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Editorial: Theological Frameworks

Those of us steeped in the tradition of the western churches[1] share a common theological framework. This idea may seem strange, since most of the readers of *Themelios* no doubt regard the Reformation as the great theological divide that separates a theological system based on traditionalism from the biblically based theology of the Reformers. Certainly this writer agrees wholeheartedly that the Reformation was a tremendous return to the Scriptures. But when we discuss a framework of theology, we are looking at the basic structure of questions that theologians are trying to answer. Whatever the source material for the answers – tradition, reason, or the Bible – it is the same general questions which are put to us by the framework. Our framework in the west is one based on the structure of the Roman legal system applied to the Christian faith.

The basic concern was how sinful mankind could be made right with God. Drawing on Paul's explanation of justification, Tertullian developed a legal interpretation of the work of redemption that fitted in very well with the Roman mentality. It has been argued that the development of the Roman Catholic Church continued the same themes, extending the concept of Christianity as a legal system into all areas of the church's life. This is certainly true in the development of the sacrament of penance which had latent in it the concept of the indulgence.

Therefore the key theological question in the west, in so far as it concerned the individual believer, was: 'How can I be made right with God?' Answering this question has formed the major part of the theological enterprise. Justification became the key theme.

The answers provided to this basic human dilemma have been varied. We are familiar with the response of Augustine (picked up by Luther and Calvin) that justification is solely a result of God's grace. Reference has already been made to the medieval system of indulgences. Some of us may be aware of some theologians who pronounce us free of the need of justification, conveniently ignoring the universally felt need for forgiveness. But all these responses have one thing in common, they all deal with the subject of justification. Even those who deny its priority belie their argument by focusing on the issue. For western theology, justification remains the key theme.

A strong argument can be made for viewing the new approaches to the Bible in the same way. These theologies are also attempting an answer to the question of justification, even if their answers do not use familiar terms. For example, some theologies which focus on the poor and the oppressed give the impression that concern and, more importantly, action in this area is what makes a person right with God. If there is no visible response then the conclusion is that the person is unrighteous and unjustified before God.

However, despite the prominence that the issue of justification has had in western theology, it is not the only framework that has been used. The church in the eastern half of the Roman empire was developing its own framework. While 1054 is the accepted date of the division between the eastern church and the western church, in reality the drift apart is noticeable as early as the fifth century. The two halves of Christendom were developing along their own particular lines of thought. Augustine and John Chrysostom were contemporaries. Both were interpreters of Paul. Augustine drew out of Paul the theology of justification by grace. Chrysostom found in Paul directions for practical Christian living.

Chrysostom's emphasis is the one followed by the Eastern Orthodox Church. Their theological framework is one determined by the concept of the believer's union with Christ. This is the purpose of the incarnation. It is to restore the image of God in man and to mend the broken fellowship between God and man. While these purposes are not excluded by the western church's emphasis on justification, the point is that they are secondary in the west's theological framework. In the eastern church, the emphasis on union with Christ explains the centrality of worship, the hallmark of the church. Indeed, the name by which the eastern church prefers to be known is the Orthodox Church. They understand this name in a way that reflects their central emphasis, 'right (ortho) praise (doxology)'.[2]

The main point here is that while both the key points of the respective frameworks are biblical, indeed even Pauline, and certainly complementary, taken by themselves they lead to different dogmatic systems. John Chrysostom is honoured as one of the three chief theologians of the Orthodox Church. Augustine does not feature at all in the Eastern Orthodox theological honours list. The different theological framework has given rise to the criticism that the Orthodox Church is not biblical since it appears deficient in its doctrine of justification. For example, 'the most famous exposition of Orthodox dogma, that of John of Damascus (c. 700-50), does not even mention the idea of justification'.[3] However, the Orthodox claim that their church is the biblical church *par excellence*, pointing to the extensive use of direct quotations of Scripture in their liturgies and to the even more numerous use of biblical allusions.[4]

The purpose of this discussion is not to settle whether the east or the west is right. It is rather to demonstrate two alternative theological frameworks which, in asking different questions of the Bible, come to different theological emphases. It is important to note that both sets of questions are biblically legitimate. The analysis of the different frameworks shows what happens when a particular line of approach is allowed to dominate the theological framework. God's revealed truth is wider than either point of departure.

What does this mean for theological students? In the first place, we must learn to be aware of our theological framework. It should not be regarded as a given in the same way that God's revealed Word is a given. Each framework takes a part of the message and makes it the interpreting key for the whole message. Depending on what key is chosen, parts of the message are distorted or even ignored. And those of us who would like to 'accurately handle the word of truth' (2 Tim. 2:15) need to realize that there is more scope to that Word of truth than our theological framework may allow.

The answer is not to abandon all frameworks, for that is impossible. All of us operate in a conceptual framework derived from an understanding of our culture (here used to include the material and immaterial parts of culture). If we say we have no framework, we delude ourselves, for we will have substituted one inherited theological framework for another one, which, though undefined, is very real. Rather the answer is to acknowledge our framework and to try to understand its limitations. The different theological perspectives of the east and west help us to understand more of the Bible. That should be our goal.

We need to strive to be biblical theologians. Let us not be put into a straitjacket by our theological framework, but be free to see biblical insights that our framework overlooks. One way to do this is to let the Scriptures show us their own points of emphasis, rather than to read all Scripture through the sieve of a predetermined central point.

[1] The term 'western churches' is merely a convenient way to refer to the Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church. For the purpose of this editorial, they share an important common element.
[2] Western theologians normally understand the term to mean 'right opinion'; this difference in understanding reflects and illustrates the differing theological frameworks of east and west.
[3] Ernst Benz, *The Eastern Orthodox Church, Its Thought and Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), pp. 50-51.
[4] See Demetrios J. Constantelos, 'The Holy Scriptures in Greek Orthodox Worship: A Comparative and Statistical Study', *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 12 (1966), pp. 7-83.

Jim Stamoolis

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Story in the Old Testament

R. W. L. Moberly

Dr Moberly is lecturer in Old Testament at the University of Durham.

Introduction

The great acts of salvation in the Bible, the Exodus and Sinai covenant in the Old Testament, and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament, have been the subject of intense study in modern times. Given their centrality to the Bible and to Christian faith that is hardly surprising, indeed it is clearly desirable.

One fact about these acts of salvation, which has always been noted but usually rather taken for granted, is that they are presented in narrative, or story, form.[1] In the Old Testament the Exodus and Sinai covenant are part of one great narrative, Genesis – 2 Kings, which stretches from creation to the fall of Jerusalem. It is natural that this narrative, often designated 'salvation-history', has been regarded as the main literary form in the Bible and the central means of revelation. Usually significance has been attached to this in two main ways. First, it has been argued that because the narrative is historical in appearance it is appropriate to study it in the way that other ancient historical narratives are studied. This has led to historical analyses both of the events recorded in the text and also of the sources, transmission and composition of the text itself. Secondly there have been numerous theological arguments about the importance of history as the sphere in which God truly acts and reveals himself.

One of the most interesting and significant developments in recent biblical study has been a growth in literary approaches to the biblical text. Instead of asking predominantly historical questions such as 'Did this event actually take place?' or 'What sources did the writer have?', a growing number of scholars are asking literary questions such as 'What does this story mean?' or 'How is it that the author achieves such a memorable and moving portrayal?' Such literary questions, while not entirely novel, have tended to be neglected previously;[2] yet they point to areas of enquiry that are clearly important for our understanding. In the Old Testament in particular, whose narratives down the ages have captured the imagination of artists, poets, and musicians as well as ordinary believers, a literary approach may offer some deliverance from the predominance of an historical study that has all too often seemed impervious to the reasons why these ancient stories have actually mattered to people. As such a literary approach is much to be welcomed.

It should be noted at the outset, however, that talk of a 'literary approach' may be potentially misleading for at least two reasons. On the one hand, the term 'literary approach' is in fact an umbrella-term that covers a vast number of different, and often mutually conflicting, approaches, which it is impossible even briefly to describe here. Since helpful surveys are available elsewhere,[3] the present discussion will concentrate on just one area of literary study, that which has attached particular importance to the story form of so much of the Old Testament. On the other hand, one reason why many literary studies are illuminating is because they are simultaneously theological studies. Given the thoroughly theological nature of most Old Testament narratives, it is hardly surprising that an approach which concentrates on what the text is saying and the way it says it should throw light upon its theological perspectives and assumptions. This means not only that a literary interest in story will often overlap with a theological approach to the text, but also that a sensitive appreciation of the characteristic assumptions and paradoxes of theology will often be needed by the literary critic.

With these two qualifications in mind, this paper will concentrate on three areas of enquiry. First, the current debate about the importance of story for theology; secondly, the ways in which approaching the biblical text as story can prove illuminating; thirdly, the question of truth in relation to literary and historical approaches to the biblical text.

The importance of story for theology

On a general theological level, much has been made of the importance of story or narrative as a peculiarly appropriate vehicle for conveying theological truth.[4] The basic reason for attaching importance to theology in story form is the fact that a story is so widely accessible to young and old, to educated and uneducated alike. Everybody likes a good story; and stories linger in the mind long after other things are forgotten. To say this is, of course, not to say anything new but rather to state the obvious. Followers of Jesus, whose favoured means of teaching was the parable, should find nothing surprising in the idea that stories are a particularly effective means of communicating theological truth.

Generally speaking, a recognition of the value of story can be a valuable corrective to the dominant tendency in western theology to abstract and to analyze. Since so much modern theology rapidly becomes technical and abstract, it is not surprising that in the current enthusiasm for story it has been suggested that some of the problematic debates of modern theology may owe some of their problems precisely to the exclusively abstract form of the debate. To recast some of the propositions of, say, Christology in narrative form might, it is proposed, help shed fresh light on old controversies.[5]

Much theology of story is essentially an attempt to reflect seriously upon the fact that the foundations of biblical faith are given in narrative form: what is the value and significance of this particular form of communication, rather than any other? Or, in other words, what is the relationship between the content of a passage and the form in which it is pre-

sented?[6] Once this is grasped, one can readily see both that story is essential to Christian theology, and that storytelling must only be a part of theologizing and cannot be the whole. For both Old Testament and New Testament contain much material that is not narrative; law, poetry, proverb, and prophetic oracle in the Old Testament, and theological letters and apocalypse in the New Testament. In the New Testament in particular this extra material provides the indispensable reflection on the story of Jesus that enables the construction of a coherent and rational faith around the story, and the effective application of its challenge to a wide variety of situations. Although, for example, Luke 18:9-14 provides a brilliant picture in just a few words of what justification by faith means (note the technical sense in which 'justified' is used in verse 14), there is still a need for Paul's systematic analysis of justification in Romans if there is to be a coherent doctrine.[7]

The fact that much non-narrative material is given in its own particular forms, and not in others, must be respected and its implications thought through no less so than with narrative. Because the normative content of Christian faith in the Bible is given in a variety of different forms, it is reasonable to expect that Christian theologizing should likewise adopt a variety of forms. The fact that from time to time somewhat extravagant claims may be made for one particular form, such as story, shows little more than that the theological world, like most other departments of life, has its fads and its fashions.

Reading Old Testament narrative as story

Given the need to take seriously the story form of much of the Old Testament, that is to try to grasp more of the meaning and significance of the text through studying the relationship between content and form, the value of the undertaking emerges in a variety of ways.

First, an interest in story will alert the reader to elements in a text that are characteristic of a story – plot, foreshadowing, irony, echo, repetition, contrast, tension, resolution, etc; elements which are clearly present in many of the most famous and memorable Old Testament stories. Interest in story means that the scholar directs his attention to the text as meaningful in itself and looks for those elements that make a text coherent and interesting. This makes a welcome change from the older style of literary criticism, which was in fact source-criticism, when 'the literary critic . . . approaches the text with, so to say, a dissecting knife in his hand, looks out particularly for breaks in continuity, or missing links in the train of thought'.[8] There is naturally a certain tension between these different approaches to a text, which raises interesting questions of method.[9] For present purposes, the important point is the positive approach to the text which interest in story encourages. My own study of Exodus 32-34, *At the Mountain of God*, shows how a text considered a 'hodgepodge' by traditional source criticism may in fact have a coherence and integrity previously unsuspected. David Clines' study of Esther, *The Esther Scroll*,[10] brilliantly illustrates not only how a text can be brought to life, but also how the weight of scholarly analysis need no longer give such priority to questions of literary growth and development, even though these are still given due space.

Secondly, there is the fact that some truths can best, or perhaps only, be conveyed in story form because of the importance of symbol and image in human understanding.[11] To assume, as is often done, that the content of any story can be translated without loss into discursive analysis ('What this story means is that . . .') is to make an unacceptable separation of form and content. This is not to say that the medium is the message. It is to say that sometimes the message cannot be entirely separated from the medium. For example, stories such as the creation of woman (Gen. 2:18-25), the burning bush (Ex. 3:1-6), or Elijah's encounter with God at Horeb (1 Kgs. 19:1-18) have a depth and appeal which depends in part upon their use of symbolism (e.g. rib, fire that does not destroy, 'still, small voice'). It is not easy to expound the stories in abstract form ('What this story means is that . . .') without saying something very much less interesting and memorable than the story itself. This does not mean that one cannot comment intelligently upon the meaning of a story. It does mean that the interpreter's comments should never become a substitute for the story, and their purpose should be to send one back to the story with fresh insight so that it is the story itself, better understood, that one if left with as the vehicle of truth and meaning.[12]

Thirdly, a story may communicate through what it does not say as well as through what it does say. A meaningful silence can be an unparalleled means of creating atmosphere and interest. The story of the Ascension of Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:1-18) is a good example. Standard commentaries leave its memorable impact largely unexamined and unexplained.[13] It is the silence in the story, that which is left unsaid, which, I suggest, provides the key. First, everyone involved, Elijah, Elisha, and the sons of the prophets at both Bethel and Jericho, know that Elijah is to be taken away (verses 1-5); yet nothing is said about how they know. Secondly, why does Elijah try to put Elisha off three times (verses 2, 4, 6)? The story implies both that Elijah was right to try and that Elisha was right to resist; yet no explanation is given. Thirdly, why is Elijah sent in stages to Bethel, to Jericho, and to the Jordan? Did he know where he was going, or was it only revealed to him step by step? And if so, why? There is no explanation. Fourthly, why should Elijah have to cross the Jordan and re-enact one of the most symbolic moments in Israel's history, the crossing into the promised land under Joshua? Again, nothing is explained. Fifthly, why is Elijah taken up to heaven east of the Jordan, outside the promised land? Because he had failed? Because his own origins were from Gilead, east of Jordan? Because this is the same region where Moses died? Again, silence.

The result of leaving so much unexplained is at least twofold. First, a sense of background depth and mystery is conveyed which fascinates and involves the reader.[14] Secondly, the story remarkably conveys a sense of the invisible presence of God. The sense of divine purpose and guidance is almost overwhelming, yet God himself remains constantly as it were offstage (the only partial exception being in verse 11). God is strongly present, and yet remains hidden. It is through a masterful use of the possibilities of narrative presentation that the writer has conveyed these effects.

The fourth point, which is related to the previous point and yet distinct, is that a story can communicate through assumption and suggestion. For example, the story of Joseph (Gen.

37-50) is well-known as an illustration of the sovereignty of God, a point indeed brought out explicitly in the text (Gen. 45:5-8, 50:20). One primary way in which this is conveyed is through those things which the writer takes for granted, for thereby the reader, who naturally identifies with what is happening in the story, is likewise invited to take the same things for granted too. For example, God's right and power to send famine (41:25-32), to determine the future (41:32), and to allow his faithful servant to suffer in various ways (37:28, 39:20, 40:23) are simply assumed. They are not in any way allowed to be problems ('How could God do such a thing?'). Rather, the story takes it as self-evidently true that this is how God is and how he works. The reader who imaginatively enters into the story will thereby absorb these same assumptions himself. Such a means of communication can be a valuable counterpart to explicit declaration.

Fifthly, a story may deliberately leave something vital to its understanding unsaid. This means that the reader is obliged to use his imagination and intelligence if he is to understand the story properly. On the one hand, this means that the meaning of the story, once so grasped, will be more deeply appropriated; on the other hand, this makes for a greater likelihood that the story will be only partially understood, or even misunderstood.

A notable example is Genesis 3. Historically, this has been of enormous importance in Christian theology; and indeed its context at the beginning of Genesis clearly indicates that it is of fundamental significance. Yet its exact meaning is a matter of considerable debate,[15] precisely because the story is deliberately somewhat elusive and enigmatic. The central difficulty is that God's clear statement of a death penalty for transgressing his prohibition and eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17) is apparently not fulfilled (3:6-7). The interpretation of such a fundamental discrepancy between what God says and what he does will largely determine the readings of the story as a whole.

The majority of modern commentators are agreed that God simply did not do what he had said,[16] and explain this as showing either a change of mind or else (more theologically) God's sovereign freedom even over what he himself has said. Coupled with this is usually a tendency to downplay the traditional Christian interpretation of the story as the archetypal story of human sin and divine judgment as being a misunderstanding of the nature of the story.

But what if the narrator expected his reader to take for granted that it was inconceivable that God should prove false in such a way, and that therefore the apparent incongruence between what God says and what happens is to provoke the reader into a deeper understanding of what is going on? On such an approach the threatened death is to be found in the man and woman hiding in fear from God (3:8-10) and in the shifting of blame (implying lack of love and trust) from man to woman to serpent (3:11-13). That is, death is reinterpreted in terms of something in the inner life of man, a fear and distrust which separates him from God and from his fellow (i.e. 'spiritual death'). The writer is thus showing that the real consequence of disobedience to God lies not in being suddenly struck down, which might naturally be expected but clearly does not in fact happen in life generally, but in a process of inner fear and alienation which destroys the love and trust that matter most in life.

It is not possible to prove that this second interpretation rather than the first is correct, for by the very nature of the story proof is not a possible option. The test must ultimately be whether an interpretation rings true and makes more sense than any other. Whatever conclusion one does come to, it is clear that one can only come to it by thinking intelligently and imaginatively to resolve what the story leaves as such unresolved.

Sixthly, a story can provide a pattern or framework for understanding life and experience. For many, life and existence on the purely historical plane may appear random or chaotic, without purpose, meaning or dignity. A story can so arrange things that pattern and meaning can be seen. The biblical story purports to be a true story. This means that as the reader recognizes in it the patterns of how God works, he can then find pattern and meaning for his own life and experience of God.

For example, life for the Jews in exile and the diaspora when they were deprived of all those things that had previously been central to their faith and identity – land, temple, king – must easily have appeared hopeless and meaningless. Stories such as those of Daniel and Esther do more than just show how life under God can be a reality in such situations. The way the stories show, both explicitly and implicitly, that God is in control and that what people do does matter makes the stories a powerful medium for creating trust in the wisdom of God and in the meaning and significance of life even in difficult circumstances.

Finally, a story can act as a mirror to help people see themselves more clearly. That is, people naturally identify with the central figure in a story. The central figure can therefore be portrayed in such a way as to represent some characteristic of the story's intended audience; and when the audience recognize what is desirable or undesirable in the story they can then be led to recognize the same feature in themselves.

The most famous example in the Old Testament is Nathan's parable to David (2 Sam. 12:1-7a). Presumably, had Nathan simply related straightforwardly to David what he had done (2 Sam. 11), David would have been unmoved. But through the use of a story to which David instinctively responds in moral and emotional involvement, Nathan prepares the way for the irresistible punchline 'You are the man', which has the necessary effect on the king (12:13). Interestingly, a similar technique is used again on David by Joab and the woman of Tekoa, again with effect (2 Sam. 14).

It is in such a way that the book of Jonah is also probably to be understood.[17] The book probably dates from a time when Israel was inclined to be too inward-looking and to adopt a negative and judgmental attitude towards other nations who did not know God in the way they did. Jonah is therefore made to embody such attitudes in such a way as to show how foolish and unacceptable they are.

The story creates interest and involvement for the reader by the use of a drily humorous 'larger than life' style of telling. The most unlikely prophet (he flees from Yahweh, 1:3) is sent to the largest city imaginable (three days' journey in breadth, 3:3), which happens to be the capital of the Assyrians, notoriously the most fearsome of ancient Near Eastern

peoples (cf. Isa. 10:5-14, Nah. 3). When he finally gets there, this unlikely prophet has only to start preaching and he has the greatest success imaginable – *everyone* repents (3:5-6), so much so that even animals have to join in (3:7-8). But how does Jonah react to this unparalleled success? Is he pleased? Is he grateful? Because God spares Nineveh (3:10), Jonah sulks (4:1-5) and complains to God that he is too merciful (4:2)! That mercy which God had shown to Israel (Ex. 34:6f) and which Israel celebrated in its worship (e.g. Ps. 103:8) should not be shown to pagan foreigners.

But what are pagan foreigners actually like? The first chapter of the book has already devoted considerable space to the pagan mariners who took Jonah on board. They were seen to be caring and responsible people who, though not themselves Hebrews, were fully prepared to acknowledge and worship Yahweh (1:14-16). The pagan sailors are more attractive figures than Jonah. As for the Assyrians, their wickedness is emphasized, yet even they were prepared, when challenged, to turn to God and repent.

The reader is now ready for the final section (4:6-11) in which God exposes how narrow and petty Jonah is and delivers the unanswerable punchline (4:10-11) in which God's care for all has to be assented to by the reader, for God's question can be answered in no other way. The story's subtle blend of humour and seriousness involves the reader in such a way that when Jonah's bigotry is condemned, so is the bigotry of the reader: 'You are the man'.

These seven points do not exhaust the significance of story, but illustrate some of the main ways in which it can illuminate the reading of the Old Testament text. In general, one may say that the value of reading biblical narrative as story lies in recognizing and appreciating material that appeals to the imaginative and intuitive side of the human mind, where symbolism, suggestion, stimulation and enjoyment may be of greater importance than argument, appeal and explicit proclamation. It is perhaps particularly important for evangelicals, whose theology has traditionally appealed largely to man's reason and will, to remember that there are large areas of man's mind and personality that are left untouched by such an appeal.[18] It is a strength of the Bible with its many stories that it recognizes the many different ways in which theological truth may be communicated. An approach to faith and life which bases itself upon the Bible should hardly do less.

Story, history and truth

In this final section it will be helpful briefly to consider the question of truth with regard to the stories of the Old Testament. In modern Old Testament study the dominant concern has always been largely historical. One assumption that has been central to this is that questions of history are important for theological truth. The revelation of God has been a revelation in history, and if one denies the historical content of the traditions of Israel one thereby denies the theological meaning attributed to the traditions, or at least one risks reducing theology to a kind of gnosticism.[19] How then does the current interest in story relate to this?

This question may be approached through noting the tendency evident in some recent literary studies not simply to be disinterested in historical questions,[20] but also to suggest that the literary character of the biblical text shows that only a minimal historical content is present anyway. Robert Alter, for example, whose brilliant *The Art of Biblical Narrative*[21] is the most stimulating and suggestive of recent literary studies, suggests that 'prose fiction' is the best general rubric for classifying biblical narrative. Alter does not intend 'fiction' to be pejorative. It is simply that many of the literary features of biblical narrative show the material to be such that it does not fit within the category of historiography as we recognize it. Stories may be based on actual historical occurrences, but their presentation has been shaped by what Alter calls the 'fictional imagination'. Overall, however, Alter gives the impression that biblical narratives have relatively little to offer the historian.

Such a use of 'fiction', which is not uncommon, clearly requires examination, if only for the reason that fiction is often held to be the opposite of fact and truth; and so to describe a biblical narrative as fictional may seem to be saying that it is untrue. Two preliminary points may usefully be made.

First, it is clearly important that 'fiction' should be properly defined and not used ambiguously. Although fiction has the general and popular meaning of an untruth or fabrication, it also has the specific literary meaning of a work of imagination. In such imaginative writing appeal to historical fact may be quite irrelevant to the determination of its value or truth, which must be established or denied on other grounds. It is clearly in this latter sense that Alter is using the term.

Secondly, there is no intrinsic reason, generally speaking, why a narrative should not be both historically accurate and well told as a story. It is vital in this sort of discussion to avoid unnecessary polarization and creating a false 'either – or' dichotomy, when it may be a matter of 'both – and'. Nonetheless the fact that narrative might in principle be both accurate history and effective literature does not mean that any given narrative actually is, still less that all Old Testament narratives are. There is a wide variety of Old Testament narratives which resist neat categorization in terms of literature and history.[22] In the story of the fall of Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 25) there is a maximum of history and a minimum of literary art or theological development, while in the story of the Flood (Gen. 6-9) the opposite is the case.[23] Patient analysis of each case on its merits rather than sweeping generalizations is what is needed.

Rather than trying to discuss in general which elements in a story are likely to be literary in origin and which are likely to be historical – a huge undertaking – it will be helpful to focus instead on an underlying issue, that is what constitutes truth in a narrative. For the categorization of biblical narrative as fiction even in the technical sense does seem to stand in a certain tension with the traditional emphasis upon the importance of historical content in biblical narrative, and so raises the question of the basis upon which their theological meaning rests.

The central problem, in my judgment, is to do with the relationship between truth and history. Despite the admitted importance of the general historical reliability of the Old Testament, it may properly be asked whether sometimes the relationship of truth and historicity has not been conceived somewhat too narrowly, so that the truth of a narrative has been made to depend too exclusively upon the historicity of

its content. Any narrow equation of truth with historicity would seem to owe more to the influence of the rather limited horizons of enlightenment rationalism than to the tenets of historic Christian theology. It is my impression, though I cannot justify it here,[24] that the rather narrow equation of truth with historicity was first made by the rationalists who argued of certain Old Testament narratives, 'This is not historical, and therefore it is not true'. This not unnaturally provoked a response along the lines of 'It is true (because of the conviction of faith), and therefore it must be historical'. The great emphasis so often attached, especially in the English-speaking world, to questions of history, sometimes gives the impression of being part of a tradition of apologetic defence of the Bible to such criticism. But the defence too readily accepted the terms in which the criticism was couched, rather than insisting that, important as history is for the Old Testament, history is but one factor among several that must be weighed in a consideration of whether and in what sense a story may be true.

It is worth remembering that, prior to the rise of modern thought when the historicity of biblical stories was generally assumed and was rarely a point at issue, the significance of historicity played a small role in most Christian and Jewish use of the Old Testament. What made the Old Testament valuable, or what made it problematic, were moral, theological, and philosophical considerations. At the Reformation, although the 'plain sense' of the text was given greater weight, historicity as such still had only limited significance. It is well known that Luther evaluated biblical books by the degree to which they bore witness to Christ – a strictly theological criterion. Luther no doubt did not deny the historicity of Esther, but that did not prevent him from considering the book worthless for the Christian on religious and moral grounds.[25]

If it be accepted that the narrow equation of truth with historicity is in fact a departure from historic Christian theology under the influence of rationalist criticism, then it is clear that it needs to be modified. To say this is not to deny the importance of history. It is simply to qualify its importance, and insist that other factors, theological, moral, philosophical and imaginative, be counted along with it.

The breadth of the concept of truth may perhaps be further appreciated through a consideration of the novels, songs, plays and films of our modern culture. What makes most works valuable and gives them their appeal (in their various ways) is surely more than anything else the extent to which they succeed in being true, that is true to life in the sense of acutely depicting and interpreting the human situation and engaging with fundamental values. The interest of, say, David Lean's film of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* hardly lies in the accuracy of its portrayal of the history of the Russian Revolution; rather it is the struggle of a man for freedom, truth and dignity both against the force of political power and against the tensions within himself, both of which problems are acutely posed by the upheavals of the Russian Revolution. The same sort of thing could probably also be said, mutatis mutandis, about the appeal of, say, the songs of Paul Simon or Bob Dylan.

By contrast, many explicitly Christian novels, songs, plays and films have had limited appeal less because of the unacceptability of a Christian perspective in itself, than because they have been seen as ultimately superficial; they have given answers too quickly without sufficiently probing the reality of God and of human life (something which is never true of biblical narrative). That is, in an important sense their truth has not been sufficiently true. What is probably the most widely read modern Christian writing, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*[26] surely owes much of its appeal not just to the fact that it is a good story well told, but because it also searchingly explores the fundamental ambiguities of power and death. Its Christian values of grace, mercy and hope which confront and overcome evil are clearly portrayed, yet in such a way that they enhance rather than trivialize the story's seriousness.

Two things, therefore, may be said in conclusion. First, in our modern culture we easily and naturally apply the concept of truth widely and flexibly. We recognize without difficulty when a writing is intended as a work of fiction,[27] that is a piece of imaginative writing, and judge it accordingly. We often find that serious fiction contains and conveys important truths. It is unnecessary and wrong when we turn to the Old Testament to abandon all such understanding and insist more narrowly that historicity is the indispensable condition for truth. Of course, questions of historicity do matter in the Old Testament, and there is the difficulty that we are not part of the culture in which the Old Testament was written and so do not share the assumptions and conventions that would have been widely held then. This should make for a proper caution in assigning literary genres and in judging whether or not writings were intended to be historical or to be imaginative, or varying degrees of both. If an Old Testament writing is judged to be historical, or even partially historical, in intention, then its truth will indeed depend, in whole or in part, upon the historical reliability of its content, and the investigation and establishment of this is the proper concern of the interpreter. But if it be decided that, for example, Jonah is a parable-like composition, which tells an imaginative (and unhistorical) story in order to make a moral and theological point, then it should be seen that this neither detracts from the truth of the book, for its truth would be of the same sort as that in the parables of Jesus, nor does it imply that therefore history is unimportant for the Old Testament as a whole, for each writing must be judged according to its own characteristics.

Secondly, it is important again to be reminded that the truth for which the Old Testament has always been valued is not simply truth with regard to what happened in history, but truth with regard to its deep understanding of the paradoxical character of God and the paradoxical nature and situation of man. Readers constantly sense depth in Old Testament narratives, and this is usually an instinctive recognition of the way many stories transcend their original Israelite context and have a meaning and relevance for the 'human situation' of all periods. Usually readers do not bother to ask how it is that the stories achieve this effect, and there is little reason why the ordinary reader should. Nonetheless it is a legitimate question to ask, and the current literary interest in Old Testament narratives as story is a contribution towards the answer.

[1] It should be noted that the use of the term 'story' is quite neutral with regard to whether or not any story in question is historical or not. Although in popular parlance 'story' may often mean a tale without real foundation, that is not the meaning in scholarly discussion where the term simply means a consecutive narrative text without prejudice to the nature of its content.

[2] In, for example, the important and influential work of M. Noth, one looks in vain for any such literary appreciation of the narrative texts he discusses.

[3] For an excellent summary survey, see R. J. Coggins, 'The Literary Approach to the Bible', *Exp.T.* 96 (1984), pp. 9-14. For a fuller discussion see J. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (London: DLT, 1984). Barton relates newer methods of study to more traditional methods, gives particular attention to structuralism, and helpfully sets the whole debate against a wider background of modern literary criticism.

[4] See e.g. M. Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982); J. Goldingay, 'Interpreting Scripture (Pt. 2)', *Anvil* 1 (1984), pp. 261-270.

[5] See A. Harvey, 'Christian Propositions and Christian Stories' in A. Harvey (ed.), *God Incarnate: Story and Belief* (London: SPCK, 1981), pp. 1-13.

[6] As an illustration of the relationship between form and content, one might compare what is said about the worship of Yahweh in his official sanctuary in Deuteronomy 12 and Psalm 84. Because Deuteronomy 12 is in a law code, part of the message conveyed is that worship is a duty; whereas in a song such as Psalm 84 the emphasis is upon worship as a delight.

[7] One may compare the comment of R. Lischer, 'The effectiveness of Martin Luther King as a preacher and agent of social change lay not in his ability to tell a story but in his incisive analysis of the situation in America and his prophetic call to justice. In his style of oratory he did not desert the black tradition [sc. of biblical storytelling], but the content and structure of his sermons are not organized around Gospel narratives but gospel principles' ('The Limits of Story', *Interpretation* 38 (1984), p. 35).

[8] So K. Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition* (London: A. & C. Black, 1969), p. 69.

[9] For a discussion, see my *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34*, JSOTS 22 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), ch. 1.

[10] *The Esther Scroll: The Story of the Story* JSOTS 30 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984).

[11] I would like to add 'myth' also, but modern debate has so muddied the waters that clear and constructive use of the term becomes extremely difficult. See, however, my brief comments as to how one can speak of the truth of myth in 'God Incarnate: Some Reflections from an Old Testament Perspective', *Churchman* 98 (1984), pp. 49-51. See also the important survey of the growing appreciation of the significance of myth in H. G. Reventlow, *Problems of Old Testament Theology in the Twentieth Century* (London: SCM, 1985), pp. 154-167.

[12] The symbolic appeal of the burning bush is well illustrated by the fact that the 7-branch candlestick (menorah), which was part of the tabernacle and temple furnishings, and which became the symbol of Judaism, is probably a stylized representation of the burning bush (see J. D. Levenson, *Sinai & Zion* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), p. 20).

[13] See, for example, J. Gray, *1 and 2 Kings*^{3} (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 472-7, G. H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, vol. II (Grand Rapids & London: Eerdmans & Marshall, 1984), pp. 381-88. Jones' treatment is considerably more helpful than that of Gray, but is still incomplete.

[14] See also the famous discussion of Genesis 22 in E. Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton, 1953), ch. 1.

[15] See e.g. C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (London: SPCK, 1984), pp. 178-278.

[16] See e.g. C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 225.

[17] On Jonah, see e.g. L. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 175ff; B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM, 1979), pp. 417-27.

[18] One may note in this context the problems and challenge that the charismatic movement has posed to much mainstream Christianity, because of institutional Christianity's almost inherent suspicion of 'enthusiasm'. The charismatic appeal to the emotional side of human personality has found wide acceptance among many who rightly felt that emotional expression and involvement in worship had been unduly neglected or suppressed.

There is then, of course, the danger of the pendulum swinging too far, with the emergence of a style of Christianity that is unhealthily based upon emotional experience to the neglect of rational thought and a discipline of the will. It is only when a right balance between reason, conscience, imagination and emotion is maintained that a truly biblical faith will be seen.

[19] For a helpful statement and discussion of this position, see G. J. Wenham, 'History and the Old Testament' in C. Brown (ed.), *History, Criticism & Faith* (Leicester: IVP, 1976), pp. 13-73.

[20] Not untypical is a statement such as 'The question of historicity is not addressed in this book since it is outside the range of my present interests' in P. D. Miscall, *The Workings of Old Testament Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 8.

[21] *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London & Sydney: G. Allen & Unwin, 1981).

[22] One may compare the comment of R. E. Friedman, 'The contemporary analyst wants to categorize this [sc. biblical] corpus as history or literature; but it does not fit our categories, precisely because it is older than the formation of these categories' ('The Prophet and the Historian: The Acquisition of Historical Information from Literary Sources', in R. E. Friedman (ed.), *The Poet and the Historian*, Harvard Semitic Studies 26 (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983), p. 4).

[23] For observations on the varying relationship of biblical narrative to history, see also J. Barr, 'Story and History in Biblical Theology' in his *Explorations in Theology 7* (London: SCM, 1980), p. 8 (reprinted from *Journal of Religion* 56 (1976), pp. 1-17).

[24] For an important study of some of the intellectual assumptions prevalent during the rise of modern biblical criticism, see H. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1974).

[25] Luther's comment is widely quoted in introductions to works on Esther. See e.g. J. Baldwin, *Esther* (Leicester: IVP, 1984), pp. 51f.

[26] For criticism and interpretation of *The Lord of the Rings*, see esp. H. Carpenter (ed.), *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981).

[27] This is not, of course, invariably true. For example, many a reader of C. S. Lewis' *Letters to Malcolm* will have supposed that they are part of a genuine correspondence without realizing that the correspondence was simply a literary form adopted by Lewis as a (for him) more appropriate (because less explicitly didactic) vehicle for a treatise on prayer.

Humility and commitment: an approach to modern hermeneutics

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Hermeneutics is known variously as an art or as a science. Its subject-matter is said to be interpretation or understanding. Regardless of the formal definition, hermeneutics is the study of how we come to know what a text means. Nowadays this study can be either descriptive – how understanding is possible – or prescriptive – what we should do in order to understand a text.

This article has a twofold purpose. On the one hand it seeks to set the scene of some recent developments in philosophical hermeneutics. But it will also do so in the light of the more traditional role of hermeneutics, viz. to provide principles on how to arrive at the correct meaning of the text.

All too often the newcomer to the study of hermeneutics finds himself in a bewildering forest of terms which tend to obfuscate rather than clarify. If he can see his way clear to the intended debating points he may either (a) wonder how anyone can ever understand any text, given the enormous theoretical barriers, or (b) wonder how anyone could ever miss the meaning of any text, given the remarkable faculties we have for interpretation.

But surely both reactions should be unwarranted. Understanding needs to be based on careful and cautious interpretation. Yet apart from a presumption that the true meaning of a text can be derived, at least in very close approximation, it would be pointless even to undertake such an endeavour. Thus I have placed this article under the twin headings of humility and commitment. Humility is called for by the interpreter's awareness that final truth may not always be in his grasp. But commitment signifies that the interpreter must never give up in his quest to find the truth.

Finding a gate

Although hermeneutics is applicable in all fields of interpretation, it has come to special prominence with regard to the Bible. Thus from this point on, I shall focus on biblical hermeneutics. But it is impossible to do so without making use of other, perhaps at times simpler, arenas where the struggle for interpretation takes place.

Apart from all spiritual significance, what makes the Bible an especially interesting case in point for hermeneutics is that the biblical world is simply not our own. Reading a newspaper, a novel, or a letter from a friend, are all good examples of the application of hermeneutical processes. But usually for those items we can presuppose a great amount of cultural overlap. To interpret the Bible we need to bridge a much larger gap occasioned by one or more of the following distinctives: language, geography, history, life-style, attitudes, and others. These considerations establish a distance between us and the people of the Bible which compounds the difficulty of establishing what they were trying to say.

Before going too far in this discussion, an important word needs to be said about the Holy Spirit and his role in our understanding of the Bible. The sentence at the end of the previous paragraph makes it sound as though the Bible is a purely human form of communication. That is of course not true; the Bible is the inspired Word of God. And Jesus has promised the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth (Jn. 14:26; 16:13). The Christian interpreter ought never to proceed without relying in both mind and spirit on God's gracious gift of illumination.

Nonetheless, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer (undeniable though it is) does not provide a short cut through the hermeneutical process. The obvious counter-example to any such presumption is found in the fact that Christians who are equally committed to the discovery of truth disagree with each other. But the Holy Spirit does not teach different truths to such believers. Apparently it is possible to (at least claim to) rely on the Holy Spirit alone and not arrive at truth.

Consequently it is best to say something along the line that the Holy Spirit's work of disclosure is not entirely divorced from the human task of interpretation. Far be it from us to ever limit God in what he wants to reveal to an individual, but for purposes of usual Bible interpretation, it seems most appropriate to place the Holy Spirit's work of illumination in tandem with the injunction for us to study God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15).

Thus we must return to our original question of how to bridge the gap between the biblical world and ours, given the cultural differences. Where do we start? We can look at both sides of this interchange without initiating much progress. On the one side, we can analyse biblical culture and learn all about the differences and similarities to ours. Or we can look at the other side, namely our own, to make similar discoveries. Then we can either marvel or worry about the possibility of ever crossing the ages in conversation.

It is this last-mentioned metaphor of a conversation that perhaps provides the passageway into this entire process. The hermeneutical project is an interchange between the text and its author on the one side and the reader on the other. This interchange can be pictured as a conversation between two partners. And a dialogue needs to be understood as a whole. One cannot ignore each partner's point of view and contribution, but it is the interchange that motivates and propels the discussion onward. This would be true even in a purely didactic setting where one partner clearly has the ascendancy over the other. Thus we begin with the fact of interpretation. It is a given that the reader and the text stand in relation to each other.[1] What remains then is not to work our way from one end to the other, but to explore each side of the relationship.

The storehouse of biblical culture

Even though we could have begun with the other side, let us look at some important principles having to do with the scriptural dimension first. We stated earlier that part of what makes Scripture interesting to the interpreter is the difference in cultures. Let us elaborate on this point and, for the sake of argument, state as many conceivable ways of understanding this fact as possible.

1. Scripture is culture-free

Such a notion by itself is a contradiction in terms. If something has been written by humans, then it is a product of culture, at least in its medium. Furthermore, since even a conservative theology of inspiration does not necessitate God's overruling of the personality and intellect of the human author, Scripture is cultural in its message as well.

2. Scripture is cast in the terms of universal culture

Regrettably for someone who might want to advocate this view, there is no such thing, except in a very minimal way. We shall return to some of the commonalities of the human race below, but only in a very rudimentary sense can it be said that there is a common culture shared by all human beings. The Bible expresses a whole range of cultural forms, including ones as diverse as the second-millennium BC Semitic culture and first-century AD Hellenistic culture. Such distinctions are traceable in the biblical text itself, and they all stand in contrast to twentieth-century cultures of various ethnic and geographic origins. Although it is true that all human beings have a culture, not all human beings have the same culture.

However, someone might reply to this point that it is correct descriptively, but not prescriptively. It could be argued that Scripture shows us a culture different from ours, to be sure, but that it is a normative culture. Insofar as our culture differs, it ought to conform itself to scriptural culture.

This is a very potent argument because it carries some truth with it. Certainly the Bible addresses cultures of all ages with mandates for reform. Nevertheless, paradoxically the cultural form of the mandate may not be mandatory in itself. For example, exhortations against Baal worship are commands against all idolatry.

3. Scripture is written in the form of a divine culture

The debate of the previous point can be extended by way of introducing the divine factor. It could be argued that the Bible does not express so much a universal, or even a universally obligatory, human culture as a culture brought about by God's intervention in history. One might consider the training which the people of Israel received from God who thus shaped the culture which became the source of biblical writing. In that case the Bible is neither culturally neutral nor universal, but what we have there is a specific divinely-originated culture. The bottom line, then, for this point of view is similar to the one above, namely that all cultural elements in Scripture are normative.

If this point is an extension of the previous one, the criticisms of the previous point are *a forteriori* applicable. The view is just too easy to be true. It could conceivably be true for the Pentateuch and other Old Testament writing (though I would not be ready to grant even this). But the argument falls totally flat when it comes to the New Testament which is written in Greek – using a language and concepts which up to that point were at home in a pagan culture. Even the very words of Jesus have come down to us in that form, not in his own language of Aramaic. To say that New Testament culture is a divinely-originated culture requires a tremendous *tour de force.*

4. Scripture is written in a culture hostile to its divine message

We must beware of the opposite mistake. Although it is risky to embrace all of biblical culture as normative, it would be even more dangerous to consider biblical culture to have been inimical to the biblical message. For the message cannot be dissected away from its cultural medium that simply. And if such a dissection is difficult, it is inconceivable that the cultural medium is counter-productive.

5. Scripture is written in a complex of several cultures that are different from ours and which are interwoven to provide the backdrop for the divine message

We return to the point of origin. There is no valid simplistic way of dealing with biblical culture except to recognize it in all its complexity as the bearer of divine revelation. But, although this recognition places a great burden on the biblical interpreter, it can still be seen in a positive light.

We can say the following: the culture of the New Testament is neither universal nor divinely-originated. But God is not opposed to particular human cultures. To the contrary, he chose to reveal himself through this particular culture without repudiating it *in toto*. This is good news for us because it gives us the boldness to see our own cultures as legitimate bearers of God's message as well.

Our contemporary living quarters

We now turn to the other side of the hermeneutical dialogue. We have repeatedly asserted that our culture[2] is different from biblical culture. But how radically different is it?

At this point we can listen to those modern thinkers who advocate a rather radical distinction between the twentieth-century 'scientific' outlook and the 'primitive' ancient world-view. Interestingly, that kind of self-glamorization has been a consistent pattern in the history of thought. It is no different from the Greek attitude towards the 'barbarians', the disdain of the Renaissance toward the Middle Ages, or the view of the so-called 'Enlightenment' towards all previous history. The truth is that such feelings of superiority often originate within an intellectual élite and usually embody numerous misconceptions about their own age as well as about the previous one.

One of the best known spokespersons for modernity in the twentieth century was Rudolf Bultmann who popularized the programme of demythologization.[3] The basis of his approach lay in the recognition of a thoroughgoing disparity between the biblical age and ours. Whereas our age is characterized by a scientific world-view which calls for an existentialist attitude, the Bible is cast in the terms of an outmoded world-view with such items as a three-story universe, miracles, spirits, and supernatural myths. Thus even though the basic message of the New Testament is still viable, we need to excise all foreign elements and recast the message in contemporary terms. In his most celebrated example, Bultmann claims that the resurrection of Jesus cannot be counted as historical fact, but that this event is crucial for the appearance of 'easter faith'.[4]

Now I want to argue that Bultmann was gravely mistaken, but that there was at least some value in his programme which is often overlooked. When he said that the gospel must be preached, and therefore the Bible must be interpreted, in the terms of the interpreter's culture, he was actually right on target. Where Bultmann was wrong was with regard to the supposed large discrepancy he found between biblical culture and ours. His dismissal of the supernatural is no doubt gratuitous. Still there are some strong differences between then and now. It is true that Bultmann tended to think in terms of twentieth-century western European culture as the modern world-view. But even if we expand our horizons more significantly, we still have to reckon with the fact that modern people in many ways are culturally different from ancient biblical ones. Technology, almost two thousand years of history and learning, scientific insights, and many other factors have caused us to distinguish ourselves strongly from the times of Abraham or Paul. Further, it is not necessary to think merely of what we might call 'progress' for this point to be true. Just the different customs we have – the way we dress, eat, greet each other, talk, *etc.* – are all items which accentuate the distance we feel from ancient days.

However, we should not go too far in viewing ancient culture as outmoded and long overhauled, for there is also much we have in common with the culture of biblical times. Human cultures are not so self-contained as to be walled off from each other. Instead they are phenomena that both differentiate and link human beings of different places and times.

Some quick reflection will point out a few of the more basic universal characteristics of humanity which allow for cross-cultural linkage. Philosophically we all relate to being, viz. a reality outside of ourselves. This fact of external reality places us in an interpersonal communion (an 'intersubjective nexus') by which we are more than isolated individuals. Our common personhood – with all that is entailed by that concept – stretches beyond the barriers of time, space, and culture. In particular, it allows us to see a continuity in history. Finally, when we as Christians interpret Scripture, we know that divine reality, *i.e.* an existent God, undergirds and guarantees all truth, whether we discover it or not.[5]

Thus it is possible to feel comfortable in the otherwise overwhelming task of trying to understand what someone said two thousand years ago in very different circumstances. We do not need to be intimidated by this apparently highly ambitious undertaking.

Nonetheless, we have not now been licensed to forego further hermeneutical considerations. The cross-cultural links listed above, rooted in our common humanity, are what make interpretation possible; they do not obviate the need for interpretation. Rather they enable us to do what otherwise would be a fruitless undertaking: to take the message derived from one culture and make it intelligible in another culture.

This cross-cultural conversation is governed by some severe constraints. Once again we need to remind ourselves of the essential distinction between descriptive and prescriptive hermeneutics. It is very easy in purely descriptive terms to say that the transfer across cultures never obtains perfectly, perhaps only in bare fragments. And there is nothing wrong with this sort of humility. But prescriptively that is not how it should be. The integrity of the hermeneutical task demands that the transfer be executed as precisely as possible.

The end result of an interpretation ought not to be merely a rough restatement of the text. Certainly there needs to be a restatement since a message can hardly be said to be understood unless it can be reproduced in the terms of the receptor culture. Mere repetition of alien phrases is neither interpretation nor understanding. But the restatement must be a completely accurate re-presentation of what the text said in its original version. Ideally, every word and concept in the interpreter's reproduction matches up with all the words and concepts in the original text.

I will call the finished product of the interpreter's task a 'conceptual isomorphism'. By this term I mean to indicate that on the one hand we are dealing with a new frame of reference, hence the need for a new shape ('-morphism'). This new shape involves the concepts of the new culture. But in the ideal situation, the new concepts match up in their totality exactly with the concepts of the old situation ('iso-').

This conceptual isomorphism is an ideal. As such its value could be prematurely impugned. In common parlance sometimes an ideal is something so unreal that it is not worth discussing at all. But this is an unfortunate misunderstanding of the role of ideals. An ideal may never be obtained in practice, but that is not its purpose. The function of an ideal is to govern the practice so that it will conform as closely as possible to the most acceptable standards. For example, every beginning chemistry student learns Boyle's law of ideal gases. The fact that no laboratory is able to reproduce the conclusions of the law in all preciseness does not detract from the value of this law. Without the law, the chemist would be floating in a sea of data without any unifying principle.

Thus the ideal of the conceptual isomorphism unifies and provides purpose to the hermeneutical undertaking. Nonetheless, as an ideal it cannot be had simply for the attempting of it. Although we may say that as long as some understanding takes place, the isomorphism is realized at least partially and in principle, yet we need continually to work towards achieving this ideal. But how do we go about this work? Let us look at several models proposed for understanding the process of understanding.

The workshop: finding models

In a short article R. C. Sproul attempts to set up a disjunction between two options in hermeneutics.[6] He makes it appear as though we have a choice between only two models: a *tabula rasa* approach and an approach based on a Bultmannian notion of pre-understanding. Since to accept that the interpreter may bring pre-understanding to the text would result in subjectivism and scepticism, we need to return to a *tabula rasa* approach.

The *tabula rasa* approach has the merit of the strongest possible commitment to the ascendancy of the text. The idea is to let the text speak to us directly so that we can receive its objective meaning. The interpreter's task is to understand and not to judge. Thus prescriptively the *tabula rasa* theory carries the day. But it becomes almost ingenuous to advocate it in absolute fashion when it is so obviously belied by experience in the descriptive arena.

Anyone who has ever been in any theological discussion, even something as simple as a Sunday school class, knows what a powerful rôle our presuppositions play when it comes to biblical interpretation. No-one approaches the text without some expectation of what it is going to say. Hence there is a pre-understanding which guides our understanding. The task then is not to obliterate the pre-understanding, but to bring it in conformity with the truth conveyed by the text. Pre-understanding and understanding must be coalesced.

A model which addresses that attempt has been proposed by Hans Georg Gadamer.[7] Gadamer contends that the act of interpreting a text involves the conjunction of two horizons, the past and the present. Understanding takes place when these two horizons are fused. Gadamer does not intend to say that in the state of fusion either the past or the present horizons lose their integrity. On the contrary, they gain their full meaning in fusion with each other.

Gadamer's model is a good one. But it can be improved on by not abolishing the distance between the two cultures (or horizons) so quickly. In particular, the Christian interpreting the Bible will not want to dispense with the otherness of the text from his own horizon too readily.

A venerable and respectable model is that of the hermeneutical circle. It was first popularized by Friedrich Schleiermacher. At one point he stated it rather pithily this way: 'One must already know a man in order to understand what he says, and yet one first becomes acquainted with him by what he says.'[8] In terms of hermeneutics what this means is that one must first of all have some understanding of what the text is going to say before letting it speak to one. However this is a circular process. The text speaks to the interpreter and so the interpreter revises his pre-understanding. With the refined preconception the interpreter returns to the text, lets it speak to himself again, and so forth. The circle never ends. One cannot escape it.

Notwithstanding such conceptualizations, evangelical theologians have of late talked of 'breaking out of hermeneutical circles'.[9] Gordon Lewis proposes that this be attempted by way of three steps: (1) for interpreters to become more aware and critical of presuppositions, (2) for everyone to give priority to the meaning of Scripture over its significance, and (3) for all interpreters to consider their own presuppositions.[10]

Lewis' suggestions are extremely valuable, but they do not quite come to terms with what the hermeneutical circle is all about. They are based on the notion that this circle keeps us from discerning true meaning; it is vicious in nature. Heidegger has already stated that this is a reverse understanding of the hermeneutical circle. It is not vicious; it is benign because it helps us to understand.[11]

However, we need not accept the benign nature of this circle merely on Heidegger's assurances. Let us once more look at its purpose. The dynamic of the circle is to take us beyond our presuppositions to the text. As Lewis himself states, 'No exegete's mind is *tabula rasa* when opening the Bible.'[12] Thus, when the interpreter goes through the continual process of letting the text mould his understanding, and thereby his presuppositions, the circle works towards letting the truth of the text be known more and more clearly. Therefore the correct attitude, even from the prescriptive vantage-point, is to make greater and greater use of the dynamic of the circle, not to escape from it.

But Lewis' point is still well taken if the ascendancy of Scripture over the interpreter is not strictly maintained. And this is an ever-present danger, as evidenced by the fact that people seem to find only such truth in Scripture as conforms to their confessional orientation. Surely at that point the interpreter has usurped the priority and is speaking to the text more than the text to himself.

If the goal is to produce the aforementioned conceptual isomorph, then the interpreter needs to work carefully with the text along the lines of inductive logic. Even though it may be inevitable that the model which a theologian produces governs his exegesis, the opposite result, that of letting the text build the model, ought to have strict priority. To say that inductive logic is the methodology for exegesis is to place it in deliberate contrast to deductive logic whereby the theologian begins with a model and then interprets Scripture in (or 'into'?) consonance with that model. This procedure is usually called eisegesis and is clearly an unacceptable hermeneutic.

Recently a number of theologians have opted for the methodology of 'abduction' as the best understanding. In this conceptualization, the interpreter recognizes the inevitability of starting with a given presupposition and then sees the interpreter's task as an informal reciprocal process of learning from the text and correcting the model. This notion of abduction seems to be exactly what is needed to suit the hermeneutical circle, but in point of fact it gives away too much.

Using inductive logic does not mean that one is ignorant of one's presuppositions and is merely collecting objective facts. Induction is always cognizant of the possible distortion or predisposition introduced by the person doing the induction. Its conclusions are always of varying degrees of probability. But what induction does that abduction obscures is to emphasize the priority of the text. In the same way in which the notion of a conceptual isomorphism is an ideal, so induction must be the ideal of the interpreter on one side of the hermeneutical circle. By insisting on an inductive methodology in the context of the hermeneutical circle we are able to maintain the commitment of the *tabula rasa* prescriptive approach with the humility of the descriptive reality.

In the lab: a test case

In the light of all of the foregoing material it is clear that the best kind of hermeneutics is one which makes optimal use of both sides of the circle: the best possible reading of the text and the most enlightened tools of the present. One of the finest examples of this kind of effort is represented in the work of Anthony Thiselton who has combined his New Testament scholarship with first-rate expertise in philosophy.[13] Out of the many contributions he has made, we shall look briefly at his use of the later work of Wittgenstein in order to illustrate how philosophical hermeneutics works and to raise some final questions.

There is no shortage of studies on the hermeneutics of Heidegger, its antecedents in Schleiermacher and Dilthey, its revision by Gadamer, or its application to theology by

Bultmann. But Thiselton notes that 'no New Testament scholar has as yet sought to draw on the insights of Wittgenstein in order to enrich or deepen his understanding of the New Testament'.[14] Of course that omission must not be considered a serious lack in and of itself. Presumably the same thing is true for New Testament scholars' strict disregard of Moritz Schlick or Paul Weiss, two other important twentieth-century philosophers. I know of no study attempting to use their conclusions in facilitating New Testament interpretation either.

Clearly Thiselton must think he has good reason to direct us to Wittgenstein. And indeed he says, 'One of the major conclusions of the present study will be that in the context of the problem of hermeneutics Wittgenstein's notion of "language-game" has striking parallels with Heidegger's understanding of "world" and even with Gadamer's notion of the interpreter's horizons.'[15] Furthermore, the point is not simply that Wittgenstein is repeating things said by various German philosophers and is thus *ipso facto* authoritative in theological circles, but that at the same time Wittgenstein's version of the similarities in question is sufficiently novel to be able to shed some new light on age-old problems in New Testament interpretation.

The aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy which Thiselton emphasizes has to do with the theory of language games. Within each such linguistic context the meanings of various utterances are derived from their use. The analysis of the use of a certain statement within its language game may describe its 'grammar'.

Inherent in the theory of language games is the recognition that in different contexts words have different meanings. These are 'polymorphous concepts'. Different language games determine what particular meaning a concept may have. It is at this point that Thiselton strikes to the heart of his intentions, 'I now suggest that the theological vocabulary of the New Testament contains some polymorphous concepts.'[16] These include the words 'faith', 'flesh', and 'truth'.

Let us concentrate on only one of several questions which Thiselton raises in order to demonstrate his contention. 'What kind of faith is justifying faith? How do we avoid making "faith" a special kind of substitute for "works" . . .?'[17] Here Thiselton turns to the analysis of what he calls 'Paul's grammar of faith'. Justification and faith are bound up with each other grammatically, viz. the two concepts are inseparable from the very basis of their meaning: 'In Wittgenstein's language, to say that justification requires faith is to make a grammatical or analytical statement comparable to "every rod has a length", "green is a colour" . . .'[18] Thus faith is not a work; it cannot be a work, for Paul's grammar of faith simply would not permit it.

The answer to this question in turn raises the subsidiary one, 'If we can arrive at a concept of faith which escapes [the problem of faith being a work], how does it relate to the concept of faith in the Epistle of James?'[19] Thiselton suggests that James does not merely present a different side of faith or criticize a deficient view of faith, but presents *his* grammar of faith, which differs from Paul's. Thiselton argues that, 'whereas in Paul we see an internal or grammatical relation between faith and justification . . . in James we see an internal or grammatical relation between faith and works, because the very concept of faith entails *acting* in a certain way'.[20] Thus one cannot play off James and Paul against each other or devise a common denominator. We simply have to recognize that 'each has a rich and positive view of the grammar of faith, which emerges in the context of a given language-game or language-situation'.[21]

Thiselton's answer to this complex of questions illustrates his use of Wittgenstein's philosophy. We can now turn to a quick evaluation of its helpfulness.

The first characteristic of Thiselton's interpretation which stands out is his willingness to engage the text on its own ground. Rather than force a reconciliation between James and Paul, Thiselton is willing to let each writer speak for himself with his own language game and grammar. Thus the 'text' side of the circle is protected. The 'reader' side then becomes paramount.

Does a use of Wittgenstein heighten our understanding of the text? At the risk of belabouring the obvious, neither James nor Paul would have known what was meant by their 'grammar of faith' in the context of their 'language games', as indeed no human being prior to Wittgenstein could have. So the question is more specific: does this use of Wittgenstein help modern people understand James and Paul more clearly?

The answer to this question has to be a guarded 'yes'. Anyone who has struggled fruitlessly with a possible inconsistency between James and Paul and who accepts Wittgenstein's analysis as valid, would be helped by Thiselton's description. But the cautiousness of our assent points out some concerns which remain open.

For most contemporary interpreters Thiselton's analysis would involve two steps. First one must learn about Wittgenstein, then one can apply him to James and Paul. Bultmann's representation of the modern world-view was seriously mistaken, but (more benignly) Wittgenstein is not exactly the spokesman for the twentieth century either. Thiselton's resort to him may be quite valid, but it is not as helpful as it could be since it is somewhat arbitrary.

To be more specific, the concern is this: I cannot be sure whether James and Paul would have thought in terms of an essence of faith with various properties, but I think most contemporary people still do. There is nothing obsolete about the idea that there is an essence of faith with the properties of not being a work, but resulting in certain actions. It has become fashionable to disparage so-called 'Aristotelian' notions in theology as outmoded, but all-in-all Aristotle's ideas, such as the above, may still be more representative of how our contemporaries understand reality than the Wittgensteinian notion of language games with their grammars. Until this state of affairs changes, Thiselton's analysis must be seen as experimental. But then no philosophical tool is final, and Thiselton makes no absolute claims for his innovation.

We see here then that, even though the Bible is God's Word for all ages, there is no final complete interpretation for all ages. Efforts like Thiselton's must continue with the commitment to discern as closely as possible what the text is saying to us, but with the humility that as human beings we do not ever have direct access to the mind of God.

[1] This understanding is worked out elaborately in Harold Oliver, *Relatedness* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1984).
[2] For the sake of simplicity I am frequently using the singular, speaking of 'our present culture', 'contemporary culture', *etc.* But such usage should not at all be construed as implying that I am unaware of the multiplicity of cultures into which the Christian message needs to be translated today. In fact, much of the challenge of hermeneutics in the present lies in the fact that a given interpretation for, say a western European, may not be at all clear for a South American Bible scholar.
[3] Rudolf Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology' in H. W. Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth* (London: SPCK, 1962).
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 38-43.
[5] For a more detailed defence of this contention, see my article, 'Philosophical Presuppositions Affecting Biblical Hermeneutics' in Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (eds.), *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), pp. 493-513.
[6] R. C. Sproul, 'A Response to Philosophical Presuppositions Affecting Biblical Hermeneutics' in Radmacher and Preus (eds.), *Hermeneutics*, pp. 515-531.
[7] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Crossroads, 1975), esp. pp. 271-73.
[8] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), p. 56.
[9] Gordon R. Lewis, 'A Response to Presuppositions of Non-Evangelical Hermeneutics: Response' in Radmacher and Preus (eds.), *Hermeneutics*, pp. 613-26.
[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 619-620.
[11] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 194. Heidegger writes: 'But if we see this circle as a vicious one and look out for ways of avoiding it, even if we just "sense" it as an inevitable imperfection, then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up.'
[12] Lewis, 'Non-Evangelical Hermeneutics', p. 620.
[13] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 408.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 415.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 422.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 415.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 424.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 427.

'Incidentalism' in theology – or a theology for thirty-year-olds?

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Is there any theological significance in the fact that Jesus' public ministry did not begin until he was about thirty years old? Or that it lasted only three years? Do these facts have any relevance, for example, to our theological views of Christian ministry, or, less ecclesiastically, to our evaluation of the seven ages of man (to say nothing of woman)?

Such questions may seem absurd enough, but let us remind ourselves that one of the most respected theologians of the early church placed considerable theological weight on the age of Jesus:

> He came to save all through means of himself – infants, and children and boys and youths and old men. He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants, ... (*etc.*)... So likewise he was an old man for old men, that he might be a perfect master for all . . . also as regards age, sanctifying at the same time the aged also.[1]

'An old man for old men'? Yes, indeed, for Irenaeus believed that Jesus lived on into his late forties ('from the fortieth and fiftieth year a man begins to decline towards old age'), on the basis of his reading of John 8:56-57. (Irenaeus also takes time to refute the notion that the Saviour came to be baptized at thirty years of age in order to 'show forth the thirty silent aeons of some Gnostic system'. He believed that at thirty Jesus had reached the perfect age for a teacher.)

So when the Vancouver Message from the 1983 Assembly of the World Council of Churches declared that Jesus 'experienced our life, our birth and childhood', we note that it did not claim that Jesus shared our middle age or old age. Not that it would have made much theological difference (would it?) if Jesus' ministry had begun when he was forty – or twenty – rather than thirty, and had lasted five years – or one year – rather than three. The age of Jesus, and the length of his ministry, belong to those incidentals or accidentals of his life on which we build no theological structures. This must also be the case with those phases of human life that he passed through. If we cannot follow Irenaeus into Jesus' sanctification of old age, nor can we go with him in the infant Jesus' sanctification of infant years. Christmas too often seems like a festival of babyhood or childhood, but it is surely a better theological insight that boyhood, teenage and the twenties and early thirties do not now enjoy any particular theological value by virtue of the fact that Jesus passed through them – a value denied to our middle and later years by his death before he reached the mid-thirties.

Modern theologians have not always been so reticent about other aspects of the experience of Jesus which might equally be regarded as incidentals. They also commonly display a loud silence about yet other aspects which might be thought to have much less claim to be viewed as mere incidentals, such as the masculinity of Jesus, and his bachelor or celibate state.

For example, if the life of Jesus affords no basis for theologizing about the ages of human life, should the flight into Egypt be made to speak theologically about the experience of refugees and displaced persons? We can leave aside the historical question about this gospel story. Its

function in Matthew's schema of fulfilment of prophetic prediction is obvious enough. In addition, we must ask, does it in any sense mean that Jesus lived in solidarity with the homeless and exiled of the earth? Has this episode in his life a significance detached from the particularity of the Matthaean context and derived from the universality of such human misfortune down the centuries, so as to impart to this kind of experience (flight or expulsion into alien territory) a value or meaning that does not apply to other common human experiences that Jesus did *not* share?

For we cannot have one – solidarity with the refugee – without the other – no solidarity with the non-refugee, if, that is, we choose to theologize this particular 'incidental'. A lengthy passage from John Vincent's book *Secular Christ* will illustrate my point:

> The theology of Christ is unashamedly *discriminatory*. By choosing to come as man, Jesus excluded womanhood (hence, of course, the divinization of Mary). By coming as a Galilean, Jesus excluded the Torah-obedient traditionalism of the rabbis. By belonging to the 'pious poor' of the land, Jesus excluded the middle class and the beggars. By being a carpenter, Jesus excluded the rich and the wise. By preaching in Galilee, Jesus excluded the Judeans, let alone the Samaritans. By being a bachelor, Jesus excluded the insights of love and family. And so on.
>
> These are what one might call the 'accidentals', the things which do not explicitly form part of the gospel. They but emphasize the restriction, particularity and selectiveness inherent in any human life. The church has not, in its best moments, read too much significance into these factors. Yet they are absolutely unavoidably tied to the church's faith in 'incarnation,' or to any man's assessment of Jesus called the Christ.
>
> The mission of Jesus is likewise discriminatory. By being baptized and preaching repentance, Jesus excluded the good who did not need repentance. By calling fishermen as disciples, Jesus excluded the student, the sage, or the rich . . . By entertaining prostitutes and tax officials, Jesus excluded the decent middle classes . . . By excluding political allegiance, Jesus excluded Rome. By being crucified, Jesus excluded the hopes of Israel . . . in the main, it was true for Jesus as for us, that you can put your eggs into only one basket.[2]

The question is: which of Jesus's baskets have a more than incidental (accidental) significance, and how do we identify them? To review merely Vincent's catalogue, we have no difficulty in singling out the crucifixion, and its exclusion of (most of) the hopes of (contemporary) Israel, but most readers of *Themelios* would hesitate long and hard, being the people they are, before seeing any special significance in the occupations of Jesus and his followers (carpentry and fishing). Christianity is surely not a religion for people who work with their hands – in the sense that one cannot make a similar affirmation about the office-bound or academic. Down the centuries, however, many have rejected learning and education *because* they do not loom large in the life of Jesus and the twelve. The same range of questions can be asked about the significance of Jesus' manual work for ministers and training for the ministry – if Jesus' ministry is the paradigm for all ministry in the church.

A letter from the *Church Times* says it all:

> Whenever I, as a Catholic, have any misgivings over my support for the ordination of women, I simply turn for reassurance to the shallow theological arguments of the Rev. F . . . B . . . With what logic can he insist that whoever stands at the altar *in persona Christi* must be male, while at the same time, presumably, waiving the requirements that he be a Palestinian Jew and a child of a skilled craftsman?

Even though biblical Christians do not normally cite Jesus' maleness in discussing women's ministry, we must resist the 'all-or-nothing' implications of this letter. But how do we discriminate? Is there a danger of fastening on Jesus' blue-collar status because it is potentially universalizable, in a way that his Jewishness and maleness,[3] let alone his unmarried state (in the Judaism of his day, perhaps the least incidental of all), are not?

The peril of selectiveness is pointed up by a quotation from 'a German woman' cited by John Poulton:

> Jesus lived without protection. That is not a statement of faith, just a plain observation. He renounced the protection a family offers. He did not want the protection afforded by property. He did not use the protection of rhetoric but remained silent. He expressly rejected the protection of weapons and armies . . . God has no desire to keep himself protected and unapproachable. God practices no violence. God has disarmed himself in Jesus Christ. Unilaterally.[4]

We may be doing the writer an injustice in analysing this one isolated paragraph. It is not clear that she would argue from God's unilateralism to ours, or to our nation's. But does such divine self-disarmament rest equally on each of Jesus' rejections of protection? Does equal weight belong to his rejection of family and property as to his rejection of weapons and armies? The former is arguably far more prominent than the latter. And are all of them models for his followers? And if we would answer no (we are not all called to renounce the protection of family, property, rhetoric), how can we know that we *are* called to reject the protection of armies and weapons? No doubt the answer is to be found on other grounds. The danger of arbitrary selectivity comes from appealing to the incidentals of Jesus' life. Such an appeal is liable to prove too little or too much.

What is here called incidentalism in theology sometimes becomes simply laughable, as in this passage from Kosuke Koyama:

> If Jesus Christ was mocked, spat upon and stripped, then his 'finality' is mocked, spat upon and stripped . . . The spat-upon Jesus means the spat-upon finality of Jesus. It must mean then the 'spat-upon bishops', 'spat-upon theology', 'spat-upon evangelism', 'spat-upon "combat-against-racism"', 'spat-upon churches'. The finality of Christ and 'being spat-upon' go together! The glory of Christ and 'being spat-upon' go together! . . . 'To be apostolic' means 'to be ready to be spat upon' . . . History can be approached in two ways: the way of spitting upon others and the way of being spat upon by others.[5]

This passage illustrates a regular feature of much of this kind of theology – its remarkable ability to establish a valid case (here, the readiness of the church to suffer humiliation like her Lord) on the wrong grounds. At its worst, such an argument produces the neurosis of those who want to experience persecution, perhaps of a particular kind, but never quite succeed.

A not unrelated lesson emerges from another passage from John Poulton's *The Feast of Life*. It is the kind of statement in which modern theology abounds, but is nonetheless questionable for all that:

> Human life . . . depends on the sun and the earth and water, and the whole ecological environment. That is why women and men are to cooperate with God over each part of nature . . . All this is said by what Christians take and do as they gather at the Lord's Table. Before ever it becomes a 'church' action, the preparing of food and drink is saying something about life itself, living, being. In its symbolism it proclaims many things, but in involving everyday food and drink and companionship, this 'communion' or 'eucharist' (thanksgiving) is saying very basically that existence and survival and humanness are God-given, God-willed.[6]

This is all very true, but is not what the Lord's supper is about – if, that is, we take our bearings from the New Testament. Quite apart from the back-to-nature artificiality of 'preparing of food and drink' (uncorking the bottle and unwrapping the loaf bought at the supermarket),[7] such a comment exemplifies a lamentable inability to differentiate. When eucharist says everything about everything, it says nothing much about anything in particular. It is a tendency of ecumenical theology, seen, for example, in the Faith and Order report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*,[8] to run to pan-eucharistic extremes, as though the whole meaning of the Christian religion were to be found in the rite. Why can we not ground such worthy affirmations elsewhere (the Old Testament perhaps?) and let the eucharist speak above all of the unique self-giving of Christ in death? Such a loss of biblical proportions arises from failure to distinguish between the incidental and the substantial.

I will conclude by raising a question mark against part of the reasoning in Moltmann's *The Crucified God*, where he ventures into what he calls 'the political theology of the cross':

> If the Christ of God was executed in the name of the politico-religious authorities of his time, then for the believer the higher justification of these and similar authorities is removed. In that case political rule can only be justified 'from below'. Wherever Christianity extends, the idea of the state changes. Political rule is no longer accepted as God-given, but is understood as a task the fulfilment of which must be constantly justified.[9]

Again, what Moltmann is advocating seems to me arguable, though not self-evident, but not to have much to do with the crucifixion. Certainly the historical developments which he immediately proceeds to summarize (the desacralization of government in the early Christian and medieval centuries) are only part of the story and have precious little to do with the fact that Christ was 'executed in the name of the politico-religious authorities of his time'. Is there any evidence that any New Testament writer drew Moltmann's conclusion from the agency of the crucifixion?

In fact, this is only one aspect of Moltmann's case for 'the political theology of the cross'. If I have understood it aright, it is not free of the peril of incidentalism. 'The death of Christ was the death of a political offender'[10] – this may be true, but is it theologically significant?[11] The sequence of Moltmann's reasoning is elusive, but it seems to rest on the assertion that the political execution of Jesus entails a delegitimization of *all* (!) political authority as God-given. Again I wonder why no Christian in the hard-pressed Roman Empire seems to have drawn this kind of conclusion.

David Kelsey would do us all a service if he wrote another book, entitled *The Uses of Jesus in Recent Theology*. It would not be, I suspect, unconnected with his earlier work on *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*.

[1] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2. 22. 4.

[2] John Vincent, *Secular Christ: A Contemporary Interpretation of Jesus* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968), pp. 70-71.

[3] *Cf.* a comment on Mary's 'sheer ordinariness': 'In a sense her femaleness is incidental: biologically required for the role she is given, but not theologically significant.' Her humble responsiveness and faith is that of a human being, not that of a woman exclusively (A. E. Lewis (ed.), *The Motherhood of God: A Report by a Study Group* . . . (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 59).

[4] John Poulton, *The Feast of Life: A Theological Reflection on the Theme 'Jesus Christ – the Life of the World'* (Geneva, 1982), p. 32.

[5] *No Handle on the Cross* (London: SCM, 1976), p. 95, quoted by A. Kee (ed.), *The Scope of Political Theology* (London: SCM, 1978), p. 95.

[6] Poulton, *Feast of Life*, p. 19.

[7] And *which* food and drink? If Poulton's reasoning is followed through, the use of (fermented) wine and bread can hardly be required in cultures to which they are alien. Luther denied that the fact that Jesus did not elevate the sacrament at the Last Supper was prescriptive for Christian practice: 'For if incidental circumstances are to be strictly binding, the external places and persons must also strictly be adhered to', and we should have the Supper only in Jerusalem in an upper room – indeed, only the apostles would enjoy it, and then only after eating the paschal lamb (*Against the Heavenly Prophets*, 1525, trans. B. Erling and C. Bergendoff, *Luther's Works*, vol. 40 (Philadelphia: Concordia, 1958), pp. 132-133).

[8] (Geneva: WCC, 1982.)

[9] J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM, 1974), p. 328.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 327.

[11] 'What are the economic, social and political consequences of the gospel of the Son of Man who was crucified as a "rebel"?' (*ibid.*, p. 317). Similar questions could be raised about some expressions of contemporary theology's 'bias to the poor': 'The nub, the nucleus, of the biblical message . . . is in the relationship between God and the poor. Jesus Christ is precisely *God become poor*' (G. Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (London: SCM, 1983), p. 13). This kind of reformulation is in danger of depriving the gospel of its universality.

The 'theology of success' movement: a comment

Antonio Barbosa da Silva

Dr da Silva, who is Assistant Professor in Philosophy of Religion at the University of Uppsala, has written a book in Swedish on the theology of success. More recently he has written a study of Jewish-Christian dialogue, Is there a *new* imbalance in the Jewish-Christian Relation? *(University of Uppsala, 1985).*

This article is a brief description and critical analysis of the 'theology of success' movement, which has recently become prominent in various parts of the world, notably in the USA and Scandinavia.

By 'theology of success' (hereafter TS) is meant a theology according to which a real Christian (a) has to be rich and healthy, to enjoy himself and to prosper in all spheres of his life, (b) possesses God's nature, and (c) should be baptized in the Holy Spirit, the unmistakable signs of this kind of baptism being the possession of the gift of speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and of the gifts of healing and miracle working. TS suggests that those who claim to be Christians, but who do not possess these characteristics are not Christians at all, or are Christians of weak faith or are living in sin.

Preliminary observations

Before these particular three points are discussed, some preliminary observations are in order. First, the adherents of TS reject classical Pentecostalism as it is established in the western world. Even if TS is charismatic in character, it should not be confused with the charismatic movements of the 1960s, which influenced almost all sections of Protestantism and the Catholic church too in some countries.[1] Generally speaking, TS can be described as a degeneration and extreme radicalization of the charismatic movement. TS owes its origin to, among others, the following theologians or preachers: Norman Vincent Peale, Kenneth E. Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Robert H. Schuller, Paul Yonggi Cho, E. W. Kenyon, Jim Casemann, Ulf Ekman (from Sweden), Hans Braterud (from Norway). The ideological roots of TS are to be found in, among other things, the optimistic anthropology 'preached' by the so-called New-Age-movement and the positive-thinking psychology of, above all, Carl Rogers and Roberto Assagioli.

Further features of TS to be noted include (a) its suggestive way of 'inducing' faith in individuals – faith in the promise of success; (b) its distinctive hermeneutical approach, which amounts to a rejection of the classical Christian approach to Scripture, according to which the Old Testament should be interpreted in the light of the New. The teachings of Jesus and of the apostles have classically been seen as the decisive criteria for the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament and for the assessment of all kinds of religious experience; (c) the almost idolatrous attitude of adherents of TS towards their leaders: the words and advice of the authoritative leaders, who are regarded as prophets, apostles or even as Christ himself, have to be accepted unconditionally. In this respect TS has very similar tendencies to those of the People Temple Full Gospel Church led by James Warren Jones (alias Jim Jones).[2]

The main tenets

Let us now consider the three main tenets of TS. Support is claimed for them all from the Bible, but in each case the view in question represents an exaggeration and/or misinterpretation of the biblical teaching.

(a) To defend the view that a Christian should prosper and be rich, TS appeals to the Old Testament, *e.g.* to God's promise to Abraham (Gn. 12:1-2), to God's blessing of Job (Jb. 42:10-17), and to Isaiah 52:13 where we read 'Behold, my servant shall prosper . . .' This sort of appeal to the Old Testament is, to say the least, simplistic. With regard to God's promises to Abraham and to other men of great faith (*cf.* Heb. 11:1-28), these are taken in Galatians 3:16-20 and Hebrews 11:39 in a spiritual sense, and they are seen as fulfilled not in the Old Testament but in the New Testament in the coming of Jesus and in what he did for his church. With regard to Isaiah 52:13, this cannot be taken of material prosperity in the way suggested by TS, since chs. 52 and 53 are interpreted in the New Testament of the sufferings of Jesus the Messiah. TS fails to interpret the Old Testament properly in the light of the New Testament. So far as Job is concerned, it is true that God blessed Job materially after his long suffering; but the book of Job is not a narrative about how God always blesses the faithful, but about how even the most faithful can suffer and face despair. Of Job's four friends who tried to comfort him only one (Elihu) understood Job's situation rightly; the others preached to Job a theology akin to TS (see Jb. 32:1-22; 42:7).

There is no question that the Old Testament (and to a lesser extent the New Testament) can see this-worldly prosperity as a God-given blessing. However, only some passages point in this direction; others make it clear that even the unrighteous can prosper and succeed, whereas the righteous may sometimes experience misfortune. The New Testament is, by and large, negative towards wealth (see Mt. 13:22; 19:24; Mk. 4:19; Lk. 1:53; 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:9,17; Jas. 1:11; 2:5-6; 5:1).

TS also preaches that Christians must be healthy and that sickness is a sign of sin and lack of faith. The Bible is said to promise healing to every Christian. Some of the most quoted passages in support of this view are: Isaiah 53:4-6; Mark 16:15-18; James 5:13-16 and 1 Peter 2:24. What can be said about this view? First, despite the passages mentioned, which must be taken entirely seriously, the New Testament makes it plain that sickness is not *always* the consequence of a specific sin committed by the one who is or becomes sick; see, for example, John 9:1-3. Second, there are examples in the New Testament of Christians becoming sick without there being

any reason to suppose that this is to be connected with some sin they have committed; see, for example, Philippians 2:25-27; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20. Thirdly, even though the New Testament does not ascribe pain or suffering any intrinsic value – *i.e.* suffering has no value *in itself* – it does consider it as having some instrumental value in that it can lead to something good, for example patience; see Romans 5:3-5; 8:35-37. Lastly, the New Testament does not promise us a life without suffering or problems. The kingdom of God with its blessings (including physical blessings) has broken into history with Jesus; but as Christians we have only 'tasted' the kingdom of God, the fullness of which we are expecting and longing for; see Romans 8:18-28; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Revelation 21:23-27; 22:1-5.

(b) There is a real sense in which the Christian receives, in and through the Holy Spirit, a share in the divine life and nature; but the proponents of TS have an over-simple and misleading understanding of this concept, failing to appreciate all the dimensions of the New Testament view of salvation. The very word 'salvation' is used in the New Testament both in the sense of conversion (Acts 2:40,47), *i.e.* of something completed, and also to denote something eschatological and not yet complete (Rom. 13:11-14). TS confuses these two tenses of salvation when it suggests that Christians are already saved in a realized-eschatological sense, such that they are deemed to be perfect during their earthly life. One can easily refute this doctrine by pointing out that, if Christians had the divine nature in the eschatological sense, they would not die. In fact, as the Bible teaches, all men must die (2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27). St Paul made it very clear that he had not become perfect; on the contrary he regarded himself as the chief of sinners (Phil. 3:12-14; 1 Tim. 1:15). Advocates of TS defend their theology against this kind of argument by maintaining that it is the spirit in man and not his body which is made perfect in the act of salvation; but this body/spirit dualism is Gnostic, not biblical.

(c) The emphasis that TS puts on the baptism of the Holy Spirit and on the gifts of the Spirit, especially on the gift of healing, can be seen as a protest against the well-established churches, including the Pentecostal ones. They are seen by proponents of TS as conservative, as too cerebral in their approach to the Bible, and as having disastrously neglected the gifts of the Spirit. In my opinion, TS is right in pointing to deficiencies in many local churches. It is, however, wrong in the way it preaches what it takes to be lacking in other churches. For example, although it is quite right to say that the New Testament sees every Christian as a partaker in the Holy Spirit, it is not true to say that the Holy Spirit will give every believer the gift of speaking in tongues or the gift of teaching (or, for that matter, perfect physical health). St Paul, speaking about ideas resembling some of those found today in TS, states very clearly in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 that the gifts of the Spirit are given to different members of the church according to the will of the Spirit and for the edification of the congregation.

Concluding remarks

Throughout the history of the church, from New Testament times onwards, radical groups of Christians sharing some of the characteristics of TS have appeared, and their views have been refuted by the great theologians of the church. If one asks why religious movements such as TS have arisen particularly in the modern western world, the broad answer must be that the traditional churches have often failed to preach the 'full gospel'. Thus, for example, they have failed to preach about the gifts of the Spirit, and they have effectively discounted the possibility of supernatural healing in the church today. But there are also ideological, economic and social causes. The *ideological* factor is that people (especially young people) are lacking, but looking for, authoritative answers to their existential, religious and political questions. The *economic* factor is the widespread economic instability in both the richer and poorer parts of the world, manifesting itself in inflation, unemployment, *etc.* Factors such as these give rise to anxiety and to feelings of insecurity about the future. Because of its simple message and authoritative preaching, TS appeals to, and brings relief to, many. There are cases of healing. And there is warm fellowship: the informal meetings associated with TS movement – with music, singing and crying – function as a kind of mental therapy for the many people in the west who lack human fellowship and satisfying social relationships. It is not surprising that a movement which promises economic prosperity, a divine nature, health, miracle-working power and good fellowship (in some cases collective living) appeals to the nature of *homo economicus* and *homo sapiens!*

Whereas TS brings relief to some, it often has disastrous consequences on the mental health of those who want to be Christians, but who do not experience all the blessings that are (misleading) offered by the preachers of TS. Such people, if experience in Sweden and Norway is typical, often become mentally disturbed, and need much pastoral counselling from psychologists and priests.

From the point of view of the philosophy of religion, TS gives rise to many important questions; these include questions about the biblical view of evil and pain, about how the power and activity of Satan are to be related to the biblical view of God as an almighty, omniscient and provident loving Father, about the nature and relationship of justification and sanctification, and, above all, about Christian ethics. These questions cannot be explained and discussed here. Suffice it to say, in conclusion, that TS represents a subtly attractive, but dangerous, distortion of Christian truth. Christians must be on their guard against it, not only by insisting on the right interpretation of the relevant biblical teaching, but also by seeking to work out and to live out the biblical pattern of Christian living more faithfully within the church of Christ.

[1] For a concise account of the charismatic movement see the article by Anne Mather in *Themelios* 9.3 (1984), pp. 17-21. On the influence of the movement see *Goodnews, Newsletter of the National Service Committee for Catholic Charismatic Renewal in England* 52 (June/July 1984).

[2] The basic themes of TS can be found in the following books: Kenneth E. Hagin, *Seven Things You Should Know about Divine Healing; idem, Seven Vital Steps to Receiving the Holy Spirit; idem, The Art of Intercession; idem, Authority of the Believer; idem, The Ministry of the Prophet; idem, Demons and how to deal with them; idem, You can have what you say; idem, How to keep your Healing; Having Faith in your Faith* (all published by Kenneth Hagin Ministries in Toronto, Canada, or Tulsa, USA, in 1980/81); E. W. Kenyon, *Advanced Bible Course; idem, Studies in the Deeper Life* (Kenyon Gospel Publishing Society, USA, 1970); Robert H. Schuller, *Self-Love, The Dynamic Force of Success* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1969); *idem, You can become the person you want to be* (New York: Pillar Books, 1973); *idem, Discover your Possibilities* (Irvine, California: Harvest House Publishers, 1978); Elda Susan Morran and Lawrence Schlemmer, *Faith for the Fearful* (Durban, South Africa; Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Natal, 1984).

Survey of recent journals

A selective review of significant articles by our Associate Editors and other contributors.

Abbreviations

AfRH	*Archive for Reformation History*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library (Manchester University)*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
ChHist	*Church History*
EQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
ExpT	*Expository Times*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
JPH	*Journal of Presbyterian History*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KTR	*King's Theological Review (King's College, London)*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
RS	*Religious Studies*
TynB	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*

Old Testament

The unity of Isaiah, a topic beloved of generations of evangelicals, is reappearing in a fresh stream of articles, though the current of that stream is very different from the traditional issue of authorship. One of the first writers in this new phase was P. R. Ackroyd ('Theological reflections on the Book of Isaiah', *KTR* 4/2 (1981), pp. 53-63; 5/1 (1982), pp. 8-13; 5/2 (1982), pp. 43-48). He stresses the value of an overall view of Isaiah, though he understands the final form of the book as the result of later reinterpretation overlaying a variety of inconsistent theological traditions. The route to this questionable conclusion is somewhat tortuous, but on the way the highlighting of three key themes, viz., kingship, worship, and Israel and the nations, opens up fresh vistas on Isaiah which are much more than a tourist attraction. R. E. Clements' initial article on the unity of Isaiah ('The Unity of the Book of Isaiah', *Interp* 36 (1982), pp. 117-129), has been followed by a second in which he too takes a thematic approach ('Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes', *JSOT* 31 (1985), pp. 95-113). His treatment of the ideas of deafness/blindness and divine election is especially instructive. Clements' main point, however, is that chs. 40-55 should be seen as a redactive development of First Isaiah. For him, this kind of internal reinterpretation is a distinctively prophetic feature bound up with the nature of prophecy itself, deriving primarily from a general cultic setting rather than an individual prophet named (Deutero-) Isaiah.

Perhaps the most imaginative article in this area is W. Brueggemann's attempt to provide a social context for these canonical and literary linkages ('Unity and dynamic in the Isaiah Tradition', *JSOT* 29 (1984), pp. 89-107). Brueggemann's interpretation is a broad-brush oversimplification, but he offers a real life context for the modern as well as the ancient world through his assessment of chs. 1-39 as a radical critique of pre-exilic culture, of chs. 40-55 as spoken to a community experiencing the pain and suffering of that judgment, and of chs. 56-66 as a new social vision. Also on Isaiah, R. Rendtorff considers kerygmatic themes common to all three sections ('Zur Komposition des Buches Jesaja', *VT* 34 (1984), pp. 295-320), while students should also be aware of an important contribution from an evangelical perspective by W. Dumbrell, who sees the city of Jerusalem as the main connecting factor throughout the book ('The Purpose of the Book of Isaiah', *TynB* 36 (1985), pp. 111-128).

Any student reading Old Testament theology will want to avail himself of G. F. Hasel's latest survey of an area which is becoming more and more like a supermarket where the student/customer is increasingly bewildered by the number of varieties on offer ('Major Recent Issues in Old Testament TTeology 1978-1983', *JSOT* 31 (1985), pp. 31-53). Hasel's range is comprehensive, his comments generally apposite and judicious, and the desire to see theology as 'the crown of OT study' welcome. He isolates four issues, of which two, viz., methodology and the 'centre' of the Old Testament, are well-worn garments, but the remaining two, viz. 'story' and canon, are more modern fashions. Both these latter issues, however, deal with matters of first importance, and there is plenty of room for evangelicals to make constructive and more visible contributions. W. Brueggemann has offered yet another suggestion for the shape of Old Testament theology ('A shape for Old Testament theology', *CBQ* 47 (1985), pp. 28-46, 395-415). He argues that the Old Testament participates in the 'common theology' of the world, which is essentially a contractual moral framework, and moves beyond and above that theology by embracing the world's pain and suffering. The Old Testament remains in the tension created by these two emphases, but it is through that tension that hope and healing are made available. One may criticize Brueggemann, *e.g.*, for a failure to grasp the distinctiveness of the Old Testament's view of law and righteousness, but his exposition of the significance of pain in *e.g.*, Moses' intercessions or the laments of the Psalter, is instructive. Indeed, the article is worth reading just for the comment on the judgment of the flood that 'Yahweh has heart trouble' (*cf.* Gn. 6:6-7).

Monotheism is a key area of Old Testament thought where little fresh thinking has been done in recent years, which is rather strange in the light of the emergence of religious pluralism in contemporary society. It is good, therefore, to be able to mention a recent debate in this area. It revolves around J. F. A. Sawyer's claim that the Old Testament is in fact far from monotheistic ('Biblical Alternatives to Monotheism', *Theology* lxxxvii, May 1984, pp. 172-180). Sawyer also believes that trinitarian theology is not really monotheistic, and that Islam is more monotheistic than Christianity. R. E. Clements, in reply, contends that Sawyer's basic plea is only a half-truth ('Monotheism and the Canonical Process', *Theology* lxxxvii, Sept. 1984, pp. 336-344). Clements moves in the right direction by stressing the importance of historical development towards monotheism and the Old Testament's

preoccupation with cultus rather than philosophy, though he concedes too much in both cases. However, his support for monotheism in the Old Testament is based essentially, though perhaps questionably, on a canonical interpretation of key texts like Exodus 20:3 and Deuteronomy 6:4 and on the unity of biblical revelation.

Daniel was the subject of the entire issue of *Interpretation* 39/2 (April 1985), in which two articles catch the eye. K. Koch argues for Daniel as essentially a prophetic work rather than a wisdom or apocalyptic one ('Is Daniel Also Among the Prophets?', pp. 117-130), and J. G. Gammie has written a particularly helpful historical survey of the interpretation of Daniel ('A Journey Through Danielic Spaces', pp. 144-156). Focusing primarily on the early church fathers (*e.g.*, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Jerome), Aquinas, and the Reformers, Gammie's conclusions leave us with the impression, as expressed in the editorial (p. 116), 'of the impoverishment of our modern, almost antiseptic interpretation in face of the riches found in other times'.

Many students have only a passing acquaintance with Hebrew poetry, and yet all of us who preach or teach from, *e.g.*, the psalms and the prophets need to know how to handle it sensitively. This area is also a growth industry among scholars, and one useful way of entering into recent advances is through the discussion in *JSOT* 28 (1984) of J. L. Kugel's ground-breaking work, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*. Contributions by F. Landy, a specialist in literature, W. G. E. Watson, whose own *magnum opus* in this field appeared in 1985, and P. D. Miller, give a guarded welcome to Kugel's main proposal that Hebrew parallelism is best understood by seeing the second half of the line as climactic rather than merely synonymous or antithetic. If this proposal becomes more widely adopted, it will significantly affect Old Testament poetic interpretation. Other proposals by Kugel, such as the abolition of any real distinction between prose and poetry, are received less warmly, though Landy in particular has a range of insights to offer.

Finally, a word about the task in which we are all involved, 'Interpreting Scripture'. This is actually the title of a two-part article by J. Goldingay in the new evangelical Anglican journal *Anvil* (vol. 1 (1984), pp. 153-162, 261-281). By drawing on a wide variety of modern sources as a guide to this age-old question, Goldingay reminds us that we really interpret God's Word best when we cease to adopt the attitude of master over that word and become instead its servant. Academic and believing approaches are essential partners in that process, so that we learn not only to listen to Scripture, but make its words our words too.
Martin Selman

New Testament

We begin our (very selective) survey of recent New Testament articles with one by Douglas Moo in *JSNT* 20 (1984) 3-49 on 'Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law'. Moo helpfully surveys the relevant gospel passages, not least Matthew 5:17-20, and he concludes that 'Jesus upholds the continuing validity of the entire OT Scriptures, but also asserts that this validity must be understood in the light of its fulfilment . . . the validity or abrogation of laws appears to be decided entirely by their relationship to Jesus' teaching and to the new situation which his coming inaugurates.' Among particular points he makes are that Jesus taught the priority of love within the law, not love in place of law, that 'all these things' in Matthew 5:18 refers to the 'whole divine purpose' and that the 'commands' of 5:19 are the laws of the Old Testament (understood in the light of their fulfilment in Jesus) rather than Jesus' own commands. Other articles in *JSNT* include the following in vol. 22: P. W. Barnett on 'Opposition in Corinth' (pp. 3-17), Craig Blomberg on 'The Law in Luke-Acts' (pp. 53-80), Colin Hemer on 'Epiousios' (pp. 81-94), Gordon Wenham on 'Matthew and Divorce' (pp. 95-107).

The title 'Son of man' is of the greatest importance in the gospels, but scholarly opinion continues to differ on its origin and meaning as much as ever. Two recent books (both reviewed in *Themelios*) take opposed views on the matter: Barnabas Lindars in his *Jesus Son of Man* (SPCK, 1983) believes that Jesus used the phrase 'Son of man' self-referentially to mean 'a man like me' but without Danielic overtones; Seyoon Kim in *'The 'Son of Man'" as the Son of God* (Tübingen, Mohr: 1983) argues for the Danielic origin of the phrase and sees it as implying a significant claim on Jesus' part to be the authoritative representative of the people of God. The scholarly debate over the title has gone on in the periodical literature with articles by Matthew Black in *ExpT* 95 (1983-1984), pp. 200-206, by Maurice Casey in *ExpT* 96 (1984-1985), pp. 233-36, by Richard Bauckham in *JSNT* 23 (1985), pp. 23-33 and in the same issue of the same journal, pp. 35-41, by Lindars replying to Bauckham. But perhaps most worthwhile is William Horbury's quite technical article 'The Messianic Associations of "The Son of Man"' in *JTS* 36 (1985), pp. 34-55. Horbury argues that there was a widely shared expectation of the Davidic Messiah in the first century AD and that Daniel 7:13 and the expression 'son of man' were probably interpreted messianically before the Christian period. Of Jesus' use of the title he says, 'The range of meaning allowed it to be both self-referential and messianic; in its aspect of opacity which the hearer was invited to pierce, it resembled the parables.'

Another important debate going on among New Testament scholars at present concerns Paul, Judaism and the law. The debate arose to a considerable extent out of E. P. Sanders' book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM, 1977), in which Sanders argued that the Judaism of New Testament times did not teach justification by legal achievement, but saw the law within the context of a covenant of grace ('covenantal nomism'). That obviously raises the question of how we are to understand Paul's sharp critique in his letters of those who teach justification by 'works of the law'. Scholars have proposed different answers, some suggesting that first-century Judaism was more legalistic than Sanders recognized, others seeking to understand Paul in new ways. James Dunn has now contributed two significant articles to the debate, the first in the *BJRL* 65 (1983), pp. 95-122, 'The New Perspective on Paul', the second in *NTS* 31 (1985), pp. 523-542, 'Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10-14)'. He argues that in criticizing those who trust in 'works of the law' Paul is criticizing Jewish national pride in the outward marks of Judaism, such as circumcision, rather than moral striving as such. Paul can be very positive about the law and doing the law when this is in its proper perspective within a context of faith in Christ; but he objects to the outward signs of the law

being used as an exclusive badge of salvation. Dunn's view is attractive, but that it is not the whole story is suggested by Heikki Räisänen in another article in the same *NTS*, pp. 543-553, 'Galatians 2.16 and Paul's Break with Judaism', in which he suggests that Dunn underestimates Paul's radical break with the whole Mosaic law (not just with the external signs of Judaism), and even more significantly by Robert Gundry in a wide-ranging article (discussing Sanders, not Dunn), 'Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul' in *Biblica* 66 (1985), pp. 1-38. Gundry concludes that, although first-century Judaism did not teach works-righteousness as the way into the covenant, it did lay stress on legal piety and achievement as crucial for staying within the covenant. Paul, on the other hand, emphasizes faith in Christ as decisive for staying in the covenant, as well as for getting in, and sees works as evidence of salvation not as a means to retaining it. In the course of his argument Gundry defends the view that juristic categories were important for Paul's view of salvation. Yet another worthwhile article on Paul and the law is C. Thomas Rhyne's '*Nomos Dikaiosynēs* and the Meaning of Romans 10:4' in *CBQ* 47 (1985), pp. 486-499, in which the author supports the view that Christ is the end of the law in that he is its goal. Pertinent to the same topic is John Fischer's 'Paul in his Jewish Context', *EQ* 57 (1985), pp. 211-236, and not unrelated is F. F. Bruce's 'The Church in Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles', *BJRL* (1985), pp. 641-661. Another noteworthy article in *BJRL* is Graham Stanton's 'The Gospel of Matthew and Judaism', vol. 66 (1984), pp. 264-284.

Other Pauline articles include Ronald Fung's 'Revelation and Tradition: the Origins of Paul's Gospel', *EQ* 57 (1985), pp. 23-41, in which he shows that the initial understanding of the gospel that Paul received at his conversion (*cf.* Gal. 1:12) was subsequently confirmed and filled out through the tradition that he received (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:3). Peter R. Jones has an interesting article in *TynB* 36 (1985), pp. 3-34, entitled '1 Corinthians 15:8: Paul the Last Apostle', in which he argues that the phrase 'last of all' in 1 Corinthians 15:8 is very significant, indicating that Paul saw his apostleship to the Gentiles as concluding the eschatological servant-ministry of the apostles, which had begun with Peter and the other apostles working among the Jews. His thesis tells against the views of those who believe in an ongoing apostolate in the modern church and against those who suggest that the early church was pluralistic in its theology.

In the same issue of the *Tyndale Bulletin,* Colin Hemer contributes two articles, one on 'First Person Narrative in Acts 27-28' (pp. 79-109) and another on 'The Name of Paul' (pp. 179-83). Mention must finally be made of Howard Marshall's article 'New Testament Perspectives on War', *EQ* 57 (1985), pp. 115-132, in an issue of the journal devoted to 'Perspectives on War' and including articles on the Old Testament by Derek Kidner, on church history by David Wright, and on biblical-theological perspectives by George Carey.

David Wenham

Dogmatic and systematic theology

In a foreword to the first issue of the recently launched *Reformed Theological Journal* Professor F. S. Leahy comments, 'It would be interesting to know how many such journals are now in circulation.' One is tempted to give the same answer as Origen offered to the question who wrote Hebrews: 'God only knows.' Certainly there are more than any student or minister can cope with and each of us will have to make a careful personal choice dictated by cost, time and the quality of what is available. From the standpoint of systematics the two most useful publications in English are still the *Westminster Theological Journal* and the *Scottish Journal of Theology.*

The number of studies appearing on the question of the Son of Man is such that all self-respecting theological colleges will soon have to consider appointing Professors of Son of Man Studies. The first number of vol. 47 of the *Westminster Theological Journal* (1985) contains an excellent and important article on this subject by David R. Jackson. Entitled 'The Priority of the Son of Man Sayings' it comes to a series of conclusions which are of considerable significance for Christology. In particular, it argues from the tendency of the early church to replace the Son of Man designation with some other title that it was Jesus who coined the title with reference to himself (which means that we have every right to use the designation as a key to his self-understanding).

The fall issue of the same journal contains two articles which deserve a mention. One is a very thorough review of Calvin's view of the extent of the atonement by Roger Nicole. This is very much oriented to R. T. Kendall's *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649.* Nicole makes clear that there is nothing at all new in Kendall's thesis. As early as 1646 Moses Amyraut himself was quoting Calvin in support of his own position and in 1655 Jean Daille published some 43 pages of extracts from Calvin which, he claimed, favoured universal grace. Nicole's own conclusion is that 'Definite atonement fits better than universal grace into the total pattern of Calvin's teaching'.

The other noteworthy article in this issue is one by Fred H. Klooster entitled 'Barth and the Future of Evangelical Theology'. This is in fact a review of Bernard Ramm's *After Fundamentalism: The Future of Evangelical Theology.* Klooster is sharply critical of Ramm's thesis that the future for evangelicals lies along the road charted by Barth: 'Ramm apparently reads Barth through evangelical glasses: he does not seem to grasp how Enlightenment objections led many theologians, including Barth, to radical reinterpretation of historic, doctrinal terms'. The alternative proposed by Klooster is that we should take our programme from the work of Abraham Kuyper.

Among several interesting studies in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* mention may be first of all of 'An Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman' by Dr Alan Sell (in vol. 38, no 1). This is a historic-theological study of three major representatives of British Methodism, Presbyterianism and Congregationalism respectively: William Pope, Robert Watts and Andrew Fairbairn. The same issue contains some reflections on Karl Rahner's monograph *The Trinity* by Dr C. M. LaCugna in an article entitled 'Reconceiving the Trinity'. Its overriding concern is to reinforce Rahner's insistence that the doctrine of the trinity must not be isolated from the doctrine of salvation: 'There is indeed a mutually determining relationship between God *pro nobis* and God *in se.*'

In vol. 38 no. 3 of the *Scottish Journal of Theology,* Dr David Ferguson has a useful contribution under the title 'Inter-

preting the Resurrection'. Is the resurrection an event in the life of Jesus or in the life of the believer? Ferguson discusses three possible approaches: the radical (represented by Bultmann and others), the liberal (Schillebeeckx, Küng and Mackey) and the traditional. He himself is inclined towards the traditional interpretation because otherwise it is very difficult to answer two crucial questions: why should faith take the primitive form of confessing 'Christ is risen' if this is only an inference from faith? And why should the New Testament reverse the logical order and call upon people to believe because Christ is risen rather than conclude that Christ is risen because people continue to believe in him after his death?

But probably the single most interesting article to appear during the past year was one by Dr Alister McGrath in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38, no. 2. It is entitled 'The Moral Theory of the Atonement: an Historical and Theological Critique'. Dr McGrath argues very convincingly that Abelard did not teach an 'Abelardian' exemplarist theory of the atonement. The idea that he did has prevailed only because scholars have isolated a single, small portion of his *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* as if it represented his teaching as a whole. In fact the doctrine of the atonement expounded by Hastings Rashdall (*The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology*, 1920) was the product not of Abelard, as he thought, but of the Enlightenment. Furthermore, as set forth by the theologians of the *Aufklärung*, it was subjected to a penetrating critique by Immanuel Kant, 'with the result that the moral theory of the Atonement, where it was held at all in the post-Kantian era, was held in a significantly modified form. Rashdall appears to be quite unaware of this point.' Through McGrath's own critique one other fact emerges with striking clarity: no satisfactory doctrine of the atonement is possible where there is a shallow view of sin. The Exemplarist Theory and Pelagianism are natural bed-fellows.

Taking a broader perspective one can see certain themes running clearly through recent periodicals. One of these is Process Theology which is the subject, for example, of an article in the *Westminster Theological Journal* (vol. 47, no. 2) entitled 'An Exposition and Critique of the Process Doctrines of Divine Mutability and Immutability' by Bruce A. Ware. One of the major representatives of this school also presents an up-to-date account of his thought in *Exp T* (July, 1985), 'How Was God In Christ?' by Professor Norman Pittenger.

Another recurring theme is hermeneutics. There is a panoramic article on the subject in *Theology Today* (October, 1985) from the pen of Albert C. Oulter ('Towards a Postliberal Hermeneutic'). In fact, all the articles in this particular issue 'either reflect hermeneutical interests or demonstrate hermeneutical procedures'. Mention may also be made of two other studies. Luther's hermeneutic is discussed by the Rev C. Clifton Black in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* (vol. 38, no. 3: 'Unity and Diversity in Luther's Biblical Exegesis: Psalm 51 as a Test Case) Calvin receives similar treatment under the more general title *'Brevitas et Felicitas:* Toward an Understanding of Calvin's Hermeneutic' by Richard C. Gamble (*Westminster Theological Journal*, vol. 47, no. 1).

The other theme currently in vogue appears to be war (a variation on the quest for a political theology). This is by no means confined to the more radical theological stream. The April 1985 issue of the *EQ* is devoted entirely to 'Perspectives on War', with contributions by Derek Kidner, Howard Marshall, David Wright and George Carey. And the *Churchman* (vol. 99, no. 1) has an article which appears to be the last word in relevance: 'A Theology for the Nuclear Debate' by David Kibble.

Back to our starting-point. The newly arrived *Reformed Theological Journal*, published by the Reformed Theological College, Belfast, does not contain any material relating directly to dogmatics. It does however, contain two interesting reviews: one of T. F. Torrance's *The Mediation of Christ* by F. S. Leahy and the other of Paul Helm's *The Divine Revelation* by W. D. J. McKay.

Donald MacLeod

Church history

The influence of Platonism on the patristic formulation of Christian beliefs is the question tackled by C. J. de Vogel in 'Platonism and Christianity: a Mere Antagonism or a Profound Common Ground?', *VC* 39 (1985), pp. 1-62. Taking issue with a distinguished German scholar, Heinrich Dörrie, he argues that several leading fathers, including Athanasius, betray an impact of Platonism going beyond language to metaphysics. This is a careful survey, concluding that 'Platonism *did* contribute to the expression of Christian faith in the Trinitarian and Christological dogma of the fourth and fifth centuries', but not warranting talk of a wholesale Platonizing of biblical Christianity.

Two articles challenge common interpretations of Erasmus' work. In 'Novum Testamentum a nobis versum: the Essence of Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament' (*JTS* 35 (1984), pp. 394-413), H. J. de Jonge claims persuasively that Erasmus' main objective was his new Latin translation. The Greek, whose inadequacies as a 'new edition' have often been pointed out, was intended only to serve the reader of the Latin and, like the *Annotations* which also accompanied it, to justify its deviations from the Vulgate. Even more surprising is M. O'R. Boyle's study, 'Erasmus and the "Modern" Question: Was He Semi-Pelagian?', in *AfRH* 75 (1984), pp. 59-77. She believes that his book on free will has been misread because note has not been taken of its proper genre. The title, *Diatribe seu Collatio*, shows it to be a disputation based on comparison, in this case of apparently conflicting biblical texts. Erasmus' position was 'patently the Augustinian formulation', which he argued for not as church doctrine but as reliable (*satis probabile*) opinion. The article is a salutary reminder of the problems involved in reading medieval texts.

What was it in late medieval Catholicism that led so many to embrace the new gospel of the Reformers? According to L. C. Duggan, 'Fear and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation', *AfRH* 75 (1984), pp. 153-175, it was not widespread religious *Angst* nurtured by an oppressive penitential system, for there is no evidence that confessional practice, which was lax rather than severe, could have acted 'as an incubator of overheated consciences' by the million. While this warns against slick generalizations about pre-Reformation Catholicism, it leaves the undoubted appeal of Protestantism unexplained.

In 'Luther's Impact on the Sixteenth Century' (*Sixteenth Century Journal* 16 (1985), pp. 3-14), S. H. Hendrix makes some sensible points in contributing to the important debate

about the 'success' or 'failure' of the German Reformation sparked off by G. Strauss' book, *Luther's House of Learning.* Hendrix suggests that Strauss' categories are not helpful in this context. Luther's achievement may have been more to abolish the old practice of religion than secure the acceptance of the new, but he provided the space for the new forms to be cultivated. In any case, the new gospel directly authorized greater involvement in non-religious activities.

The roots in Calvin himself of the Calvinists' advocacy of rebellion are further clarified in C. M. N. Eire's study, 'Prelude to Sedition? Calvin's Attack on Nicodemism and Religious Compromise', *AfRH* 76 (1985), pp. 120-145. Nicodemism was the (Protestant) practice of outwardly conforming, without inner assent, to (Catholic) religion. Calvin's unqualified opposition to it (because, *inter alia,* he refused to separate body and spirit in worship) laid the basis for a 'politics of purity', which exempted the true Christian from civic obligations involving pollution from idolatry. This 'righteous distancing' remained passive in Calvin's own writings, but helped to ease Protestants, especially in France, away from total allegiance to rulers.

'Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work: "The Life of David Brainerd" and Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Culture', by J. Conforti (*Ch Hist,* 54 (1985), pp. 188-201), analyses the influence of an enormously popular evangelical classic. In Conforti's view, it supports claims that Edwards materially contributed to religious reform and Christian activism. The work's most important gift to evangelical America was 'a high-flown doctrine of true virtue as consisting of radical disinterested benevolence'.

Another famous evangelical is J. H. Moorhead's subject in *JPH* 62 (1984), pp. 95-110 – 'Charles Finney and the Modernization of America'. This suggestive interpretation magnifies Finney's historical significance, but at the cost, many will feel, of a further diminution of his theological stature. Moorhead pin-points 'his role in promoting a standard religious culture, his commitment to a voluntaristic, functional view of community, his love of efficiency, utility, and rational calculation, his faith in human capacity to shape the future, and his eager embrace of innovation' – such that he did not expect ever to be able 'to stereotype my theological views'.

Other skeletons from the evangelical cupboard are exposed by R. Nutt in 'Robert Lewis Dabney, Presbyterians and Women's Suffrage', *JPH* 62 (1984), pp. 339-353. Dabney opposed women's political rights as stalwartly as preaching by women, for they must be free for 'higher duties' – which reveals an ardent Calvinist espousing a quite un-Calvinian depreciation of political responsibilities.

The Tyndale Historical Theology Lecture for 1983 also points to lessons for the present from the evangelical past. 'Inspiration and Criticism: The Nineteenth-Century Crisis' (*TynB* 35 (1984), pp. 129-159), by N. M. de S. Cameron, argues that 'What led to the break-up of the infallibilist consensus in nineteenth-century Britain was a loss of confidence in its dogmatic warrants. The result was an attempt to hold them in tandem with warrants historical and critical, which latter imperceptibly took over the Conservatives' self-understanding.' What conservatives lacked (and no doubt lack still), was not biblical scholars but dogmaticians. While they pleaded for a 'truer' criticism, they were in fact advancing the growing credibility of the critical case, by abandoning the appeal to dogmatic considerations. The lessons of this historical analysis are, however, unlikely to be learnt unless more guidance is offered on how the challenge *should* have been met. Also required is some sharper definition of what is meant by 'criticism'.

Finally, something completely different. The Orthodox loom increasingly large in world Christianity. G. L. Freeze in 'Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered' (*JEH* 36 (1985), pp. 82-102), presents an emerging reassessment among scholars which rejects the caricature of an Orthodox Church supinely subservient to the Tsarist regime, even in contravention of clear religious duty. If such a stereotype should prove more false than true, we should all rejoice.

D. F. Wright

Ethics/social ethics/society

An example of the contribution made by specialist journals to ethical debate can be found in the *Journal of Medical Ethics* (published by The Society for the Study of Medical Ethics, London). Over the past couple of years it has given quite a lot of space to the issues raised by the British 'Warnock Report' on human fertilization and embryology. An example of the excellence of some of these contributions is to be found in the March 1984 issue in which Teresa Iglesias and Gordon Dunstan contribute to the ethical debate about the status of the human embryo. Iglesias makes the more conservative case that, 'to be a human being is to be a person' and, therefore, there are no stages in our existence at which we are not to take it that this is the case. What makes us persons is the kind of being we are. This clearly is an ontological sort of way into ethics. Dunstan, by contrast, argues that the claim to absolute protection for the embryo from the beginning cannot be said to represent the historic Christian tradition even though it is the contemporary Roman Catholic one. He argues the case for increasing protection as the embryo develops and that this has roots in the use of Scripture in the Christian tradition. The debate will, doubtless, continue. It is to be hoped that it will continue with this level of argument and discussion.

Another secular journal which is worthy of note is the *Journal of Applied Philosophy* which is the journal of the society of the same name. The latest issue of this journal contains a closely argued article by Richard Tur providing another way into the Devlin/Hart debate on morality and the law. He rejects the view that the law is merely concerned with the prevention of harm and argues that in some sense the law is, in itself, a moral system. Attempting to plot a middle course between naturalism and positivism he develops the notion of 'normative positivism'. Law may be seen as community morality and everyone has an interest in its moral content. The latest issue of *Law and Justice* (Hilary/Easter 1985) published by the Edmund Plowden Trust, contains some very interesting articles on the question of privacy with particular reference to the Irish constitution and marital privacy, and to the decisions of the US Supreme Court in Roe v Wade over the woman's right to terminate her pregnancy being guarded by her constitutional right to privacy.

Turning to the religious journals, it is worth noting that the *Modern Churchman,* upholding the liberal tradition in the church, has published some good material on a range of issues. Two articles by Kimmet Edgar on I. T. Ramsey's Method in Ethics (Vol. XXVII Nos. 3 & 4) are particularly stimulating. The contribution made by Ian Ramsey to Christian thought has been formative and not least, as the articles point out, in the area of some of the most complex issues of our day. The articles give insight into Ramsey's careful attention to the facts, to his openness to the moral claim arising from encounter with particular situations and his sensitivity to the personal and the human.

The magazine *Crucible* produced by the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England, contains a regular run of articles on social questions. The July-September 1985 issue contained a series of articles on the subject of work. David Eaton raises the question of worth at work and explores how human worth is affected by work (or unemployment) experiences. He rejects the idea that work is about justification and affirms work rather as a place of potential growth and enrichment. Ian Gaskell, in the same issue, provides a modern parable of coal and steel from Rotherham and Barnsley.

The magazine *Third Way* continues to provide a serious evangelical contribution to social and cultural issues. From November 1984 for seven issues the magazine ran a series by Richard Bauckham on 'Using the Bible to do politics'. The articles mark a valuable contribution to such issues as the relation of Old and New Testaments, whether the Bible speaks only to personal issues and to individuals, if it is addressed to the church and not to society, *etc.* The hermeneutical question is a crucial one for evangelicals in particular. These articles provide much good sense!
John Gladwin

Religions
Lesslie Newbigin has contributed much already on the question of the relationship between Christianity and world religions. In 'Christ and the World of Religions', *Churchman* 97 (1983), pp. 16-30 he looks again at some of the central issues in terms of the debate between Hendrik Kraemer and A. G. Hogg which has been resurrected recently by authors such as Eric Sharpe and O. V. Jathanna. Newbigin clearly defines the heart of the debate: 'It is the issue between a view which takes the religious consciousness as the fundamental datum for discussion (Hogg) and the view which takes history . . . as fundamental (Kraemer).' In developing his position Hogg, who has been followed in this by Wilfred Cantwell Smith, distinguishes between 'faith', which is a universal quality, and 'faiths', the concrete and historical forms in which faith is embodied. Newbigin, following Kraemer and developing his arguments, shows that such a distinction is untenable. Towards the end of the article he returns to the difficult question of the fate of those who never hear the gospel and makes some very helpful suggestions.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith's distinction between faith (the essence of religion) and belief (its form) is examined in 'Wilfred Cantwell Smith on Faith and Belief', *RS* 20 (1984), pp. 353-366 by William J. Wainwright. Wainwright argues convincingly that the gulf which Smith opens between faith and belief is not valid and that to insist upon it will not prove helpful as the world religions come into increasing contact. Wainwright concludes that: (i) doctrinal schemes are important and that, therefore, the relationship between religions is a much more difficult matter than Smith is prepared to admit; (ii) 'to take people seriously we must take their beliefs seriously'; (iii) taking truth seriously involves assessing the truth of 'reasoned affirmations'.

Another article which deals with one of Cantwell Smith's theories is 'Words and the Medieval Notion of "Religion"' by Peter Biller in *JEH* 36 (1985), pp. 351-369. Smith argues that 'religion' in the sense of a system (Christian religion, Jewish religion, *etc*) is a meaning which only appeared in the sixteenth century. This is part of Smith's argument that exclusivism is a modern phenomenon. Biller's detailed linguistic evidence does not support Smith's theory but suggests that the idea of religion as a system can be found in the medieval period.

One argument which John Hick uses in calling for a Copernican revolution in theology is that the world religions were developed in isolation from each other but that in the global village they must develop together. This argument from separate development is obviously questionable in the case of the Semitic religions or the Indian religions though it might be more justified when applied to links between the Semitic and Indian religions. There is some evidence of communication, however, and some of it is discussed by David Scott in 'Christian responses to Buddhism in premedieval times' *Numen* 32 (1985), pp. 88-100. The early evidence does not amount to much, although it is interesting to learn that Clement of Alexandria and Jerome at least had some knowledge of Buddhism. The Chinese Nestorian documents from the sixth century onwards are much more detailed and say much about the opportunity and dangers of culturalization in spreading the gospel.

John Hick is also taken to task in a powerful article by Roger Trigg in *RS* 19 (1983), pp. 297-310 entitled 'Religion and the Threat of Relativism'. Trigg argues strongly that if the possibility of objective truth is abandoned then logically a major step has been taken in the direction of relativism and religion is threatened with subjectivism and nihilism. 'Religion', he states in his conclusion (p. 310), 'must be seen to be making claims to truth of which all men should take account, if it is not to wither away.' J. Kellenberger has responded to Trigg with 'The Slippery Slope of Religious Relativism', *RS* 21 (1985), pp. 39-52 in which he argues that it is possible to stop on the slippery slope. His argument is factually correct but does not undermine Trigg's argument that to try to stop anywhere on the slope is illogical and that to take the first step onto the slope is a step away from truth.

In a short article entitled 'Choices', in his quarterly bulletin *Co-ordinate* 23 (1985), pp. 1-3, Christopher Lamb reflects on a recent programme on Religious Education in which he took part. The programme concentrated on the questions that arise in the context of a multiracial and multifaith context. Lamb provides a very good framework for discussing the host of issues that arise in this sensitive area.
Dewi Arwel Hughes

Book reviews

John Drury, **The Parables in the Gospels: History and Allegory** (London: SPCK, 1985), xi + 180 pp., £6.95.

The title of this book was deliberately not 'The Parables of Jesus', because one of its distinctive features is its redaction-critical approach to the parables: the author gives the major part of his book over to separate consideration of the parables in Matthew, Mark, Luke and (briefly) John, and he makes no attempt to get back to the historical Jesus. He thinks that the sort of historical reconstruction attempted by Jeremias and others is an impossible task, and in any case he makes it clear that he regards much of the parabolic material in the gospels to be the composition of the evangelists.

Another distinctive feature of the book is the author's claim that most of the gospel parables, with the exception of some in Luke, are highly allegorical; contrast the common view that they are life-like stories illustrating theological truths. He observes the widespread use of allegory in the OT and in other Jewish and early Christian literature, and he criticizes the attempts of Jeremias to explain parables, such as the parable of the sower, as historically realistic.

The author of this book is right to draw attention to some of the problems in Jeremias' historical approach to the parables (problems also effectively noted in J. W. Sider's article in *JBL* 102 (1983), pp. 61-83). But he is much too sceptical about the overall reliability of the gospels, regularly ascribing things to the evangelists' redaction rather than to early Christian tradition on inconclusive grounds (*e.g.* on the basis of unimpressive vocabulary statistics). He does without 'Q' or any equivalent, making Matthew the author of much 'Q' material and Luke dependent on Matthew; in so doing he underestimates the case for a common pre-Matthean, pre-Lukan tradition, for example in the eschatological parables of Matthew 24 and 25 (and parallels).

The author is right to insist that the allegorical element in the gospel parables is significant. But he goes much too far when he treats almost all the parables, certainly in Matthew and Mark, as artificial and rather esoteric allegories rather than as stories taken from life and adapted to a didactic purpose. Jeremias may indeed be wrong in his explanation of the background of the parable of the sower, but that parable still makes good sense in the agricultural context of Palestine.

The book makes some interesting observations about the distinctiveness of the parables in the different gospels, though also some quite unpersuasive observations: did Mark see the parables as designed to obscure the truth from the crowds, or Matthew expect the church to observe Jewish dietary customs? But its value is more as a provocative tract to stimulate or irritate scholars than as a generally useful handbook on the parables in the gospels.

David Wenham, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

David Wenham, **The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse** (Gospel Perspectives vol. 4; Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1984), xi + 406 pp., £16.00/$24.50 hb; £8.95/$13.50 pb.

The Tyndale House Gospels Research Project has brought together a number of evangelical scholars who have examined the gospels from many angles. This is the only monograph among the five volumes which have been published by participants in the Project. It bears the same hallmarks as the four volumes of essays: careful scholarly work on some of the most complex and most disputed issues in current study of the gospels.

David Wenham is an able British evangelical scholar. In this, his first book, he explores in considerable detail the particularly difficult chapters in the gospels which contain Jesus' eschatological discourse, Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21. He is primarily interested in the relationships between the traditions in these chapters; his monograph is essentially a sophisticated study in source criticism. Even though his own fresh proposals are unlikely to gain wide acceptance, his book will be welcomed as a major contribution to discussion of these passages. This is a learned and technical study – not the place at which one should start work on the gospels!

Dr Wenham believes that the two document hypothesis (*i.e.* Matthew and Luke have both used Mark and Q) needs review and defence, but not outright rejection. This would be widely accepted, but the author goes considerably further. He argues that there was an elaborate pre-synoptic eschatological discourse on which Matthew, Mark and Luke all drew, and which may well have been used both by Paul and by the author of Revelation. On this view Matthew is the evangelist who most often and fully reproduces the pre-synoptic discourse; Mark abbreviates it considerably; Luke rearranges and paraphrases the discourse fairly freely (p. 365). Since these conclusions about the work of the evangelists are in many ways an exact reversal of usually accepted opinions, Dr Wenham is nothing if not bold!

His theory is essentially a revival of the Ur-Markus hypothesis, *i.e.* the view that Matthew and Luke drew independently on an earlier form of Mark which differed considerably from Mark's gospel as we now know it. But Dr Wenham also accepts that Matthew and Luke used our present Mark and a version of Q. He concedes that his hypothesis is complicated, but claims that it makes more sense of many synoptic similarities, differences and peculiarities than other explanations. He notes that the pre-synoptic discourse he has reconstructed is coherently ordered and arranged: 'it may well be that Jesus himself was largely responsible for the logical and systematic presentation of his teaching' (p. 374). But Dr Wenham accepts that the order and arrangement of the discourse has been lost to a considerable extent by the synoptists. So although he insists (correctly) that some redaction critics have made exaggerated claims about the freedom with which the evangelists have handled earlier traditions, he accepts that the teaching of Jesus has been shaped and re-ordered in its transmission.

In addition to the eschatological teaching of Jesus, Dr Wenham also considers (more briefly) the 'mission' traditions. Once again he envisages a pre-synoptic discourse known to all three synoptists: 'Matthew . . . retains the form of the mission discourse best; Mark abbreviates it; Luke sits most lightly to original contexts' (p. 251). He hints that similar results might emerge from thorough study of Matthew 5-7.

Dr Wenham's observations on individual passages are always judicious and often perceptive. His judgments are cautious: the book abounds with words such as 'perhaps', 'possibly', 'it could be'. But is he on the track (at last) of a solution to the synoptic problem? I must confess that although his suggestions are interesting and often plausible, they do not seem to me to be persuasive. Once one accepts that both Matthew and Luke have drawn (in part at least) on Mark and on some form of Q, it seems difficult to deny that Matthew has abbreviated, rearranged and reinterpreted his traditions and that Luke is the most conservative of the three synoptic evangelists. The synoptic problem will tease NT scholars for a long time to come. And scholars who share similar presuppositions will find themselves driven to adopt differing hypotheses.

Graham Stanton, King's College, London.

Grant R. Osborne, **The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 344 pp., $11.95.

In this revision of his doctoral thesis, Osborne (now Associate Professor of NT at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) sets out to consider the resurrection narratives of the four canonical gospels especially from the standpoint of redaction criticism. The study itself follows a four-part outline: (1) a survey of previous study; (2) a redaction-critical analysis of each of the stories in question; (3) a tradition study of the empty tomb and appearance narratives; and (4)

a concluding section on history and interpretation in the resurrection accounts. An extensive bibliography is included.

While this monograph is sub-titled 'A Redactional Study', it is obvious that the author's agenda was threefold. First, of course, Osborne wants to determine the theological *programme* of each of the four evangelists. Second, as an evangelical, Osborne also demonstrates a marked interest in affirming the fundamental historical authenticity of the narratives. And third, one finds here an *apologia* for the employment of the redaction-critical method aimed at the most conservative of NT scholars. How well does *The Resurrection Narratives* fulfil its agenda?

As for the attempt to uncover the theology of each of the evangelists, Osborne is to be commended for his attention to detail and his survey of previous scholarship on numerous points. As a result of his inquiry, he is able to point to the distinctive interests of each evangelist and suggest how each made use of the available traditions. However, Osborne's meticulous, verse-by-verse approach tends to mask the thematic development of the narratives, and one gains the impression that the resurrection accounts are treated too much in isolation from the earlier portions of the gospels. Perhaps Osborne could have said more at the outset about what, *e.g.*, Mark was doing in his whole gospel which can be traced in his chapter 16. Additionally, does Osborne not go too far in attributing to the synoptic writers narrative competence? Stylistic and theological inconsistencies remain in each of the narratives, and this raises questions about the high level of authorial care Osborne grants the synopticists. Interestingly, Osborne's portrait of John is that of a second-class redactor when compared to the other evangelists. The fourth evangelist, it would seem, was much more a preserver of tradition than, *e.g.*, Luke; and one cannot help but trace Osborne's own apologetic tendency at work here. Finally, it must be noted that Osborne finds it much easier to list the opinions of others than to deal critically with the issues before venturing a judgment.

Serious NT scholars will be disappointed, too, by Osborne's assessment of the authenticity of the resurrection narratives, not so much because of *what* he says but because of the way he tries to support his assertions. Thus, we find little attempt to resolve the central problem this study raises: if the evangelists exercised such a free hand in providing their gospels with resurrection stories, how can historical veracity be assumed for the accounts? One may counter that this is no insurmountable obstacle, but this does not detract from the necessity of treating the problem seriously. Further, we must query whether Osborne has paid sufficient attention to the fact that redaction criticism can suggest how an evangelist used his tradition and may even be able to point to a writer's underlying tradition, but cannot determine the historicity of a tradition. In fact, in part three of this study ('Tradition Study'), where we might have expected an extensive examination of the development of the resurrection narratives accounting for the apparent inconsistencies between the four stories in the gospels and providing reasonable arguments for the historical likelihood of this or that aspect of the tradition, we read little more than a string of assertions regarding the authenticity of the various parts of a more-or-less harmonized account. The complexity of the evidence calls for a more comprehensive treatment of the issues.

For these reasons doubts may be raised as to the usefulness of this study as an apology for the redaction-critical approach to the study of the gospels, though students of the resurrection narratives may find this a helpful book for its summaries of scholarly opinion. We must note finally that, as regards the mechanical presentation of this monograph, the incredible proliferation of editorial blunders renders this a most difficult book through which to work.

Joel B. Green, New College Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

C. M. Tuckett, ed., **Synoptic Studies: The Ampleforth Conferences of 1982 and 1983** (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), xii + 231 pp., £18.50/$28.50 hb; £8.95/$13.50 pb.

Twenty years or so ago most NT scholars of all shades of opinion, including conservative evangelicals and Roman Catholics, accepted that Matthew and Luke both used Mark and Q in the composition of their gospels. This solution of the synoptic problem, often referred to as the 'two document hypothesis', has recently been under close scrutiny. A number of conferences have been devoted solely to discussion of rival hypotheses. The essays in this volume were given as papers at conferences held at Ampleforth Abbey in England in 1982 and 1983. They are all competent, but they will be of interest mainly to advanced students and scholars.

Some of the contributors (notably W. R. Farmer and D. L. Dungan) defend the so-called Griesbach hypothesis. On this view Matthew was the first gospel to be written; Luke used Matthew (so there is no need for Q) and finally Mark produced an abbreviated version of both Matthew and Luke. Other contributors offer support for the two document hypothesis (notably C. M. Tuckett and F. G. Downing). M. D. Goulder and H. B. Green accept Marcan priority but reject Q, claiming that Luke has used Matthew as well as Mark.

Will further discussion solve the synoptic problem? These essays suggest that agreement is a long way off. Most scholars would now accept that some of the arguments used in the past to support Marcan priority are less than conclusive, since the phenomena can be explained along other lines. My own view (which would be widely shared) is that alternative hypotheses are much less plausible than Marcan priority and Q. Study of these essays confirms that supporters of the Griesbach hypothesis are still unable to explain why, on their view, Mark would want to abbreviate Matthew and Luke. And although Goulder and Green do try to explain why, on their view, Luke has rearranged Matthew so drastically, their explanations are tortuous to say the least.

But the two finest essays in this volume have little bearing on the synoptic problem. P. S. Alexander shows just how misguided are attempts to invoke the concept of 'midrash' in study of the gospels and in a second essay he provides an excellent study of rabbinic biographical tradition.

Graham Stanton, King's College, London.

David Wenham, ed., **Gospel Perspectives – volume 5: The Jesus Tradition outside the Gospels** (Sheffield/ JSOT Press, 1984), 419 pp., £16.00/$24.50 hb; £8.95/$13.50 pb.

This fifth volume of *Gospel Perspectives* considers the tradition about Jesus found outside the canonical gospels with the special object of discovering what light is shed on these four by other material both inside and outside the NT.

There are two contrasting contributions on Paul, one by the editor of the collection, who examines three passages (1 Cor. 7:10-11; Rom. 12; Gal. 1 and 2) in order to discover whether or not they confirm his previous conclusion on the basis of 1 and 2 Thessalonians that Paul was familiar with a pre-synoptic form of the gospel traditions. Having through detailed scholarly examination of parallel passages reached a positive conclusion, David Wenham shows that such Pauline use of the pre-gospel Jesus-tradition points to its antiquity and to the trustworthiness of the gospels.

The second chapter – on the *logia* of Jesus in 1 Corinthians – takes a less optimistic view of the amount of knowledge that Paul had of the life and ministry of Jesus. The two authors admit that Paul had access to gospel traditions. Nevertheless, they believe that there are surprisingly few explicit recollections about Jesus in Paul's letters.

There are two contributions on the Coptic Gospel of Thomas. Bruce Chilton disagrees with the view that this is the eastern branch of the sayings tradition whose western branch we know as Q. He therefore cannot accept the hypothesis which he attributes to Helmut Koester that this is an independent recension of Q. Instead he sees it as a harmonizing version of Jesus' sayings copied in the fourth century. However, my reading of Koester is that he regards the Gospel of Thomas as belonging to the same literary genre as Q, not as an eastern edition of it. Furthermore, even if the present document was copied in the fourth century, that does not preclude the possibility that the original goes back into the second or perhaps even

first century. Chilton does admit that it is in substance a second-century work.

The second contribution on the Gospel of Thomas is entitled 'Tradition and Redaction in the Parables of the Gospel of Thomas'. Craig Blomberg declares that there are thirteen parables of Jesus, eleven of which have clear parallels in the New Testament. The present reviewer has counted up to fifteen, of which twelve have parallels in the New Testament. He also disagrees with the author when he says that the arguments for independence are not persuasive. I think they are more so than he allows and that the Gnostic influence has still to be proved. It may rather be tainted with Jewish-Christian encratism such as was prevalent in Edessa in the early centuries of the Syrian Church. I cannot therefore accept Blomberg's final conclusion that 'as for the likelihood of Thomas having preserved pre-synoptic forms of these parables, the probability seems slim'.

It is not surprising, therefore, that I find myself more in sympathy with the positive attitude to the Gospel of Thomas tantalizingly given only briefly and in passing in the introduction to a chapter on apocryphal gospels. David Wright states that it is probably the judgment of a clear majority of scholars that Thomas may preserve traditions of the teaching of Jesus independent of, and perhaps more primitive than, the synoptic gospels. While the sayings of Jesus in the apostolic fathers turn out to be dependent on oral tradition rather than written gospels, Justin Martyr made it clear that written sources – 'the memoirs of the Apostles' – were available to him as well as oral tradition.

It is obviously impossible to do justice to a collection of essays in a short review. Only brief mention can be made of other chapters. It is shown that the allusions to sayings of Jesus in James are focused on the ethical material contained in the sermon on the mount/lain. However, the extent of such material in James and 1 Peter, and the use of Daniel in the synoptic eschatological discourse and in the book of Revelation point to pre-synoptic tradition. Thus it is useful to be reminded that there was common knowledge of, and reference to, blocks of Jesus tradition even before the synoptic gospels were written. The value of this volume lies therefore in the support it gives to the trustworthiness of the material which came to be incorporated into the New Testament.

William G. Morrice, St John's College, Durham.

G. K. Beale, **The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St John** (Lanham/London: University Press of America, 1984), xiv + 349 pp., $23.50 hb; $14.25 pb.

This Cambridge PhD thesis is a detailed exploration of the influence of the book of Daniel, particularly on the author of the book of Revelation. It is a competent and highly technical work (not suitable for theological beginners), having various possible implications for the interpretation of the book of Revelation, for example adding some weight to the view that the successive visions of the book are to be understood as temporarily parallel. Its more general interest is as a contribution to the study of the NT use of the OT and in its confirmation of the great importance of Danielic ideas for the NT church, a point noted also in an earlier important work from the same publisher, Desmond Ford's *The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology* (1979).

David Wenham.

C. K. Barrett, **Church, Ministry and Sacraments in the New Testament** (Exeter: Paternoster, 1985), 110 pp., £2.95.

This is a racy survey of the teaching about the three themes named in the title which is to be found in the various part of the book. The author is the renowned former Professor of New Testament at Durham, and he first delivered the material in this volume at the Didsbury Lectures at the British Isles Nazarene College, Manchester. If he does not say anything very new, he at least has an ample right to his opinions on a NT topic.

Those opinions are of a Protestant and cautiously liberal sort. He takes various of the NT books to be pseudonymous. He holds that Jesus made mistakes. He is not particularly concerned to find agreement between the NT writers. Yet he leaves the reader in no doubt of his veneration for Jesus, and indeed for Paul.

The subjects which Prof. Barrett has chosen to treat here are controversial ones, and it may be recalled that, as a Methodist, he took a prominent part in the controversy over the way these matters were handled in the Anglican-Methodist Union scheme of the 1960s – a scheme which he opposed on the grounds that it was contrary to the NT. Although his exposition here does not dwell on these old battles, in which evangelicals fought at his side, it is perhaps the fullest account he has given of the reasons for his stand. They come out particularly clearly in the last chapter, where (rather in the vein of T. F. Torrance's *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers*) he contrasts NT teaching with that found in the sub-apostolic literature. As he says, with equal moderation and perception, there is between the two 'a subtle difference, not easy to define but, I think, impossible not to sense. Some things that at first seemed essential lose their point; others that seemed superfluous gain in importance' (p. 99). These latter things are largely found in the area of church, ministry and sacraments, and the importance that they aquired in the sub-apostolic period has adhered to them in many later forms of Christianity.

Roger Beckwith, Latimer House, Oxford.

Klaas Runia, **The present-day Christological debate** (Issues in contemporary theology, ed. I. Howard Marshall; Leicester/ Downers Grove: IVP, 1984), 120 pp., £4.50.

This book has been expanded into its present form from a paper prepared for the Third Conference of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians, which may be a factor contributing to its weakness since (as perhaps is predictable in any synopsis of such a complex debate) there are some notable omissions and unavoidable over-simplifications. The author himself admits that he has restricted his summary to developments within 'Western, mainly European, theology' (p. 9). Thus there is no mention of 'third world' theology, in particular no mention of 'liberation theology', which is unfortunate since an ideological reinterpretation of the significance of Christ can be more beguiling than a blatant disowning of the Chalcedonian definition. Similarly 'Process Theology' is described in less than two pages in spite of its extensive influence upon academic theology in England and North America, while the major part of a chapter is given to a discussion of the symposium *The Myth of God Incarnate* despite Klaas Runia's own recognition 'that the volume as a whole is rather disappointing' (p. 81). Moreover, there is no consideration of the 'orthodox response' (*e.g. The Truth of God Incarnate*) which (like most reactions) was generally felt to be even more 'disappointing'; in fact recent 'orthodox' restatements of Christology (and their inadequacies?) are hardly mentioned.

After a short introductory chapter the study begins with a brief but favourable summary of the Christology of Karl Barth as a reaffirmation of 'the classical orthodox statements . . . on the person of Christ' (p. 16). Rudolf Bultmann, the post-Bultmannian 'quest for the historical Jesus' and the supposed tension between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith' are reviewed within the space of ten pages. The next chapter consists of a perhaps too favourable evaluation of the contribution of Wolfhart Pannenberg, including the staggeringly misleading statement that Pannenberg 'essentially shares Barth's thinking in categories of revelation' (p. 37), and a contrastingly critical treatment of the Christology of Jürgen Moltmann. Subsequent chapters on the 'abandonment of Chalcedon' amongst Roman Catholic theologians (Schoonenberg,

Schillebeeckx and Küng) and amongst Protestant theologians (Flesseman, Robinson and Berkhof) further compound the question of whether such brief summaries are a helpful introduction or a misleading simplification.

Following a chapter on *The Myth of God Incarnate* debate (mentioned above) the study is concluded with two chapters in which Runia compares these 'new Christologies' to the testimony of the New Testament, examines the manner in which the classical statements of the person of Christ developed out of this New Testament testimony and out of the worship of the early church, and finally (as one would rightly expect from any book on Christology produced by IVP) outlines the disastrous consequences of such 'new Christologies' for the doctrine of salvation. Fundamental to Runia's argument in these concluding chapters (and throughout the book) is the premise that instead of speaking of Christ in merely functional terms (which Runia considers to be the common tendency of the alternative Christologies he has discussed), an adequate Christology must follow the early councils of the church by coming to express a definition of the person of Christ in ontological categories. This is certainly the key issue. The writers that Runia has examined would generally hold in common that the New Testament speaks of Christ primarily in functional terms and that this testimony was distorted at least to some degree by being expressed in the ontological categories of Greek metaphysics. An ontological account of Christ may be demanded by a functional account of Christ, but its form and categories ought also to be determined by it; *i.e.*, a being that is located and defined in the event of becoming. It is this issue that needs to be addressed in far greater depth by those who share an unequivocal commitment to the testimony of the New Testament.

Notwithstanding such inevitable shortcomings the book is a helpful and lucid review and introduction that will be of use to the first-year theological student, to those who have had little formal theological training and to those who, through the pressures of pastoral ministry, have found difficulty in keeping abreast of more recent theological developments. Throughout the book Runia maintains an irenical and generous spirit even to those with whom he greatly disagrees. This is particularly evidenced by his acknowledgment of the 'personal confessions' of some of the writers whose Christology he dismisses as inadequate.

John E. Colwell, London.

D. J. Bartholomew, **God of Chance** (London: SCM Press, 1984), 181 pp., £5.95.

G. Theissen, **Biblical Faith: An Evolutionary Approach** (London: SCM Press, 1984), 194 pp., £5.95.

These recent publications from SCM deal with aspects of the impact of the scientific world-view upon Christian theology. The former is by a statistician who is dissatisfied with traditional theological attitudes to chance, while the latter examines the implications for theology of adopting an evolutionary epistemology.

Central to Bartholomew's work is the belief that chance plays a much more significant role in the created order than is normally permitted in theology. In place of the traditional negative attitude to chance he proposes that it be regarded as a device which God uses to ensure the richness of creation. This is similar to the view expressed by A. R. Peacocke in his 1978 Bampton Lectures (work which Bartholomew uses extensively in developing his own thesis).

God of Chance contains a useful review of the concept of chance in modern science and, in particular, examines its mistreatment in both science and theology. Bartholomew's starting-point is a critique of Monod's contention that chance undermines Christian belief. He is equally critical of those Christians who use arguments based on the improbability of aspects of the created order in their apologetics. In the central chapter of his work he argues that chance and order have to be seen as complementary aspects of the world in which we live. Perhaps because of my training in classical physics I would be inclined to take a more deterministic line than Bartholomew, but, on the whole, I found his treatment of the scientific aspects of chance well-argued and generally convincing.

Less satisfactory is his treatment of the theological aspects of the subject. He sets out to present a number of suggestions which, he believes, would aid a theologian in the construction of a natural theology which treats chance positively. In fact, we get a rather inconclusive discussion of the problems facing any attempt to relate God to the world as it is revealed by modern science. Bartholomew believes that his view has no more difficulties than a deterministic view, but he does not succeed in showing that it is significantly superior.

Turning to Theissen's work we find a survey of the central themes of Christian faith in the light of evolutionary epistemology based on the work of Karl Popper. He adopts such an epistemology in order to relativize what he perceives as contradictions between science and faith. In this way he is able to maintain that science and faith are complementary ways of coping with the mystery of reality. The cost of achieving this complementarity is that the content of faith loses its revealed status and becomes, like science, a set of unverifiable conjectures about reality. Analogous to the biological principle of selection is the principle of falsification which ensures that successful adaptations (whether scientific or religious) to reality are more likely to survive. Interestingly, he regards the rejection of biological selection as a central feature of successful adaptation in cultural evolution. Thus human culture transcends nature red in tooth and claw in so far as it turns its back on attitudes which would be praiseworthy to social Darwinists (*e.g.* laissez-faire economics).

The constant application of these views to Christianity results in a radical reinterpretation which may be illustrated by his treatment of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus, like Buddha, is an example of cultural mutation. The raw materials of Greek and Jewish culture are brought together in a revolutionary synthesis which represents a successful adaptation to reality. Implicit in such a realistic treatment of Jesus' teaching is a denial that Jesus is God incarnate.

Perhaps Theissen is uneasy about taking his reinterpretation to its logical conclusion. In any case he tries to inject an absolute element back into Christianity by affirming that Jesus was the perfect adaptation to reality. This does permit a metaphorical treatment of the incarnation but it seems to run counter to the spirit of Popper's evolutionary epistemology (which seems to me to rule out the notion of a 'perfect' adaptation to reality).

Another disturbing implication of this is that God is presented as an essentially passive transcendent reality. The initiative for cultural and spiritual evolution lies with random mutations within the human race. At one point Theissen explicitly rejects the notion that God directs this evolution as introducing an unacceptable element of teleology into the discussion.

In conclusion, Bartholomew's book provides us with a useful discussion of chance and an interesting example of a Christian scientist who is trying to reconcile his science with his faith. Theissen, on the other hand, represents a capitulation of theology to evolutionary categories which lead ultimately to a denial of the Christian faith.

L. H. Osborn, King's College, London.

Colin A. Russell, **Cross-currents: Interactions between Science and Faith** (Leicester: IVP, 1985), 272 pp., £9.95.

So many poor books on the relation between science and theology have been published that it is a particular pleasure to commend this wide-ranging, historical survey. Although engaging issues in the doctrine of creation that are complex and profound, Russell avoids unnecessary technical jargon, and his book makes pleasantly easy and interesting reading. The difficulty with interdisciplinary study is normally that the practitioner has a less than adequate grasp of the separate disciplines concerned. Russell, a Professor of History of Science and Technology, and an evangelical Christian, is more confident when handling science, and its history, than theology, but it

is to his credit that he is not tempted to speculate in areas of theology where he could not claim expertise.

The best chapters are those dealing with the rise of modern science, and the interaction between Christianity and science in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Russell defends the now well-established thesis that the Christian doctrine of creation played a decisive role in providing the climate which allowed modern science to develop. On the one hand, it implied that the physical world should be rational, and intelligible by man, the crown of creation. On the other hand, it suggested that the rationality of creation was not a pale and necessary reflection of the rationality of God (the common view of the ancient world), but would have its own created rationality, contingent upon the freedom of the creator who decided to create *ex nihilo*. The 'contingent rationality' of such a world could only be discovered by experimental investigation, the clear distinction between the rationality of God and that of creation dispelling the thought common in the fathers, who took too much Greek philosophy into their theology (a point Russell does not develop, but which explains the lack of interest in science in the early centuries of the Christian era), that it might be impious to put nature to the test.

From these religious origins, Russell charts the rise in the eighteenth century of various forms of natural theology, as theologians attempted to synthesize science and theology. The complexity of the pattern that developed, with the predominant tendency to deism fighting an underlying battle with atheism and pantheism, formed the important background to the nineteenth-century conflicts over geology and evolution. Russell draws attention to recent writers who have maintained that *The Origin of Species* was as much a product of contemporary natural theology as a threat to it, thus providing a massive stimulus to that alarming idolization of science which has been so characteristic of the twentieth century.

What has provided the mainspring for this persistent tendency towards a mythological confusion between God and culture? It is here that Russell's account would seem to require some development. Is the culprit not precisely the Newtonian science whose emergence is so well described in this book? Infinitude and absoluteness are attributes of God, yet Newtonian science ascribed them to space and time: it is little wonder that the 'theology' which related itself to this emerging world-view oscillated between deism, pantheism and atheism.

Thus, this scientist-turned-theologian is apt to see rather more inherent conflict between Newtonian science – including the neo-Darwinian theory of evolution – and theology than Russell admits. Yet, this serves to emphasize the vast significance of the changes in science associated with the advent of relativity, with its rejection of the ideas of space and time as infinite and absolute. Russell devotes but four pages of discussion to 'some theological impacts' of 'the crisis in Newtonian physics', in what is perhaps the weakest chapter of the book. Nevertheless, in pointing to further areas of questioning and discovery, Russell's book itself bears the hallmark of good science, and will play an important part in the elucidation of the interaction between science, theology, and wider spheres of culture. It deserves careful study.

Peter Forster, St John's College, Durham.

J. Houston, ed., **Is it Reasonable to Believe in God?** (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1984), 160 pp., £6.75 pb.

It is never easy to review a book consisting of a number of essays produced by different authors and this one is certainly no exception. Nine papers have been brought together here dealing with such issues as 'Arguments for the Existence of God', 'The Claims of Religious Experience', 'God, Good and Evil' and 'Petitionary Prayer'. The contributors are notable philosophers among whom are R. G. Swinburne and A. Flew to name but two. This is an attractively presented volume which precedes each chapter with a few pages of 'Introductory Groundwork' and concludes with 'Questions for Further Discussion'.

However, having said this I am afraid that it has little else in its favour. Without doubt all the papers are meticulous examples of British empiricist philosophy, every argument painstakingly rehearsed, and there is certainly nothing contained within the entire volume that could be considered damaging or even aggressive towards a conservative Christian position. However this is not the only point to be considered. The introduction to the book claims that, 'One purpose of this volume is to make easily available some of the excellent and distinctively different philosophy of religion which has been published more recently.' Despite this laudable sentiment there is little within the book that could be considered in any way 'different' from the sort of empiricist fare that has been the staple diet of philosophers in this country since as far back as Hume. As an example of this type of thinking it is faultless, but it is tired and uninspiring stuff. It is significant that the bibliography contains no references to continental scholarship, confining itself almost completely to the British academic ethos. This in itself is a notable deficiency in a work which claims to be making a serious examination of belief in God. It is a pity that, at a time when the church is crying out for a deeper understanding of what it means to believe in a transcendent God, thinkers in this country continue to produce works which cover the same old ground, albeit using the latest terminology.

Christian theology should have long since passed the stage at which it felt obliged to present its religious claims at the altar of empirical thought. The philosopher Michael Polanyi, among many others, has demonstrated the absolute centrality of faith for human knowledge and points out the many inconsistencies inherent within traditional philosophical scepticism. Greater steps forward might have been taken by this present volume were it to have devoted one or two chapters to the perennial debates concerning arguments for the existence of God and spent the rest of its time on developing newer models of religious knowledge based upon post-critical thought. As it is the book stands as something of an anachronism.

Stylistically it will prove to be a difficult read for the undergraduate who would be better served by seeking out one of the original classics of this type of thought, for example, A. Flew and A. MacIntyre (eds.) *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: SCM, 1955), and that only by way of an exercise in the history of ideas.

Michael Alsford, Durham.

Monika K. Hellwig, **Understanding Catholicism** (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 200 pp., $4.95.

Monika Hellwig, Assistant Professor of Theology at Georgetown University, is a popular Catholic writer with the goal of making official church teaching intelligible and palatable to the lay Catholic. She writes here for Catholics who are bothered 'when they have questions about their faith, or when they begin to realize that the old explanations, which were good enough before, no longer seem to offer coherent meaning' (p. 1). The epistemological tone of the book is indicated in the introduction: 'There are really no statements or formulations in which God has given us a final answer or explanation in words' (p. 4). Even the most solemn statement of a council or Pope is more of a starting-point than a final answer.

In the first main division Hellwig deals with revelation, creation, and sin. The language of theology is considered to be at best only analogical and suggestive of far higher realities. The biblical creation stories, 'couched in the language of myth', leave the question of evolution wide open. The 'sin of Adam' is 'the general state of sin in the world by which the whole human situation is set awry' (p. 47).

The book's second division treats Christology. Jesus plays the role of a second Adam by reversing the damage done through sin, incorporating us into himself, turning sin and death into true life and immortality, and restoring God's image and likeness in the human community. Such a view of Christ's work is held to be

far superior to explanations of the atonement which stress Christ's satisfaction for sin or (considered to be even worse) his substitutionary death for humankind. As to the question of *why* the death of Jesus is redemptive, there can never be one correct and universally valid response 'because we are here so definitely in the realm in which explanations must be by analogies, images, stories, and the hinting language of poetry and myth' (p. 82). The resurrection of Jesus 'does not offer proof of anything because it is not a publicly evident event testified by neutral observers' (p. 103). To ask whether Christ's tomb was really found empty is to 'trivialize' the mystery of the resurrection and to turn attention toward the satisfying of idle curiosity.

Part three is a fairly traditional statement and defence of Catholic teaching on the church, the sacraments, and the Christian life. Hellwig upholds church authority even though a clear rationale for that authority is not given. Yet in the every-day struggles of Catholics to give intelligent obedience to their church, particularly in areas of morality, one's *conscience* is said to be the final arbiter in the process of deciding right or wrong in a particular situation! Prayers for the dead and auricular confession are defended, and personal conversion is seen as a 'painful and laborious process' (p. 121).

The final division deals with eschatology and trinity. Salvation of the individual means 'liberation from oppressive fears, harmful desires (and), self-destructive tendencies' (p. 173), while salvation of the world refers to the inevitable transformation of societal structures, laws, and distribution of goods. The book closes with a brief but insightful discussion of the Trinity.

Understanding Catholicism will leave most lay Catholic readers with a fair sense of peace about their church. Because of the author's pastoral purpose the serious nature of the disagreements among present-day Catholic theologians and churchmen is not brought out. Hellwig attempts to steer a middle course between traditional and contemporary Catholic thought, although she leans to the left on matters of dogmatics and to the right on ecclesiastical matters.

Because of its over-all balance and helpful subject index (7 pages), the work may be used with profit by evangelical readers in their study of Catholicism and dialogue with Catholics. Although evangelicals will be saddened by the unbiblical theology of the book as a whole, they will appreciate a number of Hellwig's broader Christian insights, such as her stress on the unity and purpose of all life in God and her strong sense of community in the developing and practising of Christian faith. In addition, her irenic and skilful manner of protraying the theological developments and controversies of the patristic period, while necessarily over-simplified, serves as a model for readers who desire to communicate historical theology in a way that is both interesting and edifying.

Robert V. Rakestraw, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, USA.

W. Andrew Hoffecker, **Piety and the Princeton Theologians** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 176 pp., $5.95 paperback.

Several recent studies have argued that the old Princeton theologians were guilty of a scholasticizing tendency in stressing rational assent to Bible propositions. Hoffecker, Professor of Religion at Grove City College, Pennsylvania, maintains that the old Princeton theology represents a balanced synthesis of right doctrine and warm piety.

In support of his thesis Hoffecker directs attention to the three great Princeton theologians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and B. B. Warfield. Each man is considered from the vantage point of his own religious experience, his systematic writings, and writings of a more devotional nature.

Alexander, who in 1812 came from a Philadelphia pastorate to become Princeton's first professor, is shown to have placed a high priority on personal communion with Christ through the maintenance of a regular devotional life. It is true that Alexander opposed the emotional excesses of certain contemporary revivalists. Nevertheless, his entire theology was built about an intuitional apprehension of God through the Scriptures. The purpose of the objective Word of truth is to guide and regulate subjective religious experience. According to Hoffecker, it was Alexander's strong conviction that Presbyterian orthodoxy must be wedded to a vital spiritual piety.

By any standard Charles Hodge was the leading light of the old Princeton school. His theological studies in Europe and his opposition to the subjectivism of Schleiermacher have prompted some to judge that in his commitment to *Wissenschaft* Hodge lacked religious *Gefühl*. Yet Hoffecker documents the fact that Hodge enjoyed a vital relation to Christ and that through his extensive preaching ministry he ministered experimentally the things of God to large numbers of people. Hodge's systematic writings followed Scottish philosophy and the method of induction, whereby theological conclusions were drawn from the data of Scripture. Consequently Hodge viewed theology as a science. Yet Hoffecker shows that Hodge's theological method required that the facts of religious experience should be admitted along with the objective facts of Scripture. Hodge thus strove for both a theology of the Word and a theology of the religious affections. Only, unlike Schleiermacher, Hodge's religious sentiments must not be at odds with the objective word of Holy Writ. Thus Hoffecker shows that in Hodge as in Alexander scientific theology is complemented by a rich personal experience of God through the Holy Spirit.

Finally Hoffecker explores whether Warfield, with his intensive commitment to an apologetic method, is not guilty of a scholasticizing tendency. He shows that in the face of the mounting tide of liberal theology late in the nineteenth century Warfield found it necessary to wield the sword of apologetics both to refute opponents and to advance the Christian cause. True, Warfield was an assiduous scholar who lived with his books. Yet Warfield was committed to the ideals of living in communion with God and of being filled at all times with the Holy Spirit. Moreover, for Warfield, apologetics was not an end in itself. Rather apologetics was viewed as but a prolegomenon to theology. And the chief task of theology was the proclamation of the gospel of God's redemptive grace. Furthermore, Warfield was insistent that no amount of argument could dissuade a person from false allegiances or compel evangelical faith. Only the Holy Spirit operative in the heart could achieve such divine purposes.

Hoffecker acknowledges that in his quest to call forth faith Warfield gave first place to the *indicia,* whereas Calvin stressed the datum of the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The reason for this reversal of priorities, however, is that in Warfield's day historic faith was in sufficient decline as to warrant an apologetic appeal to rational arguments invoking the *indicia*. Yet quite apart from tactics, Warfield was insistent that from beginning to end salvation is all of God through the Spirit. Hence, in terms of the relation between the objective and subjective, Hoffecker concludes that Warfield is far closer to Calvin than to theological scholastics.

Hoffecker has succeeded in large measure in demonstrating that each of the Princeton theologians had a concern for both soundness of doctrine and for vital religious experience. In the case of each, theology and piety were correlative. The reader, as he follows Hoffecker's expositions of the Princeton divines, is bound to be challenged by the scholarly competence and by the vital relationship with God that each possessed. In terms of these two polarities the old Princeton divines, like their Puritan forebears, have much to teach the church today. *Piety and the Princeton Theologians* is an important book that is certain to inform the mind and to challenge the heart.

Bruce Demarest, Conservative Baptist Seminary, Denver.

Henry Stob, **Theological Reflections** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 267 pp., $11.95 paperback.

Stob, Professor Emeritus of Philosophical and Moral Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, USA, brings together in this volume twenty-nine journal articles published during the past three decades. The essays are organized under the six headings of science, philosophy, theology, revelation, church, and education.

In the lead essay 'Christianity and the Rise of Modern Science', Stob argues that in contrast to the adversary relation between Christian faith and empirical science that many perceive today, the latter enterprise is entirely dependent upon the former. The Reformation precipitated the birth of modern science, the author argues, for the reasons that (1) nature is a revelation of God, (2) man is summoned to control nature, and (3) nature's behaviour is ordered by the transcendent God who created it *ex nihilo*. The modern scientific era thus was promoted by committed Christian researchers such as Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Davey, Faraday, and Joule.

'Faith and Science' probes the perennial problem of the relationship that Christian faith sustains to scientific activity. Rejecting 'dichotomism' – the view that Christianity has no bearing on *some* sciences (*i.e.* the natural sciences) – and 'rationalism' – the opinion that Christianity bears no relation to *any* of the sciences – Stob opts for the position of 'fideism', whereby Christian faith is said to sustain a relation to *all* the sciences. Thus the author argues that a person's commitment for or against Christ inevitably shapes his presuppositions and assumptions, be they in mathematics, physics, or anthropology. All thought, even in the realm of the quantitative sciences, is said to be faith-conditioned.

Turning to the next section, the essay 'Some Issues in Philosophy' explores three themes of import to the Christian church: unity and diversity, idealism and materialism, and faith and reason. With regard to the last issue, Stob shows his distance from hard-core fideism by rightly insisting that 'natural truths are known independently of faith', *i.e.* by the natural reason common to all people. The reader will profit from the following essay 'Notes on the Philosophy of St Augustine', which brings into sharp focus several leading strands of Augustine's often diffuse and fragmented thought. The article 'Personality, Human and Divine' likewise sheds light on the elusive area of the ontology of the person. Stob identifies the person as that which possesses rationality, self-consciousness, volition, self-identity, permanence, and moral capacity.

In the third section dealing with theology Stob argues the point that whereas modern secularism rejects metaphysics and theology as superstitious, Christian theology is properly a scientific enterprise. The author shows convincingly that theology satisfies the criteria for a science: an object of investigation that is *real,* the existence of a *relation* between the object of knowledge and the inquiring subject, the presence of internal *consistency* and external *coherence,* the existence of creditable procedures for *validating* its assertions, and *findings* that enhance man's understanding of the universe. The essay 'Prayer and Providence' is a tightly reasoned case for the efficacy of prayer, one which also leaves the reader with fertile seed-thoughts for the preaching on the subject. 'Christianity and Other Religions' counters the dominant relativism and syncretism of the present age with a skilfully constructed apologetic for the uniqueness of Christ and the finality of the Christian gospel. Non-Christian religions, however, incorporate a measure of truth on the basis of the *sensus divinitatis,* general revelation, common grace, and borrowed special revelation. The theological student will profit from 'A Note to Young Seminarians', in which Stob argues that the Christian minister must be a theologian, a shepherd, a preacher, and a man of God. Since theology should always be in intimate contact with the life of the church, 'the best theology is written in the manse'.

The fourth section, dealing with revelation examines Jesus' relation to the Old Testament revelation and St. Paul's explication of the doctrine of revelation. Of particular merit in this section is Stob's study on the Logos doctrine in the Johannine literature.

This reviewer found the half-dozen articles in the section on the church less relevant and instructive than those that preceded. An exception thereto is the discussion of qualities requisite for effective leadership in the church. Moreover, the essays on education in part six focus on the Dutch Reformed conviction that to secure a world view that is truly Christian the student ought to pursue higher studies in an evangelical college or university. Quite apart from the merits of the argument, one recognizes that such a strategy is not possible in many parts of the world.

On balance, *Theological Reflections* skilfully treats a wide range of issues helpful to the theological student. The book ought to be read not only by the philosopher of religion and the theologian but, by virtue of the foundational issues it explores, by the biblical specialist as well.

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A. J. C. Heron (ed.), **The Westminster Confession in the Church Today** (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1982), 154 pp., £4.

The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England. **Believing in the Church: The Corporate Nature of Faith** (London: SPCK, 1981), 310 pp., £8.50.

These two books, appearing as they do within a year of each other, offer a unique opportunity to make a comparative study of the doctrinal climate in the two national churches of Great Britain. The Scottish book deals almost exclusively with that church's confession of faith; its English counterpart discourses much more extensively and examines the very nature of corporate believing itself.

It is a remarkable fact that, despite the many vicissitudes which have afflicted Scotland and its church since the final establishment of Presbyterianism in 1690, the Westminster Confession of Faith, composed largely by Puritan members of the Church of England, remains the legal standard of that church's doctrine. The book gives a lively account of the history, taking the reader back to leaders and events scarcely now remembered. It concentrates heavily on the legal position of the Confession, which is weaker than an outsider might suppose, and examines its particular theology in some detail.

The teaching of the Confession is laid bare in a very useful summary by Sinclair Ferguson, and an equally valuable critique is offered by James Torrance. It is interesting to note that his chief complaint seems to be that the Confession does not say enough, *e.g.* about the work of the Holy Spirit, and not that it says too much. Not all Scotsmen will agree with the positions presented, and it is good that four ministers offer their personal assessments at the end of the volume. There is also a series of brief notes on the confessional position of overseas Presbyterians, though sadly Canada and the African continent are missing.

What strikes the outside reader immediately is how like the eighteenth century the current position in the Church of Scotland is. The kirk appears to consist of moderates and evangelicals, each of whom is about equally represented here. The general tone is conservative, and more than one contributor to the volume expresses unease at covert departures from the Confession which are winked at by the authorities. It is astonishing, and refreshing, to read the following from the rather moderate Francis Lyall (pp. 68-69): 'It is . . . quite extra-ordinary how many listen to the Preamble and then subscribe that formula without having read the Confession. It is quite improper

for such later to discover that they do not like what is in the Confession, even with the various Declaratory Acts, and to seek to displace it. They should resign. Any other course is sheer dishonesty, which cannot make for the health of the Church.'

Turning to the Anglican document, the reader is transported to another world. Only one of the contributions, that by Dr Wright on the Thirty-Nine Articles, bears any comparison with the Scottish book; Dr Wright even goes so far as to say that tolerance of those who deny fundamental articles of faith could lead to conscientious withdrawal on the part of those who take them seriously. He is not as blunt as Mr Lyall, but his position can only be described as unbending when compared with the rest of the book.

Virtually all the contributors are preoccupied with 'corporate believing', a notion which they equate with a broad consensus among church-goers and well-wishers as to what the church should be about. At times a discordant note is struck, as when John Taylor claims that baptismal regeneration is the inarticulate conviction of the general run of Anglicans. On the whole however, the book has a sure touch for describing what cultured Englishmen of goodwill are prepared to tolerate. Unlimited forgiveness and a denial of eternal punishment are insisted upon, not because they can be supported from Scripture, but because traditional orthodoxy offends the current moral consciousness at these points. The best piece is Canon Vanstone's assessment of the non-churchgoing parishioner, and a whole chapter is devoted to George Eliot, not a leading theologian, of course, but an example of the influence which even an agnostic rebel can have on the corporate mind of a national church.

Literary allusions abound, with Plato and Aristotle being accorded a respect hardly matched by that paid to the Bible, a book not actually quoted until page 188! There is a great deal of religious sociology: myth, story, liturgy and ritual are categories of thought which recur on every other page. The westward position at communion and the widespread use of cremation have affected the way we believe, though quite how is something the authors find hard to ascertain. The reader is seldom sure what the various authors are getting at, but then certainty in matters of faith is a phenomenon restricted to the sectarian subculture (not wholly absent from the Church of England) which is supposed to be foreign to the broad mass of Anglicans.

If the book has to be summed up in a few words, it must be said that it leaves the impression that its authors are mostly agnostic gentlemen, well-disposed towards religion and convinced that the church must continue its good work, but with no real awareness of what the Christian faith is all about. The idea that Scripture is a *revelation* from God calling men to a *conversion* which demands intellectual *submission* to its *authority* is completely lacking. The words in italics are nowhere to be found, nor is any interpretation of faith offered which takes them into account. The enormous diversity of contemporary Anglicanism is almost invariably viewed as a sign of vigour, not of disobedience to the Word of God and the traditions of the church.

A comparison of the two volumes leaves this reviewer thinking that Scotland's church is in a far healthier state than England's, an impression which recent theological writing does nothing to dispel.

Gerald Bray, Oak Hill College, London.

Elgin S. Moyer, **The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church,** revised and enlarged by Earle Cairns (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 449 pp., $17.95.

Formerly identified as *Who Was Who in Church History,* this volume has been enhanced greatly by the work of Earle Cairns, retired professor of history at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, USA. The work now contains over 2,000 sketches of prominent and not so prominent figures from our Christian past.

Professor Cairns has achieved a helpful chronological balance in the listings. Scores of personalities from every major period in the history of the church appear. The heaviest concentration comes from the nineteenth century. This is a significant change. Most traditional surveys of church history neglect the two most recent centuries.

Another noteworthy feature is the number of evangelical leaders included. Paul Little, Lewis Sperry Chafer, and Bob Jones, Sr. are here along with Franz Liszt, Cerinthus, and E. Stanley Jones.

The nearest competitor to this work is William P. Barker's *Who's Who in Church History* (Revell). The Moyer-Cairns volume is now superior in scope. But it suffers from poor readability. The authors have chosen, apparently in the interests of space, to eliminate the subject's name or the required pronoun in the write-up wherever possible. This decision results in a choppy text at its best and grammatically misleading material at its worst. Barker's volume is superior in readability.

Any work of this type is loaded with facts, and errors are inevitable. I have enough in my review, however, to determine to consult the standard dictionaries of church history – The New International, Oxford, or Westminster – before quoting the information in scholarly writing. For the busy pastor or layman, who may want only a brief introduction to some personality, the Moyer-Cairns volume will serve quite well. Professors of history will want the book for ready reference simply because it covers so many names in one volume.

Bruce L. Shelley, Denver Seminary, Colorado, USA.

Robert J. Kepple, **Reference Works for Theological Research: an Annotated Selective Bibliographical guide** (Washington, DC: University Press of America, [2]1981), 298 pp., $11.75.

This highly worth-while guide of 728 entries by the librarian of Westminster Theological Seminary greatly expands the 1978 edition with a surprising list of newly inaugurated reference tools. The first half lists entries on general religion and theology, such as encyclopaedias, handbooks, indices to periodicals, multi-authored works and dissertations. Three pages are given to bibliography of bibliographies (a gold mine). Lists of books in subject areas – Bible, theology, church history (six chapters), ethics, mission, *etc.* comprise the second half. With an index of 30 pages and a detailed table of contents easy access is assured.

The concise annotations are fair. They note purpose, thoroughness and sometimes theological stance, *e.g.* ISBE represents an 'attitude of reasonable conservatism'. The selections are good. The range of listings is large: classic and recent works; English and foreign, Jewish and evangelical (well represented). Catholic entries are few since a comparable compendium exists. One learns of microfisch editions, booklists for seminaries in the Third World, a list of dissertations from the Old Testament (1928-1958) privately published. Unfortunately a discussion of access to computer data is missing. A very choice tool for beginning and seasoned scholars, and handy as a check-list for librarians.

Elmer A. Martens, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary Fresno, California, USA.

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We apologize to readers and to the reviewers concerned that some reviews published in this issue have been held over for a long time due to problems of space.

Note that the Gospel Perspectives volumes reviewed in this issue are available to members of IFES, TSF and related bodies ordering direct from the publishers at 25% discount off the full price. Send the correct amount to JSOT Press, Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield S10 2TN.

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John Drury **The Parables in the Gospels: History and Allegory** (David Wenham)

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Grant R. Osborne **The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study** (Joel B. Green)

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Henry Stob **Theological Reflections** (Bruce Demarest)

A. J. C. Heron (ed.) **The Westminster Confession in the Church Today** (Gerald Bray)

The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England **Believing in the Church: The Corporate Nature of Faith** (Gerald Bray)

Elgin S. Moyer **The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church** (Bruce L. Shelley)

Robert J. Kepple **Reference Works for Theological Research: an Annotated Selective Bibliographical guide** (Elmer A. Martens)

ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

Eph. 2: 20