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Brief Studies

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BRIEF STUDIES

THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION 1969

(Editor's note: This Brief Study is an extended book review prepared by Erwin L. Lueker, professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The book discussed is THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION: 1969, edited by Donald R. Cutler [Boston: Beacon Press, 1969], 1091 pages, cloth, \$15.)

This is the second in a projected series of annual volumes describing the religious situation of the current year. This volume seems more prophetic than the preceding one, that is, it deals with factors which have not yet entered the mainstream of theological discussion, but which are certainly destined to do so. Furthermore, some of the issues are couched in language which is almost certain to evoke dialog.

It seems as though the reader would be served best by synopses of the various chapters. The book is divided into four major sections:

I. Commentaries on the World Religious Situation

Donald E. MacInnis sketches the history of Maoism's treatment of religion and concludes that the latter has not been treated unlike other institutions. Traditional religions have been controlled and pushed underground, but Maoism has not demonstrated its power to hold the commitment of Chinese people. Martin E. Marty shows that the definition of religion had changed by 1968 and that the pace of religious change had quickened. There is a growing toleration of agnosticism. Philosophic concepts and civic religion are receiving increased attention. The life of a theological movement is decreased and religious rapidation may be here to stay. Religious divisions do not follow denominational lines as much as racial, national, and generational.

In the section on Europe, Josef L. Hro-

madka, long a leader in intellectual dialog between Eastern and Western Europe, expresses his hope that socialism may become an instrument of freedom and warns against regarding it as a monolithic system of power. Michael Bourdeaux points out that Eastern Europe is in a state of flux. The invasion of Czechoslovakia shattered the possibilities of international communism becoming a world force. Poland's freedom has been eroded and atheistic Albania can expect a religious revival. Aida Skritnikova's reply to an atheist is a touching testimonial of a Christian confessor.

Herbert Mason contends that Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Middle East have hope, charity, and faith in common but often vitiate their ideals through racial exclusiveness.

Annemarie A. Shinony sees possible attempts at genocide in the Biafran tragedy and urges that nations ship food to starving areas and station observers with national troops.

This section has a long subdivision devoted to the religious situation in South America, indicating the importance of changes that are going on there. Edward R. Sunshine holds that religion in Latin America must oppose oppression, if necessary with violence, and work for social change. José Míguez Bonino analyzes the causes of improved relations between Roman Catholics and other Christians in South America. He emphasizes the possibilities of working together especially in the area of social change. Waldo A. César shows how traditional non-Roman-Catholic Christianity in Latin America moved away from social realities whereas Pentecostalism through its spontaneity achieved a coherence to the social instability and therefore thrived. Francisco C. Rolim holds that Vatican II encouraged Brazilian Roman Catholicism to give the laity

a greater active role in the church. The implementation of this directive will lead to greater social involvement. Christian Lalive D'Epina points out how Pentecostalism broke the barrier of theological education which separated the layman from the pastor and created active Christian communities without religious stratification. Julio Barreiro seeks contact for a Marxist-Christian dialog by seeing in the Marxist emphasis on total man and his necessities an echo of the Bible's emphasis on the frailty, hardship, and privation of mankind. He holds that the real debate between Marxists and Christians centers on the problem of naturalism versus incarnation instead of autonomy versus heteronomy.

II. *The Experience and Expression of Religion*

In the section on preserving life and defining death, Joseph Fletcher points to the growing need for human tissue and organs, deplores the waste in crematories and cemeteries, and argues for an enlightened approach. He urges that dissection and donation be given first claim and funeral arrangements be made accordingly. He points out that procedures used to determine recipients may literally decide who shall live and who shall die. The moral problem involved calls for a reevaluation of the nature of life and death. Paul Ramsey seeks to update conceptions of death by examining theories of its meaning and criteria for determining when death occurs. Many physicians are looking at the brain to determine the criteria. Such theologians as Thieliicke distinguish between death and the maintenance of biological functions. There are also attempts to refine the traditional conception of death as cessation of the functioning of brain, heart, and lungs (integrated life function). The distinction becomes important because of the need for functioning organs. M. H. Pappworth outlines ethical issues in experimental

medicine. He stresses consent as an important issue. He also points out that often circumstances make it difficult for the person concerned to give consent and that often such consent is not valid. He stresses that experimental physicians do not have the right to select martyrs for society. A more definitive code of medical ethics is necessary. Daniel Callahan urges that moral consensus as well as professional codes and public laws are necessary to preserve the sanctity of life, which is a dignity alien to man, that is, it comes from God. This thought leads to an exploration of sanctions for the dignity of life. He holds that people of various persuasions can agree on a principle since it need not be empty because it is indeterminate. He gives a number of reasons which he considers universal for the sanctity of life: (1) the survival and the integrity of the human species, (2) the survival and integrity of family lineages, (3) the integrity of bodily life. Commentaries on this section are by Julian R. Pleasants, James M. Gustafson, and Henry K. Beecher. Frederick Elder compares two modern doctrines of nature, that of the anthropologist Loren Eiseley, who regards all being as interrelated, and theologians Harvey Cox, Herbert Richardson, and Teilhard de Chardin, who stress a man-centered universe. He defends the view of Eiseley.

Robert McAfee Brown stresses the two aspects of ecumenism: unity and mission. He stresses mission and holds that the church has progressed beyond pious generalities to a consideration of specific options of help to the needy. In the section on peace and war, law and order, Herbert Marcuse points to new forms which surplus-aggression assumes in affluent society while decline of responsibility and guilt through absorption of functions by technical and political apparatus tends to invalidate other values such as truth. Reuven Kimelman analyzes nonviolence in the Aggadists of the second, third, and fourth

generation of Amoraïm and thereby reveals deep insights into the wisdom of nonviolence. George Hunston Williams offers many insights into the moral factors of war and the draft. There is a strong current in American history emphasizing religious mission, political regeneration, and global pacification. He holds to the concept of just war and suggests that churches be sanctuaries for objectors. Chapter 23 gives a history and evaluation of "symbolic sanctuary" as offered by the Unitarian Universalist Association to those dissenting from the Vietnam war.

William G. McLoughlin sketches changing patterns of philanthropy, including the theocratic view that insisted on teaching the unwise sinners self-discipline. Education was also emphasized as was stewardship of wealth, the "Protestant ethic," the social gospel, organized philanthropy and reactions to it, service and healing. He concludes that not only a theology of revolution is necessary but a revolution is necessary in the approach to philanthropy.

In the chapter on psychedelics Allan W. Watts describes his psychedelic experiences as concentration in the present and awareness of polarity, relativity, and eternal energy. He attempts to meet some of the arguments advanced against legalizing psychedelic drugs. John R. Phillips studies the "Leary vs. United States" case and concludes that religious freedom based on an individual approach may become an important issue in the drug question.

Myron B. Boly finds a deep religious quest in alienated youth. The campus chaplain should exercise his marginal role toward both the academic establishment and the counterculture. He emphasizes the symbolic nature of the chaplain, that is as a symbol of religious verities vaguely sought by youth.

Robert O. Johann distinguishes two kinds of community, that of actions and functions and that of people. In the latter everything

else has to be subordinated to the loving fellowship.

III. *Defining the Religious Dimension*

The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is reprinted and world response is analyzed by James F. Drane. He points out that those in agreement with the encyclical often stress loyalty to the pope. Strong opposition has come especially from theologians of the Roman Catholic Church. Bishops who disagree express disappointment but conform to the encyclical while seeking ways of circumventing the strict legal requirements of the document. Theodore M. Steeman sees in the underground church (whether its emphasis is liturgical, theological, or ethical) the real source of progress in the church. Vatican II was a manifestation of the movement though not its source or consummation. By its recognition of the laity and by its concept of the church as community, Vatican II made continuing "underground" churches a reality. Randy Huntsberry, holding that learning is motivated by natural curiosity, seeks ways to counteract passivity, dependency, and fear in the learning process. He holds that education should be structured around "models" which are normed by truth, adequacy, and relevance, thereby stimulating reflective self-consciousness and verbalization. In the section on symbols and self-understanding of religious man, Herbert Richardson explores the significance of the symbol of virginity in ancient Israel and classical Greece, medieval Christianity, and the modern spiritualistic-individualistic period. He finds that in patriarchal times human sexual behavior was governed by instinctual aggression, in the medieval Christian period friendship between men and women was idealized to the exclusion of sex, and in the modern period there is a tendency to integrate friendship and sex. Robert Jay Lifton sees historical (or psycho-historical) dislocation and flooding imagery in mass communication as

causes of modern Protean man suffering from a sense of absurdity and self-condemnation related to symbolic disharmonies. A stabilizing superego has practically disappeared. Vincent Harding sees no hope for America until it places the truth of Afro-Americans into its histories. Such truth he claims would lead to a reevaluation of basic American ideals and actions. Emil L. Fackenheim shows the dilemmas of empiricism's attempts to show that Jewish faith is neither verifiable or falsifiable. Jewish or Christian faith is neither a hypothesis nor indifferent to experience, but it is beyond logical analysis. William Kuhns and Robert Stanley explore the use of coexpression in liturgy, religious education, ethical direction, and theology. Coexpression is the simultaneous appeal to several senses (or visual sense alone through picture and word) to produce a synergism, that is, a combination of two factors in the creation of a third entirely different one. An important feature of coexpression is that it can mean different things to different people.

Robert N. Bellah finds rooms for transcendence today, because there is a reality that forces itself upon our consciousness and refuses to be managed or mastered. He finds the present student generation particularly open to the kind of transcendence referred to by Wallace Stevens as the "self that touches all edges." Religious symbolism is needed because of the limitations of all other symbolism. Harvey Cox discusses the difference between feasibility and fantasy. He holds that fantasy must be supplied by religion. Without sacrificing the reason of Roman Catholicism and the freedom of other Christian traditions, Western theology needs the creativity of Eastern Orthodoxy. This at times means a departure from "normalcy" to Platonic *mania*.

Jürgen Moltmann points out that the future has become the theme of the sixties. Futurological studies necessarily project elements of the present into the future. But

faith in Christ must do the opposite: it proceeds from the absolute future in order to define and transform the present. This future is a united future. The Christian community is an act of hope which must transcend boundaries drawn by state, national, regional, and *ad hoc* churches to achieve reconciliation and transformation. Arthur Gibson urges a theology of astronauts which will extrapolate the perfection thrust along the time axis, expand the notion of personality, and give new insight into the relationship between Creator and creature.

IV. *Social Indicators of the Religious Situation*

Paul M. Harrison evaluates American ministers on the basis of criteria for professionals: (1) they are called to a vocation of community service, (2) esoteric knowledge determines rules and methods of the profession, (3) their authority is grounded in esoteric knowledge, (4) they belong to independent guilds, (5) they fulfill an important function in society. Each of these areas is explored and assets and deficits of the ministry are evaluated. Herbert H. McCabe sees the priest not as a political leader in a feudal or democratic society but as a revolutionary leader. The church is a redemptive community through which God summons man to self-transcendent future life. William A. Clebsch finds four types of cure of souls in the entire range of Western religion: healing, guiding, sustaining, and reconciling. He finds that the first two have largely been taken over by medical and psychiatric professions, but the last two have been intensified for the pastor. Edwin S. Gaustad discusses the role of the churches of Christ in America and the dilemmas they face as they confront the problems of organization and evolving social structures. Charles S. Liebman traces Jewish liberalism to the Jew's response to enlightened intellectualism rather than to other factors.

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