



The Voice

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Editor: HENRY VOTH

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EDITORIAL

CHANGES THROUGH GROWTH

Living in a rapidly changing world, we have become accustomed to accepting change in almost all areas of our life. Some of the changes we accept are improvements and indicate genuine progress. Others are merely changes and again others are, in the words of T. S. Eliot advances, "progressively backwards."

In the spiritual realm, in our understanding of God and His Word, in our worship and in our witness there are changes. This is as it should be. We can find much scriptural exhortation towards change. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts his readers to "leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and to go on to maturity." (Heb. 6:1). Paul confesses that he has not yet arrived, but is constantly pressing on "to make it my own" (Phil. 3:12). And again we have in the letter to the Ephesians a definition of the goal of the Christian life". . . to grow up in every way into him, into Christ. . . ." (4:15).

It is particularly in this passage from Ephesians that we have a clue as to what sort that change ought to be in our spiritual life, namely growth. Not all changes in this realm can be called growth. Some changes drop essential aspects of the Christian faith and life, and as such are destructive and harm the organism. Others again are additions of things which are not of the Spirit or the essence of that to which they are added, and thus constitute a foreign body which corrupts and could destroy that to which it is added. Some changes profess to be merely in the area of method, but actually, sometimes imperceptibly, they have moved into the area of content, and have actually created something new and different.

But change through growth will never do this. Growth is progress towards maturity, towards fulfillment of the purpose or goal of the organism. Growth maintains organic unity, between that which was and that which comes to be added. Growth is

not forced upon the organism from without but arises from within. It is not arbitrary but goal-directed and its direction is positive to the life of the organism which is being changed.

This is the nature of change which we should and must experience if we would be the witnesses we have been called to be. Growth involves work, and may also involve pain. We speak of "growing pains" and all adults know from experience the reality of that term. Growth in understanding too, involves pain and this is often much more acute than any physical sensation which we have experienced. It may be the pain of dropping the familiar, the cherished opinion or concept which has been associated with that which is near and dear to us. And yet if we are to grow, such relationships must never block the changes which growth demands.

Growth is necessary in all areas of Christian experience but we will here mention only one.

Growth in the Understanding of God's Word.

One area in which the need for growth is most pressing is in our understanding of God's Word. Stimuli for growth in this area may come from different sources. It may come from increased exposure to the understanding and interpretation of others, who also share a deep love for and a loyalty to the Word as God's revelation. It may come also from a growing understanding of the world in which we live and the issues we encounter. But such influences ought to be the occasion for the change rather than the cause of it.

Let me put that somewhat more clearly. When we encounter such influences we must listen carefully to what is being said, make sure that we understand what is being said, and then we must "check it out." This means that we turn to the Scriptures themselves and, like the Bereans of old, examine "the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." Never should changes in our understanding of the Word arise primarily out of the changing religious and moral climate of our environment.

We must never hold our understanding of any particular part of Scripture as final or absolute. The Word of God is a living Word and understanding of something living should not be static. We must keep our minds and hearts open for new insights which may at times not only bring with it an addition of insight to that which already we know, but also, may call for us to drop an understanding which the more careful and comprehensive study of Scripture shows to be untenable. This will be painful, but is necessary, if we are to grow in the Word.

Henry H. Voth

ARTICLES

WHERE SHALL WISDOM BE FOUND

Job throws out some penetrating questions on issues of contemporary import and abiding value. One of these is expressed in chapter 28:

Where shall wisdom be found?

And where is the place of understanding?

This question has occasioned (in part at least) two other Old Testament books, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. It is therefore worthy of our consideration.

In order to find the place of wisdom, we must determine what it is for which we are searching. The word wisdom (Hebrew, **chokma**) is used in a variety of contexts. It is the endowment of practical ability and the mastery of the crafts for the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 28:3; 31:3; 36:1), the temple of Solomon (I Chron. 28:21), and an ordinary house (Prov. 24:3); it represents moral discernment (Prov. 10:31; 29:15); it is the experience and sagacity of a man capable of giving counsel (Job 26:3; Eccl. 9:15,16,18); it consists in an understanding and meaningful appreciation and commentary on the material and social spheres of life (I Kings 4:32,33). Wisdom often appears in parallel with "understanding" (Prov. 4:5; 21:30) or "instruction" (Prov. 1:2,7; 10:23); and it is equated with the Law (Deut. 4:6) and the fear of the Lord (Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10).

Wisdom is an international phenomenon in the ancient Near East. Israel's wisdom literature is by no means unique at to the **themes** which appear. There are Egyptian love songs in which lovers speak of their love for one another, addressing each other as "my brother," "my sister." Three tablets of a Babylonian wisdom document contain a composition called **Ludlul Bel Nemeqi** which is very similar to the theme of **Job**. In it, a) there is an introduction (which is lost), b) the narrator is forsaken by his gods, c) all his fellow men from the king to his slaves turn against him, d) every kind of disease afflicts him, e) his deliverance is promised in three dreams, and f) he is freed of all the diseases. Ecclesiastes shares some literary usages and viewpoints with Babylonian and Egyptian discussions in the same field of interest; and the Egyptian **Teaching of Amenemope** and the Phoenician **Words of Ahiqar** show striking similarities to passages in Proverbs.

The comparisons noted above have not included references to the differences between Hebrew and other Near Eastern wisdom

literatures (which are often significant), nor to the matter of time of composition (which would be crucial in determining dependence), nor to the fact that there could be identical structure, themes, and even language and yet have vastly different meaning (as, for example, a Christian and a non-Christian novel produced out of the same historical and literary background on a common theme).

The Old Testament recognizes the international character of wisdom. It mentions the wise men or wisdom of Egypt (Gen. 41:8; Ex. 7:11,12; I Kings 4:30; Isa. 19:11,12); Edom (Jer. 49:7; Ob. 8); Arabia (Prov. 30:1; 31:1); the Queen of Sheba; Phoenicia (Ez. 27:8,9; 28:4-7,12,17; Zech. 9:2); "the East," meaning the Trans-jordan desert borderlands (I Kings 4:30); Babel (Isa. 47:10; Jer. 50:35; 51:57; Dan. 1:20; 2:2,10,12,13,14,18,24,27,48; 4:6,18; 5:7, 8,11,15); Persia (Esther 1:13; 6:13); and speaks about the wise men of the nations (Jer. 10:7).

Wherein, then, does the distinctiveness of Israel's wisdom lie? Where is true wisdom to be found?

Job follows this question with a survey of the various spheres of life which might offer a clue as to its source and location. Wisdom is not found in men themselves (28:13); the depths of the sea do not contain it (v. 14); wisdom is not a commodity which can be brought to light with the riches of gold or jewels (vv. 15-19); animate creation searches for it in vain (v. 21); and even death and destruction, the portals of the life beyond, can only whisper rumors concerning its presence (v. 22). So, then, where is wisdom to be found?

With Yahweh, the God of Israel and of the whole earth!

God has a monopoly on this rare commodity. Any and every communication of true wisdom finds its source in God:

God understandeth the way thereof,
And he knoweth the place thereof (Job 28:23);

Yahweh giveth wisdom;
Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding (Prov. 2:6)

Just as "Yahweh by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens" (Prov. 3:19), so God shares with man of His wisdom (I Kings 3:28) for the accomplishment of the divine purposes. This is also why, in the understanding of wisdom, the Old Testament makes so much of the role of the Spirit of God.

Joseph, when challenged to interpret Pharaoh's dream (Gen. 41:15) asserts that he does not, in himself possess the requisite wisdom for the task (v. 16). He understands the dream to represent a divine disclosure in veiled form. God must lift the veil (41:25). While it is evident that Pharaoh views Joseph as comparable to his own "magicians" and "wise men," Joseph refuses to attribute his interpretation to a human source. For him wisdom is a gift

from God. Pharaoh then acknowledges that both Joseph's ability to interpret dreams and to offer insightful advice concerning the dilemma disclosed in the dream come from the Spirit of God:

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, "Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou (vv. 38-40).

Similarly, the seventy elders appointed to serve with Moses in the administration of the tribes (Ex. 18; Numbers 11) are empowered by the Spirit of God. The appointment of these elders was on the basis of their wisdom (Deut. 1:13). The foreman and instructor of the guilds constructing the tabernacle was "filled . . . with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship . . ." (Ex. 35:31ff). Of Joshua we read: "(He) was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Deut. 34:9). Under Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, Daniel's reputation as a wise man included the recognition that "the spirit of the living gods" was in him (4:18; 5:11, 14; cf. 2:47,48). And finally, the messianic king, the Davidic prince, will be empowered with the Spirit of God, "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh" (Isa. 11:2).

The further clarification as to how one may gain access to the divine wisdom is given in Job's concluding statement:

Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
And to depart from evil is understanding (v. 28P).

One of the most common identifications of wisdom is with the "fear of the Lord." The fear of the Lord is equated with the Law of God (Ps. 19:9). The key text for an understanding of the relation of wisdom to the religion and faith of Israel is Deuteronomy 4:5-8.

Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, even as Yahweh my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the midst of the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for *this is your wisdom* and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that shall hear all these statutes, and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." For what great nation is there, that hath a god so nigh unto them as Yahweh our God is whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

This text contributes two thoughts to the understanding of wise men and wisdom. First, wisdom is a given. It is theocentric and of divine origin rather than anthropocentric and humanistic. The laws and ordinances of Israel were commanded by God, not for

the purpose of placing impossible strictures on His covenant people, but to allow them to express in every sphere of life, the great potential of true worship, fellowship, and service. The law, therefore, reorients man to the physical world, to man, and to God. The divine wisdom calls upon man to recognize his place and function within it.

Second, Israel will also be recognized as wise by other nations as a consequence of her continued reliance on the counsel of Yahweh (v. 7). Israel's existence and history is described as theocratic rather than deistic. This statement of the immanence of God prepares for the mode of guidance and counsel which is open to the covenant people—God is always accessible. Israelite wisdom functions within the framework of the covenant and Israel's distinctive relations with Yahweh.

The concept of the "fear of the Lord" is greater than the Law. In contrast with the view of Israel's pagan neighbours, "the Old Testament conception of fear is the conviction that it is not man's concern to walk warily amid all the various powers which surround him but rather that the power of Yahweh is the only one to be feared and destroys every other fear" (J. J. von Allmen, ed. *Vocabulary of the Bible*, Lutterworth, 1958, p. 116). Rather than saying that God is feared through dread of punishment, the Old Testament claims that punishment, the discipline of the God of love (Prov. 3:12), leads man to a healthy fear of God (Deut. 13:11). This fear is the supreme attribute of the Messiah (Isa. 11:2). Paradoxically, fear is the source of confidence, and weakness the source of strength (Job 4:6): that is the work of grace (*Loc.cit.*).

This understanding of wisdom defines the framework within which we must interpret the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. Israel's wisdom flowed from God, the fount of all wisdom, and functioned distinctively within the constitution of her faith. The endowment of wisdom-filled men who stood in the fear of the Lord was to serve for the care, guidance and judgment of God's people. And it equipped them to interpret the everyday events of life—the phenomena of animate and inanimate creation and the nature and life of man as an individual and as a member of society. The writer of Ecclesiastes sums up his findings in the words:

Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Eccl. 12:13,14).

A. Guenther

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN A CHRISTIAN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Obviously the New Testament does not speak directly to the topic under discussion, and I was reminded of Spurgeon's sarcastic remark to his student preachers, that if they were short of a sermon they could always remedy the situation by making a text say what it didn't. Fortunately the situation is not that desperate that we have to resort to that kind of remedy. The texts of Scripture must always be permitted to say what they have to say, and we must always listen to them carefully. But after having given them a hearing, it is the task of the interpreter to apply this message to all of life's situations. In this way Scripture remains relevant. It is also this peculiar character of Scripture that helps theology to retain its freshness. Besides, such an approach to Scripture serves as a check on all theological thinking, calling it back to its historical foundations.

It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to make us aware of our needs, and to meet these needs. As a Christian academic community we have many needs in common with believers in other walks of life. However we also have a few peculiar needs. It is important for us as an academic community to discover where our needs lie, and then to open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit so that he may meet these needs.

Some of the areas in which we need the help of the Holy Spirit in a particular way are well known to us, and all I can do is to remind us of them once more. Since we are a Christian educational institution, one basic need is that of 'light'.

I. Illumination

Those who are specifically engaged in the interpretation of Scripture need to be reminded that "the things of God no one knows except the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:11). For their encouragement Paul adds: "we have received the Spirit from God in order that we may know the things graciously give to us by God" (v. 12). This means that the interpreter of Scripture must always work with humility of heart, but at the same time with confidence in the help promised by God. On the one hand, he acknowledges his limitations in understanding the 'depths' of God, and on the other hand, he has the deep assurance that (as Jesus promised) the Spirit will guide him into all truth.

A matter that has often been debated, when it comes to our understanding of divine "mysteries", is that concerning the academic

equipment of the interpreter vis-à-vis the help of the Spirit. The Spirit obviously, will not teach us Hebrew and Greek, although many can testify to the Spirit's help even in such matters. We can hardly hold the Holy Spirit responsible for wrong interpretations of the Scripture which have arisen out of the neglect of the tools, which are so essential in our understanding of Scripture. On the other hand, we are reminded of Kierkegaard's school-boy, who stuffs his back pockets full of grammars and lexicons so that he will not feel the teacher's stick. The implication is that the great learning of the expositor may make the message of God of no effect. Indeed, some commentaries on the Bible are much like Codex Ephraemi, a palimpsest, in which the text of Scripture is obscured by the sermons of the Syrian Father written over it. Blaise Pascal drew a fine distinction between learning secular and Biblical truth: He recognized that one could learn a letter of Paul for memory as a book of Virgil. But, "where there is no grace, religious truth is no more than secular truth; is nothing but dry bones without the vivifying breath of the Spirit. Nay a man may know the whole Bible by heart and yet be damned."

Our temptation has often been to make an either/or situation out of these two aspects when we approach Biblical truth. Academic equipment versus the Holy Spirit is a wrong antithesis. I suppose if we had to choose between the two, we would all ask for the help of the Spirit. After all, there is in Scripture what Luther called the 'sufficiency principle', i.e., if the Bible is read in the right spirit every man can find Christ in it. But it is not an 'either/or'; it is a 'both this/ and that'. The man who neglects all external helps in the study of Scripture and depends on the Spirit alone needs to be asked (cum Spurgeon), how it is that he has come to think so highly of what the Spirit tells him, and so little of what the Spirit has told others (as this is found in books). On the other hand, the man who relies on his academic equipment should join Paul in his prayer for the Ephesian readers, that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that the eyes of their hearts might be opened (Ephesians 1:17, 18).

However, this prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation must be in our hearts not only when we interpret Scripture, but also when we approach other realms of knowledge. Although we are not left to our own resources even when we seek to accumulate the factual knowledge demanded of our various disciplines, it is when we try to relate this knowledge to our Christian faith and life, that we stand so desperately in need of the illumination of the Spirit. It is in the humanities and the social sciences that the more critical questions for the Christian faith are raised today. And it takes more than human insight to overcome the dichotomy between the Christian faith and the modern currents of thought.

To be enlightened by the Spirit, of course does not mean that we become, by some divine magic, as it were, omniscient, so that we feel that we have all the answers and have the authority to pontificate on all subjects. On the contrary, the Spirit makes us humble and enables us to admit our limitations. We don't always help the student most when we make the impression that we are 'king oracle, and when I ope my mouth let no dog bark.' Also, we should be less certain of being guided by the Spirit, when our insights and understanding of the Christian faith are not shared by other members of the community who also take God and his revelation seriously. The Holy Spirit may well be hindered in his work if one member of the academic community felt called to contradict or even to undermine what the other (s) felt called to build up. Moreover, it should be remembered, that the illumination of the Spirit comes to those who are concerned about "doing the truth." It is those who "follow" Christ who have the promise that they will not walk in darkness. In spiritual things, obedience to the light is an essential element in the process of knowing the truth. But we must also acknowledge the sovereignty of God in the matter of distribution of spiritual gifts, and to these belong the gifts of *sophia* and *gnosis* (I. Cor. 12:8). It is not always a comfortable observation to make (the Corinthians give evidence of that!), that some have been given the spiritual gift of penetrating more deeply into the divine mysteries. I suppose it is somewhat easier to acknowledge the insights of those who are somewhat farther removed from us (whose books we read), than to acknowledge these, when they are present in the community in which we move.

We do well to confess, at the beginning of another year of teaching, our need for light. At the same time we want to encourage our hearts by reminding ourselves of Jesus' promise of the Spirit, who would guide us into all truth.

II. Communication

The Pentecost event illustrates the significance of the Holy Spirit in the matter of communicating truth, in that the Spirit helped the apostles to break through the language barriers with the message of the Gospel. Paul confesses (I. Cor. 2:1ff.) that he had refused the use of "persuasive words of wisdom" and had looked to the demonstration (*apodeixis*) of the Spirit, so that the faith of the hearers might rest not on the words of men but on the power of God. In the same chapter (v. 13) he claims that they (he and others) speak *en didaktois pneumatos* (taught things of the Spirit). C. K. Barrett says of this expression: "The Spirit also provides language that makes conversation about theological truths possible" (p. 75, Romans). It has been said that one difference between Philo and Paul in the matter of illumination by the Spirit

is, that in Paul it's a revelation to be shared and proclaimed, whereas in Philo it's an insight to be guarded, since illumination comes only to a few 'select souls'. But in Paul, insight into God's mysteries is never an end in itself: it becomes 'gospel' for others.

In the text which I have already quoted (I. Cor. 12:8), we read of the gift of wisdom and knowledge. But it is worth noting that both of the terms are preceded by the word *logos*. This means that the Spirit not only endows people with wisdom and insight, but that he also enables them to share these insights in words. If we are to build Biblical truth, or a Christian *Weltanschauung*, into the minds of students, we must confess with Paul, that we are not sufficient for these things. There are few things that can discourage a Christian teacher more, than to discover that his understanding of the Christian life is not taken seriously by his students. Therefore, he will have to recognize, that only by the aid of the Holy Spirit can he get his message 'across' to students.

Now we know that communication goes on at a non-verbal level, as well. If Christian students were hoppers into which one could pour a certain number of facts which would then "make them wise unto salvation," we would have to view communication in a different light altogether. But we know that Christian values are 'caught' as much as they are 'taught'. Each teacher, by the way he lives, is an invitation to his students to follow him in his understanding of the Christian way. Christian values are not only a matter of teaching, but a matter of living. The pupil of a greatly beloved teacher, recalling his first lesson on the Greek declensions, said that when William Medly (classical tutor in Rowdon College, Leeds 1869-1908) wrote *doxa* on the blackboard, the room seemed full of the 'glory' of which he spoke, and in which he seemed to live.

However, not only in communicating Christian truth and values do we experience the help of the Spirit, but in the process of verbal communication itself we can look to his aid. There will be times when we have the distinct impression that what we tried to say, and the way we said it, was well received. This impression was not necessarily gained by complementary comments that were made in our hearing, but by an inner assurance. If our evaluation in such instances is correct, there is only one explanation, and that is that the Spirit of God manifested his gracious presence. But then there are also those times when we have that gnawing feeling that what we said was useless, and the manner in which we said it had little to commend it. I don't think that it would be wise, in such moments, to take refuge in Paul's confession, "when I am weak, then I am strong," as if that passage might mean that the poorer the presentation the greater the opportunity for the Holy Spirit. And yet, to our own chagrin, (and to our encouragement), it was possible for the Holy Spirit even in such disconcerting situations to convey

something of value to the hearers. On the other hand, we do not want to blame the Holy Spirit for being remiss in his work, when we bungle. The preacher who testified to the effect that he never knew beforehand what he would say, but that he depended completely on the Holy Spirit, was taken aback when asked how the Holy Spirit could be so boring?

How shall we communicate integrity, humility, patience, faithfulness, etc, unless the Holy Spirit comes to our aid to work his fruit in us and in our students? And when we remind ourselves that communication is a two-way street — that we must also learn to listen to the students as well as to inform them — than we begin to feel the need of the Spirit's help even more keenly. Or, what may be even more difficult than instructing and listening, is 'learning' from students. Just because we may have the edge on them in experience (hopefully this means more than 'age') and training, does not mean that we cannot learn much from them. This grace is also a gift of the Spirit. I once heard the president of Northern Baptist Seminary, Chicago, say, that he felt like removing his hat before every student that came to seminary. A healthy respect for the student will go a long way in opening up the channels of communication. And so we must implore the Spirit for the gift of communication.

III. Transformation

In our allusion to the non-verbal aspect of communication we suggested that Christian values, ideals and ideas could not be communicated without the help of the Spirit of God. But even before they can be communicated they must be present in the teacher, and so we must say a word on the work of the Holy Spirit in the transformation of character. It is of interest that the Greek Fathers previous to the 4th century confine themselves in their writings on the work of the Spirit to the giving of revelation and knowledge and that they dwell but little on his work of renewing ethically, disordered human nature. This was a serious oversight. In the book of Acts the work of the Spirit is seen more obviously in equipping the saints for their task; in Paul the emphasis shifts rather strongly to the ethical work of the Spirit (although the ethical emphasis is not absent in Acts, and the charismatic is not lacking in Paul). The significance of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of the believer can hardly be overstressed.

We could go on endlessly, listing texts in which the Spirit is described in his sanctifying work. Romans 8 no doubt is the most elaborate development of the Spirit's work in this respect. But the text to which I would refer to in particular is 2 Cor. 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the

Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The ‘we’, here, includes all Christians, not only Paul and other apostolic leaders. Whereas Moses alone stood before God “with unveiled face” (Ex. 34:29-35), this privilege is now extended to all saints. The meaning of the verse seems to turn somewhat on the meaning of *katoptrizomenoi*. In the middle voice it usually means “beholding oneself in a mirror.” If that is the meaning here, Paul would appear to be saying that we see the glory of the Lord, but only as reflected in a mirror, i.e., we have not yet attained to the beatific vision, our vision is still imperfect (so the AV). The RV suggests that the Christians themselves reflect the glory of the Lord ‘as a mirror’ (imperfectly indeed, as metal mirrors did) something Moses was prevented from doing when they threw a veil over his shining face. Tasker says: “It would, however, seem more natural to suppose that it is by **beholding** the image of Christ rather than by reflecting it, that the Christian becomes changed into it” (p. 68, Tyndale). The RSV seems to regard the metaphor of the mirror as no longer alive in the word, and translates ‘beholding’ (‘reflecting’ is in the margin). In contrast to Moses who could not look at the brightness of the glory and so had to cover his face, the believer beholds the Lord’s glory without a veil to hide it from him. The result is that he is transformed from glory to glory. This could mean that Christ’s glory creates a similar glory in the saint (from His glory to our glory), or that the saint is transformed progressively from stage to stage. In any case, the glory does not pass quickly away as in the case of Moses. What it means to be transformed from glory to glory is explained by saying that it is a transformation into the image (*eikon*) of the Lord — into Christlikeness (and so it is very important for our self-examination that we have information on what Christ was like. Also we should be on guard lest we choose from the portrait of Christ, only those colors which appeal to us). Now this amazing transformation of finite, fallible human beings is not of their own doing: it is **apokuriou pneumatos** (from the Lord who is spirit, from the Spirit; of the Lord; from the Lord of the Spirit; etc.). Although a certain translation of this phrase may be hard to come by, the obvious meaning is that only by the power of the Spirit (whose work is intimately linked to that of Christ) can the transformation of character take place.

In our particular case, we might emphasize the “beholding.” In Catholic spirituality this would be called the ‘illuminative way’. The stage in the life of the devout soul when Christ becomes the center of his thoughts, affections and action. Of the Marian martyrs the Catholic historian Philip Hughes has this striking comment to make: “Through their habitual frequentation of the Bible these

people have for themselves become transformed into Scriptural figures and all the drama of their lives has itself become transformed into a scriptural event itself a continuation of the sacred story.”

By gazing on his Lord, the believer becomes a mirror in which the likeness of Christ is more and more clearly seen. However, like Moses, who was not aware that his face shone, the saints are not conscious of how they reflect the Lord. When a group of young people reported to D.L. Moody that they had prayed all night and that it could be seen on their beaming faces, Moody gently reminded them of Moses, whose face had shone, “but he knew it not.” Indeed, it is very common for those who behold the image of Christ to become more and more aware of their failures and imperfections.

In the transformation of character the means of grace play an important role. In Eph. 5, where Paul instructs his readers on how to live a holy Christian life in the last days, he points to the source of strength of exhorting them to be filled with the Spirit. The participles that follow (“**speaking** to yourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and **making music** in our hearts, **giving thanks** at all times . . .”) are usually taken to be the ‘ways’ in which the fullness of the Spirit expresses itself. But there is a good possibility (according to Bendtorff, Schlier, et al.) that hymnody and prayer (that **eucharistountes** — “giving thanks” — suggests the Eucharist is doubtful) are the ‘means’ by which the transformation of life is effected. Schools of theology are often criticised for emphasizing the academic over the devotional. But there is no inherent antithesis between these two emphases. Philips Brooks, in his student years, was greatly disturbed when he discovered that students could enter so wholeheartedly into a prayer meeting and then come to class with their lessons undone. But the relationship of religious devotion to academic excellence is a big topic by itself. All we want to do is to stress the need for devotional exercises in a Christian academic community. Taking theological schools as whole, today, the tendency appears to be that the means of grace are not given the place they should have. However, it is worth noting that even in the exercise of the means of grace (prayer in particular), we need the help of the Spirit of God for we do not know how to pray (Rom. 8:26). God’s Spirit must come to our aid. It is possible to understand Phil. 3:3 in the sense that “we worship God by the Spirit”, i.e. by the help of the Spirit of God. Of all areas in which we are in need of the help of the Spirit of God, we need him most in the area of transformation of character.

IV. Motivation

I suppose motivation is one of the key-factors in the learning processes; it facilitates and speeds up learning. Students learn best,

if what they are learning seems meaningful to them; if it meets a need in their life. The Holy Spirit plays an important role in making the student aware of his needs, and in showing him that what he is learning is an answer to his needs. We all know how helpless parents and teachers are when it comes to the question of motivation. College students are often found dragging their feet when it comes to attending upon lectures, doing assignments, even attending chapel. Aside from the fact that we all suffer from the weakness of the flesh, this general debility comes at times from a feeling that what they are doing is useless and meaningless. It is only the Spirit of God who can supply the Spiritual enthusiasm so necessary for learning the things of God. Paul says, that "the one who strengthens and anoints us is God, who has sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2. Cor. 1:22). It is the Spirit that gives teachers and students joy, peace, confidence and hope (Rom. 8:6; 14:17; 15:13).

Then there is another kind of motivation which gives us an even greater feeling of helplessness. This is the inner urge to devote one's life to God, to sacrifice, and to serve Christ. We may teach and exhort to the best of our knowledge and ability, but if the Holy Spirit does not speak to the heart and kindle the flame of devotion, students (and teachers) of a Christian college can become what C. T. Studd criticised in the theology schools of his day, "stuffed sausages, tied at both ends." Students will not hear the call of God to invest time, money and life in the work of the Kingdom, unless God's Spirit moves them.

CONCLUSION

As we anticipate another school year, it would appear to me that the presence of the Spirit among us would do at least three things for us:

1. The Holy Spirit will make us aware of our **limitations**. The work of the Kingdom of God cannot be done in the power of the flesh (however educated or cultured it may be). The Spirit will make us aware of our limitations in wisdom and insight; of our inabilities in communicating divine truth; of our helplessness in influencing others for the good; of our own spiritual poverty before God.

2. The Holy Spirit will fill our hearts with **expectation**. The assurance that God is with us by his Spirit makes us confident. Since God's Spirit (like the wind) "blows where it wills," we have every right to be full of expectancy. We have no reason to doubt that the Holy Spirit will move among students and staff in his cleansing power, confirming God's truth, laying his hand on men and women to draw them into the service of Christ. Where the Spirit has his work, one can expect the unexpected to happen.

A SERMON

GOD'S COMFORT BREAKING THROUGH

Isaiah 40

Introduction:

Life hurts, and we all know something of its pain. We know the distress of physical pain. We all know something of fear — fear of the unpredictable span of time that lies ahead, fear of the ill will of other people, fear of the evil inclinations we see erupting in us from time to time. The pain of loneliness is not strange either. We have been hurt by separation, by rejection, and by the great sundering wall of indifference. Life is a painful experience, and all of us need to know something of comfort in order to survive.

Just yesterday one of our little budgies died. We had seen her illness increase, and we suspected that she was in pain as her little feet stiffened and developed white nodules. We felt a pain as we watched her helplessly. And when she was dead, we felt grief for the other bird who remained. He was silent and confused. Surely we cannot be more sensitive to the plight of these birds than God is to the needs of his creatures! He was involved, too, in the death of that little bird. But he tells us that we are of much more value than the birds, and consequently, his concern for us is infinitely great than it is for the budgie in our cage.

3. The Holy Spirit will give us the **preparation** we need. He will not necessarily do this by a 'quick charge' at a spiritual retreat, as important as such an event may be. Rather, he will prepare us from day to day, from lecture hour to lecture hour, from lesson to lesson. There will be moments when we will be conscious of his presence, at other times we will not sense it. But in the life of faith we are assured of the Spirit's help both on sunny and on cloudy days; in moments of exuberance and in the hum-drum of routine work.

Our prayer then should be; "That he would grant you(us), according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

—David Ewert

But the sick budgie in the cage did not sense anything of our concern. She snuggled into the corner and suffered her pain alone. And the one bereaved could not understand that we were sorry for him. In fact, his loneliness increased his fear. His very need of comfort caused him to distrust us and to doubt even more our affection for him. And so his doubts shut him away from the comfort that he could have experienced. And from within the wall of his doubts he piped for his companion in shrivelled notes of melancholy.

Our doubts can shut us away from the God who stands ready to give comfort. Distrust closes the door through which God would like to enter. Unbelief shuts our eyes to God, and we complain that he is not there, when all the time he is waiting for us to let him and his comfort in. Though he is standing by, we cannot see him, and so we become anxious and fretful. The need of our souls which should have been the means for making God real to us in his comforting presence, becomes the occasion for shutting God out. Our doubts become great stone walls through which we call, and cry, in an effort to break out and find the comfort of God.

Let me suggest that we let God break through our doubting from the other side, and let him bring us the comfort our soul needs.

In the text, then, let us follow the prophet as he grapples with our doubt, so that we can experience the comfort from God. He comforts by placing into our hearts an eternal truth, a truth about himself.

A. The first comforting truth: God actually enters our lives

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed."

In this fruitless desert of my existence, is it possible that there be a highway by which God makes himself real to me? Has not sin separated between man and God? Did not God drive man from his presence in the garden of Eden? Does not sin still prove the impenetrable fortress that keeps God out of my life? How can God become real to me when sin is such an awful reality? Wherever I probe my being, sin is there! In every situation I enthrone myself and dethrone God; and this is what sin is, is it not? If at the core of my very being I am a sinful creature, how can it possibly be that God will come in to bring comfort?

And through the turmoil of our doubting comes the word of God: "Comfort, comfort my people, speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her iniquity is pardoned." Where once man was driven from the face of God to be left in the cold of his isolation,

to fend for himself against the weeds of the earth and the wiles of the devil; there God has now made a provision for reunion. The sins have been forgiven; the penalty has been paid; the judgment has broken itself on the head of the lamb of God. Where once the wrath of God burned hot, now love stands revealed, and God speaks tenderly. The enmity is over; the warfare against God has ceased; we have been justified by faith, and have peace with God.

Now God can come into the everyday of my existence. And because he has found a way into my life, God is now at work building a highway for my life. Oh, he is not a magic-wand road-builder. He does not simply whisk the rugged places away. There are mountains that make the going rough; there are gorges that are almost hypnotic in their yawning depths. But God has the road building equipment, and he makes a way around, over, or through the mountains; and he fills in, or bridges, or fences off the gorges, so that we can walk safely through life.

The devil would like to keep us doubting. He would love to have us think that because of what we are in our depravity, God will have nothing to do with us. But the word of God comes through: your sins are forgiven. And that truth is a comfort, because now we can know that God does come into our experience.

B. The second comforting truth: God's word is eternally secure

But doubt still rears his grey head. God can do his work of grace here and now, but out ahead the grave still looms abysmal. "All flesh is grass; the grass withers. Surely the people is grass." For all that God can do for life here, what about the beyond? Is there some truth that will give comfort in view of the grave?

And God answers that doubt too. And he does it with a simple statement that steadies the universe: "the word of our God will stand forever." Man's life is but a span; but out beyond unsteady rhythm of life's cycle, out beyond the ticking of our time, there is God, eternal, unchangeable. Man must go; but God remains. Man's promises die with his death, or at best are forced upon others by a scribbled page; but God's promises never die. When we hear His Word, we are hearing a word that stands like a rock.

Thus, though we tremble at the fact that our lives must ebb and disappear, we have a comfort in the truth of what God is: he is eternally faithful and so is the word he speaks. The promise he makes to us now is a promise we can count on for the beyond. When he tells me in his word, that I am a child of God, I can rest assured that when I face him in the life beyond, that promise will be honored — I will still be his child.

C. The third comforting truth: God is strong enough to be gentle

Honest doubting is a groping for the truth. Disbelief is a rejection of what you have come to know to be true. The Pharisees knew Jesus to be sent from God but they refused to hear him.

Yet many who were following him sincerely still had many unanswered questions. Even John the Baptist had them when the prison cell rang hollow with his prayers. Even as we grasp one truth that gives comfort to anxiety, other questions arise. If God is out beyond where things are measured in terms of time and space, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, what about the little things that concern me here? How can the intimate things of my life touch him?

We hear the prophet cry: "Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him." We hear, and are afraid. He is so big and strong! Our problems are intimate ones. Our concerns are the concealed anxieties that touch few other lives, and much less the great world. Our fears are for personal things: will I be pretty when I grow up? Will I find the right girl? Will my friends understand? Will my father accept me when he finds out that I'm not brilliant? What if sickness comes? What if I lose my job? What if no one will marry me? Will I make a success of teaching? How will my children turn out? Will my husband be true to me?

Can a great God who "comes with might" and whose "arm rules for him" deal with things like this? Does he not dismiss them with a gesture of disdain? Not so!

It is precisely because he is so strong that he can be gentle with us in the small things that concern us. God is great; his arm rules; it wields the scepter of a million suns or bursts the fetters that held the volcano captive. And this God of might can caress, can hold tenderly, can feed a flock like a gentle shepherd, can gather lambs into his arms, can carry the tired ones on his great shoulders, can lead with kindness and consideration those who are with young, who carry secret burdens fearfully.

The comfort lies in the fact that God is the kind of God he is: "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."

D. The fourth comforting truth: God is aware of all our needs

Strange how our groping doubts latch onto the very things we believe. And yet not so strange! This is the way faith grows. Unbelief is refusing to believe, but honest doubt is standing on that which we believe and reaching into the darkness beyond it to grasp something more and climb upward to the light.

We believe that God is great. We let the truth bear in on us. The God who is strong enough to deal gently with my griefs is the God of all. And that word becomes an immensity: "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? And the prophet goes on: "Behold, the nations are like a drop

from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales. All the nations are as nothing before him. It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers.

So that's it! If nations are some random dust on the chemist's scale, then what am I? If men are before this great God like grasshoppers, swarming in their millions, then what am I? How can I be more than a particle of dust lost amid the accumulation of years, stuck away in some random crack in the floor boards of the cosmic hayloft?

If the radius of space is, as it has been calculated, 3300 millions of light years distance, then in the very immensity of it all, I ache with loneliness again. The very truth that should make my God great to me, has made me feel lost, and lonely, and of no account at all. Of what worth am I personally, and how could God even as much as be aware of me? And if the universe in which I live is an ever-expanding colossus, my own insignificance and my aloneness must only increase, not be remedied.

Oh, thou God of all, great beyond words, mighty beyond comprehension, immense beyond imagination, why hast thou forsaken me? Why hast thou set me adrift in the boundless ocean of all that is, to squirm and struggle meaninglessly and fade out — an insignificance?

And through our doubting and our groping the word of God comes quietly, reassuringly: "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hid from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God?'" We know why we said it: our God is so great, his creation activities so monopolize his time, his mind is so wrapped up in big things that really count, that he pays no attention to me. I'm a nobody anyway! I don't count!

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable."

He does not grow weary. His daily round does not exhaust him so that he has no energy left to look after the needs of his little child. His understanding is unsearchable. His mind is not the galley slave to the machine of his creation. He can look after the whirling of the galaxies and still stoop down to solve the little problems of his child. His redeemed still have priority on his time. And when he is busy adjusting the tilt of the earth's axis, or hurrying Pluto along to be around in time for the next eclipse, or trying to get the shimmy out of the great wheel of the Milky Way, his child can walk right in boldly, as to a father, and find comfort for his pain, and strength for his way. "He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they

shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

Conclusion:

Don't let the tempter convince you that your groping is unbelief. A doubt that searches for assurance is a doubt that builds on faith, a faith in God. Now let God break through your doubting with his comfort:

Your iniquity is pardoned, and so God can actually come into your life.

The word of God will stand forever and even when death snuffs out your life, the promise he made you here is valid for the beyond.

He will feed his flock, gather the lambs, gently lead those who carry concealed concerns; he is mighty enough to be gentle with our weakness.

He is aware of our little struggling and "gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might, he increases strength."

Prayer: We thank thee, God, that thou who didst say to the prophet: "Comfort, comfort my people," hast comforted us with thy truth and with thyself. Amen.

—J. Regehr

BOOK REVIEW

LITERATURE AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

by Sallie McFague TeSelle

New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966. \$6.50

Consideration of the relationship between literature and religious belief is an enterprise which has engaged the attention of many thoughtful critics since the days of Plato and Aristotle. During recent decades, however, discussion of the proper relationship between literary art and the Christian faith in particular, has displayed a new vigor and excitement. Literary and theological critics who have contributed repeatedly and significantly to more recent discussion of this complex and yet perennially intriguing subject include the following: Erich Auerbach, Cleanth Brooks, Ernst Cassirer, Dorothy Sayers, Roland Frye, Harold C. Gardiner, T. E. Hulme, John Killinger, William F.

Lynch, Jacques Maritain, D. S. Savage, Nathan A. Scott, Randall Stewart, Allen Tate, Eliseo Vivas, Paul Weiss, Amos N. Wilder, John W. Dixon, Jr., Roy Battenhouse, Malcolm Ross, and Martin Turnell.

Since there are so many facets of the subject which deserve—indeed, finally demand—careful and discriminating study, we are not disappointed to discover that few of the discussions offered by these critics consider, let alone satisfactorily resolve, all the questions which a curious Christian reader might ask about it. We are learning to be grateful—as indeed we should be if the Christian virtue of humility means anything to us—for any and every serious discussion which

freshly illuminates at least some aspect of this labyrinthine subject.

One of the most recent investigations of this tantalizing subject, first published by Yale University Press late in 1966, is Sallie M. TeSelle's *Literature and the Christian Life*. About the author herself we were able to learn little beyond a few biographical facts: she first acquired an absorbing interest in the thesis of her book when, during early college days, she prepared a longer paper on the imagery of the fall of man in the poetry of John Donne and Andrew Marvell. This interest TeSelle steadily nurtured throughout university and seminary studies and, later, as lecturer in Christianity and contemporary culture at the Yale Divinity School. This teaching position she, evidently, still holds. Early in 1968 TeSelle assumed the task, also, of editing a new periodical published by the Society for Religion in Higher Education (New Haven, Conn.) and called *Soundings: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*.

But what the book itself reveals about TeSelle's own abilities and approach as critic of literature, and as student of Christian theology and experience, is both considerable and creditable. While her treatment does not embrace all possible aspects of the subject, anymore than do most of the studies which have preceded hers, and while it reveals its own limitations of insight and perspective, as we shall venture to suggest, it does manifest certain qualities which are so important for any meaningful consideration of the relationship between literary art and Christian faith and responsibility.

If we began with the quality of careful scholarship, we may assert without hesitation that *Literature and the Christian Life* arises from, and embodies, wide-ranging and discriminative study of both secular literature and the literature of the Bible and Christian theology. TeSelle's close and sympathetic acquaintanceship with both kinds of literature is revealed in her frequent

and yet always relevant allusions to many writers of both past and present. It is revealed in her more detailed analyses of the thought and writings of (1) particular *theologians* such as Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Gerhard von Rad, John T. Robinson, Jonathan Edwards, and Soren Kierkegaard, (2) particular *novelists* such as William Faulkner, William Golding, Leo Tolstoy, Herman Melville, Saul Bellow, and B. Malamud, and (3) particular *critics* such as Allen Tate, T. E. Hulme, I. Jenkins, William Lynch, Hans Frei, Roland Frye, Erich Heller, Erich Auerbach, R. P. Blackmur, Cleanth Brooks, and W. K. Wimsatt. And these analyses, while they are searching and suggestive enough, do not rely, for their power and appeal, on the literary jargon or literary casuistry which have come to mar so many essays of the "New Criticism" school in our century.

However, it is TeSelle's thoroughgoing familiarity with the literature and spiritual tenor of the Bible—of the New Testament in particular—that so obviously sets her above and beyond a goodly number of contemporary writers who have addressed themselves to the same general subject. Sallie TeSelle devotes almost one quarter of her entire treatment to an analysis of the Christian faith and life and their distinctive essence as these are set forth in the New Testament, especially in the affirmation, and personal experience and example, of the apostle Paul. While Christian readers will approve or disapprove of specific facets of TeSelle's delineation of Christian experience in accordance with their own characteristic understanding of it, they ought to have no difficulty in recognizing and acknowledging her authentic knowledge of that experience.

Another quality which pervades TeSelle's discussion of her subject and renders it impressive and appealing is its tactfulness, honest discrimination, and mature sense of justice. This quality—or cluster of qualities—is admittedly a more sub-

jective one and will not be felt in the same way by all readers of this book. We feel that it is clearly and abundantly manifested in both the author's handling of her subject and her handling of language as such.

When, at the outset of her discussion, TeSelle speaks of the doubt and suspicion which some Christian readers in the past have expressed about the relevance of culture, and of secular literature, to the Christian enterprise, she does so in the spirit of sympathetic understanding. Moreover, she is honest enough to refer, in this connection, also to the widespread feelings of suspicion or contempt for Christian literature and for the Christian faith among otherwise intelligent artists and critics of our day and of earlier days.

When, in Chapter I of *Literature and the Christian Life*, TeSelle prepares her readers for an evaluative discussion of the principal positions which have been proposed with regard to the proper relationship between Christian belief and experience and literature generally, she is honest and even-handed enough to inform her readers promptly of the major criterion in terms of which she will assess each position. This criterion is, as she herself phrases it, "precisely the degree to which it does violence to neither faith nor art" (p.8), and it becomes the fundamental premise in her entire discussion. The reader may, of course, take issue with this basic premise, but its presence in, and significance for her discussion of the whole subject is never once disguised or confusedly asserted. In truth, it is reiterated so often that, were it not for the sheer variety of apt illustrations of this thesis and the happy felicity of her language, such reiteration would certainly prove tedious to many readers.

TeSelle's fine literary tact and discrimination are reflected in her able treatment of the three major positions which Christians have held concerning the relationship which should obtain between Christian

faith and literary art. These positions she designates thus: (1) "religious amiability," (2) "Christian discrimination," and (3) "Christian aesthetics," and in her discussion of each she succeeds in defining its characteristic essence and in referring accurately to some of its proponents, and in pointing up some of its peculiar merits and weaknesses.

But this same tact and discrimination are reflected also in TeSelle's very candid and yet courteous discussions of the critical shortcomings and distortions—when they do attempt literary analyses of specific works—of such notable critics of our time as Randall Stewart, Roland Frye, N. Berdyaev, William Lynch and Nathan Scott. The shortcomings, the superficiality, of their literary criticism, she insists, usually derives from the fact that they substitute some kind of criterion that is not strictly literary for a strictly literary one and so fail to engage in "painstaking critical exegesis."

And this tact and discrimination are reflected in her perceptive analysis of the nature of aesthetic experience and of the nature of the aesthetic objects which creative works of literature embody. In her discussion of the nature of *aesthetic experience*, TeSelle is careful to distinguish it clearly from other modes of human apprehension and response, such as the ethical, philosophical, or religious modes (unlike Tolstoy and Matthew Arnold, for example, who failed to do so). Yet she is equally careful to protect genuine aesthetic experience and activity from such positivistic or linguistic distortions as mar A. J. Ayer and I. A. Richard's conceptions of it.

The nature of aesthetic experience TeSelle defines very simply as "appreciation of or joy in something for its own sake" (p. 73), or, more fully, as "the willingness to be really open to the uniqueness and newness of something, even if it means tearing up the neat cartography of one's world" (p. 74). But she does not

stop here; she goes on to indicate suggestively how the aesthetic experience becomes linked to the ethical or religious experience: "What a man learns from a novel, for instance, may influence his actions, not because there is some intrinsic connection between the aesthetic and ethical modes, but because they are the modes of apprehension of *one man and the man may decide* to put what he knows of man and the world from his reading into his daily living. *The kind of integration that results will be a vital and not a theoretical one, an existential and not a systematic one*" (p. 83).

In her discussion of the "aesthetic object," TeSelle graciously acknowledges the real service which the New Critics have done literature (especially poetry) by insisting that "what is said and the way it is said in the aesthetic object" is deserving of our first attention, "not any references to a reality outside the object." But, once again, she reminds us of the limitations of their approach and method and argues convincingly that what a serious literary work expresses is, in the nature of the case, human experience and that, therefore, the work is really about something other than itself. "Literature," TeSelle remarks, "is always about man himself, for it is always a human experience or a testing of some idea, emotion, or event, and hence it reflects the basic *dramatic structure* of human life with all its richness, ambiguity, and irony" (p. 93). But all authentic works of literature do not merely reflect the structure of human experience and the fabric of human reality in a general way; they reflect this structure in new and particular ways so as to compel the reader to stop short, to listen carefully, and to gain new insights into the very "Grundform" of human experience and reality. And having established this point, TeSelle can proceed to indicate in what particular and legitimate ways, as she views the matter, literature can serve both Christian and non-Christ-

ian readers.

Every authentic piece of literature, then, whatever its particular genre or form and whatever the precise nature of its content, is about "man experiencing, experiencing himself, his world, and other men," and serves to deepen and sharpen the reader's knowledge of, and imaginative response to human experience. This, TeSelle contends, is its primary purpose and intent, and the fact that a particular work of literature may have been written under the controlling inspiration of a *any crucial sense*. This is not to say, TeSelle adds, that distinctively Christian inspiration or orientation adds nothing of value to a specific work. The writer who is inspired and sustained by a deeply Christian vision or perspective as he writes, may be in a position to portray human experience more compellingly than is the writer who lacks or scorns this vision or perspective. But according to TeSelle, this will be true only if the Christian writer in question is at the same time a competent and honest craftsman, and will be true only because the writer in question, being a committed Christian, presumably brings to his literary task and art a finer sensitivity and more acute insight into human nature and into the human dilemma as such.

The literary work of a Christian writer may project a distinctively Christian theme or embody a distinctively Christian orientation but will usually do so in oblique and indirect rather than obvious or explicit ways. But the primary purpose and value of a "Christian" work of literature cannot be fundamentally different from that which we legitimately expect from *any* authentic (and secular) piece of literature. Therefore, the value for *Christian readers of any and every* authentic literary work, whether it be clearly Christian or thoroughly secular in orientation and tone, depends upon the measure in which it actually acquaints them "with man's situation in the world and

with all his needs and actuality" and the measure in which, consequently, it renders "their love of man more discriminating and realistic."

Although TeSelle argues her thesis with clarity and persuasive force, and in the full and wise awareness of alternative positions, her discussion does not answer satisfactorily all of our own questions, we must assert, about the correct relationship between literature and the Christian faith and responsibility. Is her rather sharp distinction between obviously didactic Christian literature and what she terms authentic literature (which may or may not be Christian in thrust and tone) warranted? Is it a truly valid assertion to contend that "the intent of a literary work of art is not usually to convert, nor is its content trust in a merciful God and love of one's fellows"? One implication of such an assertion is that much of the world's religious and devotional literature, even though it has achieved high status as literature of human inspiration and influence, is really not authentic literature—as TeSelle defines the term, in any case. Indeed, TeSelle says as much when she declares that "the New Testament is not long on detailed knowledge of the heart of man, knowledge we need if our love of others is to be appropriate and realistic. It is not the purpose of the New Testament to delve into the heart of man, but it is the purpose of literature to do just that" (p. 162). Does this reflect an entirely just and adequate understanding of the literature of the Bible and its purposes, we ask.

Other questions that linger with us still are the following. Does a Christian writer—a truly creative and responsible Christian writer, that is—necessarily weaken or distort his artistic inspiration and energy when he allows Christian convictions and intentions to dominate him as he writes? Moreover, must his Christian convictions and purposes find only oblique and fragmentary representation or embodi-

ment in a literary work in order that the creative process of a writer, as TeSelle so frequently reminds us, might be properly stimulated and safeguarded? Is not the current emphasis upon the uniqueness and sanctity of the creative process possibly an exaggerated one that can intimidate Christian writers and prevent them from embodying the full sweep and force of a Christian vision or perspective in a piece of inspired literature?

In respect to questions such as these, we must admit, we find theological critics of literature like Martin Turnell (*Modern Literature and Christian Faith*, Newman Press, 1961) and Roland Frye (*Perspective on Man: Literature and the Christian Tradition*, Westminster Press, 1961) rather more convincing. These critics avow more boldly that, to quote from Turnell, "we only get a truly Christian work of literature when the writer's whole outlook is informed by his beliefs, when we do not feel that intellectually held beliefs are being imposed on experience from without, or are only very imperfectly assimilated into the experience" (p. 2). We cannot forget in this connection, a comment once made by a great Milton scholar, James H. Hanford (in an essay reprinted recently in *John Milton, Poet and Humanist: Essays by James Holly Hanford*): "It is no law of dramatic genius that it must be untouched by individual bias, must hold no creed but that of artistic sympathy with its creations. Milton found it possible to reconcile the objective necessities of his subject with the data of his own experience as many another artist has done" (p. 233).

Of course, we recognize that our era is one of increasing isolation and estrangement—with respect to the relations of people one to another as well as their relationship to the Christian faith, an era and culture in which, as Nathan Scott has so aptly expressed it, "the centre is broken." We recognize that, in consequence of this fact, it has be-

come increasingly difficult for Christian writers, who—like other writers—must work in the "web of their time," to speak meaningfully and persuasively to people through avowedly Christian literature. We fully appreciate, too, TeSelle's contention that a work that is thoroughly secular, or only faintly Christian, but otherwise embodies

authentic literature, can influence readers in truly Christian ways. Yet questions such as the above remain with us, and only confirm the fact that the problem and subject of TeSelle's book is a difficult and paradoxical one that shall continue to interest us for a long while yet.

Herbert Giesbrecht