DOING THEOLOGY IN A REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION

by Jose MIGUEZ-BONINO Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974 pp. xxviii plus 179, \$3.95

and

THE POLITICS OF HOPE

by Andre Bieler GRAND RAPIDS: EERDMANS, 1974 pp. 152, \$3.95

These books join a growing number of important contributions being made to theology and the life of the church by the so-called "third world theologies." Jose Miguez-Bonino, long an important figure in Protestant theological education in South America as president of Union Seminary in Buenos Aires, has recently become dean of a post-graduate institute launched jointly by Protestants and Roman Catholics. As an observer at Vatican II and consultant to many Roman Catholic leaders, he has had a chance not only to watch, but to contribute to, the revitalization taking place in Latin American Catholicism today. Miguez-Bonino provides us with lucid insights into the genius of the emerging theologies of Gutierre, Segundo, Alves, Assmann, and others, all of whom are influenced by the Marxist critique of the contradictions inherent within capitalist society. All insist that the church must shake loose its identification with wealth and power and take up the cause of the poor of this world as the appropriate way in the 20th Century of following Christ.

Especially helpful is Miguez-Bonino's discussion of how theology must be reflection on actual concrete praxis, both in the church and in society, if it is to avoid the sterility of abstraction or, worse yet, actually to reinforce those elements which oppose change. Theology defined in this way will serve as a constant critical principle, never satisfied with anything short of the Kingdom of God itself.

Andre Bieler is not Latin American but Swiss. Nevertheless his book comes out of his contact with the seminaries of Brazil, and is prefaced with a stirring introduction by Dom Helder Camara, the indominatable champion of the poor and Archbishop of Recife. Bieler makes use of three major social pronouncements by the churches in recent times, Pope Paul's *Populorum progressio*, the report of the ecumenical Conference on World Cooperation for Development, held in Beirut in 1968, and the report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala. With an eye toward these

documents Bieler develops a theology of human responsibility out of a Christological understanding of creation. It is obvious that Christians can no longer live in peace or toleration with systems that are destructive of human dignity but must join God in the process of re-creation. The church must take a conscious leadership role in shaping a more human future and exhibit in its own life the first fruits of a new humanity.

The similarities between these approaches and developments in Black theologies in this country are obvious. The Latin Americans are, if anything, more radical since they generally assume that the achievement of their goals is not possible apart from major political revolutions. Bieler is more realistic than Miguez-Bonino in analyzing the persistence of evil in the world - one would expect that of a Calvinist - and espouses a "tragic optimism" grounded in the certainty of the final victory of Christ. Miguez-Bonino is not any less appreciative of the eschatological dimension, but he wants to realize some of the first fruits of the Kingdom now!

Theodore Runyan, Jr.

VALUE CLARIFICATION AS LEARNING PROCESS: A GUIDEBOOK

by BRIAN P. HALL

(The Paulist Press, 1973)

Value Clarification as Learning Process: A Guidebook is a practical handbook that springs from its theoretical counterpart, Value Clarification as Learning Process: A Sourcebook. More and more educators are seeking to develop materials and approaches to education that enable students to deal not only with objective facts but also with feelings and values. Hall's Guidebook is made up of exercises, games, group dynamics, and tests to help students in the process of decision making, creativity, and celebration.

The book is divided into four parts, the first of which deals with the guidelines for using the book and contains definitions of concepts. On defining "values," the author says: "A value is something that is freely chosen from alternatives and is acted upon, that which the individual celebrates as being part of his creative integration in development as a person." Value clarification means a process which we use to help someone discover values in his behavior and through the choices he makes in his life. Other categories such as value-ranking, value indicators, values and environment, primary values, work and leisure, and dimensions of process are defined and discussed in Part One. This section ends with instructions on how to use the book, as well as indications of the audience for whom the book is written. Hall suggests that it is to be used by an individual or in collaboration with a friend or group of people. In addition, the book is written for students and teachers for use in high schools, colleges, or adult classes; it is designed basically to help all grow in the process of clarification of values.

Part Two deals with exercises in value clarification. These exercises are for the use of students, teachers, and professional trainers. Some of them can be used up to three full hours. The exercises fall into the categories already mentioned under Part One.

Part Three deals with conferences that can be used for introducing and training people in value clarification. Conference formats are suggested and detailed outlines are given to provide ways of having meaningful conferences.

Part Four presents value-clarification strategies in the classroom. It contains the approach to value clarification in classroom situations, exercises that can be employed, technique formats, and pedagogical methodology.

This is an excellent book. It contains photography and designs that enhance the exercises. It is like a book of recipes that can be used to fit any situation where training in value clarification is desired. Furthermore, it is an instructive manual and should be used in conjunction with its companion volume, the *Sourcebook*. In short, Hall's is a much-needed volume in a time when we are seeing that valuing cannot be exempted from the educational process.

Jonathan Jackson

JOHN WESLEY: A THEOLOGICAL BIOGRAPHY

by MARTIN SCHMIDT

Vol. I (1962); Vol. II, Part 1 (1972); Vol. II, Part 2 (1973)

Nashville: Abingdon Press

Professor Martin Schmidt of the University of Heidelberg has completed, in erudite German, John Wesley: A Theological Biography. Norman P. Goldhawk made the English translation of Volume I and Volume II, Part 1. Denis Inman translated Volume II, Part 2. [Would references not have been simplified by designating Volumes I, II, III?] Dr. Schmidt, a distinguished Lutheran, has made a significant, ecumenical contribution to Wesleius Germancius, a work sorely needed and now manifestly essential for the student who

desires a full orbed interpretation of that remarkable personality of the 18th century. "The English heritage and the German contribution," claims Schmidt, "formed in John Wesley, a true and authentic alliance." (I, p. 309) Nonetheless, this reviewer questions Albert Outler's assertion, "the best biography of John Wesley since Southey's and Tyerman's..." – as we shall see, *biography* poses something of a problem.

In format, Schmidt's modus operandi is singular (albeit an author is entitled to his own gestalt). Volume I follows a conventional chronological order: a brief prolegomenon "The Task" and proceeding with Ecclesiastical and Historical Background; Ancestors; Childhood and Youth; Oxford; and a lengthy chapter on Georgia, which includes a somewhat extraneous reference to Beat Ludwig von Muralt, the Swiss who described prison conditions in England, "and in this way combine[s] pietistic questionings about the new man with concern for the natural man, typical of the Enlightenment." (I, pp. 124-125) [Ergo we encounter Pietism, dragged into the text, and it will continue for three volumes. Why attempt to relate almost every event to a pietistic source?] Schmidt concludes with the Conversion, considerable attention being given to the trip to Germany, June 14-September 16, 1738 (Journal II, pp. 3-63), a milestone in Wesley's career and masterfully presented.

Volume II, Part 1 proceeds along a semi-chronological lineation – extensive use made of Wesley's *Journal* and *Letters* and German data – blocks of historical time periods employed: Beginning of the Evangelical Movement; Progress; Wesley the Organizer; Wesley's Relation to the Church of England; Opposition. Schmidt here becomes less the theologian and assumes the role of historian.

In Volume II, Part 2 there is a complete change to a thematic approach, depicting Wesley as Preacher; Theological Writer; Pastor; Educationalist; concluding with "Take Him For All In All" – with special observation by the translator that Schmidt "does not devote a chapter specifically to Wesley as a theologian" deciding against it, in part, to existing studies on specific doctrines, i.e., Lerch and Lindstrom on sanctification and Deschner on Christology, "... on the grounds that it seemed to him so typical of Wesley that his utterances on matters of doctrine were made in sermons, in devotional writings and cautionary tracts, and in the cut and thrust of polemical and apologetic debate, in which he invariably spoke pungently, to the point and to the immediate situation." (p. 7)

Schmidt, very wisely, regarded it "... misleading if a biographer were to diffuse this inherent concreteness by generalising abstractions."

Schmidt's work must be viewed as a unit, not compartmentalized, otherwise one is apt to miss the point: and what, precisely, is the aim? A biography? Not in the customary sense of Tyerman or Simon, yet, "A Theological Biography" appears somehow inadequate. Theological, yes indeed - heavily so - but it is more! Any writer on Wesley is faced with the dilemma of biography v.s. a partial history of Methodism. Schmidt ingeniously employs both, plus his own thesis: the relationship between German Pietism and Wesley-the influence of Herrnhut on the Oxford don. In bringing valuable findings from research in the archives in Halle, Herrnhut and Budingen, Schmidt makes a tremendous contribution. Strength becomes a weakness at this point: he tries to make Wesley a German Pietiest. By contrast, and in interesting parallel, V. H. H. Green's The Young Mr. Wesley (1961), makes him the Englishman.

Does Schmidt expound the obvious, as in "Age and nationality, historical circumstance, and mental equipment, all made him different from the great German, French and Swiss reformers, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Huldreich Zwingli"? (I, p. 9) Or, when discussing Wesley's "massive literary enterprise" A *Christian Library*, he lists the various writings, including a biography of Luther, which "... proves that he [Wesley] considered the German Reformer, to whose doctrine of the Law he took vigorous exception, to be one of the key figures in the entire history of the church"? (II, 2, p. 104)

At the outset of any biographical study it is imperative that one take into consideration the Zeitgeist under which the particular individual lived. Does Schmidt come dangerously close to forgetting that Wesley was ordained an Anglican; that he was far more English than the Hanoverian George II? Does Schmidt forget that Wesley learned German after he received his M.A. and that he delivered a solar plexus against Zinzendorf, "Is not the Count all in all? Are not the rest mere shadows, calling him Rabbi, almost implicitly both believing and obeying him?" (Letters I, p. 258) which Schmidt interprets, "Behind this criticism of Herrnhut, and in sharp contrast to such an attitude, lies the great word he wrote to James Hervey...'I look upon the world as my Parish"? (I, p. 302) Again, "John Wesley derived the impulse towards the organiza-

tion of the classes and bands, as well as their names, from Herrnhut." (II, 1. p. 98) Or "...for he [Wesley] was disposed to acknowledge like the Moravians the primacy of the Count in his community." (II, 1, p. 45)

Is Schmidt being realistic when he affirms:

The message of the justifying grace of God remained for Wesley and Methodism at the centre of their preaching. This would not have happened apart from the association with Herrnhut, for there were no influences in the theology or ecclesiastical life of the Anglican Church of the time to encourage it? (II, 1, p. 60)

A number of queries need to be addressed to Schmidt, who maintains that "John Wesley's course remained constant after his conversion of 24th May, 1738." (II, 1, p. 7) Are we to conclude there was scant substantial theological growth during 1738-1791, especially since, "His sermons themselves developed into doctrinal statements of principle. This was possible only because he conceived of preaching as a theological task"? (II, 2, p. 9)

What of Wesley the reformer? "One group of his writings still remains outstanding: namely, the ethical ones, in which he declared himself clearly and concisely on contemporary society... He also did not take slavery for granted, as his contemporaries did.... he attack it root and branch." (II, 2, p. 112) Alas, other than reference to the Samuel Hoare letter, and a footnote on *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, of 1774, no mention is made of the incomparable letter to Wilberforce, written February 24, 1791, a week before Wesley's death. (*Letters* VIII, pp. 265-266)

The author teases with "... how would events have turned out if Wesley had been offered a bishopric in the Church of England?" (II, 1, p. 144). Or a reference to the Scottish Kirk, "... Presbyterian service ... in contrast to the Anglican... seemed to him poor and tedious, like weak new wine, which the taste of the genuine old article renders insipid." (II, 1, p. 87).

Intriguing phrases appear in translation, as "...a highfalutin sense of prophetic mission..." (I, p. 247) regarding Law and Wesley, or citing the italics in Coke's use of Wesley *contra mundum*. (II, 2, pp. 199, 287).

The study is refreshing and stimulating. It dispells parochialism and is a marvelous answer to those who regard Wesley as "cult hero" or "theological featherweight" and it is a corrective for those who vaguely recall Moravian influence as a trifle more than the voyage of the *Simmonds* or Bohler's "Preach faith *till* you have it; and then, *because* you have it, you *will* preach faith." (*Journal* I, p. 442). We are grateful to Dr. Schmidt. We are reminded of the phrase attributed to Hans Leitzmann, "Only love can write a biography." W. Thomas Smith

LEO SCHAYA, THE UNIVERSAL MEANING OF THE KABBALAH

tr., NANCY PEARSON

Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1973 pp. 180. \$1.50

The Jewish contribution to the religious literature of mankind extends beyond that of the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament and Rabbinic corpus into those writings under the title of the Kabbalah. Kabbalah, derived from the Hebrew word meaning "to receive," refers to the secret "tradition," namely, Jewish esoteric, mystical literature. This speculative outpouring, especially during the Medieval period, has many parallels with Christian mysticism, such as in the symbolization of the close union between the soul and God by the marriage figure.

Leo Schaya, a Swiss-born Jew, provides a highly readible introduction into the meaning of the Kabbalah. The author places special emphasis upon the biblical origins of this literature by focusing on the starting point of all kabbalistic speculation, namely, God as infinite, unlimited being. This is the doctrine of the Sefiroth or the ten principle aspects of God, presented schematically in a series of triads. This speculative mode of viewing the divine characteristics includes the concepts of: (1) crown (lordship)-(2) wisdom-(3) intelligence; (4) mercy-(5) justice-(6) beauty; (7) victory-(8) glory-(9) foundation; and (10) kingdom. These represent the manifold aspects of the one God, for in the first triad God encompasses knowledge, the knower, and the known respectively. These Sefiroth are the starting points in the mystical speculation upon God. Schaya emphasizes the universal aspects of such thought and points to Christian parallels, such as found in Meister Eckhart's mystical awareness of God.

Of particular contemporary interest is the author's clear exposition of the kabbalistic linking of divine mercy or grace with divine justice and power. The one is seen as an extension of God's love into the world, while the other – the divine rigour – represents the negation of all which is a denial of God. Grace is God's right arm, but law is his left, or as Schaya notes, "...grace would not be affirmative without its negative possibility, rigour." (p. 49) Thus in our present concern for the relationship between God's mercy and judgment this book provides yet another dimension of this two-sided biblical concept. In the mind of this reviewer Leo Schaya's work does indeed expand our knowledge of God via the insights of Jewish mysticism as set forth in the Kabbalah.

Robert A. Bennett

POLITICAL THEOLOGY

by DOROTHEE SOELLE

Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1974 pp. xviii plus 107, \$3.50 (paperback)

Political Theology represents a theological statement/proposition for "shaking the foundations" of the status quo. There are three precise divisions to this work: first, the introduction by John Shelley, who also translated the work from German to English - this division will receive greater treatment in my critical assessment of this volume; second, chapters 1-4 which reflect the analytic-descriptive task as assumed by the author, in which there is an attempt to show "that a political interpretation of the gospel is not antithetical to the essential notions of Rudolph Bultman's theology"; third, chapters 5-8 which reflect the critical-constructive task as assumed by the author, the attempt therein is to reflect systematically, from a theological perspective, upon the relation between faith and politics.

The supposition posited in this volume by Dorothee Soelle is that political theology represents the essential formulation of the theological problem for our time. The thrust of this work is to engage in such a program "in the form of a critical conversation with the theology of Rudolph Bultman". The theological program en-deavored therein represents an attempt to take account of the theological roots reflected in the Bultmanian paradigm and to relate them to the next stage, political theology, 'which seeks to bring faith and action together more satisfactorily.' The point of departure in this critical conversation with Bultmann is developed from three different elements: first, the historicalcritical exegesis of the New Testament; second, the dialectical theology of the early twenties; and finally, the philosophy of existence.

Soelle contends the historical-critical method, as employed by Bultmann, represents a viable possibility toward theological emancipation. The explication being that historical criticism is employed not to establish casual dependence but rather the method of self-reflection, as endless questioning which ultimately leads to questions that demand a decision of us. That is, the historical-critical method does not lead to the truth of faith but it poses for us the question of whether to decide for faith or despair.

The historical-critical method is not without its problems as portended in the implicite limitations reflected as it is used in the Bultmanian paradigm. The author in her critique of this facet of the Bultmanian approach sees it as being threatened by its own characteristic inconsistency. It is the contention by the author that this inconsistency is discernible in a three-fold manner: first, it limits itself and does not include present day ecclesiastical and social structures and their ideological suprastructures; second, it over looks the historical mediation of the contents of Christianity; and finally, because it ex-empts apparently invariable and always valid structures of faith and their appropriation. The cognizance of this limitation opens the possiblity for the utilization of the positive potential latent in the his-torical-critical method. The essential features of the latent positive potential are criticism, analogy, and correlation.

At this point the author proceeds to the second essential factor in Butlmann's paradigm-dialectical theology. (The author acknowledges that there is some difficulty in any attempt to properly assess the impact and significance of dialectical theology relative to Bultmann's thought because of changes in his thought itself and also because of the eventual triumph of Barthian orthodoxy that developed in the kerygmatic neo-orthodox wing of the Bultmanian school.) The positive significance of dialectical theology, in the Bultmanian synthesis, is "the insights into the dialectic of existence". More specifically the role of dialectical theology in the Bultmanian paradigm (and its possible significance for political theology) is inferred in his treatments of the authority of the text, as this authority is a consequence of his understanding of it as a historical claim in a particular situation; of kerygma as an absolute claim, which consequentially requires a worldly/political interpretation of the Bible, in at least theory; and of ref-erence to the historical Jesus which serves as the corrective to the dogmatic Christ.

The third factor reflected in the Bultmanian synthesis thus treated by the author is the significance of existentialist philosophy. The author attempts to convey the significance of this factor via a discussion of the Bultmanian understanding of existence and history. Man finds himself in the understanding of his own radical historicity; in the Bultmanian paradigm this represents an individualistic constriction – this is imperative to understand as it represents the criticism of this understanding of Bultmann by Soelle. In the context of this individualistic understanding of existence history represents a referent to possibilities which reflect precedences indicative of the potential for transformation The fallacy of this orientation is that "if one wants to deal with existence one cannot speak purely existentially".

The raison d'etre for this critical conversation with the theology of Rudolph Bultmann is that, in spite of the fact that the Bultmanian paradigm is manifestly individualistic it is latently political. The intention of the author was to show that a political interpretation of the gospel is not antithetical to essential intentions of Bultmann's theology.

The relevant/prominent themes adopted from Bultmann in the critical-constructive task assumed by Soelle are as follows: the need for criticism (chapter 2); the claim for absoluteness (chapter 3); and the orientation toward personal self-understanding (chapter 4). These represent the presuppositions in formulating the political theological discussion endeavored by the author.

The discussion begins with a clarification of the concept: political theology is rather a political hermeneutic, which, ... holds open a horizon of interpretation in which politics is understood as the comprehensive and decisive sphere in which Christian truth should become praxis. "Political theology begins with a modified preunderstanding. Its guiding hermeneutical principle is the question of authentic life for all men. That does not mean that the question about individual existence must be suppressed or thrust aside as not essential, but surely even that question can be answered only in terms of social conditions and in the context of social hopes. No one can be saved alone." This notion reflects a cognizance of the fact that the failure or attainment of life is governed by social presuppositions and as such belongs to the political dimensions of existence.

The essential resolve as presented in *Political Theology* is to reflect upon the relationship between faith as theory to action/politics as praxis, in the context of the preunderstanding of political theologyi.e., man's social existence. In this context faith is understood as unconditional affirmation. Liberation becomes 'the act of faith'. From a political theological perspective faith must necessarily represent a reflection upon the social situation of those who are brutalized and thereby uncover the social roots of that brutalization. Actions/ praxis consonant with faith/theory reflects the movement from apathy to creating "new anguish", i.e., movement toward transformation. Political theology stresses the inseperable unity between praxis and theory; thereby precluding a theory of faith as a superior component, from a praxis of love. It is at this point that the author proceeds to a discussion of what she perceives as two critical theological elements requiring reformulation: sin and forgiveness.

In light of the politically informed understanding, what is problematic relative to man's existence is infringements upon his personhood emanating from the social situation. Thus, for political theology sin must be understood as apathy toward and collaboration with "life-denying" forces in the context of existence. Therefore based on the social-political conceptualization of sin the notion of forgiveness must likewise be extended into another dimension. Forgiveness manifest represents confrontation and transformation while extending the option for a new beginning. It portends forgiveness without qualification and without reservation.

Political Theology represents an attempt to relate, cogently, the difficulty and future task of political theology. This requires speaking appropriately of the gospel. Soelle discerns this as giving a political interpretation of the New Being, which one does not enjoy for themselves alone; what is involved is giving credibility to the possibility for the liberation from oppressive structures, what is involved is an inducement model for becoming truly human.

In the introduction John Shelley's analysis and description of the critical task assumed in Political Theology is "helpful" In his assessment of the constructive task he exhibits the same theological bias (or constriction)-i.e., theology as "Lord-Lord" talk-to which Soelle is responding. It is my opinion that Soelle in this work attempts to relate that, theology represents the introspection of existence from the perspective that the God/man relationship is the context of existence. Thus, theology by its nature is an anthropocentric enterprise. Shelley's assessment does not represent a response to this intention.

The analytic-descriptive task assumed by the author is veritable. The isolation of the components which comprise the Bultmanian paradigm is creditable. The incorporation of all of several themes explicated from the Bultmanian synthesisthe need for criticism, the claim for absoluteness, the orientation toward personal self-understanding-into this political theology is presumptuous. This valuation is based upon an understanding of the theme, the claim for absoluteness as reflective of the process of demythologization, in light of the unresolved polemic relative to the process of demythologization. Critics have contended, and rightly so, that Bultmann's definition of mythology because it would cover not only myth but all types of symbolic and analogical language represents a tacit admission that demythologization does not succeed in its intent. Thus the credibility of the notion-the claim for absoluteness-and this theology becomes a pertinent question in light of the primacy given it in the development of this political theology; which portends to represent 'the' appropriate response. For obviously, where there are major conceptual problems-this has epistemological implications-fitting answers to the prominent questions become difficult, to say the least, if not impossible.

Other critics, viz., Fritz Buri, responding to the process of demythologization contend that it represents an existential contradiction in that it presupposes, erroneously, that there is an unique or special word of God that is inaccessible to human reflection in general. Therefore a pillar for theological construction would more appropriately be "dekerygmatization". The critiques must be answered, this polemic requires resolution if the intent to present a cogent and consistently liberating theological alternative to the apolitical theology of the status quo is to be accomplished.

Relative to the constructive task the author discusses her intention as, on the one hand, bringing faith and action together more satisfactorily and, on the other hand, as discussing the relationship. For clarity and consistency the task might more appropriately be stated as the explication of the relationship between faith as theory and action/politics as praxis. At that point the necessary thrust might be more clearly in focus. Because of the "radically" different preunderstanding informing this statement the crucial/essential task appears to be a proposition for a faith consonant with the existential requirements for liberation; i.e., the need for a relevant faith.

Political Theology as a theological statement is provocative. It is accurate in discerning 'a' response to 'a' question of today; that question being liberation. (Although I would raise the question whether political theology-with the focus on liberation-as a rubric for the discussion of the human experience is specific/inclusive enough to relate to the breadth and depth of the human experience. For even the author acknowledges the multifarious nature of existence.) Creditably it does offer a focus for meaing and protest against injustices. *Political Theology* reflects a contempary, and rightly radical, theologians attempt to lead the theological community from the "mountain peak of transfiguration to the valley of decision and action". Charles Richard Stith

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