

Book Reviews

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED: A NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF LOVE, TRADITIONAL VALUES AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH, by M. Scott Peck, M.D. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978, 316 pages, \$5.95 (paper).

PEOPLE OF THE LIE: THE HOPE FOR HEALING HUMAN EVIL, by M. Scott Peck, M.D. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983, 269 pages, \$14.95.

Reviewed by Stephen Hollaway, Campus Minister, U.A.B. Graduate Schools and Birmingham-Southern College, Birmingham, Alabama.

Scott Peck is going to become a household name among campus ministers. He is at the forefront of the effort to integrate psychotherapy and spirituality, and his work speaks directly to what we are about in pushing our students toward growth and maturity. If there are two "must read" books in the general field of popular books about religion, these are the two. The first is, by Peck's admission, a "nice" book, in a sense nothing more than the ultimate self-help manual; it has rather quietly sold about 500,000 copies, some of them purchased by your students. The second title Peck calls "a dangerous book" about the reality of evil; it has been reviewed in periodicals ranging from the *New York Times* to the **Wittenberg Door**.

Scott Peck is a psychiatrist, educated at Harvard and Case Western, who has been the assistant chief of psychiatry for the U.S. Army and is now in private practice in Connecticut. He became a Christian between the time he finished the first book and the time he began the second. His background was upscale secularism, but his adolescent mysticism led him to accept insights from Buddhist, Moslem, and Christian thought. **The Road Less Traveled** is not a Christian book but uses many Christian categories of thought and gives a campus minister the feeling he gets when he has long and rich discussions with a student just on the verge of becoming a Christian. The person who reads the book is likely to be led, like Peck himself, to see the basic truth of the gospel. Peck was baptized in North Carolina by a Methodist minister in an Episcopal chapel but remains unwilling to push for a particular denomination. This is one terribly intriguing fellow.

If **The Road Less Traveled** is not distinctly Christian, it is still the one book besides the Bible I would most like a non-believer to read, because it has the effect of preparing one to receive grace. It has enabled me to receive grace in a new way. I asked my wife to read this book. Perhaps you have already sensed my evangelistic fervor.

The book begins with the statement, "Life is difficult." One of our basic problems is that we lack the discipline to choose a course that is painful but leads to growth. Peck says that there is no real difference between mental health and spiritual growth. Mental health is "a dedication to reality at all costs". Unhealth is choosing the easy way or living by old roadmaps.

Peck's section on love is better than anything I've given students to read from Rilke, Nouwen, or Fromm. Love is defined as "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth" (p.81). Peck is clear about the distinction between loving and being "in love" and argues that love is not a feeling. He warns against the loss of ego-boundaries, reminding us that love involves separateness, but he also calls for a love which risks loss, independence, commitment, and confrontation.

The third section of the book on "Growth and Religion" includes case studies of patients who have in the process of growing spiritually rejected religion, embraced religion, or changed religion. He also addresses the issue of "scientific tunnel vision" and the unwillingness of scientists to accept religious realities. It is the final section of the book entitled "Grace" which is the most helpful. Peck uses an evolutionary model of the world (similar to Teilhard de Chardin) to demonstrate that God or Grace is out there drawing us to himself with a force which pulls us toward spiritual growth. The opposite force in the world is entropy (as in the second law of thermodynamics), pulling us down to the easiest way, the least common denominator, so for Peck Original Sin is laziness. Peck is not troubled by the presence of evil, because it is to be expected; he is rather amazed by all the evidence of Grace in the world, in health, in the unconscious, in serendipity and synchronicity. The key to mental health is learning to welcome Grace. Did I say this is not Christian?

Obviously, **The People of the Lie** has a very different tone

indeed. Some of the ideas from the first book are utilized, but Peck writes unapologetically as a Christian and focuses on the question of evil people. This is not a book to hand to any student, because it is really dangrous as Peck warns; first, because a student might become fascinated by evil and, second, because he might identify some persons as evil and beyond hope. Nevertheless, this is a pioneering study of an area long neglected by psychiatrists. Wayne Oates has called this "the most original and challenging book I have read in the field of psychotherapy and theology in twenty-five years." That should be recommendation enough for most Southern Baptist campus ministers.

The case studies in this book read like sections of a novel. They are gripping and not the least bit "clinical" in tone. Peck is dealing with two different types of cases: most of them are simply evil people, people who have chosen the easy narcissistic way for so long that they no longer struggle with conscience at all, but the second type is the possessed, those who are engaged in a frightful struggle with Satan or a lesser demon. Campus ministers may be surprised to find a psychiatrist dealing with possession but Peck is quite convincing and is by no means a wild-eyed fanatic. Cases which will be most useful to campus ministers are those which deal with evil parents and the effect that this has on adolescents. Some of these cases will curl your toes, but later will remind you of families you have dealt with.

Peck will lose some of his audience when he moves to the topic of "group evil." In his years with the Army, Peck was in charge of an investigation of the My Lai atrocities. His analysis of buck-passing in an organization and the possibility of evil in group behavior are on target and will have you thinking of denominational politics as well as national politics. Peck calls for more research—a call denied by the Army, leading to his resignation—into evil and group psychology. In his conclusion he calls for a national institute to bring the resources of science to bear on the problem of evil. In a brief summary this book may sound farfetched, but Peck's story and his argument taken as a whole are quite compelling.

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TO KNOW AS WE ARE KNOWN: A SPIRITUALITY OF EDUCATION, by Parker J. Palmer. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983, 128 pages, \$10.95.

Reviewed by Glenn M. Gring, Campus Minister, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama.

This book is critical of much contemporary education. It is not clearly stated if the author refers to some levels of the educational system. Terms such as "conventional wisdom," "theory of knowing," and "hidden curriculum" give some clues regarding the starting point for the author's criticisms. He writes:

If you want to understand our controlling conception of knowledge, do not ask for our best epistemological theories. Instead, observe the way we teach and look for the theory of knowledge implicit in those practices. That is the epistemology our students learn—no matter what our best contemporary theorists may have to say (p.29).

With that as starting point, the author presents "a spirituality of education." He views spirituality as a way of "educating that joins the mind with the heart." The book is written as a result of participation in a Quaker community and adult study center, where the author received a "depth and direction" he lacked, acquired in a formative decade.

Who will read this book? The interest the author seeks is not from "people for whom truth is an intellectual issue." He hopes to "speak to people for whom truth is the fabric of daily life."

Chapter one makes an inquiry into where modern knowledge is taking us. Chapter two considers standard education as it affects our seeing and our being. Chapter three analyzes methods and their impact on students. Chapter four explores Christian spiritual tradition and implications for our knowledge in physical science, social science, and the humanities. Chapters five and six describe the creation of a space for learning and how teachers and students can practice obedience to truth within that space. Chapter seven is concerned with spiritual disciplines necessary to that kind of teaching.

Of interest to campus ministers is an emphasis on prayerful education. The author writes:

The challenge of this book—and its central irony—can be illustrated by the continuing debate over prayer in the school. Many people yearn for a return of "religiousness" to education, so they press for laws permitting vocal prayer in the classroom. But I cannot join them. Vocal prayer in class dictates a consensus that does not exist in our pluralistic socie-

ty, and any prayer that is so vaguely worded that it sounds agreeable to all is, by my limits, no prayer at all (p.10.)

This book will have an obvious appeal to everyone for whom recovery of mystical experience is urgent. Christian educators may find the thesis a matter for debate. For me the most readable, helpful section of this book is concerned with the value and meaning of silence, solitude, and a contemplative life.

Will readers of this book distrust the use of lofty words and phrases such as "spirituality of education"? The writer offers the admission that "it may seem odd to turn to spirituality for a new way of knowing." I find a certain vagueness and lack of clarity in many terms used by the author. Convictional language may defy academic precision in this book. The use of intentional language might improve on the "devotional style" the author employs.

I do not doubt the sincerity of the author's attempt to provide aid for a troubled educational system, fragmented and unsettled. Change in education is needed. However, this book may bring supportive interest from parochial religious schools primarily, not markedly influencing education in general.

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THE TRANSLATION DEBATE: WHAT MAKES A BIBLE TRANSLATION GOOD? by Eugene H. Glassman. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1981, 121 pages, \$4.25.

Reviewed by Robert B. Ford, Jr., Campus Minister, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama.

Among other roles into which the campus minister is cast unwillingly is that of being the "fountainhead of all knowledge" in matters of heated difference of opinion among the student constituency. One such issue is, "Which translation of the Bible is 'best'?" Here is a volume which will not only give the campus minister insights to make him seem as wise as Solomon, but to which he may also point his students for further clarification. In short, it may well provide the information necessary to lead students to make their own decision in this matter.

Eugene Glassman's credentials, including a master of arts in linguistics from Northwestern University, are certainly adequate for him to undertake this study. Since 1974, he has been

a translations adviser to the United Bible Societies.

The seven chapters of the book, although occupying only 121 pages, do a good job of giving a clear understanding of both the problems in translation and the types of translations. Chapter one points out the difficulty in making an honest translation of the Bible. Chapter two does a great service in distinguishing between the words "translate," "interpret," and "paraphrase." The high point of chapter three, which deals with how the Bible has lent to its own translation, is a discussion on the inevitability of paraphrase. This discussion should be noted carefully by anyone passing judgment on the accuracy of any particular translation. It is chapter four which provides the most important single discussion of the book. Here the author makes a distinction between "form-oriented" and "content-oriented" translation. The book is worth its price for this discussion alone. In the discussion ample examples are cited, from various translations, to show the difference between the two types of translation. There is also a good presentation of the strengths and weaknesses of the two types of translation.

Chapter five helps the reader to understand how missionaries, attempting to do crosscultural translations, have also helped to clarify the English translations. Chapter six reiterates the inevitability of paraphrase, but is notable for saying, "to say that paraphrase is inevitable in translating is not to say that any paraphrase is legitimate." The author then proceeds to give five guidelines for translating. These guidelines may be used by the reader to determine the value of a translation. The final chapter closes the discussion on a solid note by saying, "The word is God's but the language is man's. Let translators beware, then, lest they fail to give both these factors their due."

While the volume gives copious scripture references to illustrate necessary points, wisdom demands that the campus minister check each of these references, since their application to the subject is not always clear. The only other weakness in the book results from a personal prejudice of this reviewer; the author is far too kind to **The Living Bible**.

This book is highly recommended for help with deciding which translation is best for any individual. It should be valuable both as a discussion guide and as a tool for individual use.

BIRTH AND DEATH: BIOETHICAL DECISION-MAKING, by Paul D. Simmons. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983, 270 pages, \$13.95.

Reviewed by Stephen Hollaway, Campus Minister, U.A.B. Graduate Schools and Birmingham-Southern College, Birmingham, Alabama.

The campus minister can hardly avoid the role of ethicist. Those of us who work in university medical centers are faced with new ethical dilemmas every week, questions as fresh as the headlines. For students in health care fields, "Baby Doe" cases and embryo transplants are not matters for idle speculation but situations requiring genuine struggle over the question "What shall I do?"

Paul Simmons, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, helps us to grapple with the central questions in the field of bioethics. This volume is part of Westminster's series called "Biblical Perspectives on Current Issues," but it is not "biblical" in the sense that some fundamentalists would like. Simmons' first two chapters dealing with the use of the Bible in ethical decision-making make it clear why this book was not published by Broadman. Simmons does not hide his presuppositions: "The Bible is indispensable for Christian ethics," but "there is no irreconcilable tension between the Bible and modern science" (p. 21). As if to prove how little tension there is, he even suggests that science contributes to our understanding of the creation narrative, freeing us from "slavish literalism" (p. 24). I hope this never gets quoted from the floor of the Southern Baptist Convention!

To Simmons' credit, he works diligently at being genuinely biblical, avoiding temptations to move to the left or the right. He recognizes the integrity of various writings in Scripture without trying to synthesize a unified biblical position on every question. In defining biblical authority, Simmons says that it "rests not so much on claims made about the Bible, nor on the fact that it is used in moral discourse, but on the fact that it actually influences our moral judgments and actions" (p. 32). His own approach to using the Bible tends more toward the "relational" approach (stressing response to God) than toward a prescriptive (rules) approach or a deliberative (general principles) approach.

By the time the reader finishes the introductory chapters,

it is clear that the author is no ardent pro-lifer; on the other hand, he is not Joseph Fletcher either. Simmons' approach will be helpful for those who are not already thoroughly convinced on questions such as abortion and euthanasia. He has forced me to re-think some tentative conclusions reached under the influence of the Schaeffer-Koop school, but I am not altogether convinced that his conclusions were less predetermined than the conservatives'. The fact that Simmons' conclusions generally fall in line with liberal positions can hardly be a coincidence. It is useful to know that there is a solid biblical case for these more liberal (freedom-oriented and humane) positions, but it is hard to believe that the values involved come more from the Bible than from our culture.

The four basic issues Simmons tackles are: abortion, euthanasia, biotechnical parenting, and genetic engineering. In each chapter he gives a helpful history of the debate, a description of the technology involved, and a summary of objections to current practice. In each case, one of the central questions is the definition of personhood. Simmons argues against a genetic definition of personhood and is more sympathetic to the "developmental" school and the "social consequences" school. The biblical view of personhood, involving the image of God, includes the ability to have relationships and to make moral choices. For Simmons both the image of God and the priesthood of the believer are doctrines which stress the exercise of freedom in making ethical decisions involving your own life or the life of your child. "Leaving things up to God" in matters of life and death amounts to an abdication of responsibility, a failure of stewardship when we have the technical ability to make deliberate choices.

At points Simmons approaches issues from a fresh biblical perspective. On the matter of "biotechnical parenting," including *in vitro* fertilization and embryo transplants, he takes as his handle the biblical theme of the tragedy of infertility in "barren women." In discussing whether there is "forbidden knowledge" in genetics, Simmons argues that this category reflects the myth of Prometheus rather than Adam and Eve. He applies biblical hope to the prospect of a deteriorating gene pool and asks whether our Christian definition of human nature is based on the man of the past (Adam) or the man of the future (Christ). If such insights are stimulating to you,

this book is worth your time. I used it in a series of discussions with medical students and found that while the price was out of their reach the ideas were not.