

Introduction To
Process Philosophy

JOHN F. JOHNSON

Jürgen Moltmann
And His Theology Of Hope

THE EDITOR

The New View Of Reality
And The Task Of The Church

OTTO C. HINTZE

Auctoritas Absoluta

THOMAS SOLTIS

The Moral Aspects Of War

MARTIN H. SCHARLEMANN

The New English Bible:
Old Testament

WILLIAM F. MEYER

Assignment To Xanadu, USA:
Bane Or Blessing

HARRY COINER and
ALLEN NAUSS

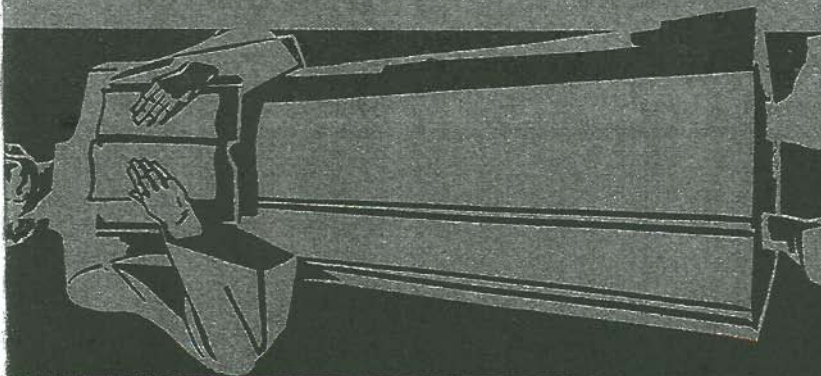
Theological Refractions

Pilgrim's Regress

Book Reviews

Index, Vol. 33

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VOL. XXXIV

NO. 1

JUNE, 1970



Theological Refractions

RANDOM THOUGHTS ON MARK'S GOSPEL

One of the major tenets of contemporary Biblical criticism in regard to the Gospels is that Mark is the first Gospel and that it is more historical and less theological than the others. The basic argument for the priority of Mark is that most of this Gospel can be found in Matthew and Luke. Whether anyone will ever definitively prove which of the Gospels is first is doubtful. There are some that on the basis of the Dead Sea Scrolls would make John's Gospel the first and date it some time before the fall of Jerusalem. This is amazing as some scholars not too long ago were suggesting a date around 150 A.D.

Robert Lindsey (*A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark*) comes to the conclusion on the basis of linguistic studies that Mark's Gospel can be translated back into the Hebrew only with distortions. If this is so, then there is every reason to believe that Mark's Gospel was dependent on other extant Greek writings. Mark was the copier and not the copied. David Flusser (*Jesus*) argues for the priority of Luke's Gospel on the basis of linguistic study and spots a Hebrew sentence structure behind the words of Jesus. If Jesus was Jewish then Luke's Gospel is closer to Jesus than is Mark's Gospel. More fuel is added to fire by Robert H. Gundry (*The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel*) who through linguistic studies claims that while the formal quotations from the Old Testament in Matthew are dependent on the Septuagint, the allusions also come from the Aramaic and the Hebrew. Matthew even corrects the Septuagint to agree with the Hebrew Bible at times. The use of Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic all point to a Palestinian authorship for Matthew.

The question of priority of the Gospels is academic at best. Even if we determined with certainty which Gospel was first, we would still be faced with the dilemma of a later dated Gospel using earlier sources. Literary criticism of the Gospels should continue and in no way be hampered by preconceived notions. But if such freedom is really allowed, then why must most New Testament critics work with the unproven axiom that Mark is first? Marcan priority is based not so much on linguistic arguments, but on the philosophical principle that theological truth grows. Essentially, this is an evolutionary concept of religion. Since Matthew is longer than Mark, then Matthew must have added to Mark. Of course, the reverse could be argued. Since Mark is shorter than Matthew, then Mark must have condensed Matthew. Such arguments are inclusive, because there is no way to establish what must and what must not be. Nevertheless the reference to the priority of Mark and the dependence of Matthew and Luke on Mark are all too frequently accepted with an unqualified dogmatic noivete. Even Willi Marxsen, who sees in Mark a Christology and not mere listing of events, claims a Marcan priority without proving it. His thesis, that Luke turned into history what Mark only intended as theology, would meet a sudden death if Mark were not the first

Gospel. In any case, Marxsen's idea must be taken lightly, if the evidence for Marcan priority is even remotely suspect. Marxsen's whole case in *Mark the Evangelist* presupposes that Matthew and Luke had Mark in front of them when they wrote. But linguistically Lindsey, Plusser and Gundry have shown that Matthew and Luke are actually closer to the Palestinian milieu in which Jesus lived.

The other myth that is constantly battered around, but which also must be put to death is that Mark is the most historical of the Gospels and that John is the least historical and most theological. Ferdinand Hahn ("The Quest of the Historical Jesus and the Special Character of the Sources Available to Us" in *What Can We Know About Jesus*) and Willi Marxsen (*Mark the Evangelist*) see a theological motive in Mark's Gospel and not a historical one. Hahn even concludes that John is based on a tradition which is older than the writing of Mark's Gospel. Marxsen contends that Mark adjusted the historical detail to fit his own theology. Marxsen's theory that Mark wrote the Gospel with a Galilean interest to get the Jerusalem congregation out of Jerusalem into the north to wait for the return of Jesus is sufficiently speculative to gain momentary attention and so inadequate in regard to evidence that it will be short lived. Nevertheless Marxsen sees that Mark's Gospel is theology. It is even more theological than John in the sense that in Mark the theology is cleverly interwoven into the fabric of the material. John's Christology is quite explicit. I am offering no pet theory of my own, but it might be the time now to thrust the sword through the hearts of these sacred cows of New Testament criticism. Mark may not only not be the first Gospel, but he may be just as theological as John. If these thoughts are taken seriously, it might undermine much literary criticism of the Gospels. But it would not be the first time it happened. Christian Ferdinand Bauer in the last century spun a theory that Matthew was first and Jewish. Paul was next and was Hellenistic. Luke came along and combined Hellenism and Judaism. It was a nice theory, but then again it was offered when a lot of people in the last century were impressed by Hegelianism. So today many current theories are based upon ideas still unproven.

D.P.S.

OPEN COMMUNION IN THE ROMAN CHURCH

In an address delivered to the Catholic Theological Society of America, Father Buckley spoke of some of the interesting developments concerning intercommunion with "separated brethren." He said that there are increasing numbers of Roman Catholic people who cross denominational lines to receive the Eucharist from other Christians. The reaction among the clerics is varied. Some applaud the trend and see no need for any prior approval of church authorities, and hope that by sharing in the celebration that they will make a decree by any authorities unnecessary. Others hold that full ecclesiastical communion needs to be established be-

fore any Eucharistic intercommunion may be permitted. The inevitable third position is that intercommunion can and should be permitted on certain special occasions under proper ecclesiastical supervision as a sign of unity achieved and as a means to further unity. Buckley is concerned to explain the position of the third alternative as that of Vatican II.

One of the principles which governs intercommunion is that all Christians in good faith may sometimes receive the Eucharist at a Catholic liturgy, for this is the completion of what was begun at baptism. As he speaks about this principle, he says that worship should signify the unity of the church and should also provide a sharing in the means of grace. However, there should not be any indiscriminate practice, and the proper ecclesiastical authorities should make the decisions on what will happen. The celebration of the Eucharist is the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true church. As an example of what he intends this principle to cover, he cites the case of the Eastern Catholic Churches, and says that although there is not perfect union with this body, there is sufficient unity, for they believe that Jesus is present in the sacrament. Those people who likewise believe that Jesus is present in the sacrament can also have Communion from the Roman Catholic Church in time of death or urgent need, or when the bishop may declare that it would be a good idea if there were an intercommunion.

A second principle is that Catholics may share in the Lord's Supper at other Christian churches. This section is somewhat of a redefinition of what a church is and must be read in a Roman sense. What Buckley is about is meeting the objections that have been traditionally raised against this practice. He argues that although there cannot be a complete sense of the Eucharist because some churches lack the historic episcopate, this does not mean that there is nothing at all present at the celebration of the Eucharist in a church of the separated brethren. Although ordination is necessary for the celebration of the Eucharist and this gives the celebrant the power necessary to consecrate the elements, Buckley argues that the power for this consecration of the elements lies in the nature of Christian prayer. Since the power of Christian prayer is open to all God's people, then it would seem that the Eucharist can be valid at least in some sense for all the people at this particular celebration even if the celebrant is not a Roman priest. Furthermore, since there is in fact a common priesthood among all the Christians, if a certain group of Christians recognizes a ministry as valid, there can really be no criticism of that ministry, for the ministry is based on the baptism of the faithful. In order to make the ministry full of its potential however, there should be a special charism, a special intention, and ecclesial authorization. Therefore the Roman clergy find themselves most admirably qualified to fill the requirements of the situation.

In considering the challenge of intercommunion, then, people should remember that Christ must be really present in the sacrament. In addition, there must be a genuine ministry which consecrates the elements. Also

it is important to remember that every celebration can help toward unity, but that under the supervision of the proper authorities in a reciprocal relationship, this is not to take place indiscriminately. (Francis J. Buckley, S.J., "Principles of Intercommunion", *Theology Digest*, XVII, 4, 338-348).

D. P. S.

ORDAINING WOMEN PASTORS IN SWEDEN

The ordination of women pastors in Sweden has been common practice for several years, still there is some opposition to the practice in certain places in the State Lutheran Church. When the Rt. Rev. David Lindquist, bishop of the Vaxjo diocese, became ill last summer, the cathedral dean, the Very Rev. Gustav Adolph Danell, became the acting bishop. Upon hearing that some of the pastors were planning the ordination of woman in the church at Glomminge, he issued a warning against such action. Dean Danell made it clear that no women would be ordained as long as he was the acting bishop. Upon the recovery of Bishop Lindquist, the dean was censured for his stand.

The matter became more acute last December when Miss Inger Svenson, herself the daughter of a Lutheran pastor, requested ordination at the Vaxjo cathedral along with ten other men. Five of the ten candidates withdrew their requests to be ordained in the same service. In an additional act of protest several theological students surrendered their licenses to preach. Danell was held responsible for the actions of these men. On his part Danell, who is the head pastor of the cathedral, threatened to lock the cathedral doors to prevent the ordination of Miss Svenson.

A recent study by a theological commission of the Lutheran Council, U.S.A. (LCUSA), claims that the ordination of women is neither commanded nor forbidden by the Scriptures. There are some who disagree with this conclusion and are protesting because their consciences do not permit them on the basis of the Scriptures to accept the ordination of women.

D. P. S.

PILGRIM'S REGRESS

FISH NETS REPLACE FISH HOOKS

Late last fall I was standing outside the regular meeting of our Fishermen's Club. Such people are members of a rare school—people who really want to go out and talk about Jesus Christ as their personal Savior to others. Now I know there is a lot of talk about the "indirect communication" of the Gospel, but in the final analysis the church has grown only when people confessed Jesus. Jesus did say something about explicitly mentioning the names of these people to His Father.

But there was another problem facing the Fishermen's Club this particular evening. It was the problem of the insignia, which till that time had been the fish hook. Our vicar, a rather ichthyophagous fellow, had pointed out to the group that in all probability, at least according to more recent scientific research of the New Testament, it has been conclusively shown that fishermen on Lake Galilee in the first half of the first century used fish nets and not fish hooks in plying their trade. We will leave aside for the time being the question of whether the disciples were fishermen or for that matter whether there were any disciples at all.

At the news of this profound discovery, reached by applying the principles of the Ichthyology School which can be summed up in Captain Hook's flatulent remark, recorded when he lost his leg in the controversy with Reptilius, "Now what did you do that for?", our group began to cast about for a means to relieve itself of the dilemma. An immediate question arose concerning the insignia. Some felt that the hook should remain as always. Others, now unsure, felt that a committee should be established to research the fishing methods of the disciples once more, while a third group was all for splitting up into buzz groups since it was obvious to them that there was no longer a consensus on this barbed question, and that the best solution was to peacefully divide the treasury and look for a new association. After a long discussion, it was decided, however, to appoint a committee to find a replacement for the sacred hook. The last position was only reached after we had heard a report from one of our members on the latest church convention he had attended.

While he was at the convention, he always wore his fish hook—he's just about our most faithful member. He claims that as he waited in the lobby of the large convention hall, with fish hook in his label, scores of men gave him knowing glances. Anyhow, one of the winkers even backed him into a corner and gave him a list with numbers on it from one to ten. Next to each number was a "yes" or a "no." Next to one number there was even the comment "your choice."

After several days our good member finally discovered, much to his relief, that all the knowing glances came only from men with fish hooks pinned on their labels. Our member was more than pleased that so many were interested in the one cause so close to his heart. As the convention was drawing to a close, another delegate, also properly notorized with fish hook, backed him into a corner and gave him another list with ten numbers, next to which were written "yes" and "no." Except this time it was in exact opposite order from the first list. The one similarity was that "your choice" was written behind the same number where it appeared on the first list. At this point our member was lost beyond assistance. He had the strange feeling that there were two different schools at the convention and both were recognizable by the secret insignia of the fish hook.

He started with furious vigor to study the position of the fish hook on the label of the suits. Were the fish hooks upright, sideways, or upside down? Were they silver or gold color? The final results showed 867 gold colored fish hooks and 253 silver ones. There was also one reporter who

was wearing a safety pin he had left in his label while he was changing his baby's diapers. This imposter was not found out until his wife, found screaming hysterically when she thought that her child had swallowed the pin, caused him to run down the center aisle holding up the safety pin for all to see, so that no one would panic.

When our good member had finished his study, he found that all of the fish hooks were upright with the exception of 12 inverted ones and three sideways. He also found that not a single one of the majority wore non-barbed hooks. He made a graph showing the relative position of the fish hooks on the labels. The graph strangely came out in the form of a peace symbol. This evidence was quickly disposed of as this might show that the convention delegates were honoring the ancient Egyptian god, Iknaton. Such an issue would undoubtedly be prohibited by one of the convention's resolutions against secret societies. After sifting through the evidence, our delegate came to the following conclusions. (1) One group was wealthier than the other since they could afford gold fish hooks, but one should always be aware of substitute gold finishes. They can stain good clothes. (2) Were those men with the twelve inverted fish hooks the twelve apostles of the Mormon Church trying to infiltrate our church body? (3) His final conclusion is that our Fishermen's Club needed a new symbol to replace the "hook", but then again, no one in our group was hooked on the hook.

Of course, with our delegate's experience at the church convention and with the stirring report from our vicar, who in the meanwhile had begun a new project to demonstrate that the hook was in reality the more ancient tool and should be restored to its proper place alongside an old form of the Ironie benediction, that nets and not hooks were used for fishing on Lake Galilee, we all voted unanimously. We then changed our insignia from fish hooks to fish nets. The fish net pins have already arrived and are being worn. There has been only one real problem. Our members are now being constantly asked for permanents. The symbol of the Hair Dressers' Union, Local 76, is a hair net.