

HUMAN SCIENCES & CULTURE

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37 Terrence W. Tilley (editor), *Postmodern Theologies: The Challenge of Religious Diversity*. Orbis, 1995. \$18.95.

Need a short reader for a class on "Postmodernism and Preaching"? Looking to update your knowledge of current theological trends that may be helpful for the practice of ministry? This may well be the book you've been waiting for.

This book is the result of a post-graduate seminar held in the Religion Department of the Florida State University in the fall of 1993. Contributors include John Edwards, Tami England, H. Frederick Felice, Stuart Kendall, C. Brad Morris, Bruce Richey, and Craig Westman.

Acknowledging that the word "postmodern" can mean many different things, these writers help the reader sort through various "post-age" models. Part 1 deals with "the postmodernism of completion." The reader is able to interact with Helmut Peukert, David Ray Griffin and David Tracy, theologians who accept Habermas' argument that postmodernism is actually the completion of modernism. Part 2 deals with "postmodernisms of dissolution." The reader is exposed to the ideas of those who embrace the deconstructive agenda of Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault, especially Thomas J. J. Altizer, Mark C. Taylor, and Edith Wyschogrod. Part 3 outlines the perspectives of those who, adopting strategies from Wittgenstein, Clifford Geertz, and narrative theology, turn postmodernism into postliberalism—most notably, George Lindbeck. Part 4 turns to theologies of communal praxis, in which theory and narrative are jettisoned in favor of shared practice. This section includes chapters on Gustavo Gutiérrez, Sharon Welch and James McClendon. A final chapter assesses each model according to its treatment of the issue of religious diversity.

The writers in this volume accentuate the roles of communication and communicative action in various postmodern theologies. Over and over again, the reader confronts communicational terms such as dialogue, conversation, persuasion, solidarity, the "other," "communion," and "community," as fundamental aspects of theological reflection. For this reason, the book is tremendously helpful for homileticians and preachers. We are invited to consider the changing face of theological communication in a postmodern context.

According to these theologians, postmodern communication shuns (inductive) forms of "identification" and embraces interactional appreciation of "difference." Postmodern narratives give voice to "otherness" instead of rejoicing in the "ahas" of mutual self-recognition. Postmodern proclamation aims not at truth, insight, or epiphany. Rather, its goals are resistance, hope, and solidarity. These are simply a few of the ideas rele-

vant for homiletical practice. We are indebted to Professor Tilley for organizing a useful seminar and sharing its fruits with us.

□ John S. McClure

38 Carroll Saussy, *The Gift of Anger: A Call to Faithful Action*. Westminster/John Knox, 1995. \$16.99.

Anger, like love, wears many hats. As a repressed enemy, it can destroy self and community. Trusted and accepted, anger becomes a transforming friend. Saussy seeks to convince us that we should befriend this powerful human emotion, tapping anger as a resource for faithful action in the world. "In what ways is anger a gift from God," she asks, "and in what ways is it a deadly sin?"

The strength of this book lies in Saussy's reminders that much anger, both personal and communal, needs no justification. Abuse of children, oppression of women, systemic violence towards minorities all engender an anger that must be expressed in ways that construct just social relations. She calls this "holy anger," and links it to the prophetic anger of the biblical tradition. In short, anger is God's gift to humanity.

In contrast to this hopeful anger stands the anger of despair. Those persons who cannot express or do not accept their own anger often turn it upon themselves. They are silenced by fear of violence, or are afraid of the uncontrollable consequences of angry expression. This leads to the "stuff and blow" syndrome so common in interpersonal relationships, or to apathetic resignation. In its most extreme forms, its consequences are clinically pathological and/or socially destructive. Saussy has apparently seen too much of such ill-harbored anger in her counseling and teaching. She wants to set the prisoners free. The thesis is familiar in our therapeutic age, though nonetheless important.

Where Saussy makes this reader uneasy is in her biblical interpretation. Her reading of the Gospels yields a psychological Jesus who "perhaps suffered what clinicians would diagnose as depression." (p. 97) Such psychological interpretations of Jesus are of dubious value even if you aim, as Saussy does, to explore Jesus as the truly human one. Further, she makes a questionable correlation between the psychological dynamics of human anger and theological statements concerning God. While human anger and divine anger are certainly analogous, she tends to collapse the distinctions. She seems unaware that beneath the psychological wisdoms with which she explores human anger reside philosophical presuppositions about human being, creation, and vocation that may or may not be compatible with her theological claims.

These cautions notwithstanding, the book gives a clear exposition of the psychological dynamics of anger. Her call to harness hopeful anger for change is indisputably needed in our violent society. It might serve one well as the resource for a topical sermon or the classroom lecture. Should sermon or lecture that addresses human anger end in increased love of God and neighbor, then Saussy's aims will have been fulfilled.

□ G. Lee Ramsey, Jr.