

Tracy, David. *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*. New York: Seabury, 1975. 271 pp. \$12.95.

The basic purpose of this work is to formulate "a revisionist model for contemporary fundamental Christian theology." As an exercise in theological method, its objective is not actually to do theology, but to formulate a model for doing theology, that is, to establish appropriate theological criteria and outline a procedure by which theology should be done. The book consists of two parts, one primarily descriptive and the other constructive. In the first, Tracy delineates the basic feature of the revisionist model, showing how it differs from other models currently employed for theological reflection. And in the second, he argues for the validity of this model by formulating three of its constitutive elements and adumbrating the theology of *praxis* which it suggests.

According to Tracy, the principal feature of the revisionist model is the attempt to correlate critically the results of reflecting upon two major theological sources, the Christian tradition and common human experience and language. Unlike the orthodox, liberal, neo-orthodox, and radical models, each of which fails in its own way to take adequate account of one or the other of these sources, the revisionist model endeavors to apply appropriate modes of reflection to both and allow the results to be mutually informative.

To demonstrate the validity of the revisionist model, Tracy formulates extensive arguments for three principal theses: (1) The religious interpretation of our common human experience and language is meaningful and true; (2) the theistic interpretation of religion is meaningful and true; (3) the christological interpretation of theistic religion is meaningful and true.

In his analysis of religion, Tracy describes the concept of "limit" as pointing to the religious dimension of common human experience, and explores the phenomena of limit-questions in science, morality, and "everyday" experience. Then he reviews the application of linguistic analysis to religious language in general, and that of the NT in particular, to show that its principal effect is to confront one with the possibility of a new and authentic mode of existence.

In his discussion of theism, Tracy argues that the only mode of reflection adequate to adjudicate the cognitive claim of religious language is explicitly metaphysical, or transcendental, in character. Then he appeals to the dipolar concept of God formulated by process philosophy as the most helpful means of thematizing the ultimate dimension of reality indicated by religious language.

Finally, in his discussion of Christology, Tracy analyzes two "facts," the fact of evil and the fact of the Christ-event. The specific function of christological language, as he interprets it, lies in its transformative character. The Gospel decisively re-presents, that is, expresses and confronts the hearer with, authentic human existence as a possible mode of being in the world.

Although the basic objective of Tracy's work is to explain the revisionist model for theology, in effect it does more than simply illustrate one theological method. For one thing, his proposal provides the major elements of a full-fledged philosophical theology, with its carefully formulated arguments for religion and theism substantiating the fundamental presuppositions of

Christian faith. Another of its notable features is the enormous range of material which it encompasses. Quite apart from its constructive merits, the work is valuable as a review of what has happened of general theological significance over the past few decades along several important lines of reflection. Linguistic analysis, process philosophy, transcendental Thomism, existential phenomenology, to name a few, are carefully and succinctly summarized. No mere survey, however, the work incorporates the principal insights of these widely diverse resources into a single cohesive, though intricate, theological proposal. It should be emphasized that Tracy regards only the revisionist model he formulates as satisfactory to the criteria incumbent upon contemporary theology. So, the pluralism in theology which he applauds is not a diversity of theological models, or several acceptable ways of doing theology, but the multiplicity of resources available for fulfilling *the* theological task as he conceives it.

The nature and thrust of Tracy's work logically give rise to two questions. One is whether the diverse positions to which he appeals really fit together as neatly as he makes them into a coherent theological proposal. It has been observed that some of the principal resources he employs have been strongly represented among his colleagues at the University of Chicago Divinity School, such as, Schubert M. Ogden and Paul Ricoeur. However, Tracy does not merely appropriate the viewpoints to which he is indebted. He is not only frequently critical of their formulation (cf. pp. 190-191), but he modifies them so as to make them thoroughly his own. Another question is whether the revisionist model he formulates is really the only way of meeting the basic theological criteria of appropriateness to the Christian tradition and adequacy to common human experience. The strength of Tracy's proposal is certainly its sensitivity to modern man's demand for intelligibility in theology. But some observers may find his analysis of the Christian tradition much less satisfactory than that of human experience, insisting that his analysis of common human experience predetermines what he will allow the Gospel to say.

This work is Tracy's most significant theological product to date, and it ranks as one of the most important contributions to American theology in the 1970s. Within months of its publication it had attracted widespread scholarly attention and become a reference point for theological discussion. The topic considered and the viewpoint presented, therefore, must be reckoned with. Whether or not one finds his revisionist model for theology persuasive, Tracy's discussion certainly emphasizes the fact that the question of method is central to the task of theology today. No contemporary theological proposal can hope for a hearing which does not explicitly reflect upon the possibility of, and the criteria necessarily incumbent upon, the enterprise of Christian theology.

Despite its richness and complexity, two things make the book rather difficult reading. One is its style. Tracy, like his mentor, Bernard Lonergan, is a theologian's theologian—challenging to the expert and discouraging to the uninitiated. His concern is not to reach a particular audience, but to formulate an argument as carefully as possible. Consequently, he makes his points with an economy of discussion and very tight reasoning, which conspire to demand the reader's unflagging attention. The placing of foot-

notes at the end of each chapter, rather than at the bottom of the pages, also makes reading difficult. The chapters contain from 53 to 111 footnotes, covering from 7 to 13 pages. And since they are filled with substantive comments, not merely references, the reader is forced continually to flip back and forth between text and notes, a practice which definitely hampers one's efforts to follow the discussion.

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Young, Norman. *Creator, Creation and Faith*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976. 219 pp. \$8.50.

The author is interested primarily in developing the meaning of creation, i.e., what it means in relationship to the way we live now. He wants to draw out its implications in terms of everyday living. His first section, chaps. 2-4 (chap. 1 is an introduction), discusses the interrelated biblical themes of creation, fall, and new creation. While adopting the position that belief in God as creator of Israel arose before God as creator of heaven and earth, he nevertheless thinks that both are inextricably related. Furthermore, he maintains that the concept that "God is redeemer because he is creator" is primary, while the concept that "he is effective redeemer because, since creator, he is powerful enough to redeem, is secondary" (pp. 40-41). The fall is due to man's dependence on his own wisdom and affects individuals, society, and nature. The new creation must involve all three, and understanding of it must come from the implications drawn from the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But exactly what these are remain disputed.

In the second section (chaps. 5-8) Young describes how four recent theologians have approached the themes of creation, fall, and new creation. Barth's view is characterized as transcendentalist because it emphasizes the "infinite qualitative distinction" between God and man. His uncompromising biblical and Christocentric orientation left little room for understanding God through nature and human wisdom. Thus Barth's position shifts theological attention away from the non-human creation as well as human understanding and institutions. Tillich's ontological approach emphasizes continuity rather than discontinuity, since his method is that of correlation. The author's principal criticism of Tillich is his making of non-being and finitude a necessary part of human existence. This would imply a pessimistic view of the possibility of a new creation in human history. The author criticizes Bultmann's existentialist theology because he insisted that "the doctrine of creation is about human existence in the present *rather than* about the beginning of the world" (p. 143). To put human existence at the beginning would place it within the framework of nature and would indicate the indissoluble relationship between man and the rest of the created order. This would prevent man from exploiting nature, since he would recognize his responsibility and accountability toward it in the context of Genesis. Moltmann's eschatological theology is criticized because while he takes the results (the liberation of the poor, oppressed, alienated, and godless) obtained