age, which looked Janus-like back toward the Puritan past and ahead toward the democratic American future. He goes on to argue in this both agreeably and tantalizingly brief study that the two served as transitional figures of the American Enlightenment who forged a much more creative approach to the religious, social, and political problems of their day than they have usually been credited with.

Neither Chauncy nor Mayhew has lacked attention of late, and Alan Heimert's *Religion and the American Mind* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966) in particular has shaped the context for the scholarly dialogue in which Corrigan is now joining. He has set out to look at the thought of the two, which sprang from the same social and intellectual matrix, not simply in terms of their putative shaping of American democratic political thought or their roles as forerunners of Unitarian theology. Instead, he sees each as having a holistic vision, shaped by their immediate cultural experience, in which religion, society, and politics are interpreted according to the same broader sets of philosophical principles.

Corrigan is gratifyingly successful in this ambitious undertaking. He argues that both men employed a dialectical method, in which dichotomies such as an elite clergy and private judgment, deference and self-government, and social hierarchy and upward mobility were regarded not as mutually exclusive opposites but necessary components in a dynamic process of cultural change. Though their thought was molded by Enlightenment categories, it was more dynamic than that of many of their contemporaries in dealing with the rapid changes that were leading inexorably toward the Revolution and the New Republic. Corrigan might have documented his arguments more thoroughly at times, but the result would have been a repetition of ground already well covered by others.

Like the porch with which Corrigan begins, his book has something of a dual aspect. Its brevity places it somewhere between a full-fledged monograph and an extended essay. As a study in American religion, it reflects that discipline's balance between social and intellectual history. Corrigan's tilt is in the latter direction, but he introduces, especially in his appendix on the social composition of the two ministers' congregations, an attempt to ground their thought in the social realities of their own time and experience. One wishes that he might have gone further in this direction, as well as in his occasional hints of utilizing symbolic theory to analyze his data. Brevity here is the reader's loss. As a whole, however, Corrigan has done a fine job in breaking out of a now nearly exhausted set of interpretive categories to take a fresh look at old phenomena. One hopes that he will be even bolder in his future explorations of this era.

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KENEL, SALLY A. *Mortal Gods: Ernest Becker and Fundamental Theology.* Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988. 226 pp.

Ernest Becker's insights into our denial of death had an impact beyond anything he anticipated. But does he qualify as a fundamental theologian? Using David Tracy's definition, Sally Kenel attempts to demonstrate that Becker deserves the title. She only partially succeeds. In essence she contends that Becker uses anthropology rather than philosophy as the academic discipline equipped to mediate the truth-claims of the human situation and those of the Christian fact. The human condition of mortality becomes the disclosive "limit situation" par excellence. Death—that the individual is essentially a "mortal god" forever

caught in the conflict between "autonomy versus creatureliness"—points us toward God and the "Sacred" as ground of our being.

Given the lack of previous critique, Kenel's preliminary chapter constitutes a useful contribution in itself. Relying on book reviews, letters to friend Harvey Bates, and Sam Keen's interview only months before Becker's death, she documents the evolution of his career, ideas, and publications. From an initial intrigue with psychoanalysis to a later fascination with death, he remained obsessed with establishing a "unified study of humanity" (p. 15). Unlike fellow anthropologists, he saw anthropology as a normative discipline, capable of constructively shaping the moral situation and in dire need of dialogue with other disciplines, including theology. This led to criticism and ridicule—one reviewer dubs him "Mr. Interdisciplinarity"—and to Pulitzer Prize acclaim for a view of human nature that integrates psychology and theology.

The remainder of Kenel's book provides a rather cut-and-dried exegesis that lacks the kind of consistent critical evaluation and constructive suggestion that one might have hoped for. She allots only paragraphs to a critique of Becker's ideal of heroism, his masculine view of women, nature, and the body, his dualistic proclivities, and his own disciplinary confusion; she does not question his monolithic theory of human motivation or his own deep fears of dependence. Oddly enough, over against his critics, Kenel defends Becker more often than not.

Chapters 3–6 simply examine the concept of mortality as Becker himself presented it, yet taking apart for the sake of presentation what he so strongly believed must remain together—the psychological, the social, and the religious dimensions. Much of Becker's flavorful dynamism gets lost. Part 2 attempts to confirm her initial thesis by putting the results of the dissection of mortality into juxtaposition with theology. Again this remains "mainly expository in nature." Rather than push Becker on the adequacy of his own correlational use of Kierkegaard and Tillich, Kenel turns somewhat abruptly to an alternative correlation with biblical images. Despite these discrepancies, her reading of scriptural views of death as "biological," as "alienating," as "aggressor," and ultimately as "vanquished adversary" stands nicely on its own and offers an insightful typology with which to understand Hebrew and Christian texts.

In pointing to the correlational method at the heart of Becker's work, Kenel does suggest avenues for further reflection. All too often fundamental theologians with their "esoteric language and restricted audience" (p. 151) fail adequately to address acute life experiences. Becker's vision continues to remind us of the need for relevance in the academy.

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DEAN, WILLIAM, and AXEL, LARRY E., eds. *The Size of God: The Theology of Bernard Loomer in Context.* Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987. 86 pp. $16.85 (cloth).

The centerpiece of this slim volume is an essay by Bernard M. Loomer in print for the first time. The editors provide a short preface, a bibliography of Loomer's published work (unfortunately incomplete), and a name index.

Significant interpretive essays by William Dean, John B. Cobb, Jr., Delwin Brown, Larry E. Axel, Bernard J. Lee, and Nancy Frankenberry complete the book. With minimal but helpful biographical insight into Loomer's theology,