

GOD, MARX, AND THE FUTURE:
DIALOGUE WITH ROGER GARAUDY

by RUSSELL BRADNER NORRIS
Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974
pp. 210, \$9.95

Russell Norris has written the first book to appear in English on the thought and work of Roger Garaudy, professor of philosophy and aesthetics at the University of Poitiers, France. Garaudy is a leading thinker in European neo-Marxist circles and a pioneer in the Christian-Marxist dialogue. Those who are familiar with Garaudy's work will welcome the appearance of this book and the opportunity it provides to introduce Garaudy to a wider audience of American students of the new mode of relationships between Christians and Marxists now arising in Europe.

One of the faults of much so-called "radical" or "liberation" theology in this country is its tendency to overlook the structural components of alienation and oppression to concentrate on changing self-images and attitudes. Important as is this latter task, few are the American theologians who have learned the lessons which Marx has taught so many European and third-world theologians. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is the image of Marxist thought as an implacable foe of all things Christians. If so, Garaudy's work can perform the important function of exposing American theological students to a Marxist who has increasingly and genuinely engaged in dialogue with Christians for some twenty years now.

Norris' book is well researched in the full range of Garaudy's literary production. It is a competent presentation of Garaudy's lively, exciting, and novel way of casting the basic Marxist insights and of relating the Christian theological tradition to them. I will not here attempt the impossible task of summarizing Garaudy's position in the space of a short review. Suffice it to say that the interested reader can make a good beginning by looking at Garaudy's own striking article, "Faith and Revolution," in the January, 1974 issue of *The Ecumenical Review*. This article was the first lecture I heard Garaudy give at the World Council of Churches in Geneva and in it he relates the three premises of his revolutionary "faith" to those of the Biblical faith, which is the source of his three premises. The most important premise of his faith, says Garaudy, is the resurrection — read his article for the other surprises. As a presentation of Garaudy's views, Norris does a competent job.

Where Norris' book falls short is in his compulsion to find the Christian "answer"

to Garaudy on every point. Not that this is an inappropriate task. But Norris responds, point by point, by utilizing the insights of Cox or Moltmann or Pannenberg or Metz or Braaten or Tillich or Bonhoeffer, etc. But all of these do not agree with each other, conceptually. Hence, the book does not provide a *unified* response identifiable as Norris' own and the invitation to dialogue goes, ironically, unanswered. And an incoherent response is neither clear nor helpful. The problem worsens when one considers that so much of the discussion revolves around theistic (Christian) and non-theistic (Marxist) conceptions of transcendence and the future. Garaudy, at least, is clear on these topics. This medley of theologians is not. This poor reader has never known what sense to attach to such a phrase as "the absolute future," for instance, that is apparently coming to us from somewhere (where? not from the future — it's not here yet — and not from the past — it's already gone). Norris' book would have been really helpful if he had gotten it all together in his response. I say this, because he has subtitled his book, "a *dialogue* with Roger Garaudy." But, as Martin Buber and Soren Kierkegaard taught us long ago, it takes a unified I to engage in dialogue with an other. Nonetheless, Norris' book is worth reading on the current state of the Christian-Marxist dialogue as that is represented by Garaudy.

Clark M. Williamson
Professor of Theology
Christian Theological Seminary

THE STORY OF AMERICAN
METHODISM

by FREDERICK A. NORWOOD
New York and Nashville:
Abingdon Press, 1974
pp. 448

\$17.95 hardback, \$9.95 paperback

It is now something over 160 years since Jesse Lee published the first history of Methodism in America. Perhaps a dozen others have essayed the same task since. The most recent author to do so is Dr. Frederick A. Norwood of Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. His book is timely for several reasons. For one thing, it provides background data and descriptions of all of the five churches which have fed into present day United Methodism. Secondly, the works of a similar nature by William Warren Sweet are long out of print and, to a degree, outdated by more recent scholarship. This volume admirably

fills the need for a readable and dependable one volume introduction to the American Methodist tradition. Third, it attempts to give attention to women's concerns, to the smaller Methodist groups and to the Black Methodists. Dr. Norwood's reputation as a scholar is well known, and that reputation is enhanced by this volume. It should become the standard textbook for seminary courses in American Methodism. It can also be put in the hands of laypersons with the assurance that they will not be led astray and with the assurance that they will not become bored as they work their way into the tradition.

Dr. Norwood wisely eschews any effort to find a single force which gave direction to the whole Methodist experience in America. Rather he provides evidence that several "channels" have given direction to the Methodist Tradition. These "channels," according to the author, are "revival, westward movement, social process, metamorphosed theology, Americanization, and the many diversities caused by the tensions between authority and freedom, between isolated independence and involvement in the Atlantic community, and between racial and ethnic social variants." (p. 441). The effect of these variant influences was to make of American Methodism a "rich pluralism" which is at once the glory and a major problem of the Methodist tradition. His argument is cogent and, on the whole, persuasive. However, this reviewer would have welcomed a "conclusions chapter." The author seems to promise such conclusions in the Introduction; but he is still involved with historical narrative a page and a half from the end of the book. This writer felt the lack of a postscript which would sum up and formulate the author's judgements about the two century long love affair between Methodism and the American way.

One is impressed by Dr. Norwood's willingness and ability to penetrate to the underlying issues of importance in matters of historical controversy. Like all Methodist historians, Dr. Norwood has had to deliver a judgement on the controversial question of beginnings. Who preached first—Strawbridge in Maryland or Embury in New York? But, he then goes on to point out that whether it was Embury or Strawbridge who preached first, the important thing is that in its formative stages American Methodism was lay-led and lay-directed. (p. 65ff) Similarly, he has a most instructive section on the theological issues which lay behind the schism of 1844. (p. 200ff) This is a good and important corrective to those who would find only economic determinism in the slavery schism. Likewise, his discussion of the

problem of self-image helps one to understand the hesitancy of the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren in approaching church union in the early years. (p. 116ff)

Dr. Norwood wanted his history to be different from some of its predecessors in its inclusiveness. Thus, he sought to include data on the Evangelical and United Brethren traditions with which The Methodist Church united in 1968. Similarly, he sought to include data on the various smaller Methodist churches, on the Black Methodists and on women in the church. Inclusiveness is a noble goal, but it is fulfilled herein with varying success. Three chapters, about 5% of the book's total length, are explicitly on the E. U. B. tradition. Moreover, there are frequent paragraphs which relate that tradition to the theme of certain of the other chapters whose primary concern is main line Methodism. On the other hand, one misses such comments in some chapters where one expected to find them—notably the chapter on expansion west of the Mississippi after 1865. The result is that the sweep of Methodist historical growth comes across strongly in the volume. But one does not get a similar feeling for the Evangelical and United Brethren movements. There is more E. U. B. history in this history of Methodism than in any of its predecessors. But those who love and treasure the German traditions will still feel slighted. The treatment of the Methodist sects and ethnic groups is generally well done. The promised emphasis on the place of women in the church seems to have been fulfilled rather meagerly.

One of the problems of one volume histories as a class is that they must, of necessity, focus on main lines and major developments. The personalities tend to get lost, or at least slighted. Dr. Norwood overcomes this problem in some cases. Joshua Soule, Frances Willard, Bishop Asbury and even Bishop Candler come alive in his pages. But there are so many persons who remain only names; and Methodism has been a movement filled with lively personalities. It is disappointing to find Peter Cartwright sloughed off with the comment that he is "so familiar" that he need not be described. Twenty years of teaching has led the present writer to believe that Cartwright is generally *not* familiar to Methodist theological students. He certainly is not to most of the laypersons who will read these pages.

Dr. Norwood has generally limited his footnoting to the minimum necessary to give due credit to persons actually quoted in the text. One understands this as an economy procedure in a general study.

One wishes that he had not limited his bibliographical information to those footnotes. There are a number of good bibliographical footnotes which list some of the best books on given subjects. Unfortunately there is no general bibliography at the end of the chapters or of the whole book. This procedure may have been an economy move. But one fears it makes the bibliography less useful and much less accessible to the person who might want to study further. I would hope that later editions of this book will contain at least a basic systematic bibliography of American Methodism at the end of the volume.

Inevitably different persons will make different judgements on some matters. To this reviewer it seems gratuitous to say that "Wesley was no reformer" (p. 57), in light of his support of Wilberforce on the slavery issue and Howard on prison reform. Presumably the problem lies in how one defines a "reformer," but I miss such a definition here. One is also puzzled by the judgement that "the Roman Catholics . . . had been replaced by the Anglicans" in Maryland by the 18th century. (p. 62) The Roman Catholic Church never was the established church in Maryland. Moreover, they certainly survived as a self-conscious minority in Maryland even after Anglican establishment. I was also struck by the judgement that "the Methodist Episcopal Church . . . has always had a large percentage of Negro members and ministers." (p. 168) One wonders how large "large" really is. Even before the slavery schism of 1844, the black percentage was never above 25%. At the time of the 1939 union the black percentage was under 7% of the Northern church — i.e. 300,000 of the 4.6 million members — and about 3% of the united church.

There are occasional factual errors. The statement that Albright preached "only

for nine years before he died" (p. 111) is puzzling in the light of Norwood's own assertion that Albright began to preach in 1796 and died in 1808. He also traces the foundation of Boston University School of Theology to 1847 in Concord, New Hampshire. (p. 307) The judgement of that school's own historian tends to confirm the *traditio receptus* at B. U. that traces said beginnings to Newbury, Vermont in 1839. Finally, a misconception about Methodist appointment practice is reflected in the statement, "in Methodism the district superintendent was appointed by the Bishop for a six year term." (p. 427) All Methodist ministerial appointments, except the episcopacy, were for one year only. In theory every appointment in the conference fell vacant every year at Conference. Bishops appointed district superintendents for one year terms. After six successive one year appointments, a man had to go "off the district" for at least three years before he could be appointed again as superintendent. But many superintendents served less than six years.

Despite the reservations noted in the above, Dr. Norwood is to be thanked for a highly creditable volume. It should be in the library of every Methodist preacher, both for his/her own information and for the use of inquiring lay persons. It should also be read well beyond the Methodist community. For, if Methodism is as Philip Schaff once opined, the most American of churches, its dialogue with American society is of more than narrowly denominational interest. This volume traces that dialogue in a perceptive and interesting manner.

Earl Kent Brown
Boston University School
of Theology

Books Received

BREAD FOR THE WORLD BY ARTHUR SIMON. Grand Rapids; New York: Paulist Press and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975. \$1.50 paperback.

CONFESSIONS OF A RELIGIONLESS CHRISTIAN by Gene Owens. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975. \$4.95.

I BELIEVE IN THE RESSURECTION OF JESUS by George Eldon Ladd. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975. \$2.95 paperback

MAN ON FIRE by B. J. Johnson. Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, 1975. \$2.95 paperback

GREAT MORNING OF THE WORLD: THE UNFORGETTABLE STORY OF HARRY BARRETT by Thomas van Braam Barrett. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975. \$6.95.

THE EVANGELICALS: WHAT THEY BELIEVE, WHO THEY ARE, WHERE THEY ARE CHANGING edited by David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975. \$8.95.

LESLIE WEATHERHEAD: A PERSONAL PORTRAIT by A. Kingsley Weatherhead. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975. \$7.95.

GLENN CLARK: HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS by Miles Clark. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975. \$3.95. paperback

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION: X-ED by John and Lela Hendrix. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1975. \$6.50

A NEW LOOK FOR SUNDAY MORNING by William Beaven Abernethy. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1975, \$4.50 paperback

EXPLORING THE BIBLE WITH CHILDREN by Dorothy Jean Furnish. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1975. \$3.95 paperback

WORD IN DEED: THEOLOGICAL THEMES IN EVANGELISM by Gabriel Fackre. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1975. \$1.95 paperback.

CONFLICT AND CHRISTIANITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND by Brian Mawhinney and Ronald Wells. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1975. \$2.65 paperback

SAMARITANS AND JEWS: THE ORIGINS OF SAMARITANISM RECONSIDERED by R. J. Coggins. Atlanta: John Knox Press. 1975. \$6.95 paperback

GETTING STRAIGHT ABOUT THE BIBLE by Horace R. Weaver. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1975. \$3.95 paperback

CLASSIC HASSIDIC TALES: Retold from Hebrew, Yiddish, and German sources by Meyer Levin. Maryland: Penguin Books Inc. 1975. \$3.95 paperback





**THE JOURNAL OF THE
INTERDENOMINATIONAL
THEOLOGICAL CENTER**

671 BECKWITH STREET, S.W.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30314