
Reviews

Aaron Milavec, *Exploring Scriptural Sources*, Kansas City, Missouri: Sheed and Ward, 1994. pp.xix+202. ISBN: 1-55612-706-5. \$19.95.

Without any explicit reference to Michael Polanyi's thought, long time member of the Polanyi Society Aaron Milavec has developed an interesting application of Polanyi's epistemological principles. *Exploring Scriptural Sources* is a case study in pivotal issues in the Christian church today: authority in the church - the leadership of Peter and the foundations of the episcopacy, how Christians whether Roman Catholic or Protestant can study scripture and tradition together, the meaning of the priesthood of lay believers and ordination, Jesus's relation to women and their being ordained, the meaning of sacrament and of baptism, and the end of history and future life. Many of these issues are ones that have divided Roman Catholics from Protestants and Protestants from each other. One of the merits of Milavec's book is its demonstration of a method that lay adults can use regardless of their affiliation. Instead of suggesting an orthodox interpretation on these questions, Milavec has developed a heuristic approach that engages students in looking into scripture and historical theology and then making up their own minds on the issue and its application to the church today. This method seems to allow for a creative approach and rapprochement that respects the history of various traditions but opens up unifying understandings. For example, Milavec poses the question of how the conservative Peter became a daring innovator and leader of the church, but he does not propose the answer. His method focuses on the scriptural sources, introduces key interpretations in historical theology that have led to differences, and then puts the student in the role of a detective in trying to solve the puzzle.

While Milavec is in the Roman Catholic tradition, his scriptural and theological sources are very ecumenical

as well as the breadth of his contemporary scholarship. If one could find a fault, it might be that he is a daring Catholic theologian whose openness will challenge anyone content to rest on the dead letter of church teaching. His attitude and method are exemplary of what Polanyi saw in Christianity as a progressive enterprise leading to enlarged perspectives of knowledge and fresh vistas of Christian faith.

It is finally then the method of inquiry provided by Milavec that is so attractive and central in his contribution here. Any teacher, struggling to engage mature persons in theological inquiry about major yet practical problems of Christian belief, could learn much from Milavec's model of exploration. It is one that gives students the tools but allows them to discover answers for themselves. Again, there is in his method, the Polyanian sense of pursuing a good problem. The issues are set forth at their edge, on the frontier where 21st century Christians are going. Milavec does not assume that bishops, sacraments, ordination of women, and related issues will remain simply as they are now. Students who follow this method will find new possibilities, ones that will challenge and reform the status quo yet doing it from the background of scriptures and church traditions. It is striking that one cannot review this book by stating Milavec's conclusions and positions. The closest thing to a position is Milavec's taking the life and mission of the church as a serious object for inquiry. In doing this, he has selected ecclesiological issues rather than the usual questions of belief and unbelief, faith and doubt, or the meaning of life. By making possible a lively and heuristic approach to church teachings, Milavec makes Christian faith itself more interesting and challenging.

Richard Gelwick
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Aaron Milavec, *EasyGreek Case Studies: Soul Journeys for Inquiring Adults*, Computer Software, Easy Greek Software, 1994.

Although it is somewhat misleading and anachronistic to term it so, this is a review of the “electronic version” of *Exploring Scriptural Sources* which Richard Gelwick reviews on page 32. Aaron Milavec has put together and published a collection of eight computer-accessed case studies under the title “EasyGreek Case Studies: Soul Journeys for Inquiring Adults.” The cases are available singly for \$12 from EasyGreek Software, 3759 N. Berkley Circle, Cincinnati, OH 45236. This material is shareware: after using the first case for 90 minutes, you are expected to register (and pay \$12); you can try another case or order the other seven at a discount (all seven for \$50). You can order a sample case for \$5 in North America (to cover the cost of diskette, postage and handling) or \$8 outside North America if you indicate you saw this review in *TAD*. Soon you can download Case One from Compuserv or America Online (listed as CASE01.EXE or CASE01.ZIP) as a shareware product.

Milavec’s software is what is technically termed hypertext or hypermedia: it is digitized information which is divided into clusters or nodes that are electronically linked. It is, of course, electronically stored and instantly accessed, and this means that the ordering of material can be less linear than a printed book: you can, in short, use the menus to move around material in a variety of ways, although the author does have a rather clear sequence or progression of thought in mind for users and he controls the linkages to lead readers down the proper path through each case study. “Soul Journeys” ran flawlessly with WINDOWS (3.1) on my 486 DX after a relatively simple installation. There is some graphic and audio material used in the case presentations but it is limited. There is a Hebrew chant that is sung at intervals (it can be turned off); there are some illustrations and a shareware bird in flight animation cleverly used to unite the material and represent the user’s journey; but there is no quicktime video and many of the bells and whistles that are found on ultra sophisti-

cated multimedia software are not incorporated. The software thus does not really require some of the standard features of a multimedia machine (e.g., CD-ROM drive, motion card, multimedia capacity hard drive) yet it artfully embodies what integrated, interactive media is all about. No doubt, as we move deeper into electronic culture, we will see more electronically-accessed material such as Milavec’s case studies.

As Gelwick notes, what is especially interesting about Milavec’s work is the way in which he has thought through, in Polanyian terms, the project of educating adult Christians; further, this software indicates he has thought through how to take advantage of the interactive potential of the new electronic medium to accomplish his ends. What the electronic case studies are is heuristic devices or structures designed to provoke investigation and discovery. As Gelwick notes, the cases focus upon critical issues (authority, the role of tradition and innovation, the role of women, etc.); each case puts the resources of scriptural and historical studies at the disposal of the student interested in examining the issues. One of Milavec’s introductory screens indicates that each case is intended to produce “deep learning.” Clearly, Milavec understands some of the ways in which the electronic environment can be a user driven pedagogical vehicle which produces a high level engagement in problem solving. Polanyi often described the endeavor of the scientific researcher in this way. Polanyi vividly portrays the scientist’s effort at dwelling in a problem and coming up with a solution; the strongest sense in which Polanyi uses the term “personal knowledge” implies such serious engagement as well as commitment to the results of investigation. What Milavec does is embody this “discovery model” in the case study approach constructed in the electronic context where instant, random access is possible.

In this software, the issues embedded in a case study unfold as a series of questions to which the reader is invited to respond, often in writing. To think about questions, there are available, in pop up windows, supporting tools such as the relevant biblical text. Written reactions can be saved in a journal and later modified or

printed out. The whole investigative process is carefully staged with a warmup phase, sleuthing stage and a debriefing. There is even a “guardian angel” screen which pops up to prod the user if too much time is taken on preliminary work which may prove a digression, allowing the user not to get the overall point made by moving through the entire case. It requires two to two and a half hours to work carefully through a case. Working through can be an individual journey or it might be done with a group. In fact, one of the pop up menus offers advice on group use of the software. Some of the comments made on screens indicate that the software might be used in conjunction with other activities by a teacher who thoroughly knew the case. This is apparently how Milavec himself uses the software.

In sum, Milavec’s well designed electronic teaching tool is a creative and interesting effort to promote Christian education; it makes tangible in the new world of integrated, interactive media some important Polanyian themes regarding learning.

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Harwell Wells. “The Philosophical Michael Oakeshott”. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55:1 (January 1994): 129-145.

It was under the influence of the British Hegelian F.H.Bradley that Michael Oakeshott (1901-1990), in *Experience and its Modes* (1933), claimed that we abstract from the essential unity of experience various modes of understanding. In his later work, Oakeshott sought to ground modes of experience within a practice. In *Rationalism in Politics* (1962), he claimed that by counting only general rules as knowledge, rationalism forgets that technical knowledge is no more than an abstraction from a practice. In his excellent article, Harwell Wells claims that one of the influences which helped Oakeshott to formulate this conception was the early writings of Michael Polanyi. Oakeshott however took the claim that a practice cannot be wholly grasped by any set of explicit rules to an extreme by

claiming that technical knowledge has no meaningful existence. As Wells points out

Polanyi believed in two sorts of knowledge, but Oakeshott came to believe that there is only one type of real knowledge - practical knowledge (138).

Wells suggests that this extremism was inspired by a Neo-Bradleyian resistance to epistemological domination by the sciences. Although Polanyi, as far as I am aware, never made any direct reference to the work of Michael Oakeshott, it is clear that he would have regarded any attempt to undermine the value of theoretical activity as an attack upon our obligation to pursue the truth. Unlike Oakeshott, he did not regard our practices as a cultural given; he claimed that they need to be constantly reformed in the light of appeals to transcendent ideals.

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Lewis E. Hill and Eleanor T. von Ende. "Towards a Personal Knowledge of Economic History: Reflections on Our Intellectual Heritage from the Polanyi Brothers" *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 53:1 (January 1995): 17-27.

The authors suggest that Polanyi's post-critical philosophy of history had as its purpose “to justify and to authenticate the historical scholarship of his older brother, Karl Polanyi” (18). To make this case, the authors begin with a brief discussion of perspectives in Michael Polanyi's post-critical philosophy and historiography. They provide a reasonably good summary, although they confusingly conflate personal knowledge and tacit knowledge. Next the article discusses Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (1944) as a good example of the model of historiography proposed by his younger brother. Karl Polanyi's methodology embodies Michael's views insofar as he is an economic historian who “evokes his creative imagination to fuse all relevant facts into an integrated whole” (23). Karl's perspective is identified as a “long-run

perspective" which warns of "the danger of insisting that the true beginning of the history of our civilization coincided with the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. . ." (23). As the conclusion of this article makes clear, the exploration of the ideas of the Polanyi brothers is used here chiefly to argue against economic history strongly oriented to quantitative analysis and statistical verification of ideas. The authors associate the Polanyis with the "logic of discovery which produces new ideas and hypotheses" and not with what they regard as the second phase of scientific or historiographical methodology, namely the "logic of verification which tests the validity and usefulness of ideas and hypotheses in order to confirm them as true or to disprove them as false" (24).

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Polanyi Society Membership

Tradition and Discovery is distributed to members of the Polanyi Society. This periodical supercedes a newsletter and earlier mini-journal published (with some gaps) by the Polanyi Society since the mid seventies. The Polanyi Society has members in thirteen different countries though most live in North America and the United Kingdom. The Society includes those formerly affiliated with the Polanyi group centered in the United Kingdom which published *Convivium: The United Kingdom Review of Post-critical Thought*. There are normally two or three issues of *TAD* each year.

The regular annual membership rate for the Polanyi Society is \$20; the student rate is \$12. The membership cycle follows the academic year; subscriptions are due September 1 to Phil Mullins, Humanities, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, MO 64507,. Please make checks payable to the Polanyi Society. Dues can be paid by credit card by providing the following information: subscriber's name as it appears on the card, the card name, and the card number and expiration date. Changes of address and inquiries should be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to Mullins (e-mail: mullins@griffon.mwsc.edu; fax: USA 816-271-4574).

New members must provide the following subscription information: complete mailing address, telephone (work and home), institutional relationship, and e-mail address and/or fax number (if available). Institutional members should identify a department to contact for billing.

The Polanyi Society attempts to maintain a data base identifying persons interested in or working with Polanyi's philosophical writing. New members can contribute to this effort by writing a short description of their particular interests in Polanyi's work and any publications and /or theses/dissertations related to Polanyi's thought. Please provide complete bibliographic information. Those renewing membership are invited to include information on recent work.

Electronic Discussion Group

The Polanyi Society supports an electronic discussion group exploring implications of the thought of Michael Polanyi. For those with access to the INTERNET, send a message to "owner-polanyi@sbu.edu" to join the list or to request further information. Communications about the electronic discussion group may also be directed to John V. Apczynski, Department of Theology, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778-0012 PHONE: (716) 375-2298 FAX: (716) 375-2389.