

convincing evidence that Americans and Canadians still have a strong spiritual core. The trick is to direct this support toward the local church.

Information from five denominations, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), United Methodist, Southern Baptist Convention, Assembly of God, and Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, provides the core data for the book. Abundant tables and easy-to-read charts included in most of the articles succinctly display what the words convey. Additional statistical information from the United Church of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church, American Baptist Church, Roman Catholic, and Black churches affords a broad view. A section each is devoted to the Black Church in America, the Roman Catholic Church, the Church in Canada, and the Baby Boomers.

The study is not all-inclusive, but the principles presented are generally applicable to all denominations. To believe otherwise is to enter Fool's Paradise.

An excellent reference section concludes the book, but the absence of an index is unfortunate.

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Scroggs, Robin. *The Text and the Times: New Testament Essays for Today*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993. xii + 292 pp. \$18.00.

The Text and the Times argues the importance and relevance of Scripture for the present. Every one of its 15 essays (ranging from social scientific criticism of the NT to gender issues to matters of language and reality) returns to two basic themes: (a) what it means to live as a person of faith, and (b) what a modern person is to make of the ancient texts called NT Scripture. Although Scroggs claims to sit in the position of a liberal, he has the heart of a conservative, or so it seems when one reads his book. He certainly does not value the triumphalism of fundamentalism, nor the self-assured rightness of much of conservative scholarship, but he is a conservative in his special regard for the importance of the text of scripture.

Chapter 6, "How We Understand Scripture When It Speaks with Forked Tongue," approaches gender issues in the New Testament within the problem of hermeneutics. Scroggs frames the problem of hermeneutics with brief descriptions of the approaches taken by "literalists" and by "radicals." Literalists claim their approach is entirely objective, while radicals claim their approach is entirely subjective. Scroggs objects that both fail on the same points. They dispense with discussion of the text by a simplistic yes/no dichotomy, and neither is willing to struggle with the tensions in the text, in terms either of gender issues or of subjective/objective approaches. To oversimplify Scroggs, the literalist denies the role of experience; the radical, the role of tradition. Scroggs maintains that those who are uncomfortable with either end of the spectrum must be satisfied with more complex and uncertain results. Scroggs finds egalitarianism portrayed in the historical Jesus, in the author of the fourth gospel, and in Paul, but notes that issues of hierarchy are prominent in the

deutero-Pauline works, where the subordination of women is coupled with a reduction of the understanding of faith to a synonym for doctrinal formulation.

Conservative Christians may object to the application of modern methodologies to the study of Scripture, while liberals will object to Scroggs's high regard for the importance of scripture and the urgency of taking it seriously. Both might elect to read the entire book if they were to begin with the last chapter. There Scroggs concisely summarizes two basic problems involved in taking Scripture seriously. The first, probably more a topic of discussion among conservatives, discusses what to do with the "then-ness" of the text in the "now-ness" of living. Scroggs defines this as the problem of analogy—what constitutes a situation in the modern world analogous to the situation in the NT to which its teaching is to be applied? The second, perhaps more an assumption than a topic of discussion among liberals, is the relationship of the prescientific world dualism of the NT and the modern world's monistic view of reality. Scroggs finds a way out in transformation (conversion), a new worldview which, however scary, demands a high level of responsibility.

While the book is a collection of addresses and essays written in the 1970s and 1980s, one of the enjoyable features of the book is a prefatory statement to each chapter describing the situation in which the chapter was written.

Chapters (and their year of original presentation or publication) include: "The Education of the Interpreter" (1993); "Tradition, Freedom, and the Abyss" (1970); "The Earliest Christian Communities as Sectarian Movements" (1975); "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament: The Present State of Research" (1979-80); "Paul and the Eschatological Woman" (1972, 1974); "The Next Step: A Common Humanity" (1978); "How We Understand Scripture When It Speaks with Forked Tongue" (1979); "The Heuristic Value of a Psychoanalytic Model in the Interpretation of Pauline Theology" (1978); "Eros and Agape in Paul" (1972); "New Being: Renewed Mind: New Perception. Paul's View of the Source of Ethical Insight" (1982); "The Theocentrism of Paul" (1986); "The New Testament and Ethics: How Do We Get from There to Here?" (1984); "Can New Testament Theology Be Saved? The Threat of Contextualisms" (1988); "Eschatological Existence in Matthew and Paul: *Coincidentia Oppositorum*" (1989); "Beyond Criticism to Encounter: The Bible in the Postcritical Age" (1978); "Can the New Testament Be Relevant for the Twenty-first Century?" (1991); plus an "Index of Ancient Texts" and an "Index of Modern Authors."

This reviewer welcomes the publication of these important essays dealing with a matter of urgent concern to Christians, regardless of orientation or denomination.

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