

directed toward him has implications for the collective body of Israel. The last twenty pages of the book deal with the variants of the prophetic judgment-speech, *viz.*, the woe-speech (*Wehe-Worte*); the curse; the legal procedure; the disputation (*Streitgespräch*); the parable; the lament; and the prophetic Torah. This section, while containing much that is thought-provoking, is regrettably sketchy and incomplete. Noticeably lacking, for example, is a clear distinction between the prophets of doom and prophets¹ of weal (*Heilspropheten*); an evaluation of the promise oracles, exhortations, and utterances to foreign nations, all three important variants of the basic prophetic speech, is also missing.

Professor Westermann expresses in the preface to the English edition that this translation can encourage contemporary discussion of Biblical studies between American and German scholars. It is this reviewer's belief that his wish is being fulfilled. But more important, this volume stands as an exemplary introduction to mature form-critical research, and will reward careful reading by the student of the Biblical interpretation. Finally, it is hoped that in future printings indices to the authors cited and to Biblical references would be included to enrich the value of this book.

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Williams, Colin W., *The Church*. "New Directions in Theology Today,"
4. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968. 187 pp. \$ 2.45.

Since the task of the Church is to bear witness in the world and not simply to maintain traditional structures of organization and of doctrine, it will follow that if it is to perform that task of witness it will seek to understand how that will be appropriate or even possible in the changing world of today. This is not of course a new thesis. This book, and the series of which it is a part, in spite of the title, "New Directions in Theology Today," does not attempt a developing of new directions, but a reporting of them. To perform the task of witness appropriately will involve enterprising rethinking on the Church's part of its structure, methods, theology, and ministry. This book serves as a reminder of the earnest work that has been done (and often not by recognized leaders of the Church viewed as an "organization") for the sake of improving the effectiveness of the Church's witness. If Williams' thesis is correct, the leadership of the churches will be less and less in the hands of a traditionally ordered institutional form. He is careful to point out, however, that this will not mean the abandoning of "institutions." If new forms and new places of obedience are demanded, new direction for the Church may come in spite of institutional diehardism. Williams makes us aware of the need for the Church to be flexible and responsive in the face of the world's need. Indeed, in a certain sense the world must be allowed

to write the Church's agenda if the Church is to fulfill a genuine servant role; the agenda, but not the answers. We may have learned from the NT that a variety of forms of organization and of teaching is necessary to make the ministry of the Church effective.

Williams writes from considered experience when he affirms that, although the appropriate expression of the Church is always institutional, any particular institutional form may have to be by-passed by God in order for him to fulfill his purpose. It is salutary to be reminded, if we can take it, that all the institutional forms of the Church stand under judgment, and need justification. If the Church is to perform the servant role genuinely, it will avoid corporate selfishness by manifesting humility and love in its affairs, both "within" and "without." The Church has often responded with concern when its own institutional role has been questioned or curtailed by the state, but has been far less interested in exercising the servant role for the sake of obtaining *human* rights for those who lack them when the state has encroached upon these. In this way self-concern has replaced genuine humility and servant-love.

To insist on the traditional forms of ministry as the only forms (*i.e.*, the parish ministry) would today mean that the ministry of the Church would be isolated from where the ministry is now most urgently needed. One reason for this is the shift from residence to non-residence congregations. Where at present old forms are inadequate, new forms of ministry must emerge. The tasks of the Church remain. The forms of the ministry through which they are to be achieved must change. The time we live in is characterized by our immersion in the diverse structures of contemporary life (p. 124), and because of this a variety of ministries is demanded.

The Church's witness is to be not simply in word but also in deed. Williams expresses a widespread concern that the Church make its presence felt where key decisions are made within secular institutions. Such obedience as is now called for will be an "ever new event." Reformation of the old is not sufficient. Renewal is demanded (p. 146). Witness will be in act as well as word.

The immense complexity and change in our pluralistic society demands a "pluriform of presence" on the Church's part. Change in the world requires change in the Church to meet the worldly change, but no abandoning of the Church's task. The ways he suggests (and he is representing the views of others and of ecumenical discussion as well as his own) are pointers. His treatment reminds us that the ecumenical movement is not seeking for a uniformity of organization and of practice, nor even of interpretation. It is concerned with the fulfillment of the Church's task to make the future open to Christianity, when other ideologies and institutions are bidding for it. This can be done, Williams claims, only by its assuming responsibility for the present and for the immediate future.

It is salutary, even if painful, to be reminded of the situation. It is helpful, if not decisive, to be reminded of possibilities for renewal

and for changed expression of our responsibility. The book, whether read as an introduction to the doctrine of the Church in contemporary theology, or as an expression of dedicated concern for irrelevant institutionalism and for the fulfillment of churchly responsibility, cannot but, if carefully considered, lead to examination of heart and soul. It is to be hoped that its message may be heeded before it is too late. But that such discussion is possible is a sign of hope, hope that the genuine tasks of the Church may be performed in unlikely places by unlikely people. The book does not simply express the pious dream of a visionary. It documents views and changes already evident and operative. In the nature of the case, the "theology" presented is tentative, for theology expresses understanding, and act precedes both.

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