

commitment to "situation ethics." On the other hand, he has an equally firm and fully self-conscious commitment to the Jewish tradition. Yet one can hardly imagine a moral stance more difficult to reconcile with Judaism as traditionally received than "situation ethics." In *A New Jewish Ethics* S. D. Breslauer makes an honest and forthright attempt to come to grips with this problem and solve it. From the confrontation of basically incompatible positions interesting sparks can fly; such is the case with the present work.

Breslauer's approach involves the radical redefinition of traditional concepts in order to make possible what he calls an "ecumenical ethics." Such an "ethics is understood as a dialogic process of heeding the needs and concerns of others while challenging others on the basis of one's own needs and concerns" (p. 6). His work is more a personal statement than an extended argument, basically answering the question, what consequences follow from the confrontation of a liberal interpretation of Judaism with "situation ethics"? It does not address the questions, is "situation ethics" religiously and philosophically valid and does the interpretation of Judaism offered do justice to the sources on which it is alleged to be based?

While I find much to admire and respect in this work, particularly the moral fervor which animates it and the attempt to see Judaism as morally relevant in the modern world, I think that it would have been more convincing had the author rooted his discussions more firmly and in greater detail in Jewish sources and examined more carefully and self-consciously concepts such as 'dialogue', 'authenticity', 'process', and 'ecumenical' upon which many of his arguments turn.

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The Epistles of John. The Anchor Bible, 30. By Raymond E. Brown. Doubleday, 1982. 812 pages. \$18.00.

For some period of time now, I believe, R. Brown has been the undisputed dean of American Johannine scholarship. The volume, consistency and quality of his publications in the area more than justify such an assessment. The present volume brings to a close his trilogy on the Johannine writings for "The Anchor Bible" commentary series and expounds in detail theories already advanced in his recent work on the history and development of the Johannine community, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (1979).

The volume shows B. at his very best. For a work of this size and nature, the style is remarkably lucid and eminently readable throughout. The volume also displays once again two of B.'s most characteristic traits: a thorough command of the exegetical literature and an uncanny ability to organize and trace this literature according to its main ideological, chronological and topical currents.

Most importantly, however, the volume is also quite innovative with respect to many of the central and most debated questions in 1 John studies, such as its genre, its structure and the purported positions of the author's adversaries. B. suggests, first of all, that the work represents a "comment" on the Gospel: an exposition of ideas from the Gospel misinterpreted by the opponents. The proposed structure is similarly

modelled on that of the Gospel: two main sections (1:5–3:10; 3:11–5:12)—each introduced by the formula, “This is the gospel,” and developing the theme introduced therein, “light” (1:5) and “love” (3:11)—with a prologue (1:1–4) and a conclusion (5:13–21). Finally, the adversaries or “secessionists” are said to neglect the humanity of Jesus and to be moral indifferentists, thus neither docetists nor moral libertines. In conclusion, a most welcome and most important addition to Johannine scholarship.

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The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression. By Patricia Caldwell. Cambridge University Press, 1983. 210 pages. \$19.95. ✓

This book analyzes Puritan conversion narratives as works of imaginative literature. Author Patricia Caldwell shows how the New England practice of relating conversion experiences as a condition of church membership offered first-generation New England Puritans the opportunity to deal with their confusion about being in America. Caldwell shows how the American narratives can be read as symbolic texts in which the strange land of America becomes the touchstone of religious expression.

Unlike English conversion narratives, American ones are troubled and unresolved. While the more uplifting and ultimately joyful English narratives rely on biblical images as objective correlates for personal experience, the more depressing American ones are so immersed in biblical imagery that the narratives extend, and to some extent supplant, the Bible itself. Caldwell argues that this internalized biblical consciousness, along with the therapeutic use to which language is put to use in the struggle to make sense of being in America, make the Puritan narratives the first expression of a distinctly American literature.

While the implications of this argument are vast, the argument itself is executed through precise analysis of a small body of long-neglected texts. This thorough and particular grounding is one of the chief strengths of the book. Another is the eloquent and very modern quality of the author's own mode of expression. By so well describing Puritan dilemmas with modern wit and literary flourish, Caldwell points to the affinity between Puritan and present-day concerns and makes an implicit case for perennial themes in American literature.

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All Faithful People: Change and Continuity in Middletown's Religion. By Theodore Caplow, Howard M. Bahr, and Bruce A. Chadwick. University of Minnesota Press, 1983. 378 pages. \$19.50.

In 1924 Robert and Helen Lynd went to Muncie, Indiana to investigate the changes that had occurred between 1890 and 1924 in the spheres of work, family life, education, leisure, religion, and community activities. Ten years later they



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