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Books In Review

Briefly Noted

The Organizational Revolution: Presbyterians and American Denominationalism. Edited by Milton J. Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 376 pp. $16.95.*

As more volumes in the "Presbyterian Presence" series become available, its value as a case study in the present crisis of mainline/oldline Protestant denominations is increasingly apparent. The present book looks at the organizational dimension of the Presbyterian (and mainline) "predicament" in twelve essays, dealing with denominational structures; financial changes; women's, men's, and special–interest groups; and in two provocative concluding essays, some speculative conclusions about where the changes have brought us. One major theme is that American denominational organizations have gradually been transformed along corporate bureaucratic lines, reflecting the values and managerial assumptions of American business. Another is an awareness of the overall decline of denominationalism, coupled with a growth of localism and congregational decision–making. Also informing many of the essays is a recognition of the organizational effects of the pluralism that has come to characterize mainline denominations. In this regard the analysis of Robert Wuthnow, who points to the cleavage between liberals and conservatives that cuts across all such denominations, seems to have influenced most of the writers and is frequently cited. The concluding essay by Craig Dykstra and James Hudnut–Beumler suggests (through metaphor) that the dysfunctional corporate bureaucratic mode of denominational organization has been replaced by a "regulatory agency" mode. No longer able to provide goods and services acceptable to their constituencies, the bureaucracies seek to regulate procedures, policies, and the expenditure of funds in church structures they no longer directly control.

–Richard G. Hutcheson, Jr.

Transforming Parish Ministry: The Changing Roles of Catholic Clergy, Laity, and Women Religious. By Jay P. Dolan et al. *Crossroad. 366 pp. $24.95 cloth, $14.95 paper.*

A socio–historical account of parish ministry from 1930 to 1980 written from a distinctly "progressivist" angle. Keeping the bias in mind, the book provides a great deal of useful information begging for a more persuasive interpretation.

Sex in the Parish. By Karen Lebacqz and Ronald G. Barton. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 278 pp. $14.95 paper.*

This is a serious effort to establish limits on appropriate and inappropriate sexual expression between clergy and parishioners. It assumes the truth of conventional feminist and homosexualist critiques of society, and tends to be dismissive of traditional sexual ethics as "culturally conditioned." *Sex in the Parish* is an interesting inquiry into how to contain the damage after anything like an identifiably Christian sexual ethic has been abandoned.

The American Search for Peace: Moral Reasoning, Religious Hope, and National Security. Edited by George Weigel and John R. Langan. *Georgetown University Press. 281 pp. $30 cloth, $15 paper.*

The "correlation of forces," as the Marxists used to say, has dramatically transformed the international arena in the last few years, and some of these essays may not take that adequately into account. Others do, however, making this book a very useful guide to religio–moral thinking about the new world order or, as the case may be, the new old world order. In addition to the editors, contributors include James Childress, Bryan Hehir, James Turner Johnson, and David Hollenbach.

Economics Today: A Christian Critique. By Donald A. Hay. *Eerdmans. 336 pp. $17.95 paper.*

An overview by a fellow of Jesus College, Oxford. Its almost complete indifference to religious and moral disputes about economics in this country will make it of limited interest to American readers.

Geno: The Life and Mission of Geno Baroni. By Lawrence M. O'Rourke. *Paulist Press. 314 pp. $11.95 paper.*

Geno Baroni, who died in 1984, was an Italian–American priest–politician famed for his commonsensical radicalism in devotion to the poor. In the Carter administration he was Assistant Secretary for Housing and Urban Development. He played an important part in the "ethnic renascence" of the 1970s and early decried the error of the Democratic party, his party, in alienating those who cherished traditional moral and social values. The author, Washington correspondent for the *St. Louis Post–Dispatch*, has rendered his friend a great service in this moving memoir.

Piety, Purity, Plenty: Images of Protestantism in America. By Robert L. Ferm. *Fortress Press. $8.95 paper.*

A professor of religion at Middlebury College opines that fundamentalism is "inadequate" and that "peeling away the layers of the [doctrinal] onion has left liberal Christianity with nothing." While he allows that doctrinal debates about Christ and the Trinity are of only antiquarian interest, he comes out for what he calls a "redemptive process" in which good people do not give up on the goal of establishing the kingdom of God on earth. Mr. Ferm might give some thought to where he discarded those onion peels.

The Scarlet Lady: Confessions of a Successful Abortionist. By Carol Everett with Jack Shaw. *Wolgemuth & Hyatt. 266 pp. $14.99.*

The compelling and popularly written story of a woman who ran a large abortion clinic in Texas and was slowly forced by conscience

into the prolife movement. It is another important entry in the genre of Dr. Bernard Nathanson's *Aborting America*. An underreported factor in the abortion debate is the number of people in the prolife cause who have had abortions or been abortionists.