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# the christian CENTURY

MARCH 7, 1979



## A Liturgical Strategy

James F. White



## Mapping the Brain

Paul W. Walaskay

'The Praying Jew (The Rabbi of Vitebsk),' by Marc Chagall



Marc Chagall's  
Religious Vision  
Cinematic Sermon  
in Grand Rapids  
Petropolitics  
Backlash in Britain

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**NEWSPAPER**

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## In This Issue

✦ A SERIOUS revitalization effort is required to restore worship to its central position in the life of the Christian congregation. That is the contention of James F. White, a United Methodist minister and college professor who has worked full-time for 18 years on what he considers a priority issue. Ignorance and indifference are the obstacles which the author proposes to eradicate through improved communications on four fronts: seminaries, denominational agencies, workshops and publications. By the initiation of innovative programs, he is convinced, churchgoers can become informed about options in worship.

A challenging interdisciplinary approach is adopted by Paul A. Walaskay, who proposes in his article that current neurological research provides a basis and pattern for describing religious life. Serving as the archetype for free movement between the cognitive and intuitive modes of consciousness, which together form the unified religious experience, is the witness of Paul of Tarsus. Dr. Walaskay has written articles and musical compositions, and is coauthor, with James Ashbrook, of *Christianity for Pious Skeptics*.

Speaking to the unity of religion and culture is an article on Marc Chagall by Lawrence S. Cunningham, an associate professor at Florida State University who teaches both religion and humanities. The author attests to the success of Chagall's paintings in conveying a religious vision that nourishes spiritual needs.

Directed to that same need is a contribution to our series of Lenten meditations, this one by novelist, National Book Award nominee and ordained Presbyterian minister Frederick Buechner. Evoking the tranquillity of his Vermont home, Buechner describes a moving experience shared with a friend during a walk through maple woods.

Managing editor Dean Peerman, now back from a two-week stay in Mexico to cover the CELAM III conference, plans to do a major article on its outcome and implications (his correspondence on the influence of Pope John Paul II appeared last week). After the harried and chaotic days at Puebla, Mr. Peerman did have time for a brief stopover in Mexico City when President Carter was there; herewith his assessment of that event.

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as choice among options. Again, however, the emphasis is not so much on the only possible option, but on the ways our actual choices can and do illustrate our fundamental human nature.

From my perspective, *Free and Faithful in Christ* stands as a testimony to how far a moral theologian can move in the direction of relativism without actually giving up anything fundamental. Put another way, contemporary Thomist

ethics as filtered through the open mind of Bernard Häring is able to absorb and disarm most "secular" challenges.

Volume II of the work, which presumably will apply the insights of Volume I to current moral problems, will test the capacity of Häring's ethics to engender decisiveness without closed-mindedness, and maintain openness without irrelevance.

JOHN P. CROSSLEY, JR.

## This Week's Arrivals

**THE METHOD AND MESSAGE OF JESUS' TEACHINGS.** By Robert H. Stein. Westminster, \$7.95 paperback.

Stein helps locate the many modes of discourse of Jesus, speculates as to why they were employed, and leads readers through the mazes of the Gospels. A reverent and learned treatment.

**NEAR EASTERN RELIGIOUS TEXTS RELATING TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.** Edited by Walter Beyerlin. Westminster, \$20.00.

Here are 122 selections designed to enhance understandings of biblical background material and texts parallel to the canonical Scriptures. Curses, catalogues of sins, building inscriptions: these are matters for specialists, but they will more than welcome the availability in this convenient form.

**THE WILL ROGERS TOUCH.** By Leland Wilson. Brethren, \$6.95.

What is a Church of the Brethren minister doing snipping and snipeting the lore of Will Rogers? And why is Brethren Press printing it? The reader will soon learn that Wilson as a minister has had a career-long interest in studying Rogers and in quoting him, and that Brethren Press is being a good servant of the larger community by taking on this labor of love. Wilson perhaps overpraises his hero in the introduction, but then steps aside and lets Rogers speak for himself.

**A GUIDE TO THE BOOK OF EXODUS.** By John H. Dobson. Judson, \$5.95 paperback.

Judson authors jam-pack their "how to" study guides, and this volume is no exception: the print is small, the margins are narrow, the information is rich, and the package is useful. First published by S.P.C.K. in England. No nonsense.

**A HANDFUL OF PEARLS: THE EPISTLE OF JAMES.** By Addison J. Eastman. Westminster, \$4.65 paperback.

Far from dismissing the Epistle to James as being marginal to evangelical interests, Eastman lifts it up as having special ethical relevance today. He does not worry too much about theological problems raised by the book, but contents himself with helpful comment on Christian behavior.

**THE BIBLICAL INTERPRETER.** By Richard L. Rohrbaugh. Fortress, \$4.95.

Everyone, it seems, needs a hermeneutics these days, and Rohrbaugh's is a "parish hermeneutics." Never mind. What he means is that he wants to help others interpret the

Bible, an agrarian book, in an industrial society. He does. The author is well read in texts on the sociology of knowledge and is likely to help people find things in the Bible they had overlooked previously.

**THE REMAKING OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.** By Maurice Wiles. Westminster, \$5.95 paperback.

Five years ago Wiles delivered these revisionist lectures but did not then yet know to designate them as such. Now he has picked up the term from American David Tracy, and uses it to describe his reworking of Christian themes, British style. Somehow the book has a '60s mood about it.

**SILENT FIRE: AN INVITATION TO WESTERN MYSTICISM.** Edited by Walter Holden Capps and Wendy M. Wright. Harper & Row, \$5.95 paperback.

Welcome home, wanderers from West to East; here is a generous sampling of contemplative and mystical writings by greats who belong in Western traditions but who reached for a consciousness that the hip young and the searchers think can only be found far from home. Hildegard of Bingen, Bonaventura, Meister Eckhart, Simone Weil. Inspiring, inspiring, uplifting, outlifting.

**THE INTEGRITY OF ANGLICANISM.** By Stephen W. Sykes. Seabury, \$8.95.

Anglicans have always cherished "comprehensiveness" and have shown considerable latitude about latitudinarianism. Has this ancient charm of theirs worn off, or does it stand them in ill stead in a time when people seek authority and definition? Well, yes. But just what kind of integrity they can retrieve from a theological past is a problem; Sykes takes it up with a frank and open spirit. The book will tie loose ends together without tying up Anglicanism in knots of new constriction.

**THE IDEAS OF NEWMAN: CHRISTIANITY AND HUMAN RELIGIOSITY.** By Lee H. Yearley. Penn State Press, \$12.50.

Here is a different kind of book about John Henry Newman, one that is informed by a comparative religionist approach (Yearley is an expert on Chinese religion). That approach allows the author to isolate the meanings of liberal religion, the uses and misuses to which Newman put it, and the helpful ways he went about differentiating it from Catholicism—even if he did not always do justice to the integrity of the liberal reconstruction of Christian faith.



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