

however, who spend \$123.00 to purchase this book may feel their money deserved better editorial work, if not at least a spellchecker.

Whether Thompson's suppositions in the *Early History of the Israelite People* will gain significant adherents remains to be seen. The real question, however, is whether it takes us any closer to understanding the Bible or is just the most recent innovation.

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Trull, Joe E., and James E. Carter. *Ministerial Ethics: Being a Good Minister in a Not-so-Good World*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993. 256 pp. Cloth, \$14.99.

Joe Trull and James Carter write out of a conviction that, given today's social context, there is a lack of guidance and instruction in ministerial ethics. "It seems enigmatic that in the one profession expected to model morality, very few codes of ethics are found" (183). To their credit, they have produced a noteworthy book that helps overcome that enigma.

Having defined gospel ministry as a "profession," they explore the dimensions of that profession with respect to ethics. How this is done is quite clearly revealed in such chapter headings as: "The Minister's Personal Life," "The Minister's Congregation," "The Minister's Colleagues," and "The Minister's Community."

Perhaps the most critical chapter concerning "ethics" is Chapter Two, "The Minister's Moral Choices: Endowed or Acquired?" While the Bible is the primary resource for ethical guidelines, it is not complete or absolute since we face many moral concerns that did not exist in Bible times. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is always critical in making moral choices. "Moral reflection and the ability to analyze situations are extremely important aids in decision making. . . . In sum, Christian ministers must use every means at their command in order to discover and to do the right thing" (45).

One of the questions that becomes central later in the book is raised in this chapter on moral choices: "What about a code of ethics for the church professional?" (56). The question leads to a consideration of "the value of rules and the dangers of prescriptive ethics" (*ibid.*). Like good evangelicals, the authors eschew legalism with its dogmas and creeds because any list of laws is never long enough. Their appeal is to principles rather than rules. To adequately use the Bible for moral decision-making, correct interpretation is most critical. Too often in life we are faced with the dilemma of having to break one rule in order to follow another.

Whether or not an action or behavior is right or wrong depends upon the consequences of that behavior. This principle for moral decision-

making runs throughout the Bible. The authors deal with this in terms of teleology or the "telos," which in the Greek is the word for *end* or *goal*. What makes this principle problematic, they say, is that we are "never sure of what the consequences will be" (57). The word "never," however, is perhaps an overstatement. Consequences may be immediate, ultimate, or eternal. Immediate consequences we often know from experience. And while we may not know ultimate or eternal consequences, the Bible, the Word of God, stands sure because God does know such consequences. That is why His "no" is always a "yes" to life.

But in all fairness it must be said that Trull and Carter do not subscribe to relativism when it comes to ministerial ethics. In discussing the virtue of integrity in the life of the minister, they do not hesitate to say, "The example of Jesus is our guiding story. . . . To be accepted as a disciple means learning to imitate a master. . . . Whether you call it discipleship, moral vision, or integrity, the challenge is the same, we are to 'walk as Jesus did' (I John 2:6)" (61-62). And then follows this classic statement: "Do you want to be a minister of integrity? Then model your life and ministry after the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The incarnate Son of God perfectly exemplified in His humanity the life of integrity we are to follow" (62).

It is in the last chapter of the book, "The Ministerial Code of Ethics," that the rubber hits the road. Can we have a ministerial code of ethics without being legalistic? This question is posed and answered thus: ". . . many people feel uncomfortable with a rules approach to morality, which the professional codes appear to be. This deontological bent downplays the role of character and overlooks the complex question of motives and consequences" (190). Where Trull and Carter stand on this question is clear: "A ministerial code of ethics is supported by biblical principles, theological conclusions, professional standards, and practical considerations. That is why it is our deep conviction that a clergy code of ethics, properly developed, clearly written, and appropriately enforced can strengthen ministerial integrity" (193).

The balance of the book is given to guidelines in the construction of a code of ministerial ethics. While they encourage the creation and implementation of such a code, they do not prescribe one. Rather, they encourage the individual, the congregation, and the denomination to do so as is appropriate. In the Appendices they provide examples of historic and denominational codes as well as what they call "Sample Codes of Ethics" that may offer help in the formation of such a document.

Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter are right when they express their concern that more needs to be said and done with respect to ministerial ethics. The paucity of literature on the subject is regrettable. We are indebted to them for their book which should be read by everyone concerned for the integrity of the Christian ministry. The book is well

written, well organized, and quite comprehensive in its treatment of the subject.

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STEVEN P. VITRANO

Wallis, Jim. *The Soul of Politics: A Practical and Prophetic Vision for Change*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994. 304 pp. Cloth, \$19.95; paper, \$12.00.

The unpleasantness of this book for white middle- and upper-class Christians in the U.S. will only be matched by its prophetic importance. To avoid this book is to continue to ignore the unjust social systems that plague this nation and make our cities so dangerous. Such behavior also runs the risk of ignoring an opportunity to explore the cure of our social sicknesses and to participate in the healing of the nation.

Jim Wallis is known as one of the major prophetic voices of the latter part of the twentieth century. The editor of *Sojourner* magazine, he is one of the leaders of the Sojourner Community that moved into Columbia Heights during the 1960s. This neighborhood is twenty blocks from the White House in the District of Columbia and is one of the more serious pockets of poverty, hunger, and crime in the nation's capital.

This book, as a serious alternative to the Christian Right of the Pat Robertsons and other Protestant fundamentalists, is not a rallying cry to seize power, but rather a call for a renewal of deep spiritual and moral values that must undergird the believing and practicing Christian community in what Wallis refers to as "islands of hope." The book enables Americans to look closely at their world and their worldview and evaluate both from a biblical, social-ethical perspective.

Politics, to Wallis, is more than the party machinations "within the beltway"; it is the practical outworking of our social behavior, our social practice. This book is an explicit call for large-scale socially-responsible behavior on the part of all peoples, all citizens. It calls Christians to escape from their walled-in, cocoon-like existence, characterized by individualism and spiritual privatization, and to reenter the public square as the socially transforming agent that Jesus called us to be.

One of the ramifications of all this is the need for this socially responsible behavior to be demonstrated within the various Christian communities. Too often the polarized behaviors of political conservatives and liberals are mirrored within the Christian communities, whether the polarizations be over doctrine or practice. Basic to the ability of the church to be an agent of social transformation (yeast, salt, light) is the imperative for the church to practice inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness, compassion instead of divisiveness, and community rather than