

## Review

*Psychology of Religion.* By HEIJE FABER. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976. 338 pages. \$13.95.

Heije Faber, a professor of pastoral psychology at the University of Leyden, Netherlands, examines the nature of religion from a psychoanalytic point of view and offers suggestions for possible dialogue between psychology and theology. His *Psychology of Religion* also contains the keen observations of a pastor sensitive to the plight of the believer in the modern world. These diverse purposes prevent the book from having a sharp focus, but the compensation is a stimulating set of insights which deserve exploration.

The first half of Faber's book is an extensive analysis and critique of the work of Sigmund Freud, Carl G. Jung, H. C. Rümke, Erich Fromm, and Erik H. Erikson in the psychology of religion. Faber believes that the basic orientation of psychoanalysis toward religion is valuable, namely, the importance of early childhood experience, especially with reference to the mother and father, and the importance of unconscious processes. Nevertheless, he is critical of the antireligious bias of Freud (Freud thought that religion was essentially infantile and a substitute for neurotic symptoms). Another point of contention for Faber is that he sees most of the psychoanalytic studies of religion as based on what he calls "natural religion." In other words, there is a dichotomy between "natural" and "revealed" religion (Christianity) for Faber, and the psychoanalytic tradition has ignored examples of true religion. I find this distinction useful at times but question whether Faber is consistent throughout the book with the distinction and whether such a distinction is helpful in the psychology of religion.

Faber concludes the first half by observing that Erikson's expansion of the Freudian framework is best suited to the study of religion. He surveys Erikson's study of Luther, finds Erikson not antireligious and not rigid in his psychoanalytic perception of religion. Indeed Erikson views religion as a unique and irreducible sphere of life which is crucial to the development of identity in the adolescent and to the enrichment of later life. Erikson is also important to a neopsychoanalytic interpretation of religion because he is aware of the interplay between individual psychology and the wider culture.

The second half is built upon Faber's interpretation of Erikson. Faber proposes the audacious hypothesis that the psychoanalytic stages of development (oral, anal, etc.), as Erikson sees them, parallel particular types of religion. "The whole panorama," he writes, "of mankind's religious life, from the so-called primitives down to present-day man, therefore reflect particular phases of development which have been pointed out by analysts such as Freud and Erikson" (p. 146). He details this assertion by demonstrating, for example, that the oral stage centers on the child's relationship to the mother

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and the foundational issues of basic trust, emancipation, and security. Examples of "oral" religions are primitive religions (fertility cults, magic, and mythology), Hinduism, and religious humanism. These religions, like the oral phase, are concerned with unity and separation from the cosmos, mysticism, and the goodness of creation. Faber suggests that the current religious revival of Eastern cults is symptomatic of a yearning for maternal security and trust.

Lack of space prevents a complete discussion of Faber's hypothesis; however, several problems immediately present themselves. First, Faber has made a dangerous move from psychoanalysis, which is based on the study of individuals, to cultural analysis. Second, Faber, while referring to Erikson, does not detail the mechanisms by which one can say that particular ways of life (oral, anal, etc.) are communicated or embodied within the whole culture. He never makes clear if particular styles of child rearing cause the culture to develop in a certain fashion or if the culture is the matrix out of which a form of life is inevitable. It is my opinion that Erikson's approach to this problem is far more sophisticated than Faber's. Third, Faber does not go beyond the stages outlined by Freud. Why does he not follow Erikson and cover the entire life-span instead of stopping with adolescence? Fourth, historians of religion will be outraged at such simplifications as that Hinduism is an "oral" type of religion and that the Pharisees and Puritans were "anal." However illuminating the parallels may be for certain aspects of religious individuals, there are dangers in the path of anyone who extrapolates in such a manner. Nevertheless, Faber's book should be suggestive for the person well-versed in psychoanalysis and theology and for scholars concerned with the interaction of religion, culture, and personality.

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