



Volume

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more on
Language

Craig Gay's *Dialogue, Catalogue & Monologue: Personal, Impersonal & Depersonalizing Ways to Use Words** (2008) is published by Regent College Publishing. Eugene Peterson's *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers** (2008) is published by Eerdmans. Both writers cite the works of many others in their respective books, and one title that shows up prominently in both books is Walker Percy's *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do with the Other** (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975). Peterson commends this book by describing Percy's six novels, by means of which he has emerged as "America's Kierkegaard, using the language of parable and indirection to penetrate cultural stereotypes with Truth." The essays in *The Message in the Bottle* reflect on "the ways language works and the ways it doesn't work; the way language involves us in living truth and the way language seduces us to live lies." Both Gay and (to a lesser extent) Peterson interact with George Steiner's many books on language, especially *Real Presences** (Chicago, 1989), but also *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman** (Atheneum, 1967), and *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation** (Oxford, 1975). Both Gay and Peterson stress the priority of speech to the written word. Peterson recommends Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy's exploration of that theme in *Speech and Reality* (Argo Books, 1970), which (in Peterson's words) makes the case that "Language is inherently revelational and relational, a spoken exchange of lived reality between named persons, not an impersonal transfer of ideas or facts that can more conveniently and accurately be made with a book." The priority of the spoken word is also discussed in Walter J. Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word** (Routledge, 1982), and the essential *relationality* of language is a theme in Josef Pieper's *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power** (Ignatius, 1992), in which Pieper asserts that "Truth lives in dialogue, in discussion, in conversation." Ong's earlier book, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History** (Yale, 1967), examines some of the social and spiritual changes effected as the spoken word has been replaced by the printed word and by images.

The relationship between seeing and hearing (and thus between images and words) is discussed at length in Jacques Ellul's *The*

Part 1

- 1 **Introduction**
- 2 **Stewart Davenport**, on how nineteenth-century Christians separated the moral and practical aspects of economic life
- 3 **William T. Cavanaugh**, on how theology and economics are necessarily intertwined
- 4 **William T. Cavanaugh**, on how a larger understanding of the meaning of "freedom" would change our economic actions
- 5 **J. Matthew Bonzo and Michael R. Stevens**, on Wendell Berry's concern for the dislocating and fragmenting forces in modern life

Part 2

- 1 **Craig Gay**, on how language—specifically the spoken word—is central to our human experience
- 2 **Eugene Peterson**, on how Jesus' use of ambiguous language encouraged active spiritual engagement
- 3 **Barry Hankins**, on how the late Francis Schaeffer moved from being a defensive fundamentalist to a prophet of cultural engagement

*An asterisk means that the book is in print; if you wish to purchase it from our friends at Splintered Light Books, call 1.800.979.3310.

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*Humiliation of the Word** (Eerdmans, 1985). Ellul's masterful study of *Propaganda** (Vintage, 1965) had warned of the abuse of language to manipulate and destroy; in *Humiliation*, he laments "the rupture between the speaker and his words" and the "excess of talk devoid of meaning and veracity."

Craig Gay also cites Richard Mitchell's *Less than Words Can Say* (Little, Brown, 1979), a devastating critique of careless use of language, especially in official and bureaucratic documents. His chief targets are jargon, careless use of modifying words, and the use of passive verbs. "If you cannot examine your thoughts," Mitchell warns, "you have no choice but to think them, no matter how silly they may be." Finally, Wendell Berry's *Standing by Words: Essays** (North Point Press, 1983), is a loving plea to all (but especially poets) to treat our words with clarity of meaning and intent—which for Berry does not preclude the inevitability of mystery. This collection includes Berry's essays "Poetry and Marriage" and "Poetry and Place."

Other Works Mentioned

Stewart Davenport's *Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon: Northern Christians and Market Capitalism, 1815-1860** (2008) is published by the University of Chicago Press. William Cavanaugh's *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire** (2008) is published by Eerdmans. *Wendell Berry and the Cultivation of Life: A Reader's Guide** (2008), by J. Matthew Bonzo and Michael R. Stevens, is published by Brazos Press. Barry Hankins's *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America** (2007) is published by Eerdmans.

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