

Editorial

The essays in this *Zygon* issue on social-science interpretations of religion can stand on their own and need no special introduction. But a few remarks explaining the genesis of the issue may be in order.

The essays by Jonathan Z. Smith, David Tracy, Robin Scroggs, and Robert L. Moore were delivered at a special session of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Chicago last November. This session, entitled "Psycho-Social Interpretations in Religion," was organized by a working group affiliated with the American Academy of Religion. It was planned and chaired jointly by Lucy Bregmann, chairperson of the working group, and me.

These four essays fall into two areas of interest. Smith's and Tracy's are responses to John G. Gager's stimulating and provocative *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975). The justification for addressing the Gager book is the belief that, successful or not, it is one of the most ambitious attempts available to give a systematic, social-science interpretation of early Christianity. The book clearly merits serious attention, and Smith's and Tracy's are fitting efforts in this direction. Smith is a specialist in Mediterranean civilizations and religions, and his criticisms of the Gager book come from his general expertise in this area of scholarship. Tracy is one of our leading Catholic theologians; his evaluation of the Gager book is from the perspective of its theological implications. Although by themselves both of these essays are extremely helpful to those already familiar with Gager's work, it was thought that a more introductory essay was needed for those not familiar with his study. For this I turned to my colleague David L. Bartlett. We have in his essay not only an excellent summary of *Kingdom and Community* but also a thoughtful evaluation of the work.

Scroggs's and Moore's essays deal with early Christianity from another perspective. Whereas Gager primarily uses concepts derived from sociology and anthropology, Scroggs and Moore examine psychoanalytic interpretations of early Christianity. Scroggs evaluates the contributions of Norman O. Brown to a possible psychoanalytic interpretation of Pauline theology and Moore the psychoanalytic interpretations of Richard Rubenstein.

Finally Volney Patrick Gay's "Reductionism and Redundancy in the Analysis of Religious Forms" seems to us an appropriate companion piece for this issue.

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