

The Voice

of the

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of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College

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Editor: HENRY VOTH

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EDITORIAL

**OUR RESPONSE TO A RENEWED INTEREST
IN THE CANON**

There are few Christians (and even fewer of today's Christian youth) who have not asked themselves the basic questions of canonicity: which books are inspired, hence, belong in the Bible? who determined the inclusion or exclusion of existing documents when the canon was formed? what were the criteria or authority underlying canonicity?

Renewal of Contemporary Interest

These questions are not new but there is a renewal of contemporary interest in the subject. An article in the *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* (Winter, 1967, pp. 15-19) was devoted to an analysis of the increasing contemporary interest. The author suggests four reasons why the question of canon is enjoying a renaissance. The first is the publication of the archaeological finds of Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls) and Nag Hammidi (Gospel of Thomas) as "Lost Scriptures." The implication meant to be conveyed, is that these ancient writings are of the character of Scripture and are worthy of consideration as canonical.

A second reason for the revival of interest in the canon is the authorization by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in 1957, of the use of the apocrypha in liturgical readings. The insidious effect is to place before the reader passages from non-canonical writings in the context of worship, where most of us are least prepared to make critical judgments.

The influence of modern theology in the area of the canon lies in the suggestion that the canonical Scriptures are merely witnesses to divine activity. The Bible itself is not revelation. The Old Testament, for example, witnesses to God's redemptive dealings with Israel. So the Old Testament canon is said to indicate to us that we are on holy ground. The apocryphal books and the Qumran documents also give such direction.

Though most evangelicals continue to speak decisively against these theological formulations, unfortunately the influence of the New Theology is being felt in evangelical circles as well. Dewey M. Beegle, who continues to affirm his identification with evangelicals, emphasizes the sufficiency of the canonical Scriptures

while simultaneously questioning whether all of the Bible is necessarily of canonical stature:

The Protestant canon of the Bible is well able to achieve God's purpose in revealing himself to mankind. There is a shading off at the fringes of Scripture [Esther, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Jude], but the sufficiency of the redemptive message is not marred thereby. For this reason we need not attempt to justify every word in the canon. (Dewey M. Beegle, *The Inspiration of Scripture*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963, p.101)

A fourth reason, cited by Zinkand, for the resurgent interest in the canon is the reaffirmation by the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic acceptance of the Apocrypha as "sacred and canonical, entire with all their parts." In this ecumenical age, with the pressure of the World Council of Churches on the one side and Rome on the other, increasing attention is sure to be paid to the basis of the church's authority.

A fifth observation, specifically applicable to the Old Testament canon is the implicit denial of the value of the Old Testament by misuse or neglect. How many sermons are preached on the basis of Old Testament texts? Few indeed! But much more crucial is the fact that we as evangelicals, who rightly affirm that Jesus Christ is the final and perfect revelation of God, neglect what the Old Testament record speaks of Him and of the antecedent redemptive events. Perhaps it is time to reexamine the Old Testament Scriptures in a very deliberate attempt to see the continuity, not the contrasts or conflicts. Else the criticisms voiced concerning Emil Kraepling may be applicable to us as well:

To him so much in the Old Testament is objectionable to the Christian mind and alien to a truly Christian theology that it seems to endanger the church if it continues to be regarded as Christian Scripture. (James D. Smart, *the Interpretation of Scripture*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961, p. 72)

Response

What is to be our response to the renewed interest in the canon? First, we ought to rejoice that the essentials are again under consideration. The increased interest in the Scriptures generated by the Second Vatican Council is just cause for gratitude. The Word of God remains "alive and active; it cuts more keenly than any two-edged sword; it strikes through to the place where soul and spirit meet, to the innermost intimacies of a man's being; it exposes the very thoughts and motives of a man's heart." This word is the word we teach and preach and is able to make us "wise unto salvation."

Second, we need to become more informed as to the nature of the issues regarding canonicity, the contemporary views, and the body of facts which can be brought to bear upon the subject. A variety of books and articles are available on the subject for the Christian layman, student and minister.

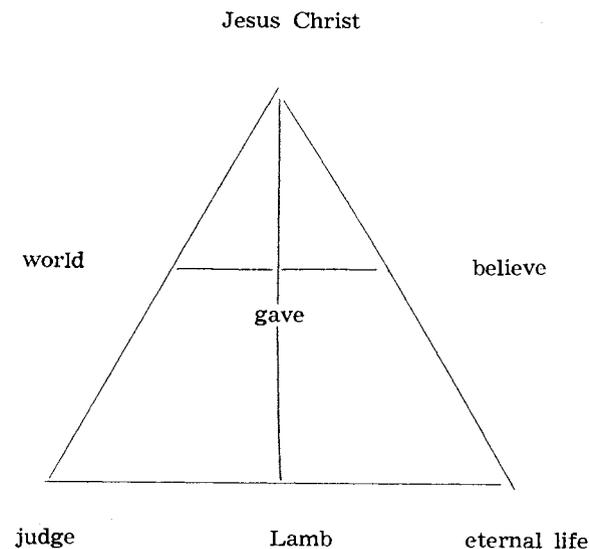
ARTICLES

ASPECTS OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

(Part two of three parts)

Review:

In part one, the prologue of the Fourth Gospel was probed to discover its intricate involvement as a key to the whole text. The revelation of the person of Jesus Christ is pre-eminent, while the basic theological framework which undergirds this revelation is developed according to the following structure:



Third, there are certain affirmations which the Christian must make which form necessary Biblical presuppositions and underlying principles with which one approaches such a study. One of these is the ultimate authority of the testimony of Christ and the apostles—an authority which extends to include the consciousness of what is revealed and inspired. The other (for the Christian) is the superintending activity of the Holy Spirit, both in inspiring the Word and in directing the church in the recognition and use of the inspired writings for its knowledge of divine truth and its ongoing mission of proclaiming the gospel.

—A. Guenther

III. HE GAVE

The Johannine use of "gift" (didomi) can be understood by combining the conception of God's knowledge of man and the description of God's relation to man in the person of Jesus Christ. Dodd would link,

"the prophetic doctrine of God's knowledge of His people (as illustrated in the incident between Moses and Korah, 'In the morning Jehovah will show who are his and who is holy, and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he shall choose will he cause to come near unto him Nu. 16:5) with the Johannine. God who 10:14 knows those who are His, 13:18 has chosen them and 6:44, 12:32 leads them to Himself."¹

The classic description of 3:16 leaves no doubt as to the what and why of God's relation to man.

The identification stressed between the Father and the Son wherein he that has seen the Son has seen the Father is further described in the declarative statements of Christ when He details what the Father has given Him. From the broadest claim of all things,

- 3:35 The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand.
13:3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands.

through the particular claims of works,

- 5:36 The works the Father hath given me to accomplish.
17:4 The work which thou hast given me to do.

of authority or power,

- 19:11 (Pilate) except it were given thee from above.

and life,

- 6:33 The bread of God . . . giveth life unto the world.

one moves to the most specific of all the claims, that man himself is a gift of the Father to the Son. But not all men, as an isolated consideration of 12:32 "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men to myself," would seem to imply. For in the discussion on the Bread of Life Jesus clearly states,

- 6:37 All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me.
6:39 And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing.

and then, so there can be no question as to the exact meaning, He adds, "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him" (6:44, 65). Similarly, the image of the Good Shepherd stresses a Shepherd who knows and sheep who knowingly respond because, "My Father hath given them unto me" (10:29).

The unmistakable link between the Father who gives and the Christ who takes, is the Cross. As it is true that the death of Christ

inaugurated His worldwide dominion, so one must agree with Dodd that "the universal effect of the work of Christ is associated with His passion and death."² The universal all of 12:32 Calvin assigns to "the Church to be gathered from among the Gentiles and the Jews, i.e. the children of God who belong to this flock."³

In the High Priestly prayer of chapter 17, John seems to have a definite group in mind, the elect if you will, when he first mentions, "that to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal life" (17:2), and then delineates His disciples in "those whom thou hast given me" (17:6, 9, 12, 24), in contrast to the world and with an obviously timeless reference to all disciples. With this Dodd concurs when he states,

"In a hostile world, the will of God for men's salvation challenges the powers of evil in the incarnation and the work of Christ, through which eternal life is opened to men. Once a man has responded (by God's grace alone) to Christ in faith, Christ (in whom the whole Godhead is at work) takes responsibility for his salvation."⁴

And again when he seems to outdo even the master from Geneva in words that could hardly be plainer,

"Christ declares that the doctrine of the Gospel, though it is preached to all without exception, cannot be embraced by all, but that a new understanding and a new perception are requisite; and therefore, that faith does not depend on the will of men, but that it is God who gives it."⁵

Finally, Calvin sees John as declaring that God bestows grace on those whom He has elected, and then that "a powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit makes men willing who formerly were unwilling and reluctant," and that God works "in his elect by such an efficacy of the Holy Spirit that not one of them falls away."⁶

Therefore, it would seem evident that the Johannine conception of God's relation to man in the person of Jesus Christ, when he is given as the only Son to be sacrificed as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, also rests on God's knowledge of His elect whom He has chosen, i.e. those who received Him and believed on His name, who were born of God.

IV. THE LAMB OF GOD

While many of the theological aspects of the Fourth Gospel found in the prologue find an adequate development in the text, there are a few which are only hinted at. Among these few is the concept of "lamb" (amnos). The Baptist's testimony as a witness to the light (1:7), is twice stated in his verbal description of Jesus as "the Lamb of God" (1:29, 36). Once this is qualified with the added clause, "who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). Even a brief survey of various commentators and their interpretations enables one to see that here is a crucial question which is settled more according to one's basic presuppositions than on an objective

analysis of the text, since the text takes the understanding of the term for granted.

It is C. H. Dodd who details the four possible interpretations.⁷ It is generally agreed that the problem of the symbolic meaning of the term, Lamb of God, must be solved by discovering an Old Testament practice or term which gives content to the present symbol, while finding an adequate support in the totality of Christ's ministry. After examining and rejecting (i) the lamb of the sin-offering, (ii) the paschal lamb, and (iii) the Servant of the Lord, Dodd finds the idea grounded in apocalyptic symbolism, and suggests that the evangelist understood the 'Lamb of God' to be a synonym for the 'Messiah', so that here the lamb is a symbol of the Messiah as leader of the flock of God. Since a function of the Jewish Messiah is to make an end of sin, quite apart from any thought of a redemptive death, Dodd concludes we may translate 1:29 as 'God's Messiah who makes an end of sin'.⁸

On the other side, Oscar Cullmann in his book, "The Christology of the New Testament," presupposing an original Aramaic text, admits the possibility of translating the phrase lamb of God as either 'Lamb' or 'Servant' of God, but rejects the former for the latter, since the expression Lamb of God is not commonly used in the Old Testament as a designation for the paschal lamb.⁹ However, he does find a relation between the 'ebed' and the lamb in Isaiah 53:7. The use of the verb 'airein' which seems applicable only to the paschal lamb is explained by noting that the original Aramaic verb 'natal' can be translated in Greek either as 'airein' or as 'ferein'.

Without becoming involved in a lengthy analysis of these positions, as examination of the evidence still seems to support the most widely favoured interpretation which finds here primarily an allusion to the paschal lamb of Exodus 12. The conception of the Messiah as the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, involves a view of His death which embraces sacrificial vicarious and redemptive aspects. Here we follow A. J. Macleod in "The New Bible Commentary."¹⁰ He sees Jesus' obedience as fulfilling the normal sacrifices in the temple; an almost certain reference to Isaiah 53 with the thought of removal of sin through vicarious bearing; and the thought of the suffering of the paschal lamb with whom Jesus is also identified in 19:36.

Whatever interpretation one may honestly adopt in view of the evidence, it seems unreasonable to suppose that we have here a later evangelical interpretation imposed upon the narrative, or that the universal significance of the redemptive act of Jesus was outside the appreciation of the Baptist. Surely, it is quite possible that we have here one of those flashes of divine revelation so common to the prophets wherein they spoke better than they knew.

V. GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

A detailed study of the more than sixty occurrences of "world" (*kosmos*) in the Fourth Gospel reveals a pattern of usage which suggests certain fixed ideas with regard to this term. While many, if not most, of the uses fit under the broad definition of the human race (cf. 1:29, 3:16), most of them may also be defined in more detail when considered from the standpoint of sacred history.

A certain geographic understanding is attached to the world when it is called, first, the place of man's residence:

1:9 man coming into the world
21:25 the world itself could not contain.

secondly, the sphere of the Christian's existence:

13:1 his own that were in the world.
17:6 whom thou gavest me out of the world.
17:14 they are not of the world.
17:18 I sent them into the world.

It would seem by implication that while the world is the sphere of the Christian's existence he is not to be identified with it. The 'stranger and pilgrim' idea is suggested. Thirdly, the era of Christ's residence and service:

1:10 He was in the world. (also 9:5, 17:11 13.)
6:14 the prophet that cometh into the world. (also 11:27, 12:46,
16:28, 18:37.)
13:1 depart out of this world.

The multiplicity of references to what must have been an obvious fact to His listeners is most easily accounted for by the realization that this is the pre-existent Logos on the plane of time, involved with men—thus the revelation of God in the world. Fourthly, the place to which the Father sends the Son:

10:36 the Father sent into the world.
17:18 thou didst send me into the world.

It is obvious that the concept of the world is set in the understanding where the dwelling-place of man and of God are different, except when the Son is sent to dwell with men. It is not surprising then that a portrayal of John's world should reflect a divine viewpoint. Thus it is the object of His creation, "the world was made through him." (1:10). But, while it is true that Christ was Creator, it must be remembered that in this creation there are those who are peculiarly His (1:11). However, this world is of such a character that even these reject the Christ when He comes among them. And so it stands as a place of darkness rejecting the true light:

1:10 the world knew him not.
3:19 light is come into the world; men loved darkness.
8:12 I am the light of the world. (also 9:5 11:9.)
12:46 a light into the dark world.

One can almost feel this quality of darkness as Judas goes about the business of betrayal. The text says, "and it was night" (13:30).

Lest we be deceived into thinking that this is a passive state,

John clearly describes the world as an active principle of hate against Christ and his disciples:

- 7:7 the world (works are evil) hateth me.
- 15:18 the world hateth you.
- 16:33 in the world ye have tribulation.
- 17:14 the world hated them as not of the world.

This is obvious because of the differences in origin of being and allegiance between those who are of Christ, and those who are of the world:

- 8:23 ye are from beneath . . . ye are of this world.
- 8:44 ye are of your father the devil.
- 12:31 the prince of this world. (also 14:30, 16:11)
- 17:15 keep them from the evil one.

If the picture of the world from the divine viewpoint seems bleak, let us be careful to note how the real need of the world is met:

- 1:29 Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world.
- 3:16 God so loved the world that He gave his only Son.
- 3:17 the world should be saved through Him. (also 4:42, 12:47.)
- 6:33 bread of God . . . giveth life unto the world.

The desperate need of the world because of its sin was not only a good example, but a Saviour who could give life. So to a world lost in the darkness of death Christ came as the Light to bring life to men.

The direct action of Christ in revelation was also to give the message from God to men:

- 8:26 things heard from (God) I speak unto the world.
- 14:31 the world may know I love (and obey) the Father.
- 17:13 I speak in the world that they may have my joy.
- 17:21,23 that the world may believe . . . know.
- 18:20 spoken openly to the world.

The abuse of light in the natural and spiritual realms produces callousness. But the fact of rejection becomes for many the liability to judgment:

- 9:39 for judgment I came into this world.
- 12:31 now is the judgment of this world.
- 12:47(even if) I came not to judge the world but to save.

And this is to continue as long as the world is the Holy Spirit's sphere of labour, "He will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment" (16:8), while those who are of the world reject the Spirit of truth, "whom the world cannot receive" (14:17).

The negatives seem to abound as Christ paints the world's future when they reject Him. They will not see nor be shown Christ (14:19, 22); no mediator will pray for them (17:9); they shall not know the Father (17:25); and they are not essentially a part of His kingdom (18:36). And yet the world is unmistakably the scene and area of Christ's triumph as He declares, "I have overcome the world" (16:33).

John has drawn the lines in clear and concise language. Surely one purpose of the Word is to mirror reality as God knows it. The picture presented may not be to the liking of many, but, let us

consider who it is that says it. The next step is to pursue this consideration to its logical conclusion. As God came and men rejected Him, so they placed themselves under His wrath and became fit subjects for His judgment. —H. Swartz

Footnotes:

- 1 Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 162.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 375.
- 3 John Calvin, *Commentary on John*, II, 37.
- 4 Dodd, *loc. cit.*, p. 433.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 257.
- 6 Calvin, *loc. cit.*, p. 252.
- 7 Dodd, *loc. cit.*, p. 233.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 237.
- 9 Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, p. 71.
- 10 Macleod, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 868.

SYSTEMATIC PREACHING IN THE CHURCH

The systematic teaching of the Word of God is one of the primary tasks of the Church. The Lord Jesus Christ, in his parting injunction to his disciples, commanded them to evangelize or to "make disciples" and then, after baptism, to teach these disciples "to observe all that I have commanded you . . ." (Matthew 28:20). The Book of Acts reports that those who believed and were baptized "were added" (2:41). In this context the word "church" does not follow the "were added" but later the terms "believers were added to the Lord" (5:14), and "great fear came upon the whole church," (1:51), indicate that the believers were added to the church. And it was in this setting that the teaching of the Word (Acts 2:42 and 6:2,4,7) was systematically carried forward. Paul exhorts the elders and bishops of the church at Ephesus to "take heed . . . to all the flock . . . to feed the church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28). He himself indicates that this can be done by declaring "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), and that he himself did not "shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). Finally we note that in the gifts that God has given to the church for its establishment and its equipment to carry out its God-given ministry, are listed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11). So we see that the teaching task of the church has as its subject matter all that Jesus taught and commanded; that it is to be carried out in the context of the church (although not necessarily only there, but particularly there), and that this teaching is to enlist the ministry of all the variously endowed servants of the Lord in the Church. Such a teaching ministry can properly be called a systematic teaching ministry. A few practical suggestions follow as to how such a teaching ministry

could be structured in our churches today, and what factors will add to its effectiveness.

It is clear from what has already been said, that the scope of this systematic teaching ministry is to be church-wide; that it includes all the teaching agencies of the church: the Pulpit, the Sunday School, the Mid-Week program (the term "mid" is used somewhat loosely; it includes endeavors held on other nights of the week as well), the special age-group organizations, DVBS, Library, etc. It will, of course, be impossible for me in this paper to say something about each of these agencies, but I shall attempt to restrict myself more specifically to the three first named, and will therefore include the others only in a very general way.

What can we then do to promote systematic teaching from the pulpit? The function and the status of the pulpit ministry is, in our day, a matter of varied opinion and evaluation. The pulpit has a number of competing ministries (at least they may prove to be competing ministries, when they ought to be complementary). There is the field of Christian Education viewed in a more restricted sense. The National Sunday School Association has suggested that a pastor ought to allot 50 per cent of his time to the active promotion of this ministry. There is the ministry of pastoral counselling. Some have felt that this is the most vital aspect of a pastor's ministry. There is the visitation ministry and many have felt this is the secret of a successful pastoral ministry. Others—and their number may yet be relatively small—have suggested that the pulpit is only one way communication and that our day requires two way communication. They would see a discussion type of ministry as the effective way of carrying out the pastoral task.

While all these can be, and no doubt most often are, vital and valuable ministries, they cannot, in my estimation, replace the centrality of a dynamic and systematic pulpit ministry. Much individual counselling might become unnecessary if there were a strong and relevant pulpit ministry. And what can be said for an organized visitation program which brings people to the church to hear a sermon which makes little or no impact because the pastor was so busy keeping the program running that there was little time to prepare a clear and forceful gospel message. Further because of the fragmenting influence of the demands listed and others, his spiritual resources become depleted and due to lack of time, he finds little opportunity to seek and find that inward renewal and refreshing, which is so necessary for fruitful pulpit work. Experiencing little success here, he himself may plunge into the more mechanical and superficial aspects of his assignment. Systematic teaching from the pulpit cannot thrive under these conditions.

Some Difficulties

But even if the pastor and his congregation recognize the centrality of the task of proclamation, there are factors in our

churches today which make a systematic pursuit of this ministry somewhat difficult. One of these factors is a multiple ministry; by this I mean, that a number of brethren divide the task of preaching the Word from the pulpit. This, in itself, need not work against a systematic teaching program. It need not, but often does. It has sometimes been said in defense of this practice that surely the Holy Spirit will direct the preacher in the choice of his sermon topic so that that which the church particularly needs will be presented. Far be it from me to deny that this is the task and the desire of the Holy Spirit, but are we always ready to be led by Him? Why is it that some of us are "led" much more readily to one topic than another. Why is it that there is sometime such a strong resemblance in topic, tone and emphasis in the successive sermons that we preach? What about "pet" themes and topics? Later on, in this paper, I would like to suggest a practical procedure that would introduce a more systematic emphasis into the pulpit ministry even though more than one man carry the responsibility for this work.

Frequent visiting speakers may add variety and interest to the pulpit ministry, but may not do too much for its systematic character. The visiting speaker does not usually know the congregation nor its needs very well. He also does not know what has been presented from the pulpit Sunday by Sunday, nor does he know what is being planned. He has, to the best of his ability and in the light of his limited acquaintance of the church and its needs, sought the guidance of God concerning what he should preach. Sometimes, but not always, he was in a position of mind and heart where the Spirit could and did lead him in his choice. At other times other influences may have been more dominant. It will perhaps always be difficult to carry on a systematic teaching program in that church which has many visiting speakers unless the church adopts the practice of giving such speakers guidance in what they ought to preach.

But again, even where there are not multiple pulpit ministries nor frequent visiting speakers, even where there is only one pastor and he does all or most of the preaching, there will not be a systematic teaching program unless this is consciously and carefully provided for. Some ministers have what might be called a "hunt and peck" system of sermon selection; one might call it a hand to mouth sermonic existence. Selection of topics for any given Sunday (except, of course, at certain specific occasions such as advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, etc.) are made without much retrospect or planning for the future. Some would feel that to plan ahead, for six months or a year, is excluding the guidance of the Holy Spirit from the making of topic, theme or text selection. Does the Holy Spirit need the passage of time in order to know what the needs of a congregation will be a year hence? Will the pastor who in a busy schedule is faced with the pressing need to

prepare a sermon for a Sunday which is fast approaching, be in a fitter frame of mind to be guided by the Spirit of God than one who under no such pressure to meet deadlines seeks guidance in the presence of God? Why is it that, as Gibson says,

"The well thought out sermon in a carefully thought out series is often spoken of as though it were an embarrassment to the Spirit, who is supposed to be at his best when dealing with planless and unprepared preachers. Precisely the opposite is true. The Holy Spirit is not sent to relieve us of our obvious responsibilities." (*Planned Preaching*)

Paul emphasizes the need to proclaim "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). How can he make the assertion that he has kept back nothing that was profitable (Acts 20:20) if he had not carefully compared what they needed and what he had proclaimed?

Some Practical Suggestions

What are then some practical suggestions, the implementing of which will contribute toward a systematic teaching program? Before steps can be taken to establish such a program, it must be recognized that it is needed; it will not happen accidentally. This is true whether one person is involved or more. To say the latter is, of course, not to say that unless all the men involved in preaching from a certain pulpit are convinced of the need for such action, nothing can or ought to be done. But it would seem to be correct to say that only to the extent that we have seen the urgency and the need for this type of ministry, will its benefits truly be felt in the congregation.

Therefore it would seem that a very practical step would be to gather those who are involved in the pulpit ministry, for a careful discussion of the need for and the merits of a planned approach to the preaching. In preparation for such a session(s), it would be a great advantage to have those who are to participate read a book on this topic such as A. W. Blackwood's, *Planning a Year's Pulpit Work*, (1942), or G. M. Gibson's, *Planned Preaching*, (1954). In books such as these one does not find "ready made" plans for a year's pulpit work, but rather an examination of the merits of such an approach and the principles which must be followed to build an effective program. At such a session, the pros and cons of a planned procedure could be discussed and any misunderstandings could be cleared up. Thus a solid basis for the next step would be established. It hardly needs to be added that where a preacher works alone, a careful reading and thoughtful consideration of such a work will impress upon him the significance of planning his work.

Next then, I would suggest a "planning session" or a "planning day." The latter certainly has its merits. How valuable it would be for those who have the oversight of the teaching ministry from the pulpit, to take time, and in an unhurried atmosphere, as shepherds of the flock of God, to survey the needs of that flock over which

the Lord has set them and see what they, under God, might do to meet that need. A pastor working alone could set a specific time aside in which he, without fear of interruptions and distractions, might give himself time to do the same thing that has just been suggested for a group of ministers.

It is here suggested that such a planning session might concern itself with the pulpit work for a year both for Sunday morning and Sunday evening services. The following considerations and factors would seem to be of vital importance for such a planning session:

a) **the Christian Calendar**—We in our tradition have not used this calendar in the same way as some other churches have, but there are still certain occasions which commemorate certain salvation events which we can naturally emphasize on those days.

b) **The Civil Calendar**—Certain national or family festivities are suitable times to emphasize certain Biblical truths, e.g. Thanksgiving Day, Mother's Day, Remembrance Day, etc.

c) **The Church's Calendar**—special days and blocks of days which the church has set aside for designated purposes; e.g., evangelistic campaigns, Christian Education emphasis, Deeper Life services, Promotion Day, etc.

d) **Special Needs of the Church**—a careful comparison of what is being covered at the times above indicated, with an enumeration of the needs which the church has, will reveal what needs have not yet been provided for. There needs might be covered in some instances in individual sermons; in others, through a series of messages. Certain sections of the calendar might also be set aside for an expository series on a certain book or epistle of the Bible.

A number of advantages arise out of such an approach. For one, in this way it is possible to minimize the danger of duplicating certain emphases, while omitting others. Another is that, with such a procedure, one will completely lose the fear (if one had it) of running out of ideas; there will be an overabundance of material. Further, it permits the inclusion of a certain emphasis at its most opportune time. So often one encounters the problem that there is no room for the treatment of a certain issue when it should be treated. At other times, the proper person or resource is not available because one asked too late, on the spur of the moment.

It is, of course, obvious that such planning ought to be concerned with broad outlines; no effort ought at this time to be made to settle all the small details. Then again such planning ought to be flexible; that is, it can be changed if subsequent developments would seem to require it. Emergencies may arise, new, unforeseen opportunities may present themselves. However, the considerations in changing the developed plan ought to be weighty ones; only if the ministry of the pulpit is made more effective thereby, should

changes be entertained. Separate provisions ought to be made for Sunday morning and evening services; i.e. it ought to be recognized in the planning that the character of these two services are different, and this recognition ought to be reflected in the planning.

As has already been said, an effort ought to be made to include all those involved in preaching in such a planning session. However, if not all brethren concur, the effort to plan ahead ought not therefore to be abandoned. It would still be valuable to do the planning as if it would be fully carried out and then to attempt to realize as much of it as possible. The projection still serves as a check, as a guide for those who want to use it. It might also be well for the minister who works alone to draw other brethren in to plan with him. Both, where one minister does all the preaching and where a number of men share this responsibility, it would be well to include a voice from the "laymen" of the congregation in the planning effort.

—H. H. VOTH

PRELIMINARY THINKING ON THE SACRED - SECULAR DEBATE

Possibly one of the first openly identified secularists is referred to in II Tim. 4:10: "For Demas, in love with this present world, has left me." "Paul's swift phrase," Merrill Abbey writes, "supplies an almost perfect description of the secularized mind." We know of Demas earlier (Philemon 24): "Demas and Luke, my fellow workers"); now some years later we hear of him again, and now "Demas has deserted me." The explanation? "He is in love with this present world."

Now, we hear much of secularism today, as Kenneth Willson writes in the September, 1966, issue of the *Christian Herald*. In general, "two major threats to spiritual peace and order are regularly denounced from pulpits in the land. One of them is secularism. The other one I can't recall at the moment."

Secularism is a bad thing in our time. Perhaps one of the reasons for it is the particular suffix. Most words with an "ism" get a bad press these days; "hood," on the other hand, seems to have favourable connotations, e.g. brotherhood, nationhood, motherhood. So let's take the suffix off "secularism." Secular. Still sounds terrible, and if we put it against "sacred" it gets second billing every time. Here's the strange thing. We feel there is something unhappy about that which is secular: it's menacing, it's "anti," it's not kosher. And yet sometimes we place great stress on it; the more secular someone was, the more attention is paid to him when this someone becomes connected with the sacred. So let someone out of the secular (e.g. John Lennon) say that the

Beatles are better known than Jesus Christ and all pandemonium in ecclesiastical circles breaks out; disc jockeys burn records, fan clubs tear up pictures, correspondence and hair; parents roll frenzied eyes to wherever Robinson's heaven is now. Everybody acts as though they had never heard, in fact, that the Beatles withdrew, stand for stand, any Westminster Abbey production (except the Queen's coronation and Churchill's funeral—and remember, these were paid for by the State); everybody acts as though they had never heard, in fact, that the Beatle records outsold even the White Sisters'.

On the other hand, if a definitely secular person becomes associated with the sacred, then the drums begin rolling and the religious press begins beating and pointing out the trophies: "Look, here is a governor, a football star, a businessman, a movie-star, and he/she has become a Christian." And so attention is paid to the status, the position, of the individual. We use the vocation—exploit the particular area of what we call the secular position—to enhance the sacred. The secular appears to have a use, then, for bolstering the sacred. With one part of us we seem to feel, somehow, that the very nature of the work itself makes preparation of a sermon sacred and preparation of a lecture or of a term-paper secular (or at least non-sacred). We begin to treat these in terms of being ceremonially clean and unclean. And if the paper is about New Testament theology it is more sacred than if it is about the New Testament canon; and if it is about the New Testament canon it is more sacred than if it is about the Patristic writings. And so we slide down the continuum. In other words, the sacred seems to be concerned with **what** we are doing, not **how** or **why** we are doing it; "sacred" appears to be concerned with subject matter, not with motivation; it seems to be concerned with that which is sensorily discerned, not that which emanates from the attitude. The determining criteria for rating a task secular or sacred is determined, then, it seems, by examining the actions performed, the words said and the very nature of the subject matter, most of these being very materialistic considerations indeed; and it is easy to avoid altogether introducing the "spiritual." And so we plot a graph of the sacred-secular continuum, with preachers, seminary professors and Bible College students presumably somewhere near the top. Physicians form the borderline, for they treat the bodies that God created; farmers fare well, for they till the soil God created and feed the bodies already mentioned. But garbage collectors, who have a certain relationship to the farmer's products, and through no fault of their own, consistently get a bad press—they are indisputably secular.

But how are we to look at the secular? Sometimes it does not particularly bother us, at least consciously. If my hot water pipes need fixing and I call a plumber, I don't first of all ask,

"Are you a Christian?" I ask him if he can repair the leak. If he is inept, no number of Christian convictions will help him to perform the task. His faith may help me in other ways—if the pipe is leaking badly it may be faith that I most need at the time—but it will not fix the pipe. At that particular time, whether he is a Christian or not seems to be of secondary value in relation to my immediate need—his secularism and ability to meet a problem are extremely important as the waters swirl and deepen around my ankles.

And it is this importance of the secular we must recognize. The money in the offering plate does not become sacred simply because Bach has been played while the money was lifted—that horrible phrase we sometimes hear: "Will the ushers come forward to lift the offering?" (possibly akin to the ancient wave offering)—or even because the minister pronounces a dedicatory prayer or prayer of thanks.

Perhaps one way of looking at the difference between secular and sacred things really lies not so much in what we **find** in them as in what we **bring** to them. A film, or a lecture, or a sermon, may be secular even if they **have** scriptural allusions (or illusions). But whether something is secular or not really depends on something much deeper, and it is this which Paul is talking about in II Tim. 4:10. It is saecularis, "belonging to an age," being tied to a set of here and now values. It is the attitude that God can "be dismissed as a factor affecting one's destiny"; it is the attitude expressed in "What is God that man should be mindful of him?" In Hartman's **Holy Masquerade**, Mrs. Svensson muses,

". . . And it's really this way with everything that is preached. You ask: Does it really exist? Do people become conciliatory through Christianity? Does it make any difference in business or politics? Does it have any consequences in the psyche of the hypochondriac?

And then I asked, "Would you be different if you were not a Christian?"

Albert said that this was not relevant, but his face got red and he spilled ashes on the floor."

It is the attitude that accepts the comfortable brotherliness of the church, looking on it as a convenient cultural accretion, and in Trueblood's metaphor, "plucks these benefits like cut-flowers without comparable concern for their roots in the faith that gave them life." It involves taking God out of life as a real force. Religion becomes a moral code of truth and honesty and square dealing, says the secularist, and he lives out the code by being sportsmanlike on the golf course Sunday morning.

Now, there are some who say that the Bible itself teaches secularism. Harvey Cox, he of **The Secular City**, says that the Genesis Creation account is the secularization of nature—God is removed from nature; He is no longer in plants and planets. The

Exodus account is the secularization of the political—God no longer resides in a monarchy or in a political state and man is free to rebel. The Sinaitic account is the secularization of the moral—God is no longer to be found in a set of values, of morals—all becomes absolutely relative. And so, Cox concludes, the Bible itself shows God has removed himself from that which most closely impinges on us, and we must ourselves become secular if we are to be Biblical.

Unfortunately, Paul had not read Cox, and we find in Paul's grief for a lost co-worker the conviction that service to God, and the compulsion to be tied to a **present** age are diametrically opposed. For Paul there were two choices: the sacred was to commit oneself to God and to give expression of this commitment through working in and with the age. The secular was to become so identified with this age that the claims of a transcendent, trans-Chronos God no longer mattered.

Paul was basically a crass materialist. He begged money from the Corinthian church; he ate well in Damascus; he appreciated the comforts of cloak and parchments; he practiced unashamedly his leathercraft; he enjoyed writing letters; he argued with the Greeks the intricacies of their philosophy. But each of these "secular" things had an added dimension—they were performed because God made them meaningful, both immediately and ultimately. Wilson comments that James had an interesting headline long before Altizer and van Buren: Faith is dead, he shouted, unless validated on the job. Something is sacred, not only because of what is in it, but because of what you bring to it.

And so we can imagine this man Demas—and remember that a closely related word, demos, means "man"—we can imagine him beginning his sermon preparation with the thought of what the audience would make of him and of whether Paul would mention him favourably to intellectual Luke. And the first acid drop of secularism falls and God is pushed out a little. Visitation becomes public relations; writing becomes politics; church administration becomes manipulation; and God recedes as secularism advances. And finally Demas becomes expert manipulator of church finances and church administration and thrilling sermons of the good life, and it doesn't matter anymore, because God is really out of it. God is a linguistic symbol to be manipulated to suit the conditioned responses occasioned by liturgy and prayer and custom, and Demas, (demos — man) has become secularized.

And finally he can go to Paul and say that he has been offered the position of legal advisor to the Thessalonian City Council, and since this work is similar to what he was doing in the church, he feels he can better use his talents there. But he doesn't become secular at that point—he was secular long before. God didn't really matter any longer. (A cautionary note here. I am not implying

A SERMON

THE DEATH - LIFE PARADOX

(John 12:23-34)

The editorial in a recent issue of the "College Companion" questioned the wisdom of displaying sheaves or pumpkins in our sanctuaries at Thanksgiving. The editor contended that these symbols of God's blessing had become outdated. He suggested that possibly a display of miniature automobiles or graduation diplomas would be more appropriate. No doubt the editor's contention was valid to a degree. But how sad to admit that our urban setting

that a person becomes secular simply because he leaves a church position to take one in the political sphere. First of all, it is to a certain extent what he brings to the position that determines whether or not it is really secular or sacred. Second, a person may have become secular **long before** he changes positions.)

So Demas, (demos—man) attends Sunday School so the kids will have a good training, and he listens to the sermons, and criticizes the minister along with everyone else, and feels proud when the lights on the wall-map flash on to show where the denominational missionaries are translating the Apocalypse into esoteric dialects. But weekdays his expense accounts are as padded as his competitors'; as a salary negotiator for a teacher's federation he can deplore materialism on Sunday and hold adamantly to salary demands on Monday; he can pray for world peace on Sunday and defame character the next six; he can pray for missions on Sunday and quarrel over fence maintenance the rest of the year; he can pray for brotherhood unity, and splinter a church by leaving because it changed its order of service to include a sermon in a language spoken by the community. He is secular. God is effectively taken out. God doesn't matter at every point anymore.

The distinction between sacred and secular may not be easily determined. But the approach to the distinction is easy. The approach is couched in Paul's appeal to separate the demands of God from the motivations of society. In this separation of the demands lies part of the distinction between the sacred and the secular. Ours, Paul reminds us repeatedly, is a holy calling. May the charge not be laid to our account that we, motivated and tied to an age, having become secular, have deserted the One who calls us to touch all things and make them His—and make them sacred.

—V. Ratzlaff

has caused us to forget our natural environment, and that the future generation may fail to understand the many simple parables and lessons that Christ drew from nature. Jesus, Himself, grew up in a carpenter's shop in an urban setting, but he never failed to draw upon nature for His teaching material. The lessons from the lilies of the field and the birds of the air appear uppermost in our thinking. Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these. In our text Jesus again draws a lesson from a mundane sphere of life. He takes a kernel of grain and therewith illustrates one of the greatest truths of all Scripture.

Jesus had just entered Jerusalem triumphantly to the shouts of Hosanna. What more could there be for Him but to permit the followers to crowd Him as their king. And not only were the Jews enthralled, but also Greeks requested a hearing. But capturing the attention of His disciples, Jesus revealed to them how He should obtain His glory. His glory was not to come through coronation, but through death. His glory was not to be realized by the shouts of Hosanna from a few children or the presence of several Gentiles. His glory would be realized through being lifted up to die.

This revelation startled the crowd. They knew that life could result in death, but how could death result in greater glory. They had anticipated an eternal Christ and not one to be hanged on an ignominious cross. But Christ recognized that His hour had come and that the only way to glory was by way of death. And by introducing the simple metaphor of the kernel of grain, Christ predicted His own future and laid down an eternal principle for all his disciples. If any man will achieve greatness in the kingdom of God, it will be via a death process. Christ would be lifted up to die and if anyone desired to be Christ's servant he would have to follow His example.

I. The Nature of Death

The death process is obviously not a pleasant one. The very thought of death is painful. Man desires life. Man desires to be lifted up and be exalted. Man desires attention and applause. His philosophy is "assert yourself," and "express your personality." Or as the Negro pastor is to have said: "Verily, verily, I says unto you, let every man blow his own trumpet or it shall not be blowed." William Barclay relates the story of a school boy who was asked what part of speech **my** and **mine** were. The lad apparently didn't know his grammar, but certainly expressed the philosophy of our day when he replied: "They are aggressive pronouns." Man everywhere strives to get ahead, to become autonomous, and to make a name for himself. This trend has been present since the fall of man and reached its climax in the events at Babel. "Let us make ourselves a name" (Gen. 11:4). The world thinks only in terms of strength and achievement, self-assurance and aggressiveness,

security and advancement. Man chafes under the slightest restraint of self-expression. His desire is for unlimited autonomy. The present chafing under church rules in our denomination and a desire to cast them off is nothing new. Adam and Eve experienced a similar urge for emancipation. They were impatient even with a single restriction and in unbelief rebelled against divine authority in an attempt to be like God Himself.

Or we might take another look at the all familiar parable of the prodigal son. The young man was living in the affluence and loving care of his father. Yet he demanded what he claimed was his due and with that portion went into a far country. His basic motive seems to have been an attempt to escape from the restraining relations with his father. He too strove for autonomy. But as the parable clearly teaches, all man's self-assertion can bring nothing but loneliness, disappointment, and self-destruction. "He that loveth his life shall lose it." And yet self-denial is so painful. It is so contrary to human nature. But if we examine our text we realize that it wasn't easy for the Saviour either. His soul was troubled at the thought of death.

But death is not only painful. Death also involves separation. For Christ it meant a betrayal by Judas Iscariot, a denial by Peter, public mocking by members of the Sanhedrin, and finally the bitter experience on the cross which brought forth the cry: "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" The *via Dolorosa* was not an easy road for our Saviour to walk. Nor is the road He has plotted for His followers to be any easier. Our walk with Him may demand a separation from that which is dearest to us. For Elisha it meant a denial of all his material possessions, his security and advancement. And yet in the moment when Elijah flung the prophet's cloak about Elisha, the latter denounced all hope of earthly advancement. The plow and the oxen served as altar and sacrifice as Elisha stepped out into a life of obedience to a higher calling. No doubt there may have been human concerns about his future, but a death to self could result only in greater blessing. And the later record bears witness that the blessings in his ministry must have far exceeded all expectation. And if we look again at Christ, we must conclude that even His earthly ministry gathered only a few disciples, but His separation in death drew all men unto Himself.

We might also consider the O.T. account of Gideon (Judges 6,7). Gideon feared the Midianites and hid behind a wine press to thresh his crop. But it was there the Lord appeared to him and commissioned him to go and deliver Israel from the snares of Midian. Gideon was extremely skeptical about fighting the innumerable Midianites. Twice he tested God by throwing out his fleece. And finally, being convinced that God had chosen him, Gideon sounded his trumpet and assembled his troops for battle.

He was ready to attack. But there was one thing Gideon had not reckoned with. He failed to recognize that he was under further divine jurisdiction. And to his dismay God ordered all those who were fearful to return home. But God was not satisfied and Gideon was ordered to take his troops through an interesting examination. And finally when Gideon had but a handful of warriors left, God ordered them to battle. The ensuing battle of his 300 men against the Midianites who had gathered like grasshoppers for multitude, must have appeared suicidal. The loss of his many troops must have been extremely painful. And yet it was only as Gideon acted in obedience, that he experienced the victory Israel desired.

In our twentieth century we have been led to accept, quite unconsciously, the Communist slogan of having our pie here and now instead of in the sky, bye and bye. We measure our spiritual successes in terms of panel discussions, teach-ins, and study conferences. We savour our sermons with expressions from the original, with ideas from godless philosophers, or with allusions to some contemporary figures in the entertainment world. We speak with the tongues of men (and sometimes of angels), we predict future events, we solve many mysteries, and M.C.C. bestows our goods to the poor. But despite it all, our spiritual results are disappointing. Maybe C. S Lewis' evaluation that we have ceased to think of the other world and have become ineffective in the one in which we live is a valid one. He suggests that we again aim at heaven and get earth "thrown in," because if we aim at earth we'll get neither. Again the words of Christ ring out: Except a kernel of grain fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.

II. The Result of Death

Christ's main emphasis in our text, however, is not on the pain and separation of death. His main interest lies in the results of death. Death is to be nothing more than an entrance to life. For as all life succumbs to death in the natural, so death must succumb to life in the spiritual. The death of Christ resulted in men being drawn to Him. The small group that disbanded into the darkness of night, multiplied many times over on the day of Pentecost. And as was the experience of Christ, even so can be our experience. For Jesus said: "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mk. 8:35). And this life that is lost but saved, is a life of victory that Christ has intended for us. It is a more abundant life. And in terms of the metaphor of the seed, it can be a life of new verdure and refreshing fragrance. Or to use the language of one of the greatest chapters of the Bible, the new life will express itself in a love that is patient, kind, never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; a love which is never selfish nor takes offence; a love that keeps no score of wrongs, nor gloats over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. The vitality of this life following death to self far exceeds that of the original

BOOK REVIEW

WAR AND THE GOSPEL

by Jean Lasserre, translated by Oliver Coburn. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1962, 243 pp.

Though we as Mennonite Brethren belong to the Historic Peace Churches, we have never been able to take

the doctrine of non-resistance for granted, even among our own members. Each age faces the challenge

life, for Christ becomes the new dynamic. The reality of this new life seems to be inversely proportional to the death experience. Paul implies that even Christ's glorification was conditioned by His humiliation (Phil. 2:9), and L. E. Maxwell in **Born Crucified** contends that Christ's exaltation was measured by His humiliation.

Possibly the simplest and yet most beautiful example of the transformation process is that of the ugly squirming caterpillar. By natural instinct the caterpillar envelops itself in a silky cocoon and succumbs to apparent death. But after the period of metamorphosis, the drab-looking cocoon releases the multicolored butterfly that is no longer earthbound but has entered a new sphere of life. The Christian too can experience a new life of liberty through a death process. For if the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed (Jn. 3:36).

But the death-life process does not end in a mere transformation. By natural law the process also implies a multiplication of its kind. Jesus said that if the kernel died it would bring forth much fruit. As already noted, this was most evident at Pentecost. But history records many similar incidents. Stephen's martyrdom probably influenced the conversion of Paul. Paul's sacrificial ministry planted the church throughout the Mediterranean world. The unwavering faith of the second and third century Christians multiplied and strengthened the saints. The persecution of the church only added fuel to the flame, or as Tertullian summarizes, "The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church." In more recent years the very brief but sacrificial service of David Brainerd (missionary to American Indians; who died at the age of 29) inspired missionaries like William Carey and Henry Martyn. Martyn, rejoicing at his arrival in India, wrote home saying: "Now let me burn out for Christ." Within six years that prayer was realized, but the effects of that dedication are still with us today.

And what about our generation? Is there still an opportunity to burn out for Christ? Or can our generation produce only hippies and anti-war demonstrations? The laws of nature have never changed. Let the seed undergo a death process and it will break forth in life and fruitfulness. The principle which Christ drew from the seed is as applicable today as it was when He pronounced it.

—Ben Doerksen

anew and thus the debate must constantly be kept alive. The present situation in the world, particularly in Viet Nam, has focused attention on the issue of participation in war as seldom before, and while the circumstances of this war may be somewhat different from others, the fundamental issue remains the same. Is war ever sanctioned by the Gospel and, if so, can a Christian ever participate? These are the questions which Lasserre attempts to answer in this book. Jean Lasserre is a minister of the French Reformed Church and therefore speaks from a somewhat different perspective than that from which most books on the topic have been written. His book may well be considered one of the most comprehensive and thorough analyses of the problem to date.

The first major proposition which Lasserre examines is the commandment of love. This commandment is an unqualified and unconditional one which relates to the question of killing in war as much as to individual murder. Lasserre firmly rejects the notion that killing can ever be done in love, as many Christians would contend. To maintain that this is possible is to see in love an emotion independent of the acts which condition it or express it (p. 25).

A rather basic and determinative factor in arriving at a particular interpretation is the way in which one views the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The wars of the Old Testament are one of the major obstacles to belief in non-resistance for many Christians. Lasserre states his position on this at the outset.

The Old Testament is normative for us Christians only in so far as it supports a Christological interpretation; it cannot be normative directly, without intermediary of the Gospel of the

Cross. For it speaks to us of Jesus Christ, not of morality. So we must begin by looking for answers in the New Testament (p. 23).

While this alone does not resolve the inherent difficulties of interpretation of many Old Testament texts, it does fix priorities. The error of Calvin, Lasserre says, was that he fixed his ethic indifferently on the two Testaments.

A rather careful exegesis of many of the New Testament texts relating to the problem is given. Lasserre tries to show how in the teaching and example of Christ and the Apostles violence and bloodshed are never condoned. He exposes the inconsistency of those who deduce the legitimacy of the profession of arms from the fact that Christ never spoke directly to the issue even when confronted by men who were involved in the profession. On the same basis one could deduce the legitimacy of military occupation of a foreign country!

After dealing with the specific relevance of the commandment of love the author examines the question of obedience to the State. Does a Christian not also have an obligation to the State because of its function of preserving order and maintaining a climate in which the Church can carry on its task? Lasserre uses the term 'State' with some reluctance because there may not be any equivalent concept in Biblical thought and also because of the ambiguity of the concept in general. He cautions that there are few texts in the New Testament on the State and one looks in vain for a systematic development of a theology of the State.

Lasserre then proceeds with the exegesis of texts in the Gospels and in the Epistles which appear to say something about the State. Particularly interesting and refreshing is his

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interpretation of such texts as, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's (Mark 12:13-17). In the light of the context it becomes obvious that Christ has no intention of carefully defining two entirely separate spheres of authority, each with an independent claim upon an indi-

vidual. At the very least Christ's answer is ambiguous and even though the meaning were that Caesar had a legitimate claim, the text could still not be taken as a definition of the limits of that claim.

Another passage which deservedly receives more lengthy treatment is Romans 13. While much that is said

is helpful, it appears that the exegesis here, as in several other instances, suffers from the attempt to prove too much—which is precisely what Lasserre on occasion accuses others of doing. In a general way he says of Romans 13,

So the interpretation we give to Romans 13 must be modified in the light of the rest of the evidence from the New Testament, especially as in verse 1, the most strongly affirmative towards the State, "the idea that every authority exists by God's command is not a theory of Paul's but a traditional Judaeo-Hellenic one." (p. 103, the latter part quoted from Dibelius).

Perhaps the most stimulating section of the book is that in which the author searches for a Biblical criterion of political morality. He rejects the traditional doctrine which he defines as follows:

God has charged the Church with the duty of preaching the Gospel, and the State with the duty of ensuring the political order; the Christian is both member of the Church and citizen of the nation; as the former he must obey God by conforming to the Gospel ethic as it emerges from the New Testament; as the latter he must obey God by conforming to the political ethic of which the State is the judge and which is not to be disputed from the Christian point of view unless the State tries to impose a religious belief or interfere with the freedom of Christian preaching (p. 132).

Lasserre believes that political and Gospel morality cannot be independent of one another—they can only be concentric. He decisively rejects all natural theology, and believes that the Scriptures alone can provide a single universal criterion for morality. At this point the author declares himself as being in the true

Reform tradition and accepts the Ten Commandments of Sinai as the criterion of good for political morality. More precisely, he states that "the Decalogue is the *minimal norm* for the Christian's private obedience and only the essential criterion for his political obedience: not the norm, that is, of what the State *should* do (this was Calvin's error), but the criterion of what the Christian *may* do in obeying the State" (p. 154). The reasons for accepting this criterion are convincingly stated, although with respect to this there would probably be rather widespread disagreement among Biblical pacifists. The reasons for the rejection of the Noachic laws as normative could perhaps have been elaborated upon somewhat since they find rather general acceptance.

The final section of the book deals more directly with the sixth commandment. Does it condemn only individual murder? What about the death penalty? The author goes on to speak about the function of the police and then about the army conceived as a kind of police force. That this conception is mistaken is obvious, for "every government is at once judge, party to the dispute, and executioner (what an executioner!)" (p. 180).

Lasserre can hardly be accused of being idealistic or impractical. He is not exclusively concerned with the meanings of words and phrases, but again and again brings them to bear upon concrete situations. He is passionately concerned with making the Gospel witness a dynamic and consistent one, and this concern is perhaps best stated in his final words: "So many people at present are preparing with great earnestness to 'defend' Christianity. I believe the more urgent thing is to live it" (p. 218). For those who concur in this, as well as for those who disagree, this book should prove to be a vital challenge.

A. Dueck