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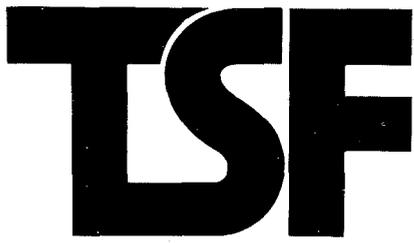
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BULLETIN

THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP

MAY-JUNE 1984

Vol. 7, No. 5 \$3.50

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Is the Reformation Over?
Geoffrey Wainwright 2

Dispensationalism and the Salvation of the Kingdom
Robert Saucy 6

**Jacques Ellul:
The Original "Liberation Theologian"**
Thomas Hanks 8

**Asking the Right Questions:
Evangelism through Eucharist and Prayer**
Michele Matto 11

**Contemporary Feminist Theology:
A Selective Bibliography**
Kathleen Storrie 13

**The Wholeness of Evangelism:
A Bible Study (Part D)**
Alfred C. Krass 16

Summer Reading List
TSF Bulletin Associate Editors 17

Software Review: *The Word Processor*
Thomas H. McAlpine 19

Book Reviews (Itemized on back cover) 19

Index: *TSF Bulletin* volume 7 38

TSF Materials Order Form (center pages)

American Protestants) that in effect leaves governments and the spheres of politics, society, and economics outside the Lordship of Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Given the serious abuses of the concept of the presence of the Kingdom of God within European ecumenical circles—especially within his own denomination—Ellul found it necessary to return to this theme, elaborating the other side of the coin in his *False Presence of the Kingdom* (1964). It presents a call to authentic holiness and a necessary “separation” from the world. Ellul accuses the church of conforming too much to the world, of producing a tardy echo of the slogans of the left (sometimes 10–15 years later), even when claiming to be “prophetic”! This is the book that put an end to Ellul’s influence in ecumenical Protestant circles;⁴² in fact, in Bordeaux in 1982 we found that it was principally the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students movement (the evangelical community) and the Catholics who were listening to and providing a platform for Ellul (though neither group was entirely comfortable with what they heard!).

It is in any case evident that Ellul shares with the theologians of liberation and the radical evangelicals of Latin America a hermeneutical perspective and a theology of the Kingdom that challenge both the flight from the synoptics to Paul (Luther), and the Platonic-Marcionite dichotomies of the pietists and dispensationalists that are dominant in our context. His dialectical and polemical perspective avoids various common distortions: the neglect of the hermeneutical key of the Kingdom by the Reformation, pietism and dispensationalism, the Platonic distortion of the Kingdom within traditional Catholicism, and the naive humanistic optimism (“we build the Kingdom—with or without God”) of the old “social gospel,” marxism and certain extreme forms of theology of liberation.⁴³

1.7 Prophetic Praxis

We cannot provide here the details appropriate to a biographical article. But we must underline the fact that Ellul’s life is a rich source of inspiration for whoever wishes to witness authentic and profoundly Christian praxis: his opposition to the Nazis at the cost of his university position, his service as the vice-mayor of Bordeaux (1944–46), his ministry for twenty years to the members of Bordeaux’s street gangs, his struggle to transform the theological education of

his denomination, his work as a popular but controversial professor for 40 years—all of this reflects a fascinating and challenging life that would require an entire book to describe adequately.⁴⁴

Of course, we must recognize that the praxis of Ellul—as that of Marx himself—is seen primarily in his writings: some 40 books and over 650 articles! When reading the reviews—from very diverse sources—of these books, the adjective “prophetic” appears so frequently that it almost becomes a refrain.

As David Gill has indicated, even the literary genre and style of Ellul’s writings generally corresponds to the genre of prophecy:

Those coming to Ellul looking for systematic coherence, careful attention to all details, or sober academic refinement will be disappointed . . . Not only the content but the rhetorical style of his message is best appreciated as a challenging message for the times, a cry in the technological wilderness . . . One of the most difficult to accept aspects of Ellul’s work is his habitual overstatement, where he sounds as though life is all over, no political change or revolution is possible, etc.—or, conversely, where he proclaims the great victory of God or the radical transformation of human history by the Incarnation. Part of the reason for this hyperbole is his persistent and radical dialectical method. But another reason . . . is that he is writing in the heat of passion and concern. He engages in rhetorical exaggeration to try to provoke a degree of response that may ultimately redeem a situation. Like most prophets, Ellul’s offense is not only his message but his style as well!⁴⁵

⁴² Personal interview. Bordeaux, 1982.

⁴³ Ernesto Cardenal, *La santidad de la revolución*, Sigueme, Salamanca, 1978, pp. 20, 31, 57, 85. Cp. Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 142: “The objections against expressions like ‘building’ the Kingdom are legitimate protests against naive optimism or at times justified protection of the primacy of divine initiative.”

⁴⁴ Ellul, *ISOS*, pp. 108–16, 117–38, 158–71. Ellul’s autobiography, to appear after his death, will consist of two volumes: David W. Gill, personal interviews, Bordeaux, June, 1982.

⁴⁵ David W. Gill, “Jacques Ellul: The Prophet as Theologian,” *Themelios* VII:1, Sept. 1982, pp. 14, 4–6. For the decisive role of praxis in his epistemology (like the “epistemological leap” in theologies of liberation) see Ellul’s critique of G. Casalis, *Les idées justes ne tombent pas du ciel* (Cert, Paris, 1977), in Ellul, *L’idéologie marxiste chrétienne* (Centurion, Paris, 1979), pp. 156–63; *TWID*, pp. 5–19. Katherine C. Temple, *The Task of Jacques Ellul*, Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, 1976, pp. 108–57; Christians and Van Hook, *Essays*, pp. 246–48; Ellul criticizes the marxist tradition for being as idealistic as Hegel; see John Boli-Bennett, “Dialectics,” p. 186.

Asking the Right Questions: Evangelism through Eucharist and Prayer

by Michele Matto

When I first came to the seminary, I expected to turn up the answers to a lot of questions I’ve had about what seems to be missing today in proclaimed Christianity—why so many people are turned off by the institutional church, why we can’t keep young people’s interest . . . basically, why membership is like a revolving door for so many who do join. No one has had the answers I sought, but people tell me I’ve learned to ask the right questions and now I’ve concluded that, paradoxically, asking the right questions *is* the answer.

I lead renewal music, much of it lately for a denomination whose members jokingly refer to themselves as “God’s frozen chosen.” The first thing I say to a group I stand before, in order to lower the stress level for those who have been told from childhood that they can’t sing, is that in renewal music the question is not, “Do you have a voice?” but rather, “Do you have a song?” Only from this base can we then get on with what singing is really all about.

I thought about that lead-in one night as I was listening in the car to one of those call-in radio programs where the question had been,

“Did you go to church yesterday? If so, why? If not, why not?” The real question, it became quickly apparent, was, “How do you feel about the institutional church?” What struck me as I listened to the responses was that those who responded from “inside” the church had voices, but those who were calling from “outside” seemed to have the Song. Knowledge of theology was about equally divided between the groups, but what captured my attention was that the “outsiders” were really asking the right questions.

The “outsiders” seemed to have a good grasp, at least intuitively, of the fact that Jesus came to bring us wholeness, and most of them had left the institutional church because they felt it was standing in the way of that wholeness rather than facilitating it. They seemed to have interpreted the church father’s statement that there is no salvation outside the church, as John Westerhoff does, to mean that there is no wholeness outside of community. In leaving the church they were actually *seeking* community, a community which gives them freedom to be who they are in-process and loves them wherever that is. They are seeking Jesus in the same way that Zacchaeus did and, sadly, have left the church to seek His love in whoever will just come to table with them “as is.”

Michele Matto is a student at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. She is married and has four children.

As I listened, I began to see the parallels to my own history, and thus the truth for me of what they were saying. My husband, whose faith was already developing when we met 21 years ago, has been with me through my "atheism" period, my agnostic period, my 10-year turnoff from the church, my see-saw from the liberal theology of my childhood to fundamentalism (until my eye offended me), and is only now beginning to reap the rewards of our sharing together a balanced religion. In the interim, he never "evangelized" me; he just loved me wherever I was, and that has been a lot of places on my journey. He was never threatened by my exploring. He was "with" me wherever I was, curious with me, sharing my interests, though never moved from his own beliefs. He even let me do Tarot readings for him in my "occult" phase. His God has always been the One Who did the "saving," and *that* is the essence of real and authentic evangelism. It is, in fact, the whole Christian message: Jesus comes into the manure of our lives and remains *with us* in our coldness to say, "You can be who you are, however messed up that is, and I will love you to death." Resurrection, then, is in the hands of the Father. If it is true that God comes to us through each other, then we can expect to find ourselves in a lot of other people's stables. The right question then becomes, "What do we *do* there?"

It sounded, from the telephone responses on the radio, as if the people outside the church had done more honest soul-searching to come to know themselves as they really are than the people "inside" the church, who had a lot of "right" answers about Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior, but whose answers seemed to be evolving out of a whole line of wrong (death-oriented) questions. As I listened to the church people who "had" Jesus as their Lord and Savior, I wasn't sure I belonged in the conversation, even remotely, since I do battle daily with Self as Lord, if not also Savior. Soul-searching is serious business, and if you don't do it in an environment of real love and acceptance, you can lose your song for a time. I was glad to arrive at the grocery store at that point, where I knew I could be who I am even "in-process." The grocery store is an easy place to just "be," and in my hardest struggles I find myself gravitating there for communion. There, if I have my baby with me, they ask if I'd like help with the bags into the van. At the end of my pregnancy when I was visibly uncomfortable, the cashier shared my pain; my pain was in her eyes as she handed me the change. She put the bread and wine, unopened, into the bag and never said a word about Jesus, but I had been served Eucharist. At the grocery store, no one does a "ministry" number on me, they just love me. Maybe there really is no conscious "ministry" . . . just the sharing of pilgrimages, a ministry which is most effective because it remains unconscious.

Last year, I thought I'd finally put my finger on what is missing today in the church: teaching about what mature Christian prayer—prayer in a listening mode—really is and what John 17 has to say to us for today. Now I see that I was on the right track but only partway home, for it only *begins* with deep contemplative prayer.

The early church fathers had much to say about this prayer. But we have, in the church, misconstrued their teachings into a view of prayer as some kind of ethereal Dionysian separateness which lets the world go to hell. The unfortunate result of having let go of "mystical" prayer in the teaching of the church is that with its abandonment has also gone any existential understanding of the "dark night of the soul," in John of the Cross' terms—that purgation through which we are drawn (sooner or later) to come to know ourselves in all our Capital-R Rebellion as angry, confused, self-trusting people—that definition of "sin" which somehow never seems to grab *us* personally from the pulpit.

Only when one has undergone this purgation that comes (sooner or later!) when time is given to prayer, can one really understand what is meant by the "theology of the cross," for only then does one rightly understand for oneself what sin really is, and, therefore, the real meaning of the cross, both for Jesus and for us today. I see contemplative prayer and the theology of the cross as symbiotic in that neither survives without the other. The cross, for Jesus, was made bearable out of the same oneness with the Father that John 17 seeks for *us*, and to the extent that we expect to endure the cross without first being in that state of oneness ourselves, we obliterate Martin Luther's whole life, because such would be the ultimate presumption of Self. The question that emerges is, "How can the institutional church rightly teach about the cross when it has not done its home-

work on prayer?"

So (to return to the stable) without a foundation in deep Christian prayer, what does one "in" the church really offer to one "outside" the church? Can one really accept another in-process, as-is when one has not yet seen oneself in-process, as-is? (The cashier in the grocery store had had a baby herself.) Without undergoing the purgation that deep prayer brings, people continue through the revolving doors of Sunday services feeling "saved"—even faking it pretty well in their preoccupation with church work—when, in fact, they don't have an understanding of the beginning of true salvation, nor are they motivated to "ask, seek, and knock," because at the precipice of purgation it is infinitely more inviting to remain "saved" and continue in neurosis than to let Jesus bring the wholeness He wishes but which, though free, is not cheap.

***At the precipice of purgation it is
infinitely more inviting to remain
"saved" and continue in neurosis***

When one in-process reaches the point of being ready to seek counseling or direction and is met with a subtle superiority from others that suggests they are above and beyond such need for integration in their own lives, one seeks acceptance where it may be found and, judging from the responses on the radio and from my own experience, it has often been found outside the institutional church. My own salvation in the area of prayer came when I quit asking church people and found a psychiatrist who had done his homework on the early Christian mystics. It was *he* who affirmed me not only in my sanity but in my understanding of what prayer is. Out of the experience of God in prayer, we are shown our own sin in a way that gets our attention and, at the same time, we feel God's love so much that we can then move out to others in love and acceptance. The institutional church, in its not knowing where the line is drawn between "mysticism" and schizophrenia, has thrown the baby out with the bath water, and so its proclamation of the Kingdom of God has no teeth. People don't understand what "The Kingdom of God is at hand!" really means—and how could they be expected to when many pastors themselves are running scared from the numinous? Not that one can blame them—"It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" But now that the modern physicists have come up with a view of reality that parallels Jesus' New Testament world view and that of the mystics of old—a world view which takes seriously dreams, healing, intuition, and, in general, direct relationship with supra-personal reality, it is more important than ever that this "new physics" be accorded an appropriate theological interpretation in a Christian perspective that incorporates the teachings and thinking of the early church fathers, lest it degenerate over time into a mass lay-occultism. Now it becomes clear to my why I was allowed to stray for a time into the occult . . . that I might take it seriously in a world that thinks it is funny. The church cannot run scared now from the future; without the *real* cross and the *real* kingdom, its EKG goes flat. Science will force theology to "put up or shut up." That is the ultimate post-enlightenment paradox! But the question again emerges, "How can the church rightly teach about things on which it has not done its own homework?"

The answer there is that part of accepting and loving each other where we are, Zacchaeus-style, includes openness to loving dialogue between "mystics" and "non-mystics" in the church, that we may, to use Martin Marty's words, "hitchhike" on each others' journeys rather than write each other off. It is not just a one-way street; mystics need the solid theology that the institutional church has to offer. Most of all, we need to understand one another . . . and ourselves. One of my favorite professors once said, in bewilderment, when he came to a section on mysticism in church history, "I think you must have to *be* one of these people to understand them." I never found the courage to tell him that, pain him as it might to hear it, he *is* a mystic. I was afraid I would make him angry, because he doesn't

like the label. But only a person of deep prayer has the humility to stand before a class of seventy and ponder the answer to a student's question in perplexed silence for several minutes and then admit in childlike honesty that he doesn't know the answer. Non-mystics often have a need to be omniscient, whereas he is very vulnerable. I covet this man's otherwise-hidden prayer life, out of which such humility is born, but for which I need only to ask, seek and knock. If then, in the church, we are failing in our attempts at evangelism, could it be that who we put ourselves across to be speaks so loudly no one can hear what we are saying? One important thing about doing music is to be aware of when your voice is getting in the way of the song. I've always hated history; I used to steal the tests in high school (the only way I could pass) and in college I avoided it altogether. But in this professor's class, I got A's, not because of my own brilliance but because his voice didn't get in the way of the song.

When I received a call recently to lead the music for a folk Eucharist at a workshop John Westerhoff came to lead, I was curious as to how I happened to be called, since there are so many better musicians available here. The caller said she had called an excellent guitarist, but that he thought he would be a "nervous wreck" working with a well-known person. Ironically, I said, it is only in knowing who Westerhoff is (through his books) as a person of prayer that I could work with him. For me the question is not, "How big is the name?" but rather, "Will I still have a song to sing when we're done?" As Westerhoff's theology goes, the whole message of Scripture is that, "You can mess it up, but you can't blow it." Since I seem to mess up much of what I do, in one respect or another, I like to work with people who own the kind of theology that can trust, as I have to, that in my weakness is Christ's strength made perfect.

Where the Gospel message is truly present, there will be freedom—freedom to be who I am in my finitude; and if who that is messes things up, I still won't have blown it. Any church environment, whether it is the choir, liturgical worship, or, irony of ironies, the Eucharistic celebration itself, which puts such pressure on people to "get it right" that it suffocates this spirit of freedom, quenches the Spirit of Christ and, sadly to say, His very Name. If Christ is "truly present" in the elements, then His Spirit of freedom will be truly present in the Eucharistic celebration: "I AM with you!"

Abraham Heschel says that the test of authentic theology is whether it reflects and embraces prayer. My "answer" to real and authentic evangelism is that we must first become people of prayer. Theologians from Augustine to Gutiérrez to Westerhoff sing in unison,

"Theology begins on its knees in prayer." That is what I enjoy about doing renewal music. The songs become prayer, not so much just in the words as in the singing. In the simplicity of the words and repetitive antiphons one has time and energy left to simply *be* with God in the singing. Renewal music doesn't string you out in *doing*; it lets you *be*. It's very symbolic, actually.

As prayer becomes, more generally in our lives, something we *are* and not something we *do*, then evangelism will take place daily as we become the incarnation of this vision we say we have. Then we will know the right question to ask people on the "outside," which is really the old question with new depth: "How are you?" which, when spoken from a base of prayer, is really asking, "May I *be with* you in your pain?" It is *God Who* will deliver them from it.

Only when it asks the right questions will the institutional church have both a voice and the Song. I will know my own eyes have seen salvation when I can have patience with both the church and myself in-process, and no longer expect either of us to "get it right." In the meantime, I share the church's pain.

We asked the author to provide a brief bibliography for those wishing to pursue some of the issues raised by this piece. She sent the following, with annotations.

The books I would include on a bibliography for one interested and wanting to get right to the heart of the subject are:

1. *Western Mysticism*, by Dom Cuthbert Butler, an in-depth look at the differences but consistent thread running through the spirituality of Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Gregory the Great;
2. *Contemplation*, by Francis Kelly Nemeck and Maria Theresa Coombs;
3. *A History of Christian Spirituality*, by Urban T. Holmes, especially recommended for its own bibliography;
4. *Seeking Jesus in Contemplation and Discernment*, by Robert Faricy;
5. "Contemplative Prayer in the Christian Tradition: An Historical Perspective," by Thomas Keating in the book, *Finding Grace at the Center*, by Keating, Basil Pennington, and Thomas E. Clarke.
6. *When the Well Runs Dry*, by Thomas Green, an easy-to-read introduction to spiritual direction based on St. John of the Cross;
7. *Ascent of Mt. Carmel* and *Dark Night of the Soul* (sequel), St. John of the Cross, described as difficult for the neophyte by Green, but where my journey began, so it is hard for me to assess that comment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY / THEOLOGY

Contemporary Feminist Theology: A Selective Bibliography

by Kathleen Storrie

Books on feminism and religion are multiplying rapidly. We asked Professor Storrie to comment on influential scholarly literature. Many more pastoral volumes are available, but are not listed here. —eds.

- Barstow, Ann. "The Uses of Archeology for Women's History: James Mellaart's Work on the Meolithic Goddess at Catal Huyuk," *Feminist Studies* 4/3(1978):7-18. An extremely important, though often neglected, source for the study of goddess religion.
- Bentley, Sally and Claire Randall. "The Spirit Moving: A New Approach to Theologizing," *Christianity and Crisis*, Feb. 4, 1974,3-7. Useful in documenting some of the origins of contemporary feminist theologizing.
- Bianchi, Eugene C. and Rosemary R. Ruether. *From Machismo to Mutuality*, Paulist, 1972. A creative mixture of theology and sociology. Bianchi's analysis of "masculinity" remains one of the best in Christian literature.
- Carmody, Denise Lardener. *Feminism and Christianity. A Two-Way Reflection*. Abingdon, 1982. Develops a colloquy between feminism and Christianity, focussing on nature, society, self and divinity. Scholarly and well written.

Kathleen Storrie is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Saskatchewan.

Christ, Carol P. *Diving Deep and Surfacing. Women Writers on Spiritual Quest*. Beacon, 1980. Contemporary literature written by women is used as a source for female spiritual renewal and affirmation or even as a substitute for sacred texts.

_____. "The New Feminist Theology: A Review of the Literature," *Religious Studies Review* 3/4(1977):203-212. A theologian antagonistic to Christianity surveys the history and major themes of feminist theology. Christian core symbolism is viewed as inherently patriarchal and therefore invalid as a means of liberating women.

Christ, Carol P. and Judith Plaskow (Eds). *Womanspirit Rising. A Feminist Reader in Theology*, Harper and Row, 1979. A helpful collection of essays providing an overview of the various positions within feminist theology.

Collins, Sheila. *A Different Heaven and Earth*, Judson, 1974. A search for the transcendent in sources other than the Judeo-Christian theology. Penetrating insight but weak knowledge of female imagery for God in the Bible.

_____. "Feminist Theology at the Crossroads," *Christianity and Crisis* 41(1981):342-47. Collins sums up ten years of feminist theologizing and calls feminists to join forces with other oppressed people.