers.

The manner in which the parable confronts widely held views of power in our modern world, and the cynicism and pessimism which sometimes flow from them is significant. We live in a world which stresses bigness and the might of coercive power. We place our trust not only in the accumulation of things but in the accumulation of things with power to coerce or destroy. Where is God in such a world?

Those of us who take seriously the doctrine of the immanence of God believe that the preacher is called upon to declare and point to the presence and working of God in the matrix of our existence, often working quietly, undramatically, and yet transformingly. There is power in ideas and ideals and in examples of integrity. There is power in love and the search for justice and the search for truth. There is power in compassion and the will to communicate. There is power in visions of hope.
If the preacher is called to make God real to human beings he or she must seek to show how God is operationally present in the world of our experience. The preacher must show that God is indeed making a difference in the world. The preacher must show how human beings can relate to God and share in God's creating, redeeming, life-giving work. To do this with integrity the preacher must have a theology of nature, a theology of culture, a theology of human relations, a theology of emerging personhood, a theology of hope. The need is for a theology which unites deep inwardness with outreaching concern. The parable of the leaven provides resources for sermons which deal with the reality of God. The divine presence often goes unrecognized for the divine agency is, indeed, often like leaven.

In our own time, as in biblical times, the divine presence often goes unrecognized. It is important to recall that much of the Old Testament was written in retrospect. The perspective of the years was required to recognize the presence of God in situations which at the time were thought to prove the absence of God. Out of the painful experience of displacement in Babylon the cry came, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Ps. 137:4). Yet in time the faithful Jew came to see that not only was God present in the Babylonian experience, the vision of God grew greater through that experience. In Isa. 45:5 God says, "I gird you, though you do not know me." Out of the pain of the exile emerged the vision of "the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth" (Isa. 40:28).

Why in our own time do we sometimes miss the divine reality in the experiences we are passing through? Perhaps, like the ancient Hebrews, we sometimes associate God with the familiar; we fail to discern the holy in the new, the strange, the unfamiliar. Sometimes we think of God as being located in just one space or place; yet later we may come to know that God is a pervasive reality in whom "we live and move and have our being." Sometimes we think of God as being located in just one space or place; yet later we may come to know that God is a pervasive reality in whom "we live and move and have our being." Sometimes we go on the assumption that the experience of God involves a particular feeling; perhaps later we realize that many different kinds of feeling may attend the divine presence; indeed, we may experience God in many different ways: not merely as comforter, but as challenge, not only as sustaining presence, but as prod; not only as creator and redeemer, but as the One who calls forward into the new.

The parable of the leaven suggests still another reason why we
may sometimes miss the divine reality in our midst: we tend to associate the divine presence with the dramatic, with sudden transformation, with coercive power. The parable reminds us that the kingdom of God (heaven) may come in quieter, less dramatic, but more awesome ways.

In his book *Adventures of Ideas*, Alfred North Whitehead reports that toward the end of his life Plato came to the conviction that the divine element in the world “is to be conceived as a persuasive agency and not a coercive agency.” Whitehead then goes on to say that what Plato stated as a theory, Christianity came to affirm in the Christ story:

The essence of Christianity is the appeal to the life of Christ as a revelation of the nature of God and of his agency in the world. . . . There can be no doubt as to what elements in the record have evoked a response from all that is best in human nature. The Mother, the Child, and the bare manger: the lowly man, homeless and self-forgetful, with his message of peace, love, and sympathy: the suffering, the agony, the tender words as life ebbed, the final despair: and the whole with the authority of supreme victory.

I need not elaborate. Can there be any doubt that the power of Christianity lies in its revelation in act, of that which Plato divined in theory? (Macmillan, 1933, p. 214.)

The transformations of life which have come through the Christian vision and faith have not come by way of legalistic demands or threats of punishment or coercion in some other form. They have come through “the upward call of God in Christ” evoking a response of devotion, trust, and commitment. They have come through the transforming power of ideas, ideals, and examples of loving persons.

We have come to a point in history when it is given us to know that God is not a God of magic or occasional intervening rewards and punishments, or a God who guarantees that everything is going to come out all right. Rather, God is the integrity which underlies reality, the creative power making for wholeness in nature and in human relations, the luring and transforming power expressed in creative ideas, beliefs, and ideals calling forth the best in human beings. God is undergirding presence through all life brings, the redemptive power which in love transmutes some of loss and suffering into gain. To know this God, to relate to this God, to seek to organize life and relationships around this God is to know the hope of a new order of things. It is to find inspiration for carrying on.
Kenneth Rexroth wrote "Against the ruin of the world there is only one defense—the creative act." In the integrity which upholds the order of things, in the creativity which brings forth the new out of what might be, in the power which brings new dimensions of wholeness out of life's brokenness, in the human beings who, inspired by great ideas and ideals, bring promise and healing to the world doing the creative thing, God is present. God and the kingdom of God are like leaven.

In affirming that he had a dream Martin Luther King, Jr., not only revealed much about his own motivation, he inspired thousands of others to commitment in a great cause. In pressing on against great odds in the belief that "truth and love prevail" Gandhi became the instrument of justice and freedom. In the lives of countless unnamed persons who bless the world by their presence, inspired by visions of justice and love, the persuasive power of God is manifest. Headlines feature the conflict and catastrophes of the world. But there is more to be said. James Reston wrote, "A top-flight reporter keeps asking, 'What's not getting reported? What is the big story everybody is missing?" The big story is that God is present and at work in our world. To discern the divine presence and to seek to relate to what God is doing in the world is to fulfill the human role in one's time. The kingdom of God is like leaven.

SUNDAY, JULY 29, 1984

Matthew 13:44-52

Although the parables of the treasure (Matt. 13:44) and the pearl (Matt. 13:45) differ in matters of detail, they may well be considered together since they are getting at the same points. The treasure is discovered and comes as a great surprise. The pearl, on the other hand, is found after a period of searching. However, both the figure of the hidden treasure and pearl of great value introduce images which would readily be recognized by the hearers. Both parables point to the kingdom (the final realization and fulfillment of God's reign over the world) as the supreme good.

Jeremias holds that the Matthew account of the parable of the treasure is original. Hidden treasure is said to be a favorite theme in Oriental folklore. Burying was a form of security against theft. The ethics of the man who sells what he has in order to buy the hidden treasure is not the point at issue. The value of the treasure is not the point at issue. The value of the treasure and the joy in finding it are
the central points. Jeremias finds the parables of the treasure and
the pearl to be twin-parables, both giving somewhat surprising
twists to the stories. He writes:

When that great joy, surpassing all measure, seizes a man, it carries him
away, penetrates his inmost being, subjugates his mind. . . . The decisive
thing in the twin parable is not what the two men give up, but their reason
for doing so: the overwhelming experience of the splendour of their
discovery. Thus it is with the Kingdom of God. The effect of the joyful
news is overpowering; it fills the heart with gladness; it makes life’s whole
aim the consummation of the divine community and produces the most
whole-hearted sacrifice. (The Parables of Jesus, Scribner’s, 1954, p. 201.)

Dodd likewise speaks of the images of treasure and pearl as being
familiar in the setting in which Jesus spoke. He finds the main
emphasis of the parables, not the supreme worth of the kingdom,
but on the cost of entering the kingdom. A call to action and
commitment is implied in the parables. Dodd writes:

With the fundamental principle in mind, that Jesus saw in his own
ministry the coming of the Kingdom of God, we may state the argument
thus: You agree that the Kingdom of God is the highest good: it is within
your power to possess it here and now, if, like the treasure-finder and the
pearl merchant, you will throw caution to the winds: “Follow me!”
(Parables of the Kingdom, p. 87.)

Crossan looks upon the parable of the treasure as “a parable of
reversal.” In the surprise advent of the kingdom (a gift of God) the
finder’s world is turned around. What in the past has seemed of
supreme importance is now relinquished for the joy of the
kingdom. A new world is opened up. The coming of a new world
which could not have been imagined or programmed now calls for
action. A life-style of carefully planning one’s future on some
human timetable is called into question. We are to be open to God’s
gift-like surprises (In Parables, pp. 34 ff.).

If one employs the insights of Jeremias, Dodd, Crossan and
others there are several directions in which one might go in sermon
planning. I shall make one suggestion. It seems to me that these
parables raise questions of the most fundamental importance for
every human being. The questions are more implicit than explicit.
They have to do with the meaning of life. Vital preaching must come
face to face with that issue. Many persons in our time ask the
question of salvation in terms of the question of meaning.

The theologian-in-residence is called to be an interpreter, an
interpreter not simply of a text or of a theological doctrine but of life itself. Unless the parables we are considering confront the reader or listener with the question of meaning in his or her own situation they have not come alive. A sermon drawing on these parables becomes a theological event when it leads a person to ask, "What are my centers of value? What am I prepared to sacrifice in order that life may have greater meaning? How does my faith and hope in God relate to my sense of purpose in living?"

How many persons do you know whose basic response to life is one of joy, expectancy, glad surprise? That is what we are told is the response of one to whom the promise and the possibility of the kingdom is real. How many persons do you know who have found significant centers of value for which they are willing to sacrifice all else? The parables of the treasure and the pearl confront the reader and listener with the question of meaning in his or her own existence.

Whitehead wrote, "that religion will conquer which can render clear to popular understanding some eternal greatness incarnate in the passage of temporal fact" (Adventures of Ideas, p. 41). Nothing less than the vision of an eternal greatness in the matrix of our experience can evoke a sustained sense of wonder, joy, glad surprise and expectancy through the ups and downs of life. The vision of the kingdom is a vision of an eternal greatness. The tragedy is that so many persons have no vision of an eternal greatness. Life is "so daily" with little kindling sense of meaning. At best their treasure is nothing greater than the satisfactions which attend possessions, position, power, self-indulgent pleasure. After a time these things wear thin. What, then, is the great treasure of which the Gospel speaks?

George Santayana wrote, "The vistas it [religion] opens and the mysteries it propounds are another world to live in; and another world to live in—whether we expect ever to pass wholly into it or no—is what we mean by having a religion" (Reason in Religion). The image of kingdom is the image of "another world to live in." One need not subscribe to cosmological views of apocalypticism in order to believe that one age and one world can come to an end and a new age and a new world come into being. We can continue to live in the same world as do other people in a physical and geographical sense while entering a new world of perception and sensitivity and meaning. Apocalypticism can have an existential as well as a cosmological interpretation.

Every preacher has the responsibility of sharing his or her theology of meaning. What is the treasure which, by the grace of God,
transforms existence into life? What is that quality of life, the possibility of which, justifies the pain of existence? It is not enough to talk about hope or the kingdom in the abstract to persons who are struggling with the sense of futility. Ours is a world in which we choose our values and then pay for them. Good preaching ought to clarify the options we have.

My own theology of meaning involves four basic points: (1) In response to the vision of the creating God (to whom creation is an end in itself) there comes meaning through appreciation of life's intrinsic values. Beauty, play, learning, fellowship, and supremely love are their own excuses for being. Martin Buber spoke of "the hallowing of the every day." Any day is rendered meaningful and holy in the savoring of life's intrinsic values as gifts of God. (2) In response to the vision of the sanctity of human life, meaning comes as we mature in the sense of our personal worth and as we mature in our unique personhood through the challenges, struggles, and testing experiences of life. (3) In response to the vision that we are members one of another, meaning comes through creative human relationships. More specifically meaning comes as we learn to receive and give graciously. The art of loving is the art of practicing reciprocity—receiving what others have to share with us; contributing to others what we have to share. (4) In the vision that it is God in whom we live and move and have our being, there is meaning in coming to know God and to love God more deeply in the midst of life's experiences. To seek to share in God's creating and redeeming work, to be open to God's grace as we deal with life situations, to live in gratitude and grace knowing that life is a gift and a stewardship, to face death in the awareness that nothing can separate us from the love of God, and in the awareness that in our dying we can contribute to the treasury of value which is God's is to find a quality of life and an experience of meaning which transcends all other ways of life. Augustine put it well: "O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee."

If there is any "solution" to the problem of evil it lies in the possibility of meaningful existence in a world in which sin, suffering, and death are facts. We give our own personal response to the problem of evil in the way we deal with the raw materials of life, seeking to be instruments of God's love and peace.

Any sermons which draw on the parables of the treasure and the pearl in confronting persons with the question of their own centers
of value and with the possibility of true meaning in life will be theological events.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1984

Matthew 18:21-35

This parable, which is found only in Matthew, is a parable of the last judgment. It teaches that the love which characterizes discipleship and participation in the kingdom is a love which forgives. The breaking in of the kingdom involves accounting, and the heart of the accounting has to do with the readiness to forgive. This brings us to an issue of crucial importance in Jesus' concept of the kingdom.

The imagery of the parable is significant. The king (God) is dealing with a servant. The amount of money involved in the transaction is very large, suggesting that the servant may have been intended to be a satrap, responsible for the money from his province. The king's forgiveness was no trifling matter. The amount of the money was great. The implication seems to be that the servant's inability to pay involved gross negligence or wrongdoing.

In contrast to the large sum owed the king by his servant was the relatively small sum (one hundred denarii) owed to the servant by his fellow-servant. Yet, although he had experienced the forgiveness of the king, the servant showed no mercy on the one who was in debt to him. The experience of being forgiven did not issue in a forgiving spirit.

The parable goes on to suggest that in the final judgment both judgment and mercy are operative. Where there is the readiness to forgive, there is mercy. Where this readiness is absent there is judgment without mercy.

The parable speaks of forgiveness which springs "from your heart" (18:35). Having been forgiven it is to be expected that one will have it in his or her heart to reach out to others in forgiveness. It is more than a legal matter; it is a matter of gratitude for what one has received; it is a matter of feeling and compassion.

Particularly helpful discussions of this parable are found in Jeremias (The Parables of Jesus, pp. 210 ff.) and in Crossan (In Parables, pp. 105-7). Crossan suggests that this parable may have been used by Matthew as counsel to a disturbed and divided community. Crossan also points out that according to the parable there comes a point where God does not forgive the unforgiving spirit.

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This parable opens the door to a wealth of insights into the divine-human experience of forgiveness. The preacher who would address himself or herself to this theme would do well to draw not only on the parable but on insights emerging from contemporary theology and the behavioral sciences. We are learning much about the dynamics of forgiveness in relation to personality development and faith development. The preacher who would draw on guidelines of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason will find that the theme of becoming more fully human through the experiences of forgiving and being forgiven has been dealt with in ways which have contemporary relevance.

Some years ago I had a luncheon engagement with the head of the department of psychiatry at the University of Colorado medical center. He was late for our appointment. As it turned out, he was seeing a deeply troubled patient. When he finally arrived he began the conversation by saying, "I wish you theologians would come up with a credible doctrine of forgiveness." The patient he had been seeing was imprisoned in a sense of guilt.

As it happened I was seeing a parishioner in those same days with a related problem. An extremely conscientious person, this parishioner considered herself to be falling far short in doing all the things a Christian ought to be doing and being all that a Christian ought to be. It seemed that the harder she tried the worse things became. Not only was she dragging her past with her, she seemed unable to accept the gift of new days, new opportunities, new joys. She desperately needed the resources of a credible doctrine of forgiveness.

Every pastor sees persons who are suffering the pain of tangled human relationships. In some instances mistakes have been made, pain has been inflicted. Is there any hope for the relationship? Is there any possibility of going beyond the past? A credible doctrine of forgiveness must have relevance for situations such as these. Whatever forgiveness may be, it is a reality to be experienced in the midst of the struggles, regrets, estrangements of life. It involves reunion where there has been separation, a new chapter of relatedness where there has been brokenness. It involves what Rudolf Bultmann called "freedom from the past; openness to the future."

The experience of grace in the midst of a broken or badly impaired relationship due to mistakes or failures of some kind does not mean that the past is erased; it does mean that one has been enabled to move beyond the past. As new factors come into the
situation, as new commitments are made, as one opens himself or herself to the healing, "pulling-together" work of God, new chapters of life unfold. One session of a cooking school was entitled "Making the Most of the Leftovers." Forgiveness is that wondrous working whereby fragments of life are brought together in a new kind of relationship and reality.

Probably in all the world there is no responsible adult whose record does not include some kind of failure, mistake, or missed opportunity. How fine it would be to go back and transform the failure, erase the mistake, or seize the lost chance! But the past is beyond recall, and sometimes today is burdened by the weight of consequences of what has gone before.

Added to the tragic consequences of what has gone before may be the weight of regret, remorse, and a sense of guilt which in some instances is crippling and well-nigh intolerable. There are situations in which regret plays a needed and constructive role; there are others in which the sense of guilt may have a paralyzing effect. A healthy experience of forgiveness involves moving through mistakes and regrets into a new chapter of life deepened by experience and learning.

A credible doctrine of forgiveness must deal with the role of conscience in human experience. Erich Fromm has distinguished immature and mature conscience. Immature conscience is based in fear of rejection and punishment on the part of the authority figure, be it parent or God. The mature conscience is animated by self-chosen goals, a sense of value, a productive relation between the individual and the world. The growing of a maturing, healthy conscience is a major factor in personality growth and in religious growth. Home, church, and school ought to provide settings for the nurturing of the healthy conscience.

The parable of the ungrateful servant implies that the kingdom is open to those of a forgiving spirit. We now know that a forgiving spirit is nurtured from the early years of life onward. Parents who invoke the sense of guilt to control a child, sometimes associating guilt with perfectly natural functions, may be doing more damage than they realize. Not only are they laying foundations of resentment on the part of the child in later years, they may be nurturing what Fromm calls an immature conscience. Fromm wrote, "The most effective method for weakening the child's will is to arouse his sense of guilt" (Man for Himself, Rinehart, 1947, p. 155). A child so treated may find it difficult in later years to express a forgiving spirit which "comes from the heart." Furthermore, he or
she may transfer the image of the authoritarian, punishing parent to the image of God. A far better way is to nurture in the child a sense of value, the need for disciplines related to those values, a sense of wonder, and the blessedness of being loved. Erik Erikson has reminded us of the crisis between the encouragement of a sense of initiative and that of a sense of guilt in the early years. Foundations of the forgiving spirit are laid in these early and critically important years.

Forgiveness has to do with one-to-one relationships, but it goes further. There can be forgiving groups and even forgiving societies. Winston Churchill wrote:

The mood and temper of the public with regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilization of any country. A calm recognition of the rights of the accused . . . constant heart-searching by all charged with the duty of punishment; a desire and an eagerness to rehabilitate . . . tireless efforts toward the discovery of creative and regenerative processes . . . unfailing faith that there is treasure, if only you can find it, in the heart of every man. These are the symbols which mark and measure the stored up strength of a nation, proof of the living virtue in it (Probation, December, 1941).

Whether forgiveness takes place between two persons, or within a group, or within society, it marks a transcending of the past. It marks the coming of a new chapter in a relationship hopefully deepened by what has gone before. God is the creative reality making for wholeness; to enter into a forgiven relationship with another human being is to enter a forgiven relationship with God.

In preparing a sermon on the theme of forgiveness, one might well reread Paul Tillich's sermon "You Are Accepted." Tillich reminds us of the importance of accepting one's acceptance. Forgiveness is more than a legalistic matter; it is a relational matter. One might well ask "In what sense, if any, did the ungrateful servant really accept his acceptance?" If faith is a matter of believing and trusting and active commitment it requires a sense of acceptance and forgiveness which frees one to move forward graciously in faith.

Modern personality studies make clear that we are profoundly relational creatures. No person is an island unto her- or himself. We come into being, we are nurtured, we are sustained, we find meaning through relationships. One way of saying this is to state that we are a nurtured species in which the mature care for the immature, the strong for the weak. The healthy direction of a human life is toward growth and maturing. However, no one achieves a static perfection
or static maturity. There is something of the child in all of us; we need help and reassurance; we have undeveloped capacities; we face unresolved problems; we make mistakes. To keep moving ahead in becoming more fully human we all need experiences of being understood, being accepted, being encouraged "in spite of..." We need a continuing forgiveness.

Sermons dealing with forgiving and being forgiven might well take account of four themes:

First, we are all recipients of a continuing forgiveness. Fritz Buri has defined grace as "the gift character of life." Daily we receive permission to go on from where we have been. Sometimes the gift of forgiveness is given us by those who do not permit a personal relationship to be broken because of a weakness or mistake on our part. Sometimes the gift is given us in the provision that while we cannot erase the past we can go beyond it. We do not need to be enslaved by the past. We need not make a career of dragging the past with us. There is, as Bultmann pointed out, a new life of faith wherein we are free from the past and open to the future. Life does, indeed, have its gracious dimension, mediated through persons and places and experiences. At the heart of life is the divine, creative caring which ministers to us if we are open. We are recipients of a continuing forgiveness.

Second, to accept one's acceptance, to internalize forgiveness, is to be made free to reach out to others in grace and forgiveness. There is a deeply personal dimension in the movement from being forgiven to being a forgiving person. The ungrateful servant was forgiven but did not, in turn, forgive. Some sort of blockage was there. To take into oneself the experience of forgiveness is to be changed. Barriers are removed. One sees oneself in others. Compassion emerges. When Jesus spoke of forgiving your brother "from your heart" he was speaking of something that goes deeper than simply saying "Let's forget it" or "I won't hold it against you." He was speaking of a relational matter; the forgiveness of which Jesus spoke springs from "the heart." What can that mean? I suggest that a forgiveness which springs from the heart is motivated by three things: (1) gratitude for the forgiveness which one has experienced; (2) compassion for others, recognizing in the vulnerability and weakness of others one's own vulnerability and weakness; (3) the will to affirm the other as a person of worth. Without these forgiveness is at best a legalistic matter. With these a new level of relationship is created. Jesus was concerned with the quality of life and heart which would characterize participants in the kingdom.
One who is motivated "from the heart" moves from the experience of being forgiven to a more compassionate, forgiving, affirming spirit toward others.

Third, there is a stern side of forgiveness; if there is mercy there is also judgment. The parable concludes on a sobering one. It speaks of the judgment upon those who "do not forgive your brother from your heart." What are we to make of this in the light of Jesus' earlier statement about forgiving one's brother seventy times seven? The implication of the parable seems to be that the kingdom of heaven involves relationships of such a character that the heartless or utterly unforgiving spirit has no place in it. It is not so much a matter of God's willingness to forgive as it is about what is required for membership in the kingdom. In the divine order deeds have consequences; there is a continuing judgment written into the nature of things. Forgiveness does not make light of consequences; in many instances it seeks to right wrongs and to correct mistakes; but it also seeks to bring affirmation and compassion to the neighbor who is in need of an open future. The stern fact remains: to be a participant in the kingdom requires a loving quality of life and spirit. The ungrateful servant excluded himself from the highest good. That was his right. He paid a very high price for his decision.

Fourth, the church is called to be a fellowship of the forgiven and the forgiving. One of the early Methodist societies expelled a member who had "fallen into sin." When John Wesley learned of this he wrote a letter to the society asking, "Where is compassion? Where is the gospel?" He went on to say, "Let us set him on his feet once more." The church is called to be a fellowship of persons mediating the grace of caring and forgiving, opening to sincere persons the possibility of new chapters of life. In that spirit Alan Paton wrote:

I have no higher vision of the church than as the Servant of the World, not withdrawn but participating, not embattled but battling, not condemning but healing the wounds of the hurt and the lost and the lonely, not preoccupied with its survival or its observances or its Articles, but with the needs of mankind. (Instrument of Thy Peace, Seabury, 1975, p. 69.)

Matthew Fox has defined compassion as "a passionate way of living born of an awareness of the interconnectedness of all creatures by virtue of their common Creator" (A Spirituality Named Compassion, Winston Press, p. 34). An authentic Christian fellowship lives in an awareness of the shared humanity of all its members in relation to God.
BOOK REVIEW

THE SHAPE OF THE LITURGY
by Dom Gregory Dix

Review by John-Charles, S.S.F.


This first American printing of a seminal work of modern liturgical scholarship, first published in England in 1945, places us all in the debt of Seabury Press. The modern liturgical revisions of most major Christian denominations are either indebted to many of Dom Gregory Dix's insights and have been influenced by his basic thesis, or they, as a result of independent scholarship, often reflect a similar point of view. Certainly no one could rightly claim to be a liturgical scholar or expert, at least in the English-speaking world, without a knowledge of Dix's work. I was a seminarian at the time when Dix's work was becoming well-known, and I recall well the excitement which it engendered as well as the longing it awakened for liturgical reform and renewal.

Gregory Dix (1901-1952) was an Anglican Benedictine monk of the English foundation at Nashdom Abbey in Buckinghamshire, England. A graduate of Oxford, he was from 1924 to 1926 a lecturer in modern history at Keble College, Oxford. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1924 and entered the Order of Saint Benedict in 1925. He made his solemn profession in perpetual vows in 1940. He was elected prior of Nashdom in 1948. He became over the years one of the most famous scholars of the Anglican communion. In England he was widely known, well-beloved, and highly respected. His brilliance of intellect, his unconventional style, and his sharp but never cruel wit in controversy all combined to make him a public figure.

It was this background which helped to give to The Shape of the Liturgy

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(hereafter The Shape) so general an acceptance by a wide public. It was Dix's most significant work and its publication, along with the writings of Father Gabriel Hebert, S.S.M., and Bishop Henry de Candole, was largely responsible for the revival of liturgical study in the Anglican communion. The influence of that revival spread elsewhere and met with similar streams on the Continent and in America. Dix's own study was informed by a deep desire to see the church come alive through a clear understanding of the Eucharist and by a carrying out of that understanding in its communal life and witness. For him the Eucharist was constitutive of the church. It is not surprising, therefore, that he had a passion for Christian unity.

From his early days he had a continuing association with the Abbe Paul Couturier, the French Roman Catholic priest who came to be known as "The Apostle of Unity." Couturier's vision of costly prayer coupled with reparation for Christian disunity changed the whole approach of the Christian churches and led to the modern observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Dix's critical edition of The Apostolic Tradition of Saint Hippolytus of Rome appeared in 1929 and indicated his already deep knowledge of liturgical scholarship. More recent research and scholarship has corrected some of his work, but the value of Dix's edition has not been entirely done away. Basic to any understanding of Dix's thesis in The Shape is his belief that the Reformation had accelerated the "deformation" of the eucharistic liturgy. The roots of this process were to be found in the Constantinian establishment of the church. Behind that event was the primitive shape of the liturgy. That shape not only set out and set forth the Eucharist as determinative of the church and its life, but for Dix, and for many since his day, this primitive pattern had the advantage of avoiding those arguments of the sixteenth century which contributed to the loss of the Eucharist as "the sacrament of unity." The hardening of those arguments into denominational barriers is what we have for so long taken for granted. Among Lutherans in the English-speaking world Dix's work has been regarded favorably. It has been seen as a useful and valuable source of liturgical study and inspiration. In the Lutheran Church of America The Shape was studied in the preparation of the Eucharistic Prayer in the new Lutheran Book of Worship.

There is some evidence to suggest that in general terms modern Roman Catholic liturgical scholarship has taken account of Dix's thesis, although this communion is much less dependent on English liturgists than many others. The post-Vatican II reforms were, on the whole, more influenced by the work of continental liturgiologists who wrote after Dix's death. Some of this work, as Marshall's notes make clear, has corrected and added to Dix's conclusions.

In the Church of Scotland there was, of course, an awareness of Dix's work. His conclusions were, however, not held decisive even though his picture of the fourfold action was given due weight. The Rev. Dr. A. K.
Robertson, then convener of the General Assembly's Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion, was "guided by" Dix "in matters like the kiss of peace and the Agnus Dei" (from a letter addressed by the present convener to the author). Dix was not the force behind the major revisions of 1949. Instead there was a general desire to enrich the 1940 Book of Common Order's longer rite, "one of the greatest produced in the Reformed Church", in "view of the Church's universal liturgical heritage" (the same letter).

The early chapters of *The Shape* which popularized the idea of the fourfold action, made more widely understood the atmosphere of a domestic liturgy in a Roman house church and introduced many to the idea of the westward-facing position of the celebrant or president of the Eucharist. This idea had some influence on liturgical developments in the then-Anglican Province of the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon. But elements which Dix emphasized were already familiar to Indian liturgists, some of them from encounters with the ancient indigenous churches of that area. Dix's influence cannot be claimed for the shape of the developing Anglican liturgy in India. He was, however, influential in the heightening of the offertory in the 1947 revision. But the later 1960 revision departed from Dix's conclusions in significant ways.

In the inconclusive and continuing argument about whether the Last Supper was, as the Fourth Gospel suggests, a meal on the night before the Passover or whether, as others have argued, it was the Passover meal, Dix supported the Johannine chronology as accurate. Whether we accept his arguments and conclusions in this matter cannot gainsay the fact that his study gave to a wide audience a more accurate picture of common Jewish meals and their connection with the institution. This insight was to have profound liturgical significance. In a manner somewhat akin to such meals the Eucharist became an institution.

No work of scholarship is without its bias, no history without its criteria of selection and interpretation. In Dix's case some of his prejudices are so blatant that they are for us readily discernible and can be rejected without losing the benefit of what is excellent in his writing. Like most Anglo-Catholics and Roman Catholics of three generations ago, Dix failed almost totally to understand the Reformers. There was a block there which has only been removed by Vatican II, through the modern sympathetic biographies, and through the various joint interchurch commissions and talks. Dix's ungenerous, and patently unfair, gibe at Zwingli is a case in point. His myopia led him to describe Zwingli's eucharistic theology as the doctrine of the "real absence." In fairness to Dix it must be said that some conservative evangelicals, especially in Anglican circles, expounded Zwingli's theory in such a way as to deserve that description.

In his handling of the pre-Nicene background of eucharistic worship Dom Gregory was, as Fr. Jungmann noted in *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great* (1959, p. 12), at his best. Dix's principal claim is that the primitive Eucharist was, after the pattern of the Last Supper, composed of seven actions (48). The Eucharist as we have known it for centuries is a
drastic modification of this definitive shape. Gradually the pattern became a fourfold action (the offertory, the great prayer of thanksgiving, the fraction, and the communion). This modification, Dix speculated, was so remarkable that its general acceptance must have been made possible by its having originated in a Christian community of great authority and prestige: probably Rome (101). There is wide disagreement with the idea of Rome as the location of the change. There is less disagreement with the theory of how the change came about.

It cannot be urged too strongly, if Dix is to be rightly understood and his work to inform those unfamiliar with his theory, that he understood fully how medieval worship had suffered from decay. Nevertheless he emphasized, as must equally be understood, that in the Middle Ages the liturgy did what, until recently, modern worship has not done. The failure is there whether the liturgy is “antique” or revised. For what medieval liturgy did (and some modern liturgical celebrations are now doing) was penetrate “all human life with hopefulness and a purpose beyond its human littleness which it is hard to imagine in our secularized society” (604). It is this kind of insight which, occurring in a truly monumental work of scholarship combining highly technical material with passages of immensely popular appeal, makes The Shape so timeless.

Marshall points out, in his valuable long notes (769 ff.), how subsequent studies have modified Dix’s views on the anaphora, while more drastically, at the level of popular interpretation of liturgy, there has been irreconcilable disagreement about the nature of “the taking.” In the Church of England, and some other parts of the Anglican Communion, the issue of oblation and sacrifice have been hotly debated by conservative evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics.

One unhappy result of this debate, combined with the attempt in some places to create liturgy by synodical resolutions, has been that Dix’s viewpoint has won least acceptance among Anglicans, especially in the Church of England. Marshall’s notes refer to the sources for following the history and theology of liturgical revision since Dix’s time. His notes on the eucharistic theology and liturgical actions of the Reformers indicate the necessary corrections to Dix’s bias in order to have a fairer, more balanced, approach.

One of the more serious defects in Dix’s work springs from the standpoint from which he wrote—as an Anglican Benedictine committed to the observance of the liturgical office and Mass according to the Roman usage, in Latin. It was this which really accounts for his harsh and often ungenerous criticism of the Reformers, especially the Germans. For him they and Cranmer had deliberately set aside the norms of Christian worship. The Latin breviary and missal were for Dix “the set of texts which has not changed by more than a few syllables since Augustine used those very words at Canterbury” (745). It was this continuity which Dix valued and which he captured in expressive and gripping prose. It was the restoration of this continuity for which he longed and worked. Long after his death most modern liturgical reform has moved towards such a goal.
SHAPE OF LITURGY

for that, I am sure, he would be pleased. Dix was desirous not of restoring medieval piety but of offering to the people of God the glory and the compelling power of the primitive liturgy.

The pattern of the Eucharist is central to the practice of the Christian faith. Nothing else so clearly indicates the beliefs and priorities of the church: lex orandi, lex credendi. In his attempt to deal for Anglicans with a peculiarly Anglican problem—the roots of the liturgy behind Cranmer's revisions which become the rites to which most Anglicans were accustomed for four centuries—Dix elaborated a scientific study of the issues basic to all liturgical study. In doing so he produced a book which, despite all later correctives, is of abiding significance. He succeeded, again subject to more recent studies, in laying bare in a way which remains both attractive and persuasive not only when and how the shape of the liturgy came to be, but more importantly, why that shape came to be and why it has continued to the present.

Although there is a significant consideration in one chapter of Anglican liturgical development (to which Marshall's notes are an important addition), the bulk of the work, sixteen chapters, is a chronological presentation of the liturgy as "the common inheritance of all the baptised, the legacy of our common Mother before our family quarrels had grown so sharp and tragic" (xx). Every eucharistic liturgy is, he argued, the expression of a conception of human life as a whole. He therefore hoped his work would help all Christians "to love God better through their own liturgies" (xx). Today's liturgical situation in almost all the churches is a fulfillment of his hope.

Marshall's Introduction and Notes locate Dix's work in its original context. This will help American readers unfamiliar with past liturgical history to a better understanding. The notes should, accordingly, be read first, even though they are placed last. Marshall reminds us that the new English Alternative Services Book took as axiomatic Dix's fourfold action as its shape. Debate took place on the relative importance of each of the four actions. In his notes Marshall looks at that book from Dix's point of view. Other notes draw attention to more recent studies. Understandably, though regretfully, this reference is largely confined to works written in English.

As Marshall emphasizes, Dix's major contribution through The Shape was to elaborate "a fundamental working principle in liturgical studies" which set the pattern for others to follow. That pattern "understands the origin, growth, and theology of the ancient rites by enquiring primarily into their "shape" or basic patterns, before making other enquiries." The aim is not to discover some ancient text which would then become normative. The discovery of the shape could, and in Dix's judgment should, control liturgical construction.

Dix's prose helps his object of locating the liturgy in the heart of the church's life and faith. The result is genuinely inspirational. He succeeded in capturing the atmosphere of primitive worship. Even when his conclusions are subject to scholarly correction, as in his chapter, "The Sanctification of Time," he still raises topics of abiding concern with an inescapable sense of their importance.

The conclusion of the book is a masterpiece both of English prose and of spiritual writing. It sweeps across the centuries capturing as it marches
along an ever-increasing sense of the Eucharist as the central act of the church, in obedience to the Lord’s command to “do this in remembrance of me.” All types of people in every age and in all sorts of circumstances are caught up in this act which nourishes, inspires, and gives hope and meaning in the midst of all life’s variableness. What he does in these last pages sums up the thrust of his whole work—to move us from consideration of the shape of the liturgy to the prayer which is the heart of the Christian religion. That is Gregory Dix’s great offering, and it is this which makes the republication of this notable study so timely.
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