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# themelios

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# Editorial: A call to revolution

Jesus announced the arrival of a revolution — not a military revolution, not a man-centred or humanly engineered revolution, but a God-given, God-centred revolution. The revolution of which he spoke — he used the expression 'kingdom of God' — was the revolution looked forward to in the Old Testament: God had promised through the prophets a new day when his rule over his world would be total, when evil, sickness and sadness would be eliminated, when God, man and the world would be in harmony, and when God's blessing and peace would be universal (see such passages as Is. 61, Je. 31, Mi. 4, Zc. 14).

Jesus explained that he had brought this glorious revolution: he pointed people to the signs of Satan being overcome in his ministry, of sickness being healed; he brought people back into fellowship with God; his ministry led to the breaking down of social barriers (e.g. between Jew and Samaritan) and to the inauguration of a new community of love and sharing (see, e.g., Mt. 9:10-13; 11:4-5; 12:28; 12:50; Lk. 10:29-37; 19:1-10). His ministry was a real revolution: it was new wine bursting the old wineskins, something powerful and exciting and disturbing (Mt. 9:17; 11:12).

Although Jesus claimed that the promised revolution of God had come in his ministry and his person, he did not suppose that the arrival of the revolution meant the immediate end of the old order. His disciples hoped that things would work that way and that they would shortly get top seats in the kingdom (Mt. 20:20-28). Jesus, however, was conscious that the revolution of God would face intense resistance and opposition from Satan, the 'ruler of this world', and his allies. The revolution had really come, but there would be a period of hard, painful struggle (including the decisively important suffering of the cross) before the forces of Jesus' revolution would finally conquer the forces of satanic reaction; only at the Second Coming would the enemy be finally ousted (e.g. Mt. 13:36-43; 16:21-28; Jn. 14:30; 16:33; cf. 1 Cor. 15:25-28).

Like most revolutions, Jesus' revolution was good news for some and bad news for others. In particular it was good news for the poor, the oppressed and the needy, to whom it offered hope, but bad news for those with vested interests in the status quo, notably the rich (e.g. Lk. 6:20-26). Not that it was poverty in itself which qualified people for a place in the revolutionary kingdom; it was rather a consciousness of need, an openness to Jesus and a willingness to commit oneself to his revolution (so 'believe in the gospel', Mk. 1:15; Lk. 15:18; 18:13-14; etc.). Such a commitment was relatively easy for the poor (though only relatively so, cf. Mt. 7:14), but for the comfortable and often complacent rich it was terribly hard — harder than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle — because Jesus required a total commitment (Mt. 19:24). This meant, first, giving up everything for the revolution: it was not just the rich young ruler who was called to such costly commitment, but every would-be disciple (see, e.g., Mt. 13:44-46; 19:16-30; Lk. 14:25-33). It meant, second, living out and working for the revolution practically, for example by

sharing one's goods with the poor and needy, as well as by seeking to bring others into the revolutionary experience of God's love (see, e.g., Mt. 28:19-20; Lk. 12:32-34; 14:12-14). The early church was not perfect, but it was such a revolutionary community when people shared their goods with others — see Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37: Luke wants us to see their sharing as exemplary Spirit-inspired behaviour (compare also 2 Cor. 8) — and when it opened its doors to Gentiles as well as Jews.

What does this message of revolution mean to readers of *Themelios*? Many of us live in relatively wealthy and comfortable circumstances, and we will constantly be inclined to dilute or to ignore the revolutionary dimensions of Christian discipleship. One way we tend to do this, consciously or unconsciously, is by spiritualizing the notions of the kingdom of God and of renunciation in such a way that they make few demands on us, whether in terms of social attitudes or financial sacrifices and commitment. But that is quite as much a distortion of Jesus' revolutionary message as is the sort of 'socialist' Christianity which reduces Christian mission to social reforming without emphasizing reconciliation with God as Father through the death of Christ. It is to call Jesus 'Lord, Lord' and not to do what he asks (Lk. 6:46).

Exactly what it means in practical terms to 'renounce all' that we have and to live for the poor may not be easy to work out in our complicated modern world. But we must not comfort ourselves with the argument that the situation is complicated and use that as an excuse for doing nothing! Even if there are difficult practical questions — and there certainly are — we must constantly be seeking to work out as individuals and as churches what it means to live out Jesus' revolution in the world.

In this context a document like the Church of England's recent report, *Faith in the City* (Church House Publishing, London, 1985), deserves to be taken very seriously by Christians. It is a vivid exposé of the real deprivation of many urban areas in Britain and a call to take action to meet the needs of such areas. The report leaves some things to be desired: for example, in its theological outlook it seems to favour broad ecumenical Christianity rather than committed evangelical faith, despite a recognition of the relative effectiveness of some evangelical and Catholic ministries in deprived areas. But, although it is right to recognize such deficiencies, and although we may not agree with all the report's specific recommendations, it would be quite wrong for such reasons to allow the challenge of such a report and its call to action to go unheeded. It would be wrong, because the call for practical and caring action comes ultimately not from an Archbishop's commission, but from Jesus himself. In a world where we are surrounded by poverty and oppression, we need to listen very carefully to his parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Jesus' followers are committed to a total revolution. Is his question to us: 'Why do you call me "Lord, Lord" and not do what I tell you?'

# Synoptic studies: some recent methodological developments and debates

Craig L Blomberg

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New Testament scholarship continues to overwhelm the student who would keep abreast of its developments, as it deluges him with massive quantities of literature and a bewildering array of methods and tools. Nowhere is this problem so pressing as in the study of the synoptic gospels. This article surveys six popular but often misunderstood modern methodologies and a sampling of the most significant, recent literature in each area.<sup>1</sup> The order of presentation follows roughly the chronological order of the rise and/or popularity of the six disciplines.

## 1. Source criticism

As recently as 1964, Stephen Neill could write that the synoptic problem was one of the few settled issues of New Testament scholarship.<sup>2</sup> The two-document hypothesis, in which Matthew and Luke independently drew on Mark and Q as their primary sources, commanded virtually unanimous support. B. H. Streeter's more ambitious four-document hypothesis, which added M and L as hypothetical sources for Matthew's and Luke's peculiar material,<sup>3</sup> was less widely held but still considered quite plausible. In that same year, however, William Farmer issued a major challenge to the critical consensus with his detailed attempt to revive the Griesbach hypothesis (named after its stalwart, late eighteenth-century advocate), in which Matthew is seen as the earliest gospel writer, Luke as directly dependent on him, and Mark as the abridger or conflator of the two.<sup>4</sup> Farmer's work gained only a minimal following until the second half of the 1970s, but since then supporters have been emerging from the woodwork in droves, even if they still represent only a vocal minority of scholars worldwide.<sup>5</sup>

Several international colloquia have helped to fuel the recent resurgence of interest in the Griesbach hypothesis.<sup>6</sup> New synopses, in which the gospel parallels are aligned differently from the traditional left-to-right, Matthew-Mark-Luke arrangement, will further this interest,<sup>7</sup> as opponents of the two-document hypothesis argue that readers become unjustifiably prejudiced when they always follow synopses which use Mark as their guide for pericope division and which sandwich the Lucan and Matthean parallels on either side of him.<sup>8</sup> The growing concern to reopen an investigation once thought closed has encouraged others to propose a whole host of different hypotheses, invoking concepts popular a century ago, including proto-gospels,<sup>9</sup> an overarching, primitive *Ur-gospel*,<sup>10</sup> Aramaic gospels later translated into

Greek,<sup>11</sup> variants caused by oral tradition,<sup>12</sup> and greater degrees of literary independence.<sup>13</sup> Most of these gain few adherents apart from the students of their creators, but they point to an important insight. The solution to the synoptic problem, by virtue of the complexity of the data and the complexity of the factors involved in the production of any first-century religious or historical documents, is almost certainly very intricate itself, and as a result may well be irrecoverable in many details. Nevertheless, it may still be possible to answer the three main questions to which Streeter's classic theory offered affirmative replies: Did Matthew and Luke use Mark? Did Matthew and Luke use an independent source Q? Are M and L plausible hypotheses?

The cases for and against both Marcan priority and the Q hypothesis are ably laid out in the anthology of classic articles edited by Arthur Bellinzoni.<sup>14</sup> Recent studies increasingly admit that Matthew's use of Mark is not as easily demonstrated as Luke's use of Mark, but this does not necessarily advance the cause of Griesbach; it more naturally suggests the rehabilitation or modification of Augustine's much older view, in which the order of the synoptics matches their order in the canon. The Griesbachians, admittedly, have scored several points; it is now more widely conceded that the argument from order (Matthew and Luke only rarely deviating from Mark in the same way at the same time) could fit in with several different models of synoptic interrelationships,<sup>15</sup> but the view which sees Mark as last has yet to come up with a convincing reason for his omission of all the so-called Q material. Attempts have been made to explain why, on this view, Mark alternated between Matthew and Luke for that material which he did include,<sup>16</sup> but the theological and stylistic features invoked are much more general and less clearly present than the redaction-critical tendencies definable via the two-document hypothesis. Moreover, the type of conflationary process involved — omission of large sections coupled with expansion of detail in passages included — stands on its head the traditional processes of literary abridgment known in antiquity.<sup>17</sup> And attempts to argue that Mark's roughness of style and grammar and potentially misleading historical and theological statements point to his distance from the gospel tradition rather than to his priority<sup>18</sup> make little sense. If Mark did not have Matthew and Luke in front of him, one could plausibly argue this way, but granted a literary interrelationship only a hack writer would replace his otherwise coherent sources with such infelicities.

Significantly, few detailed exegetical or theological studies of major sections of the synoptics have adopted Matthean and/or Lukan priority; it is easier to point out flaws in alternative theories than to make these ones work in practice.



Even a sizeable majority of studies of individual passages continue to find Marcan priority generally adequate. Those which dissent usually point out primitive features in Matthew rather than in Luke.<sup>19</sup> This, coupled with some renewed recognition of the *prima facie* reliability of the ancient patristic testimony, especially that of Papias,<sup>20</sup> may suggest a two-stage composition of the gospel of Matthew, or even of Mark, allowing for cross-fertilization of the two traditions at various stages of the gospels' development.<sup>21</sup> If Marcan priority needs to be modified, cross-fertilization is a more promising model to consider than conflation.

Evidence for Q has always been more ambiguous than that which favours Marcan priority. Much recent literature has been conveniently summarized in brief by H. Bigg and in detail by F. Neirynck.<sup>22</sup> Those who would dispense with Q overwhelmingly favour Luke's use of Matthew rather than vice versa, since primitivity is over-all more defensible for Matthew than for Luke. But attempts to explain Luke's rationale in cutting up Matthew's coherent, extended accounts of Jesus' discourses (Mt. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 23-25) fail miserably. No-one has expended as much energy at this task as has Michael Goulder, but with each successive publication he rejects his previous theories in favour of new ones, and most rest on the flimsiest of evidence, so that it is difficult to take them too seriously.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, noteworthy progress has been made in identifying consistent theological and stylistic features of Q, as traditionally understood, and of proposing plausible, if not demonstrable, *Sitze im Leben* for its formation.<sup>24</sup> It is quite possible that one needs to think of Q in terms of multiple recensions, multiple documents, or the confluence of oral and written traditions, but on the whole Q remains preferable to its competitors.

Even before the reopening of the synoptic problem, M and L remained the shakiest building blocks in the Streeterian edifice. It is almost certainly unreasonable to expect them to be coherent, unified documents, as if Matthew and Luke got all of their information from written sources, and then only from three. Still, meticulous studies of the distinctive language of the peculiarly Lucan material and of the extra-biblical parallels to the peculiarly Matthean material suggest that these two evangelists did rely on some kind of early source material, whether written or oral, for their distinctive elements. Stephen Farris, for example, applies detailed linguistic criteria to argue that Luke 1-2 largely comprise 'translation Greek' (from a Semitic source) different from that which characterizes Luke's writing elsewhere.<sup>25</sup> I have suggested reasons for perceiving a parable source on which Luke drew for much of his central section (9:51-18:14).<sup>26</sup> Most convincingly of all, Richard Bauckham discerns the use of the traditions behind Matthew's special material by Ignatius and other extra-biblical writers, and concludes that

since the Apostolic Fathers knew non-Markan traditions in oral form, it is inconceivable that Matthew and Luke should not have done. Christian literature outside the Synoptic Gospels provides so much evidence of independent, varying forms of Synoptic material that the *probability* is in favour of more, not fewer, Synoptic sources.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly the field is wide open for much further study in synoptic source criticism, even if a modified form of Streeter's approach still remains most likely.

## 2. Form criticism

The long overdue replacement for Rudolf Bultmann's famous text, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*,<sup>28</sup> may have at last appeared, at least in programmatic form, in Klaus Berger's *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments*.<sup>29</sup> Berger attempts to classify not just the synoptic but all the NT materials according to form, eschewing prejudicial labels such as myth and legend, as well as remote history-of-religions 'parallels', in favour of categories based strictly on generic and rhetorical features common to the biblical texts and other Greek literature of their day. His system of classification is also much more detailed, utilizing post-Bultmannian research to enunciate and subdivide the three main rhetorical divisions of deliberative, epideictic and juridical texts. In an age when many critics have abandoned form-critical questions in favour of one or more of those discussed in the rest of this article, Berger has shown that there is much interpretive benefit to be gained from the careful analysis of a pericope's form.

Wisely, Berger avoids the pitfalls of so many earlier form-critics by not attempting to trace the tradition-history of each form or passage. He readily admits that the two tasks, though related, are separable, and that there is good reason to believe in at least a generally conservative tradition behind the transmission of the Jesus-material. The only criterion of authenticity which he will admit is that of *'wirkungsgeschichtlichen Plausibilität'*<sup>30</sup> (the plausibility of historical results), that is, that which makes the subsequent history of the early church understandable. It is of course this issue of historicity and criteria for authenticity which has exercised so many of the critics of form criticism.<sup>31</sup> The arguments supporting the trustworthiness of the gospel tradition continue to be rehearsed, along with the weaknesses of the critical reconstructions of its tradition history.<sup>32</sup> A few find those weaknesses so severe that they either abandon form criticism altogether or deny that a period of oral transmission of the tradition ever existed.<sup>33</sup> The 'guarded tradition' hypothesis of Riesenfeld and Gerhardsson, which proposed that Jesus taught his disciples in rabbinic fashion to memorize many of his teachings and narratives of his deeds, which were in turn carefully passed along to specifically designated tradents in the early Christian community, remains more defensible.<sup>34</sup> But the value of the rabbinic analogy is somewhat diminished due to its reliance on anachronistic, post-AD 70 parallels and to its failure to account for Jesus' uniqueness and for the differences which still remain among the synoptic parallels.<sup>35</sup>

Two lines of research have quite recently broken this stalemate. On the one hand, a trio of German Ph.D. theses have investigated the nature of pre-70 Jewish and Christian oral tradition and discovered that the Riesenfeld-Gerhardsson model suffers neither from anachronism nor from a failure to acknowledge Jesus' distinctiveness. P.-G. Müller examines ancient oral tradition in the light of modern speech-act theory, A. F. Zimmermann studies the role of the *didaskalos* or 'teacher' in the early church, and Rainer Riesner surveys the role of memorization in almost every form of ancient education, beginning with the most elementary levels.<sup>36</sup> As a result, all three agree that it is virtually inconceivable that Jesus would not have taught his disciples to learn large bodies of material by heart.

By far the most significant of these three theses is Riesner's. In addition to demonstrating the rote nature of elementary

education required of all first-century Jewish boys, Riesner provides five other key reasons why the teaching of and about Jesus would most likely have been preserved quite carefully. (1) Jesus followed the practice of Old Testament prophets by proclaiming the Word of the Lord with the kind of authority that would have commanded respect and concern to safeguard that which was perceived as revelation from God. (2) Jesus' presentation of himself as Messiah, even if in a sometimes veiled way, would reinforce his followers' concern to preserve his words, since one fairly consistent feature in an otherwise diverse body of first-century expectations was that the Messiah would be a teacher of wisdom. (3) The gospels depict Jesus as just such a teacher of wisdom and phrase over 90% of his sayings in forms which would have been easy to remember, using figures and styles of speech much like those found in Hebrew poetry. (4) There are numerous hints and a few concrete examples in the gospels of Jesus commanding the twelve to 'learn' specific lessons and to transmit what they learned to others, even before the end of his earthly ministry. (5) Almost all teachers in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds of that day gathered disciples around them in order to perpetuate their teachings and lifestyle, so however different Jesus was from his contemporaries in other ways, he probably resembled them in this respect.

On the other hand, studies of oral tradition in a variety of modern, pre-literary cultures suggest that memorization in the ancient world did not always mean what it does today. For example, A. B. Lord's pioneering study of a quarter-century ago, only recently noticed by more than a handful of biblical scholars, described certain illiterate Yugoslavian folk singers who had 'memorized' epic narratives of up to 100,000 words in length. The plot, the characters, all the main events and the vast majority of the details stayed the same every time they retold or sang the stories. Members of the community were sufficiently familiar with them to correct the singer if he erred in any significant way. Yet anywhere from 10% to 40% of the precise wording could vary from one performance to the next, quite comparable to the variation found in the synoptic gospels.<sup>37</sup> Lord himself suggests that this model of flexibility in wording, order, inclusion and omission of material may account for many of the variations among synoptic parallels.<sup>38</sup>

Werner Kelber has followed Lord further, noting his disjunction between the fluidity of oral tradition and the fixity of written tradition, and hence rejecting the applicability of the model of 'passive transmission' to the gospels as they now exist, since they clearly drew on written sources.<sup>39</sup> But Kelber overlooks the fact that oral traditions often continued and remained authoritative long after written accounts were produced. Lord specifically cautions that 'the use of writing in setting down oral texts does not *per se* have any effect on oral tradition'.<sup>40</sup> It is only when a community accepts a given written text as normative to the exclusion of all other versions that the oral-written disjunction comes into play. It is not clear that such an acceptance of the gospels as canonical predates the mid-second century. Nevertheless, several of Kelber's emphases about the active involvement of those who handed down the Jesus-tradition, selecting what seemed to them appropriate for a given audience under given social circumstances, may well account for some of the differences among the synoptic parallels.

### 3. Redaction criticism

Undoubtedly the most thriving discipline in recent years, redaction criticism picks up where form criticism and the study of the transmission of the tradition leave off. It is here that a majority of the differences among gospel parallels is most successfully accounted for. No doubt because they perceive their discipline as neither any more in its infancy nor yet on the wane, current redaction critics write less self-reflectively about their method and busy themselves more with simply analyzing the gospel texts than do practitioners of any of the other criticisms surveyed here.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time, important issues of definition and method require further clarification. Some extreme conservatives, mostly in North America, have rejected redaction criticism outright, often because they believe it necessarily requires an abandonment of belief in the full historicity of the gospels.<sup>42</sup> Such a misunderstanding stems in part from the widespread circulation of introductory texts like that of Norman Perrin, who articulated in great detail a radically sceptical position reflecting the opposite extreme of the theological spectrum.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the definition of Richard Soulen's handbook is more widely representative: redaction criticism 'seeks to lay bare the theological perspectives of a biblical writer by analyzing the editorial (redactional) and compositional techniques and interpretations employed by him in shaping and framing the written and/or oral traditions at hand (see Luke 1:1-4)'.<sup>44</sup> The church throughout its history has investigated these questions, even if not under the banner of current terminology or with as much critical introspection.<sup>45</sup> For example, the major evangelical commentaries on the synoptics by D. A. Carson, W. L. Lane and I. H. Marshall all employ redaction criticism to various degrees to yield crucial theological insight into the distinctive emphases of the three gospels without necessarily abandoning belief in their historicity.

Nevertheless, quite often redaction critics still seem needlessly sceptical of the historicity of a given portion of the gospels. This scepticism could be ameliorated if certain common but unwarranted presuppositions not inherent in redaction criticism itself were laid aside. These vitiating presuppositions are not all as well-known as the problems often attaching to form criticism, so they merit brief cataloguing here.<sup>47</sup> (1) Some have assumed that an author's perspective emerges only from a study of how he has edited his sources rather than from a holistic analysis of everything he includes in his work. The former often seems implied, for example in J. A. Fitzmyer's exhaustive commentary on Luke, while the latter, by way of contrast, is the explicit presupposition of C. H. Talbert's more programmatic work on the same gospel.<sup>48</sup> (2) Many commentators treat virtually every pair of passages with any similarity as variants of one original saying or event in Jesus' life. This leads to drastic conclusions about the freedom with which a given evangelist rewrote his sources and overlooks the possibility of apparent parallels not being genuine ones.<sup>49</sup> (3) Drawing conclusions about the nature of the communities which the gospel writers were addressing is a much more subjective process than many critics admit. Meeting a pressing need in his audience is not the only reason an author includes material in his work!<sup>50</sup> (4) Many redaction-critical studies build on the unnecessarily sceptical assumptions of more radical form criticism and ignore the positive

results noted above. The two most detailed commentaries on Mark currently available, by R. Pesch and J. Gnika, exemplify a trend to assign material to a pre-Markan stage of the tradition without seeming willing to consider that it might also be authentic.<sup>51</sup> While it does not immediately follow that traditional material is historical, the probability of its reliability is at least enhanced.

(5) Some bypass the problem of redaction criticism's labelling certain passages as unhistorical by arguing that the gospel material need not be authentic to be authoritative. This view dominates that branch of redaction criticism known as canon criticism, but is not limited to it, and has infected certain evangelical circles as well.<sup>52</sup> Though well-intentioned, this approach makes Christian belief unfalsifiable and therefore unjustifiable. Had the first Christians adopted it, they would have had no rationale for excluding portions of the apocryphal gospels from the canon. (6) Minor grammatical and syntactical differences between parallels are sometimes invested with deep theological significance when they may only reflect the stylistic preferences of their authors. This is more a problem for specialized studies which have smaller databases with which to work, as for example in the books on the parables by C. E. Carlston and J. Drury.<sup>53</sup> (7) Dictional analysis, the study of the characteristic *versus* the unusual vocabulary of a given evangelist, invariably overestimates the amount of material which can confidently be identified as redactional or traditional on linguistic and statistical grounds alone.<sup>54</sup> (8) Finally, and most significantly, redaction critics astonishingly continue to equate 'redactional' or 'theological' with 'unhistorical' almost by definition, despite widespread protests against this practice. As already observed, it is quite likely that the gospel writers had access to much information about the life and teaching of Jesus besides their primary written sources.

Despite these eight excesses, redaction criticism remains a valuable tool. Its abuse can be avoided, and, when stripped of the excess baggage it tends to attract, it offers insights into the emphases of the evangelists which make the differences among the gospels more understandable. At times, it can even help clear up knotty problems of harmonization where more traditional methods prove unconvincing.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4. Midrash criticism

Are the gospels midrashic? The answer to this question, which has stirred up much recent controversy, depends largely on one's definition of the term. Midrash, from the Hebrew for 'interpretation', can refer to a wide variety of texts or passages. One fundamental distinction separates midrash as a genre off from midrash as one or more methods of interpretation. As a genre, midrash refers to types of exposition of the Hebrew Scriptures. These divide into three major categories: (a) the targums, (b) the more elaborate 'rewritten Scriptures' such as Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* or pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, and (c) the earliest Jewish commentaries beginning in the rabbinic period.<sup>56</sup> As methods of interpreting Scripture, midrash usually encompasses one or more of the ancient lists of hermeneutical rules handed down by the rabbis.<sup>57</sup>

Midrashic methods of interpretation undeniably appear in the gospels, including well-known techniques such as *qal-wa-*

*homer*, arguing from the lesser to the greater (e.g. Mt. 7:11), as well as less familiar forms such as the proem or homily called *yelammedenu rabbenu* ('let our master teach us'). The latter involves a dialogue with a question, two or more scriptural quotations or allusions, exposition by means of catchwords or parables, and a concluding allusion to one or more of the initial quotations. This form of interpretation can bring order and unity, for example to the cryptic dialogue in which the parable of the Good Samaritan is embedded (Lk. 10:25-37).<sup>58</sup>

More controversial are those instances where midrash is invoked to explain seemingly illegitimate New Testament exegesis of the Old. A classic example from the gospels arises in Matthew 2:15, quoting Hosea 11:1: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.' Matthew appears to have turned a straightforward historical statement about the exodus into a prophecy of Jesus' flight from Herod. Less conservative scholars may simply argue that the evangelist was creating a typical midrashic play on words, somewhat arbitrarily reading a meaning which the word 'son' can have elsewhere in the OT (i.e. Messiah) into a passage where it clearly refers to Israel, even though modern expositors recognize the invalidity of such hermeneutics.<sup>59</sup> More conservative scholars often adopt a similar explanation, but combine it with a belief that the NT writers, because they were inspired, could employ methods which would be inadmissible for any other exegete.<sup>60</sup>

The latter view, though, much like the approach of canon criticism noted earlier, could theoretically be employed to justify any exegesis of Scripture, however fanciful, so long as it was performed by an inspired author. There are numerous other possible explanations for the unusual uses of the OT by the NT that should be tested first before recourse be made to anything so drastic. Some of these include use of a different text-type (non-Masoretic Hebrew, LXX, targums), especially where there is reason to believe the Masoretic text may not be the most reliable;<sup>61</sup> use of a later text-type current in the first century, when the point the writer is making does not depend on the distinctive form of that variant text;<sup>62</sup> typological exegesis (probably the best explanation of Mt. 2:15);<sup>63</sup> use of the word 'fulfil' (*pleroō*) with a broader semantic range than is normal in English;<sup>64</sup> insufficient appreciation of the full meaning of an OT text in its larger context;<sup>65</sup> and possibly even *sensus plenior*.<sup>66</sup>

The other storm-centre of recent midrash criticism revolves around the issue of whether or not an entire main section of the gospels or even a whole gospel is midrashic in genre. Thus Luke has been seen as following a sequence of parallels in the book of Deuteronomy for the outline of his central section, or a series of texts from Kings and Chronicles in the earlier chapters.<sup>67</sup> Even more ambitious is Robert Gundry's notion that Matthew is a midrash on Mark and Q, fictitiously embellishing his two sources with unhistorical material which his audience would have recognized as such due to its peculiar nature.<sup>68</sup>

Here at least two points need to be distinguished. First, to refer to any of these portions of the gospels as midrash is to use the term more broadly than the ancient Jews would have permitted. Strictly speaking, midrash as a genre is limited to obvious paraphrases, elaborations or interpretations of specific OT texts, not just possible, vague parallels which only a minority of commentators perceive.<sup>69</sup> The modern use of

the term midrash to refer to fictitious events set in the era of the gospel writer (*i.e.* portions of the life of Jesus) also stands on its head the typical Jewish usage, in which midrashic writings largely left contemporary events untampered with (not least because they were more easily investigated) but altered the interpretation of the OT narratives and prophecies to make them match current events more closely.<sup>70</sup> Second, regardless of the terminology, it is not clear that most of the authors of these hypotheses have created convincing cases; several thoroughgoing critiques are readily available.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, midrash criticism may have occasionally unearthed OT backgrounds for certain individual passages in the gospels,<sup>72</sup> and Gundry's type of hypothesis should at least alert exegetes to an often-overlooked principle: the superficial appearance of a text as a historical narrative offers no guarantee that the author of that narrative was employing an entirely historical genre. Only a detailed study of the text and a wide diversity of possible parallels in other literature of its time can prove decisive.

### 5. Social-scientific methods

Dissatisfaction with the limitations of the various branches of historical and literary criticism already discussed is leading growing numbers of biblical critics to experiment with methods borrowed from the social sciences. The synoptics, usually in conjunction with larger portions of Scripture, have thus been interpreted through the grids of modern economic,<sup>73</sup> psychological<sup>74</sup> and anthropological theories.<sup>75</sup> By far the most plentiful, however, are sociological studies of the rise of Christianity.<sup>76</sup> These range from fairly traditional studies of the historical beginnings of the Jesus-movement, which merely seek to highlight its social nature in contrast to modern Western Christianity's overemphasis on individualism, all the way to fairly radical revisionist portraits of Jesus and his disciples as wandering, homeless charismatics.<sup>77</sup>

All of these studies provide fresh perspectives on largely overlooked dimensions of the background and meaning of various gospel texts. Equally often, however, the methods employed mask important presuppositions which lead to a reductionistic analysis of the biblical material. One of the most common of these is the antisupernaturalism inherent in much modern social science, but there are important exceptions. Howard C. Kee and Gerd Theissen, for example, have both eschewed the historical questions about 'what happened' in connection with Jesus' miracles in order to concentrate on the functional questions of how these synoptic narratives affected their first audiences and the communities which came to believe in them.<sup>78</sup> The results of such studies may in some cases make the historicity of the miracle stories more defensible; in others they may render such questions irrelevant or suggest that the gospel writers were not intending to write history at all at certain points.<sup>79</sup> Ironically, E. M. Yamauchi points out that even as biblical scholars are at last learning about modern developments in the social sciences, many sociologists are regaining an appreciation for the need to ask the historical questions and are toning down the more radical theories which the New Testament critics are embracing.<sup>80</sup>

### 6. Other literary criticisms

Other scholars who have been dissatisfied with the questions

and answers supplied by the more traditional historical-critical methods have advocated the introduction, and in some cases the substitution, of purely literary-critical issues and tools. In many North American universities one can almost speak of a complete paradigm shift from interest in the gospels as historical documents to interest in them as literary narratives.<sup>81</sup> In the 1960s and '70s this shift often began via a focus on structuralism, broadly defined as a formalist preoccupation with the text apart from questions of historical background, context, or authorial intent. In some instances the rise of 'Bible as literature' courses led to the analysis of scriptural 'surface structures' — identifying the roles of a story's main characters, the plot, tone, theme, motifs — in short the standard type of criticism long since applied to fictitious literature such as novels or short stories. Major works of this kind of 'narrative criticism' applied to the gospels are now at last becoming popular, usually without involving any necessary presumptions for or against historicity. Thus, for example, J. D. Kingsbury distinguishes between the fully developed 'round' characters of Jesus and the disciples in Matthew and the monolithic, 'flat' characters of the Jewish leaders and the crowds in order to highlight the role of conflict in the developing story-line of this gospel.<sup>82</sup> Leland Ryken is one of the few evangelicals who has written extensively on the Bible as literature; and his work deserves far more attention than it has received. No interpreter of the parables, for example, can afford to ignore his refutation of the traditional parable-allegory disjunction.<sup>83</sup>

One specialized branch of formalist literary analysis is rhetorical criticism, in which no-one has excelled as much as George Kennedy. Kennedy's most recent work, for example, includes an analysis of the Sermon on the Mount which perceives in it a logical structure which closely follows the rules for ancient deliberative rhetoric. Knowing that his views fly fully in the face of the critical consensus, Kennedy considers in the light of the practices of ancient rhetoricians that this carefully knit unity might well represent an abbreviated form of a single, original discourse which Jesus spoke, perhaps more than once in varying forms (thus accounting for Luke's Sermon on the Plain):

Matthew's version might thus represent what was remembered from several occasions and not what Jesus said verbatim at any one delivery, but in the same sense it could represent a relatively full version of what he was remembered as saying at one period of his ministry.<sup>84</sup>

The term structuralism itself is usually reserved for a more esoteric form of study of the 'deep structures' of a text — the underlying and more fundamental features which allegedly form the basis of all narratives, for example, the functions, motives and interaction among the main characters and objects in a narrative and, most notably, the types of oppositions and resolutions that develop as the text unfolds.<sup>85</sup> Not too long ago many initiates into this kind of structuralism were heralding it as the only valid tool for literary analysis, and promoting it as an ideology inherently bound up with dialectic philosophy, determinism and atheism.<sup>86</sup> But while much methodological discussion arose, and numerous sample texts were studied, most notably Jesus' parables, few concrete exegetical insights arose that could not have been gained by other means and by employing more familiar terminology. As a result its popularity has waned. Where it is still promoted, it is usually put forward as one method among

several,<sup>87</sup> and attention has turned somewhat away from the gospels to the writings of Paul, perhaps in hopes of still proving it valuable. Nevertheless one may read with profit Sandra Perpich's largely successful, though obtusely worded, attempt to combine the techniques of structuralism with the best of another nearly defunct movement, the 'new hermeneutic', in exegeting the parable of the Good Samaritan.<sup>88</sup>

Most gospel scholars who keep up with the new literary criticisms, however, have all but abandoned structuralism in favour of the so-called poststructuralist movements. In the last few years a torrent of poststructuralist studies of the gospels has been unleashed and there are no signs of its diminution. Poststructuralism gathers together a loosely connected collection of methods which usually share at least one common belief: the meaning of a text resides neither in the author's intention (as in traditional historical and literary criticism) nor in the text studied autonomously (as in formalism and structuralism) but in the mind of the reader or, most commonly, in the product of the interaction of the text and the reader.<sup>89</sup>

The most avant-garde and abstruse form of poststructuralism calls itself 'deconstruction' and endorses the process of 'generating conflicting meanings from the same text, and playing those meanings against each other'<sup>90</sup> to show how all language ultimately self-destructs or contradicts itself. Its ideological ancestor is a Nietzschean nihilism and its most prolific contemporary spokesman, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida.<sup>91</sup> J. D. Crossan illustrates a kind of deconstruction applied to the gospels when he argues that, although they highlight Jesus' teaching in parables about God, they advocate belief in Jesus as the 'Parable of God' – God's own self-communication. The texts actually undermine the perspectives they assert.<sup>92</sup> Or again, with the parable of the prodigal son, Crossan discovers an allegory about interpretations of the world. The father stands for reality, the older brother for realism in interpretation, and the prodigal for the one who abandons the search for realism. Thus the inversion of the two sons' roles at the end of the parable proves that 'he who finds the meaning loses it, and he who loses it finds it'.<sup>93</sup>

Less esoteric and more widespread is the practice of reader-response criticism, which seeks to assess the meaning of a text for a reader at various stages of the reading process. Instead of focusing only on the text as a whole, it stresses how the reader's perception of meaning changes depending on the amount of a text he has read, and depending on the nature of the sequence of that text's episodes.<sup>94</sup> Robert Fowler, for example, suggests that Mark has created the story of the feeding of the 5,000 (Mk. 6:30-44) on the model of the feeding of the 4,000 (Mk. 8:1-10), and arranged the two accounts in his gospel into a sequence which would highlight the irony of the disciples' failure to understand how Jesus could provide food for the multitudes (Mk. 8:4).<sup>95</sup> Frank Kermode proves less restrained in his reader-response interpretation of the secrecy motif in Mark's gospel. Taking Mark 4:11-12 at face value as a statement of its author's desire to hide the true meaning of the parables, Kermode extrapolates to construct a paradigm for the meaning of the entire gospel which the reader is free to create for himself and which Kermode accomplishes by a sort of 'free-association' with literary parallels as far removed from the world of the gospels as James Joyce's *Ulysses*.<sup>96</sup>

Consistent poststructuralism of course leads to solipsism: one can affirm no objective meaning for one's own work while denying it to everyone else. For Derrida this is no problem: he does not write as if he wishes to be understood! But the majority of less extreme reader-oriented interpreters sooner or later betray this inconsistency. The most helpful are those who eschew both the intentionalist and the affective fallacies but offer a more holistic model, seeking the locus of meaning in a text, but with special attention to the clues that the author has left in the text which disclose his intentions or purposes and which reveal the types of audiences or readers to whom the text was addressed.<sup>97</sup> Anthony Thiselton goes one step further and combines the insights of reader-response criticism with the philosophical school known as 'speech-act theory'. Thus instead of talking about what the text meant *versus* what it means, or about meaning *versus* significance, Thiselton prefers to distinguish the unchanging cognitive truth claim of a passage with the variable action which it generates or accomplishes through its articulation. The reader therefore both does and does not create the meaning of a text, depending on which dimension of meaning is involved. The polyvalent nature of the parables, not surprisingly, has left them as prime candidates for many of the first forays of gospel critics into poststructuralism.<sup>98</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

Every one of the six disciplines surveyed offers rich rewards for those who will take the time to master them and patiently sift the wheat from the chaff. Each has at times wrongly been put forward as the single most important approach to gospel studies, and all have gained a certain measure of disrepute because of invalid presuppositions, inconsistent applications, or spurious conclusions which can obscure their value. Modern critics must be eclectics, however, drawing widely from wherever historical and exegetical insight may be gained, but scrupulously avoiding too fond an attachment to the latest scholarly fashion. If there is one lesson to be learned from recent criticism, it is that today's assured results do not remain assured for very long, and that specific methods stay in fashion scarcely longer than styles of clothing. But the perplexed student of the gospels profits as little from ignoring all the recent developments of scholarship as from appearing in public in obviously outmoded dress. Successful interaction with the modern world, whether in society or academia, requires awareness of the latest trends and a willingness both to reject that which is bad and to cling fast to that which is good (*cf.* Rom. 12:9).

<sup>1</sup> It should be emphasized that this article is necessarily selective in its coverage of synoptic studies. The focus of the article is on literary and historical questions rather than, for example, on questions of theology and application, important though these are. For another recent 'state of the art' report, focusing solely on questions of prolegomena, source and form criticism, see E. Earle Ellis, 'Gospels Criticism', in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), pp. 27-54.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University, 1964), p. 339.

<sup>3</sup> B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924; New York: Macmillan, 1925).

<sup>4</sup> William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1964).

<sup>5</sup> Most notably Bernard Orchard, *Matthew, Luke, and Mark* (Manchester: Koinonia, 1976); T. R. W. Longstaff, *Evidence of Conflation in Mark?* (Missoula: Scholars, 1977); H.-H. Stoldt, *History*

and Criticism of the Marcan Hypothesis (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Macon: Mercer, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> William O. Walker, Jr. (ed.), *The Relationships among the Gospels* (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1978); Bernard Orchard and T. R. W. Longstaff (eds.), *J. J. Griesbach: Synoptic and Text-Critical Studies 1776-1976* (Cambridge: University Press, 1978); William R. Farmer (ed.), *New Synoptic Studies* (Macon: Mercer, 1983); C. M. Tuckett (ed.), *Synoptic Studies* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Orchard, *A Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (Mercer: Macon, 1982; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983); Robert W. Funk, *New Gospel Parallels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Orchard, 'Are All Gospel Synopses Biased?', *TZ* 34 (1978), pp. 149-162; David L. Dungan, 'Theory of Synopsis Construction', *Bib.* 61 (1980), pp. 305-329.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Robert C. Newman, 'The Synoptic Problem: A Proposal for Handling Both Internal and External Evidence', *WTJ* 43 (1980), pp. 132-151; Malcolm Lowe and David Flusser, 'Evidence Corroborating a Modified Proto-Matthean Synoptic Theory', *NTS* 30 (1984), pp. 25-47.

<sup>10</sup> A possible but not necessary implication of David Wenham's provocative reconstruction of a source for Jesus' eschatological discourse which is longer than any of the current synoptic forms and which contains almost all of what they do (*The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1984]. Cf., more generally, Philippe Rolland, 'Les Évangiles des premières communautés chrétiennes', *RB* 90 (1983), pp. 161-201.

<sup>11</sup> Esp. Frank Zimmermann, *The Aramaic Origin of the Four Gospels* (New York: KTAV, 1979).

<sup>12</sup> Esp. Rudolf Laufen, *Die Doppelüberlieferungen der Logienquelle und des Markusevangeliums* (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1980); cf. more briefly, following targumic analogies, Bruce Chilton, 'Targumic Transmission and Dominical Tradition', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 1, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), pp. 21-45; and *idem*, 'A Comparative Study of Synoptic Development: The Dispute between Cain and Abel in the Palestinian Targums and the Beelzebul Controversy in the Gospels', *JBL* 101 (1982), pp. 553-562.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. J. M. Rist, *On the Independence of Matthew and Mark* (Cambridge: University Press, 1978); Charles H. Dyer, 'Do the Synoptics Depend on Each Other?', *BSac* 138 (1981), pp. 230-245.

<sup>14</sup> Arthur J. Bellinzoni, Jr. (ed.), assisted by Joseph B. Tyson and William O. Walker, Jr., *The Two-Source Hypothesis: A Critical Appraisal* (Macon: Mercer, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Malcolm Lowe, 'The Demise of Arguments from Order for Markan Priority', *NovT* 24 (1982), pp. 27-36; and C. M. Tuckett, 'Arguments from Order: Definition and Evaluation', in *Synoptic Studies*, pp. 197-219.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. W. R. Farmer, 'Modern Developments of Griesbach's Hypothesis', *NTS* 23 (1977), pp. 283-284; T. R. W. Longstaff, 'Crisis and Christology: The Theology of Mark', in *New Synoptic Studies*, pp. 373-392; D. L. Dungan, 'The Purpose and Provenance of the Gospel of Mark according to the Two-Gospel (Owen-Griesbach) Hypothesis', in *ibid.*, pp. 411-440.

<sup>17</sup> C. M. Tuckett, *The Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis* (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), pp. 41-51; and, as demonstrated even by the most detailed study on behalf of the conflation theory, Longstaff, *Evidence of Conflation*, pp. 10-42. Roland M. Frye, 'The Synoptic Problem and Analogies in Other Literatures', in *The Relationships among the Gospels*, p. 285, finds partial parallels to this phenomenon in medieval western Europe but cites no evidence that such procedures existed in the first-century world of the NT.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. Pierson Parker, 'The Posteriority of Mark', in *New Synoptic Studies*, pp. 67-142; William R. Farmer, *Jesus and the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), pp. 111-134.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Lamar Cope, 'The Argument Revolves: The Pivotal Evidence for Markan Priority is Reversing Itself', in *New Synoptic Studies*, pp. 143-159; Phillip Sigal, 'Aspects of Mark Pointing to Matthean Priority', in *ibid.*, pp. 185-208.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. A. C. Perumalil, 'Are Not Papias and Irenaeus Competent to Report on the Gospels?', *ExpT* 91 (1980), pp. 332-337; R. Glover, 'Patristic Quotations and Gospel Sources', *NTS* 31 (1985), pp. 234-268; Anthony Meredith, 'The Evidence of Papias for the Priority of Matthew', in *Synoptic Studies*, pp. 187-196.

<sup>21</sup> See esp. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 609-622, a position somewhat in tension with, but more promising than, the midrashic interpretation (see below) which informs the bulk of his commentary.

<sup>22</sup> Howard Bigg, 'The Q Debate since 1955', *Themelios* 6.2 (1981), pp. 18-28; F. Neirynck, 'Recent Developments in the Study of Q', in *Logia*, ed. J. Delobel (Leuven: University Press, 1982), pp. 29-75.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. e.g. M. D. Goulder, 'The Chiastic Structure of the Lucan Journey', *TU* 87 (1964), pp. 195-202; *idem*, *The Evangelists' Calendar* (London: SPCK, 1978), esp. pp. 95-101, 146-155; *idem*, 'The Order of a Crank', in *Synoptic Studies*, pp. 111-130. The only one of these studies which is defended in detail is the second one; for a thoroughgoing refutation of it see Leon Morris, 'The Gospels and the Jewish Lectionaries', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (1983), pp. 129-156; and Craig L. Blomberg, 'Midrash, Chiasmus, and the Outline of Luke's Central Section', in *ibid.*, esp. pp. 229-233.

<sup>24</sup> In addition to the research surveyed in the articles noted above (n. 22), see esp. Arland D. Jacobson, 'The Literary Unity of Q', *JBL* 101 (1982), pp. 365-389; John S. Kloppenborg, 'Tradition and Redaction in the Synoptic Sayings Source', *CBQ* 46 (1984), pp. 34-62; R. Hodgson, 'On the Gattung of Q: A Dialogue with James M. Robinson', *Bib* 66 (1985), pp. 73-95.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen C. Farris, *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985); but note the cautions in my review of this book in a forthcoming issue of *EQ*.

<sup>26</sup> Blomberg, 'Luke's Central Section', pp. 233-247.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Bauckham, 'The Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels: Problems and Prospects', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 5, ed. David Wenham (1985), p. 377; refining the work of J. Smit Sibinga, 'Ignatius and Matthew', *NovT* 8 (1966), pp. 263-283.

<sup>28</sup> Oxford: Blackwell; New York: Harper & Row, 1963 (German orig. 1921).

<sup>29</sup> Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1984.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> For an important methodological analysis, see Robert H. Stein, 'The Criteria for Authenticity', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 1, pp. 225-263 (but see n. 52 below). Cf. also Stewart C. Goetz and Craig L. Blomberg, 'The Burden of Proof', *JSNT* 11 (1981), pp. 39-63.

<sup>32</sup> Among the more recent and less well-known are René Latourelle, *Finding Jesus through the Gospels* (New York: Alba, 1979), pp. 143-198, an unfortunately poor translation of a much better French original; Hugo Staudinger, *The Trustworthiness of the Gospels* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1981), esp. pp. 1-33; and Wolfgang Schadewalt, 'Die Zuverlässigkeit der synoptischen Tradition', *ThBeitr* 13 (1982), pp. 201-223.

<sup>33</sup> Thus, respectively, Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Candid Questions concerning Gospel Form Criticism* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979); and Walter Schmithals, 'Kritik der Formkritik', *ZTK* 77 (1980), pp. 149-185.

<sup>34</sup> See, originally, Harald Riesenfeld, 'The Gospel Tradition and Its Beginnings', *TU* 73 (1959), pp. 43-65; and Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Lund: Gleerup, 1961). Gerhardsson has replied to his critics on numerous occasions; see esp. *The Origins of the Gospel Traditions* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

<sup>35</sup> For a critique of and survey of reaction to this 'Scandinavian school', see Peter H. Davids, 'The Gospels and Jewish Tradition: Twenty Years after Gerhardsson', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 1, pp. 75-99.

<sup>36</sup> P.-G. Müller, *Der Traditionsprozess im Neuen Testament* (Freiburg: Herder, 1982); A. F. Zimmermann, *Die urchristlichen Lehrer* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984); Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981).

<sup>37</sup> Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1960). Cf. the studies of native African oral tradition by Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study of Historical Methodology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Chicago: Aldine, 1965).

<sup>38</sup> Albert B. Lord, 'The Gospels as Oral Traditional Literature', in *The Relationships among the Gospels*, pp. 33-91.

<sup>39</sup> Werner Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), drawing heavily on the work of Walter J. Ong. Ong's

work is nicely summarized in his *Orality and Literacy* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

<sup>40</sup> Lord, *Singer of Tales*, p. 128.

<sup>41</sup> Current research into the theologies of the individual evangelists is thoroughly surveyed in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. W. Hasse and H. Temporini, series 2, vol. 25.3 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1985), pp. 1889-1951, 1969-2035, 2258-2328. A forthcoming issue of *Themelios* will also be surveying this research, so attention here is restricted to questions of method.

<sup>42</sup> The debate is well chronicled in D. L. Turner, 'Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism and the Current Inerrancy Crisis', *Grace Theological Journal* 4 (1983), pp. 263-288; and *idem*, 'Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism and Inerrancy: The Debate Continues', *GTJ* 5 (1984), pp. 37-45.

<sup>43</sup> Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969; London: SPCK, 1970).

<sup>44</sup> Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Guildford: Lutterworth; Richmond: John Knox, 1977), p. 142.

<sup>45</sup> Moisés Silva, 'Ned B. Stonehouse and Redaction Criticism', *WTJ* 40 (1977-8), pp. 77-88, 281-303, for example, demonstrates how a prominent American evangelical scholar in the 1940s anticipated the questions of German scholarship of a decade later and had already dealt with them in a constructive but conservative fashion. Had his work been given more notice by both fundamentalists and radicals, some of the polarization of more recent years might have been reduced.

<sup>46</sup> D. A. Carson, 'Matthew', in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), pp. 1-599; William L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1975); I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

<sup>47</sup> For a more thorough critique see esp. D. A. Carson, 'Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool', in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Leicester: IVP, 1983), pp. 119-142.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2 vols (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981-5); Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

<sup>49</sup> The most extreme example is Gundry, *Matthew*, but *cf.* also Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Oxford: Blackwell; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981). Of course conservatives have often overestimated the number of problems that can be resolved by appealing to the repetition of sayings or events in Jesus' life. For one small sample set of passages, I have proposed a mediating and more objective approach; see Craig L. Blomberg, 'When Is a Parallel Really a Parallel? A Test Case: The Lucan Parables?', *WTJ* 46 (1984), pp. 78-103.

<sup>50</sup> Among the more balanced recent assessments of the purposes of Matthew, Mark and Luke and the needs of the communities to which they wrote are G. N. Stanton, 'The Gospel of Matthew and Judaism', *BJRL* 66 (1984), pp. 264-284; Ernest Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983), pp. 21-36; Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982); though none of these is willing to accept the traditional authors and dates for the synoptics.

<sup>51</sup> Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 2 vols (Freiburg: Herder, 1976-7); Joachim Gnlika, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 2 vols (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener; Zurich: Benziger, 1978-9).

<sup>52</sup> From the perspective of canon criticism, see esp. Brevard Childs, *The New Testament Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westminster; London: SCM, 1984); from an evangelical perspective, *cf.* Stein, 'Criteria for Authenticity', p. 229.

<sup>53</sup> Charles E. Carlston, *The Parables of the Triple Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); and John Drury, *The Parables in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1985).

<sup>54</sup> *E.g.* Joachim Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980); E. J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Marcan Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1978); and Gundry, *Matthew*. More briefly, *cf.* even Bruce D. Chilton, 'An Evangelical and Critical Approach to the Sayings of Jesus', *Themelios* 3.3 (1978), pp. 78-85.

<sup>55</sup> For examples, see Craig L. Blomberg, 'The Legitimacy and

Limits of Harmonization', in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Leicester: IVP, 1986), pp. 139-174.

<sup>56</sup> R. T. France, 'Jewish Historiography, Midrash, and the Gospels', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, pp. 99-127. *Cf.* Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), pp. 5-78.

<sup>57</sup> *Cf.* Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 19-50; with Jacob Neusner, *Midrash in Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

<sup>58</sup> E. E. Ellis, 'How the New Testament Uses the Old', in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 205-206.

<sup>59</sup> A remarkably comprehensive catalogue of allegedly midrashic uses of the OT in the NT, including this one, appears in Alejandro Diez-Macho, 'Derás y exégesis del Nuevo Testamento', *Sefarad* 35 (1975), pp. 37-89.

<sup>60</sup> *E.g.* Richard N. Longenecker, 'Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?', *TynB* 21 (1970), pp. 3-38.

<sup>61</sup> See esp. Moisés Silva, 'The New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Text Form and Authority', in *Scripture and Truth*, pp. 147-165.

<sup>62</sup> See esp. Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986).

<sup>63</sup> On typology, *cf.* Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); and Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1981).

<sup>64</sup> Editor's note to R. Schippers, 'πληρωμα', in *NIDNTT*, vol. 1, p. 737. *Cf.* Brevard S. Childs, 'Prophecy and Fulfillment', *Int* 12 (1958), p. 267.

<sup>65</sup> The hallmark of Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), pp. 51-52, but he appeals to this type of explanation too often and too monolithically.

<sup>66</sup> See esp. Douglas J. Moo, 'The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*', in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, pp. 179-211; most defences of this theory are less nuanced or convincing.

<sup>67</sup> On the former, originally C. F. Evans, 'The Central Section of St. Luke's Gospel', in *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), pp. 37-53; and more recently elaborated in John Drury, *Tradition and Design in Luke's Gospel* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976); on the latter, *cf.* L. T. Brodie, 'A New Temple and a New Law: The Unity and Chronicler-Based Nature of Luke 1:1 - 4:22a', *JSNT* 5 (1979), pp. 21-45; *idem*, 'Towards Unravelling Luke's Use of the Old Testament: Luke 7:11-17 as an *Imitatio* of 1 Kings 17:17-24', *NTS* 32 (1986), pp. 247-267.

<sup>68</sup> In addition to his commentary (see n. 21), *cf.* his four short clarificatory articles in debating Norman L. Geisler and Douglas J. Moo in *JETS* 26 (1983), pp. 41-56, 71-86, 95-100, 109-115, and his reply to Julius Scott in 'On Interpreting Matthew's Editorial Comments', *WTJ* 47 (1985), pp. 319-328.

<sup>69</sup> See esp. Gary G. Porton, 'Midrash: Palestinian Jews and the Hebrew Bible in the Greco-Roman Period', in *Aufstieg und Niedergang*, series 2, vol. 19.2 (1979), pp. 103-138; *idem*, *Understanding Rabbinic Midrash* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1985); and Renée Bloch, 'Midrash', in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, ed. William S. Green (Missoula: Scholars, 1978), pp. 29-50.

<sup>70</sup> F. F. Bruce, 'Biblical Exposition at Qumran', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, p. 87. *Cf.* F. G. Downing, 'Redaction Criticism: Josephus' Antiquities and the Synoptic Gospels (I)', *JSNT* 8 (1980), pp. 46-65; and Richard Bauckham, 'The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum of Pseudo-Philo and the Gospels as "Midrash"', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, pp. 33-76.

<sup>71</sup> *E.g.* Philip S. Alexander, 'Midrash and the Gospels', in *Synoptic Studies*, pp. 1-18; Philip B. Payne, 'Midrash and History in the Gospels with Special Reference to R. H. Gundry's *Matthew*' in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, pp. 177-215.

<sup>72</sup> Here no-one has been as prolific as J. D. M. Derrett (*Law in the New Testament* [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970]; *Studies in the New Testament*, 4 vols [Leiden: Brill, 1977-86]); while a number of his proposals rely on very tenuous suggestions concerning OT background to the NT, several others are reasonable and may shed light on some of the more puzzling teachings of Jesus.

<sup>73</sup> Most celebrated is Fernando Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981); revised and popularized by



Michel Clévenot, *Materialist Approaches to the Bible* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985).

<sup>74</sup> See esp. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1981; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); Wayne G. Rollins, *Jung and the Bible* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1983).

<sup>75</sup> Esp. Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981; London: SCM, 1983).

<sup>76</sup> Well surveyed by Derek Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1983 [= *The Social Context of the New Testament: A Sociological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984)]); and E. M. Yamauchi, 'Sociology, Scripture and the Supernatural', *JETS* 27 (1984), pp. 169-192.

<sup>77</sup> See e.g., respectively, Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress; New York: Paulist, 1984); and Gerd Theissen, *The First Followers of Jesus* (London: SCM [= *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress)], 1978).

<sup>78</sup> Howard C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1983); Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

<sup>79</sup> For elaboration, see Craig L. Blomberg, 'New Testament Miracles and Higher Criticism: Climbing Up the Slippery Slope', *JETS* 27 (1984), esp. pp. 434-436.

<sup>80</sup> Yamauchi, 'Sociology', p. 188.

<sup>81</sup> For overviews of these movements, see esp. Norman Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); and E. V. McKnight, *The Bible and the Reader* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

<sup>82</sup> Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). For works of a similar genre, see R. A. Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story*.

<sup>83</sup> Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), pp. 199-203. Over-all this book is a re-working and simplification of *idem*, *The Literature of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974).

<sup>84</sup> George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1984), p. 68.

<sup>85</sup> See esp. Daniel Patte, *What is Structural Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976). Cf., more briefly, Carl Armerding, 'Structural Analysis', *Themelios* 4.3 (1979), pp. 96-104; and A. C. Thiselton, 'Structuralism and Biblical Studies: Method or Ideology?', *ExpT* 89 (1978), pp. 329-335.

<sup>86</sup> As pointed out by Robert Detweiler, 'After the New Criticism: Contemporary Methods of Literary Interpretation', in *Orientation by Disorientation*, ed. Richard A. Spencer (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1980),

p. 13. Cf. Vern Poythress, 'Philosophical Roots of Phenomenological and Structuralist Literary Criticism', *WTJ* 41 (1978), p. 166.

<sup>87</sup> See esp. Raymond F. Collins, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Garden City: Doubleday; London: SCM, 1983), pp. 231-271; Elizabeth S. Malbon, 'Structuralism, Hermeneutics, and Contextual Meaning', *JAAR* 51 (1983), pp. 207-230; Brian Kovacs (ed.), 'A Joint Paper by the Members of the Structuralism and Exegesis SBL Seminar', in *SBL 1982 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent H. Richards (Chico: Scholars, 1982), pp. 251-270.

<sup>88</sup> Sandra W. Perpich, *A Hermeneutic Critique of Structuralist Exegesis, with Special Reference to Luke 10:29-37* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

<sup>89</sup> James L. Resseguie, 'Reader-Response Criticism and the Synoptic Gospels', *JAAR* 52 (1984), p. 322. Cf. D. S. Greenwood, 'Poststructuralism and Biblical Studies: Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, pp. 263-288.

<sup>90</sup> T. K. Seung, *Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (New York: Columbia University, 1982), p. 271. As with structuralism, simple introductions are hard to find, and the nature of the movements being described has much to do with this. But two valiant attempts are Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983); and Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

<sup>91</sup> For a sampling of Derrida's own writing, along with sympathetic critiques and applications to NT texts, see the entire issue of *Semeia* 23 (1982).

<sup>92</sup> J. D. Crossan, *The Dark Interval* (Niles, IL and Harlow: Argus Communications, 1975).

<sup>93</sup> *Idem*, *Cliffs of Fall: Paradox and Polyvalence in the Parables of Jesus* (New York: Seabury, 1980), p. 101. For a survey and critique of Crossan's works, see Frank B. Brown and Elizabeth S. Malbon, 'Parables as a *Via Negativa*: A Critical Review of the Work of John Dominic Crossan', *JR* 64 (1984), pp. 530-538.

<sup>94</sup> At length, cf. Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard, 1980); more briefly, Robert M. Fowler, 'Who Is "The Reader" in Reader-Response Criticism?', *Semeia* 31 (1985), pp. 5-23.

<sup>95</sup> *Idem*, *Loaves and Fishes* (Chico: Scholars, 1980).

<sup>96</sup> Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard, 1979). The gospel of Mark has so far proved most conducive to reader-response criticism, with its abrupt transitions, apparent doublets, intercalations and uncertain ending.

<sup>97</sup> See esp. Norman R. Petersen, 'The Reader in the Gospel', *Neotestamentica* 18 (1984), pp. 38-51; H. Frankemölle, 'Kommunikatives Handeln in Gleichnissen Jesu', *NTS* 28 (1982), pp. 61-90.

<sup>98</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, 'Reader-Response Hermeneutics, Action Models, and the Parables of Jesus', in *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics*, with Roger Lundin and Clarence Walhout (Exeter: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 79-113.

## Some scientific issues related to the understanding of Genesis 1-3

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### Part I

Although the title of this paper is, 'Some scientific issues related to the understanding of Genesis 1-3', I think that I

must begin with a theological issue. This is, 'Is it ever right to take scientific issues into account when seeking to understand Genesis 1-3, or any other part of Scripture?' This question is raised by Professor Blocher in his study *In The Beginning*,<sup>1</sup> and his answer is a qualified 'No'. He says, 'We must curb the desire to make the scientific view play a part in the actual interpretation; the interpretation must cling solely to the text and its context.'<sup>2</sup> My first reaction on reading this was to agree with it, but on reflection I began to have doubts.

Blocher himself admits that the sciences of language and history are in fact used as tools for interpretation. I would add that they are indispensable tools. Why should it be different when it comes to using the findings of the natural sciences? I cannot see that there is any difference in principle involved here. If there is not, then I think that we must widen my original question to ask, 'Is it right to take the results of extra-biblical study into account when interpreting Scripture?' Once we do that it is clear that the answer is, 'Yes' — unless we define biblical study so widely that it includes not only learning OT Hebrew and NT Greek but also the study of the archaeology, culture, history and geography of the Ancient Near East in biblical times. But why stop there? Surely the natural history of Bible lands should be included too, so opening the door to the natural sciences. If their findings impinge on any part of Scripture, surely they should be taken into account? If this is agreed, we then need to ask what principles might govern the use of extra-biblical knowledge in biblical interpretation. I am going to take a short cut here and simply take my stand with one of the outstanding Christian exegetes, John Calvin. Although critical of pagan thinking and convinced that the fallenness of man includes his intellect, Calvin did not disavow the use of extra-biblical knowledge in exegesis even when it came from non-Christian sources. It seems to me that there are three principles which governed his attitude to, and use of, such knowledge. These are not *ad hoc* principles but flow from his theology.

#### *Scripture and truth*

Calvin's doctrine of 'common grace' led him to conclude that all truth is God's truth and that the light of truth still shines even in the heathen. Hence he says, 'If we hold the Spirit of God to be the only source of truth, we will neither reject nor despise the truth, wherever it may reveal itself, lest we offend the Spirit of God'.<sup>3</sup> One of the reasons why Blocher is hesitant to admit the use of scientific findings in exegesis is a desire to protect the authority of Scripture. However, the authority of Scripture is really the authority of God the Spirit who inspired it. Calvin is asserting, I think rightly, that all truth is inspired by the Spirit and has his authority. It does not compromise the authority of Scripture to recognize this. Blocher is aware of this argument and responds to it by saying that the truths of nature are grasped by us in a fallible manner, whereas in the Bible we have truth expressed infallibly. My reply to this is that the distinction is an unreal one. There is in science, as in any discipline, a core of well-established facts which can be relied upon with confidence when interpreting Scripture. Where Blocher's caution *is* valid is when one steps beyond this core into the realm of heavily theory-laden facts and theories proper. Also, whilst the Bible gives us truth infallibly expressed, we grasp that truth fallibly, and anything that will help us to understand it more clearly is to be welcomed.

#### *Scripture is for all*

Calvin held strongly to the Reformation doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture, its accessibility to everyone. This led him to what has been called the doctrine of accommodation. The language of the Bible is 'adapted . . . to common usage'<sup>4</sup> because the Holy Spirit 'would rather speak childishly than unintelligibly to the humble and unlearned'.<sup>5</sup> Calvin even accepts that there are what he calls 'vulgar errors' in the Bible.<sup>6</sup> By this he means that the writers sometimes express

themselves in time-bound concepts of their day which later knowledge shows to have been mistaken. Hooykaas points out that there is here in the idea of the divine word veiled in human words a parallel with the doctrine of the Divine Word becoming man in Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

The doctrine of accommodation is extended by Calvin beyond the question of the way truth is expressed in the Bible to the question of the subjects covered. Because the Bible is 'a book for laymen', he says, 'He who would learn astronomy and other recondite arts, let him go elsewhere'.<sup>8</sup> He therefore refused to join those who used the Bible to attack the newly emerging astronomical ideas of his day.<sup>9</sup>

If one accepts the doctrine of accommodation one can suggest that one use of the findings of science in interpretation might be to determine when the language of the Bible is 'adapted to common usage'. This will prevent some statements being taken in a woodenly literal way when they should not be. An example of this use of science is found in Calvin's comment on Gn. 1:16.<sup>10</sup> Some exegetes of his day insisted that this verse teaches that the sun and moon are the two largest heavenly bodies. Against this Calvin argues that since the astronomers had shown that Saturn is larger than the moon, and only *looks* smaller because of its distance from us, the language here is simply that of appearance. Things are expressed by the Holy Spirit in the way that the common person sees them to be in nature without the aid of telescope and calculator.

#### *Scripture and Christ*

There is a second reason why Calvin refused to use the Bible as a source text for scientific knowledge of a specialist kind. This is his belief that the primary purpose of the study of the Bible is to know God in Christ. Thus he says, 'We ought to read the Scriptures with the express design of finding Christ in them. Whoever shall turn aside from this object, though he may weary himself throughout his whole life in learning, will never attain the knowledge of the truth.'<sup>11</sup>

#### *Conclusions*

So to conclude this section I want to suggest that we should follow Calvin and accept gratefully, as God-given, all truth, from whatever source, that might aid us in understanding Scripture. This must be used with care, especially discriminating between reliable facts and theories or opinions. We should accept too his caution that since the Bible is written for the lay person using common idioms and concepts, and with the aim of presenting Christ to us, we do well not to drag it into scientific disputes. Thirdly, we should, like him, have the humility to accept that the findings of the scientists might sometimes help us by pointing out places where the Holy Spirit has made use of 'common usage' or 'vulgar error' to express the truth.

Let me illustrate these conclusions briefly by a non-controversial example. It is easy for us to conclude that the medieval scholars who opposed Copernicus on the basis of a few verses, mainly from the Psalms, were being stupid. After all, poetic language is to be taken figuratively, isn't it? Well, is it? It is true that poetry uses a much higher proportion of figurative language than does prose, but not every statement in poetry is figurative. We need some means of deciding

when it is figurative. Often it is simply a matter of common sense, as when we read of the hills singing and the trees clapping their hands.<sup>12</sup> But what of statements about the sun moving through the heavens and the earth being immovable?<sup>13</sup> Common sense would suggest that these are literal statements. It is only acceptance of the scientific evidence for a helio-centric view of the solar system that leads us to say that this is the language of appearance and that we need not take it literally, even if the original author would have done. To this we can add the consideration that it is not the Bible's purpose to teach us astrophysics anyway.

## Part 2

We must now turn to the scientific considerations that are meant to be the main topic of this paper. In view of what I have already said about the use of scientific information when interpreting the Bible, my intention here is primarily to indicate the boundary between fact and theory in areas that might impinge on the understanding of Gn. 1-3.

### *The age of the earth*

Until the late 18th century it was widely held that the genealogies in Genesis implied that the earth was created c. 6,000 years ago. However, developments in geology and astronomy between c. 1750 and 1850 led nearly all educated people, including Christians, to accept that the earth is much older than this, probably millions of years old.<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that this issue was settled in most people's minds well before the issue of Darwinism arose. It is only in the last 25 years or so that a significant number of Christians have once again tried to argue for a 'young' earth. It seems to me that the evidence for the earth being very old is very convincing. Here I can give only a few examples.<sup>15</sup>

(1) Seasonal factors such as rainfall and the amount of plant debris carried down by rivers mean that the clay deposits laid down at the bottom of lakes or seas are built up in a series of distinguishable annual layers which can be counted like tree rings. The Green River shale deposits in the mid-western USA contain several million such layers.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the thickness of these layers shows a 11½-year cycle, which correlates with the well-known rainfall cycle due to the sunspot cycle. Clearly this rock was several million years in the making, and so the earth must be at least that old.

(2) According to radioactive dating methods, the oldest rocks on earth are nearly 4,000 million years old. Much the same date is found for the oldest moon rocks and meteorites. Radiometric dating is not free from problems. Scientists are well aware of this and so are continually investigating possible causes of error and how to avoid them.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, 'young earth' advocates tend to seize on their admissions of discordant results without giving due consideration to the explanations for them. For example, *Creation News* 33 (Spring 1979) carries an article on the Rb/Sr dating method which reprints a data table from a paper in *Science* (1976) showing discordant results found by this method for some igneous rocks, and claims that this is evidence that the method does not work. The main point of the original paper is dismissed in a sentence: "The authors of the paper explain the errors[!] as being due to varying degrees of inheritance of source area radiometric age characteristics for material which

has been transported by plutonic or volcanic processes.' I do not know whether that makes sense to you! It almost seems like an attempt to smother in jargon the very credible explanation of the discordances given in the paper. This is that whilst still molten, the igneous rock had picked up pieces of the older rock over which it flowed without completely melting them. These were then incorporated into the new rock as it solidified. The discordant ages were given by these older, foreign, intrusions. The point of the paper is not that the Rb/Sr method is useless, but that inclusions of older rocks in lava flow must be looked for so that it is clear what is being dated. It was irresponsible, to say the least, of the author of the *Creation News* article not to make this clear. Unfortunately this is not an isolated example of such handling of material by proponents of a 'young earth' theory.

(3) The stars are like controlled H-bombs. The composition, mass and temperature of some are measurable. Using this data and current knowledge of nuclear physics, astrophysicists can estimate the ages of stars. The oldest in our galaxy come out at about 10,000 million years.<sup>18</sup> This is in good agreement with the age of the earth (which would have formed some time after the galaxy), being c. 4,000 million years.

(4) Spectroscopic studies of the galaxies show that we are living in an expanding universe. The available evidence supports the view that this expansion is due to an original 'Big Bang' which happened some 15,000 million years ago.<sup>19</sup> Again this is a reasonable figure in view of the probable age of our galaxy.

It is important to note that the four dating methods I have mentioned are all quite independent of each other. This increases one's confidence in them when the results they give are consistent with each other.

In the light of this kind of evidence I think that only two options are open: acceptance that the earth is as old as it indicates, or acceptance of the postulate put forward by Philip Gosse<sup>20</sup> in the mid-19th century, that God created the earth with an *appearance* of age. However, if the latter view is to be held consistently one cannot decry the accuracy of scientifically derived dates for rocks, etc., nor should one look for evidences of a 'young' earth. To do this would imply that God had been inconsistent or incompetent in his act of creation. The true age of the earth could then only be known by revelation — as Gosse believed it was in Genesis.

### *The origin of life*

Although Darwin did not claim to explain the origin of life itself, only the origin of species, it has become almost axiomatic today among evolutionary biologists that the first living cell arose on earth by a gradual, natural process. This is referred to as pre-biotic or chemical evolution.<sup>21</sup> This is not the place to attempt a critique of the theories propounded in this area, especially as a good one is available in *Faith & Thought* (1982).<sup>22</sup> All that I want to do is to point out that whilst some chemists have been busy trying to think up ways in which the complex molecules that are essential to life might have been produced on the primitive earth, some mathematicians have been busy calculating the probabilities of such a thing happening by chance even if the conditions were ideal for the necessary chemical reactions. The problem that is being addressed here is that the complex molecules are

built up of sub-units that have to be arranged in particular ways and not just haphazardly. Professors Hoyle and Wickramasinghe conclude that the chance of the most important proteins needed for life arising by chance is about 1 in  $10^{40,000}$ , i.e. the odds against are 1 followed by 40,000 zeros, which would take you a few hours and some 40 pages to write out!<sup>23</sup> Faced with this virtual impossibility, they conclude that life could not have arisen on earth but must have come here from space. The Nobel prize-winning molecular biologist F. Crick has also come to the same conclusion.<sup>24</sup> Crick believes that, given the whole universe as a laboratory, life probably arose somewhere by chance and spread to earth. Hoyle and Wickramasinghe are driven to conclude, reluctantly, that there must have been a creative intelligence at work which brought life into being and guided its spread throughout the universe.

Other mathematicians have done similar computations of the probabilities of an original living cell evolving into a complex creature by random mutation. Again the odds against this are astronomical.<sup>25</sup> Most recently, Professor H. S. Lipson ends his studies of this matter with the reluctant conclusion that evolution cannot be a chance process and that the only alternative is to postulate a Creator.<sup>26</sup>

Now I am not suggesting that Christians should seize on these calculations as proof that there must be a Creator. I am simply pointing out that the widely held assumption that life could have arisen spontaneously on earth by normal chemical processes is no more than a dubious assumption.

#### *Fossil evidence*

In anti-evolutionary writings one sometimes finds statements such as the following: 'Fossils are used as the only key for placing rocks in chronological order. The criterion for assigning fossils to specific places in that chronology is the assumed evolutionary progression of life; the assumed evolutionary progression is based on the fossil record so constructed. The main evidence for evolution is the assumption of evolution!<sup>27</sup> This is quite unfair. The first person to develop the technique of using fossils to establish the relative dates of rock strata was William Smith in the late 18th century. He was a creationist. He built up the first 'geologic column' — a sequence of fossil forms — before Darwin was born and when evolution was not an issue. He realized that certain fossils always occurred together. Moreover, in places where several undisturbed strata lay one on top of another, the different fossil groups always appeared in the same order. It is true that in any one place only a part of the geologic column is attested, but it is not too difficult to build up the whole picture. If in one place the sequence of fossil types is ABCDEFG, and in another it is FGHJK, and in a third it is IJKLM, and so on, one can quite reasonably deduce the whole sequence. This was firmly established and in use as a means of dating rocks *in relation to one another* well before Darwin propounded his views.

If one accepts the reliability of radioactive dating of rocks and couples this with the fossil record, one is led to the conclusion that life has a long history on this planet. Moreover, it is a history in the course of which the forms of life have become increasingly complex. Amongst the animals the overall fossil sequence is: simple invertebrates → more complex invertebrates → vertebrates. Amongst the verte-

brates it is: fish → amphibians → reptiles → mammals. This much I take as fact. When we try to explain how the fossil record came to have this form we enter the realm of theory. In chapter 10 of *The Origin of Species* Darwin admits that whilst the fossil record seems at first sight to imply a process of evolution, it also poses some problems. He mentions two: the absence of transitional forms between the separate species, genera, etc., and the sudden appearance of several of the main divisions of the animal kingdom in the earliest fossiliferous rocks. His only real answer to these problems was that the study of fossils was still a fairly young science and that as more and more fossils came to light the missing links would appear to close the gaps. 130 years later the situation has hardly changed. A recent defender of Neo-Darwinism says, 'There are now some cases in which evolutionary change can be seen in the fossil record. A few dozen could be listed. But the most striking thing about them is their rarity'.<sup>28</sup> He can only echo Darwin's hope that in the future the picture will improve.

The near absence of transitional forms has led to modified evolutionary theories which postulate periods of rapid and marked change.<sup>29</sup> It is also the basis of 'Age-day' creationism and Progressive Creationism.<sup>30</sup>

#### *The origin of Man*

I have neither the time nor the expertise to discuss the question of the relationship of the various fossil hominoids and hominids to one another and to modern homo sapiens.<sup>31</sup> I simply want to make three points.

The first is simple yet important. It is that there is no dispute over the fact that modern man forms a single species. This, of course, is in accord with the biblical claims.

The second point is that it is quite clear that homo sapiens has a great deal in common not only with the primates, or even the mammals, but also with the whole animal kingdom. In fact the fundamental biochemical processes of life are much the same in a yeast cell as in a human cell.<sup>32</sup> Creationists see this similarity as evidence of a single creative mind at work. Theistic evolutionists agree, but add that the combination of similarity and difference suggests that this mind worked through a unified evolutionary process.<sup>33</sup> The continuity between humans and animals may be relevant to understanding the biblical statements that Adam as well as the other living creatures was brought into being from the dust of the earth.

My third point is another obvious one, yet it sometimes gets lost in the heat of debate. This is the question of how one defines 'Man'. Prehistoric anthropologists of necessity use such criteria as skeletal structure, brain shape and size, evidence of use of tools, other evidence of culture, etc. The biblical definition is clear, if not simple: Man is the one creature, male and female, that bears the image of God. Theologians are not fully agreed as to just what this means, but there seems general agreement that it implies the ability to relate to God in a personal way.<sup>34</sup> I do not see how this ability could leave any definitive fossil evidence, and so attempts to correlate Adam and Eve with any particular fossil hominids would seem fruitless. There is, however, one approach that I find interesting and fairly convincing, though not without problems. This is Pearce's cultural approach.<sup>35</sup>

He argues that the culture depicted for Adam and Eve and their sons is that of New Stone Age people, and that the geographical region where Eden is placed is in the area where this culture arose some 10,000 years ago. Pearce regards Adam and Eve as the result of a divinely engineered genetic change. As a result they stood in a line of physical continuity with their predecessors, but on the supra-physical level something new was introduced by divine fiat. This, of course, is not a scientifically testable hypothesis.

Acceptance of an evolutionary connection between Adam and Eve and earlier hominids does require that the narrative in Gn. 2 concerning their creation from the dust of the ground be taken as metaphorical or symbolic. Kidner defends such a reading, pointing out that God's use of natural processes is described in terms of the potter's art in Jb. 10:8ff. & Ps. 119:73.<sup>36</sup> Some conservative scholars might resist any suggestion that elements in Gn. 2 and 3 should be taken symbolically as the thin end of a wedge which inevitably results in reducing the whole narrative to 'myth' (whatever that term might be taken to mean!). This is an over-reaction which must not be allowed to blind the exegete to the nature of the language being used. Blocher<sup>1</sup> both makes a strong case for recognizing the use of symbolic motifs in Gn. 2 and 3, and shows that an exegesis based on this recognition need not lead to the denial of an historical basis to the narrative. Taken as symbolic language, Gn. 2:7, as Kidner puts it, 'would by no means disallow' that God shaped homo sapiens by a process of evolution. Nor does it support that view.

### *The fall*

If one accepts the great age of the earth and the fossil record, one has to accept that death was a feature of life on earth before the fall, if that was an historical event. Dr Cameron has focused on this issue as a major argument against evolution in his book *Evolution and the Authority of the Bible*.<sup>37</sup> It is not a new issue. It was widely discussed in the 19th century both before and after the publication of *The Origin of Species*. Many Bible-believing scholars came to the conclusion expressed by J. Orr (a contributor to *The Fundamentals*) that, 'There is not a word in the Bible to indicate that in its view death entered the animal world as a consequence of the sin of man'.<sup>38</sup> That was written at the end of the century, but the same view had been expressed some 60 years earlier by J. P. Smith in an interesting book<sup>39</sup> in which, amongst other things, he argues that the command, 'Be fruitful and multiply', in Gn. 1, implies 'the departure of precedent individuals'<sup>40</sup> to make way for their offspring so as not to overcrowd the earth, and that the threat of death would not have been comprehensible to Adam and Eve unless it already existed in the animals. One of the fullest discussions of the question of death before the fall is that in a sermon preached in Oxford Cathedral by William Buckland on 27 January 1839. He discussed Rom. 5:12, 17-18; 8:19-23; 1 Cor. 15:21; and Is. 11:6-9, and to my mind showed convincingly that 'though most clearly inflicted as a punishment on man, it [death] is by no inspired writer spoken of as a penal dispensation to any other living creature excepting Adam and his posterity'.<sup>41</sup> It is not my intention to repeat the exegetical arguments used by Buckland *et al.* Those who are interested can read and weigh them for themselves. I will simply focus on a few other key issues.

The first is the notable *crux interpretum* Gn. 2:17. The standard commentaries can be consulted for the various

views. I simply want to take my stand with the view summed up by Blocher when he says,<sup>42</sup> 'In the Bible, death is the reverse of life — it is not the reverse of existence. . . . It is a diminished existence, but nevertheless an existence', and that in Gn. 3 God's threat is carried out in a multiplicity of ways. Human existence is diminished by the effects of the curses, and above all Adam and Eve are cut off from the tree of life and from the fellowship with God (the ultimate source of life) that they had enjoyed in Eden. Moreover, to quote Kidner again, 'these words [*i.e.* 2:17] do not necessarily imply that man was not naturally mortal. God "alone has immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16, RSV), and the presence of the tree of life in the garden indicates that if man is to share the boon it must be an added gift'.<sup>43</sup> From this I conclude that the mere cessation of physical existence on earth should not be equated with the 'death' threatened in Gn. 2:17. It is sin and its effects that give that event its sting, and incorporate it into 'death' in the biblical sense. It has been suggested that the translation of Enoch and/or Elijah perhaps illustrate what God prepared for man. This may or may not be so. We can only speculate in this area, and others, about what would be the case if there had been no fall.

Let me speculate for a moment. There is here a problem of methodology. I think that all too often we look at the worst examples of what happens now and let them colour our thought. Maybe we would do better to look at the best of what we know now and see it as a pointer to what God intended. As a pastor and relative I have been at the bedside of Christians in their last hours whose sense of peace and joy at the prospect of 'being at home with the Lord' has deeply touched those around them in hospital. Maybe this is how God intended we should cease our existence on this earth and go into his presence in eternity. What makes this passing hard for us now are such things as fear of the unknown (for the non-believer), untimely death, the suffering that may precede it, *etc.* These, not the event itself, are what we should perhaps see as the result of the fall. But what of growing old? Again, it is the tragic cases of senility that fill our vision. However, many people grow old with dignity, charm, and little physical suffering. Maybe this is the scenario we should concentrate on. It may be objected that the process of ageing is one of degeneration and so is inherently evil. I do not see that *physical* decay can automatically be equated with *moral* evil. It is conceivable that it is a neutral process which God can use for his good purpose of taking us through a range of experiences which enable us to mature morally and spiritually, including the experience of coping with increasing physical limitations.

A second issue is how we are to envisage the effect of God's cursing the ground. Arthur Lewis<sup>44</sup> is of the opinion that, 'Nothing in the narrative suggests that the realm of nature has been altered in a fundamental way. There is no indication that the Lord God added thorns to the roses or sharp teeth to carnivorous animals'. However, the matter is one of long-standing dispute. I think that Blocher points the right way forward for cautious speculation when he says, 'It is permissible to think that the disruption affects that [man-nature] relationship before anything else, beginning with the weakening and disorder of man himself. If man were perfectly sturdy, no microbe could do him any harm. If he had all the faculties that were his at creation, he would be able to turn the up-

heavals in nature to good account, without suffering at their hands'.<sup>45</sup> Modern medicine is taking increasing account of social and psychological factors in disease. This is not only a matter of bad conditions and bad habits causing bodily damage. There is growing recognition that both the susceptibility to disease and infection, and the ability to combat them, sometimes have a social/psychological element. It is therefore possible that in a perfectly ordered society a person at peace with God and so with him/herself would not suffer from disease as we know it, even though sharing the earth with the very bacteria and viruses that trouble us.

Finally, there is the admittedly difficult issue of animal pain and suffering. Is this a result of the fall? I think that this is not necessarily the case. From one point of view pain can be seen as a good. It has a defensive and educative purpose, steering animals away from harmful situations. It is conceivable that one could construct an argument parallel to the 'freewill defence', to the effect that in creating a stable world with fixed natural laws it was necessary for God to include pain in his scheme. The question of evil comes in when pain is gratuitously inflicted by one creature on another.

### Summary

I have argued that biblical scholars ought to take scientific facts into consideration when interpreting the Bible. It seems to me that the great age of the earth, several thousand million years, is one such fact. A second is the fossil record. This shows that life has been on earth for hundreds of millions of years, and that in this time life forms have become more diverse and more complex. Moreover, it means that animal and plant death preceded the fall of man. Another relevant fact is that modern man consists of a single species. Finally, I would include the fact that on a physical level of body structure and biochemistry we have much in common with the animal kingdom, whilst being strikingly different in other aspects of our being. I have briefly explored some of the implications of these facts for the interpretation of Gn. 1-3. Much more thought needs to be given to this.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Blocher, *In The Beginning* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 24ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> J. Calvin, *Institutes*, II.2.15.

<sup>4</sup> J. Calvin, *Comm. Genesis*, 1:16.

<sup>5</sup> J. Calvin, *Comm. Psalms*, 136:7.

<sup>6</sup> J. Calvin, *Comm. Psalms*, 58:4f.

<sup>7</sup> R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Edinburgh, 1972), p. 119.

<sup>8</sup> J. Calvin, *Comm. Genesis*, 1:6.

<sup>9</sup> Calvin did on one occasion deny a moving earth, but on the grounds of common sense, not Scripture. See C. A. Russell, *Cross-Currents* (Leicester, 1985), p. 42.

<sup>10</sup> J. Calvin, *Comm. Genesis*, 1:16.

<sup>11</sup> J. Calvin, *Comm. John*, 5:39.

<sup>12</sup> Is. 55:12.

<sup>13</sup> Ps. 19:6; 93:1; Eccl. 1:5.

<sup>14</sup> M. B. Roberts, 'The Roots of Creationism', *Faith & Thought* 112 (1986), p. 24, says that by the end of the 19th century '... "young earthers" were a very rare species indeed — even amongst evangelical Christians.

<sup>15</sup> For a useful layman's guide to the evidences, see A. Hayward, *Creation and Evolution* (London, 1985), pp. 82-113.

<sup>16</sup> T. H. Clark and C. H. Stearn, *The Geological Evolution of North America* (NY, 1960).

<sup>17</sup> Details of radiometric dating methods and results can be found in: E. I. Hamilton, *Applied Geochronology* (NY, 1965); D. Yorke and R. M. Farquhar, *The Earth's Age and Geochronology* (Oxford, 1972); T. Kirsten, 'Time and the Solar System', in S. F. Dermott (ed.), *The Origin of the Solar System* (NY, 1978), pp. 267-346.

<sup>18</sup> According to R. J. Tayler, *The Stars: Their Structure and Evolution* (London, 1972), calculations show that it took 30 million years for the sun to form from a galactic dust cloud, and that its lifetime should be about 8,000 million years. He says that the evidence is consistent with it being 4,500 million years old (p. 123f.). Firm ages can only be obtained for star clusters. The oldest of these are about 10,000 million years old (p. 165f.). This indicates the likely age of the galaxy.

<sup>19</sup> M. V. Zambeck, *Handbook of Space Astronomy and Astrophysics* (Cambridge, 1982), gives the age of the universe (the 'Hubble Time') as  $(19.6-9.78) \times 10^9$  years (p. 5).

<sup>20</sup> P. Gosse, *Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot* (London, 1857).

<sup>21</sup> On this see for example, M. Calvin, *Chemical Evolution* (Oxford, 1969); M. G. Rutten, *The Origin of Life* (London, 1971).

<sup>22</sup> J. H. J. Peet, 'Chemical Evolution — Some Difficulties', *Faith & Thought* 109 (1982), pp. 127-154.

<sup>23</sup> F. Hoyle and N. C. Wickramasinghe, *Evolution From Space* (London, 1981).

<sup>24</sup> F. Crick, *Life Itself* (London, 1981).

<sup>25</sup> P. S. Moorehead and M. M. Kaplan (eds.), *Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution* (Philadelphia, 1967).

<sup>26</sup> H. S. Lipson, *Physics Bulletin* 30 (1979), p. 140; 31 (1980), pp. 138, 337.

<sup>27</sup> H. Morris (ed.), *Scientific Creationism* (San Diego, 1974), p. 136.

<sup>28</sup> M. Ridley, *The Problems of Evolution* (Oxford, 1985), p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> For examples see: R. Goldschmidt, *The Material Basis of Evolution* (New Haven, 1940); S. J. Gould, *The Panda's Thumb* (London, 1980). Rather different, but trying to deal with the same problem, is the view that life arose spontaneously on earth more than once, as suggested by G. A. Kerkut, *Implications of Evolution* (Oxford, 1960).

<sup>30</sup> See D. A. Young, *Creation and the Flood* (Grand Rapids, 1977) (Age-Day view); B. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Exeter, 1967) (Progressive Creationism). A somewhat different 'ancient creationist' view is that of A. Hayward, *op. cit.* no. 15.

<sup>31</sup> J. Reader, *Missing Links* (London, 1981), gives a not too technical account.

<sup>32</sup> W. M. Becker, *The World of the Cell* (Mento Park, CA, 1986), says, '... virtually all cells oxidize sugar molecules for energy, transport ions across membranes, transcribe DNA into RNA, and undergo division to generate daughter cells ... all cells are surrounded by selectively permeable membranes, all have ribosomes for the purpose of protein synthesis, and all contain double-stranded DNA as their genetic information' (p. 19).

<sup>33</sup> For theistic evolutionary views see R. J. Berry, *Adam and the Ape* (London, 1975); D. C. Spanner, *Biblical Creation and the Theory of Evolution* (Exeter, 1986).

<sup>34</sup> For a survey of views see D. Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (London, rev. edn 1973).

<sup>35</sup> E. K. V. Pearce, *Who was Adam?* (Exeter, 1967).

<sup>36</sup> D. Kidner, *Genesis* (TOTC) (London, 1967), p. 28.

<sup>37</sup> N. M. de S. Cameron, *Evolution and the Authority of the Bible* (Exeter, 1983).

<sup>38</sup> J. Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (Edinburgh, 1897), p. 197.

<sup>39</sup> J. P. Smith, *The Relation Between the Holy Scripture and Some Parts of Geological Science* (London, 1839).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261f.

<sup>41</sup> W. Buckland, *An Enquiry Whether the Sentence of Death Pronounced at the Fall of Man Included the Whole Animal Creation or was Restricted to the Human Race* (London, 1839), p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> H. Bolcher, *op. cit.*, p. 171f.

<sup>43</sup> D. Kidner, *op. cit.*, p. 64f.

<sup>44</sup> A. Lewis, 'The Localization of the Garden of Eden', *BETS* 11 (1968), p. 174.

<sup>45</sup> H. Blocher, *op. cit.*, p. 183f.

# Recent trends in Christology

Gerald L Bray

*Christology remains the centrally important subject for Christian theology: there are many issues, much debate and many opinions. To ask anyone to summarize the field is almost to ask the impossible; but we are very glad that Dr Bray, of Oak Hill College in London and author of Creeds, Councils and Christ (IVP, 1984), has accepted the challenge and given us this survey article.*

In the eyes of a British student there can be little doubt that a study of recent trends in Christology ought to begin with the symposium *The Myth of God Incarnate* which appeared in July 1977.<sup>1</sup> Ten years later the book is still in print, and although it is neither a particularly original nor a particularly profound Christological study, it did manage to create an atmosphere which has provided a talking-point for the subsequent decade. The 'myth-makers', as the contributors to the symposium were irreverently dubbed, were quickly and almost universally criticized by most scholars working in the field, and a number of studies soon appeared which did their best to demonstrate that they were on the wrong track.<sup>2</sup> Before long there were even secondary symposia dedicated to an examination of the 'myth debate', in which proponents and opponents of the original work met each other and agreed to differ, often sharply, from one another.<sup>3</sup>

The *Myth* was criticized for two main reasons. First, the contributors were not agreed about what they meant by the word itself, and this led to some confusion in the minds of readers. Behind the verbal uncertainty lay an uncertain approach to historical facts which revealed itself in the cavalier approach which some of the contributors took to the evidence of the gospels. On the whole it would probably be fair to say that for most of them, as good post-Bultmannians, the historical Jesus had little or no importance for the development of Christology. But in this respect the symposiasts were out of step with a large section of scholarly opinion, and they were criticized for naively swallowing an approach to the biblical data which was strongly reminiscent of classical (i.e. pre-1914) liberalism and which is now generally regarded as obsolete.<sup>4</sup>

The *Myth's* influence on Christology had therefore little to do with its actual content. Rather what the book did was to bring into view the problem of whether and to what extent traditional dogmatic Christology ought to be revised in the light of the findings of biblical scholars and the speculations of modern theologians. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that it was precisely the *Myth's* failure to handle either of these matters satisfactorily which produced a spate of material endeavouring to correct and supplement its shortcomings. To that extent the book opened up an area which had been too long neglected, and which urgently needed serious attention.

## History and the gospels

The precise relationship of the gospels to scientific history has long been recognized to lie at the heart of much Christological debate. The authors of the *Myth* were basically complaining that the early church took the biblical texts at face value and out of them constructed a dogmatic structure which, whilst it was internally coherent, was based on a false assumption. In saying this they were following in the footsteps of Rudolf Bultmann, who had died the previous year, but ignoring the widespread reaction to his ideas which had come to dominate Christological studies in Germany. Käsemann's 'new quest' for the historical Jesus, Pannenberg's assertion that the resurrection must be regarded as a scientifically historical event, and Hengel's wide-ranging and generally conservative studies of the New Testament church — all these were simply ignored. This astonishing oversight can perhaps be explained by the fact that German historical and archaeological studies have usually fitted comfortably within a liberal theological framework. They have not been designed, as they have been in the English-speaking world, to support the historical trustworthiness of the gospels as the chief prop of classical orthodoxy. The myth-makers, coming as they did from an Anglo-Saxon environment, understood that only a radically anti-historical approach could serve as a persuasive basis for their theological reconstruction. Thus they were obliged to overstate their case and ignore developments in Germany which might be interpreted as evidence against it.

But in spite of its lingering attachment to orthodoxy, the main characteristic of recent Anglo-Saxon historical study has been its relative detachment from theological questions, and this tradition has reasserted itself in the debates of the past decade, which found many in the conservative camp unprepared to argue on the myth-makers' chosen ground. The *Myth* appeared too soon after John Robinson's *Redating the New Testament*<sup>5</sup> for the latter to have exerted any influence upon it, but the contrast between them was soon perceived and commented upon.<sup>6</sup> Robinson was a theological radical schooled in the English tradition of conservative biblical criticism, and in his book he managed to present a case for saying that the entire New Testament canon was in existence by AD 70 without ever suggesting what implications that might have for a radical rejection of the gospels as historical evidence. Robinson subsequently went even further and attempted to demonstrate that the fourth gospel was the one closest to the original *kerygma*, although here he was prepared to admit that there may have been a long period in which John was able to meditate on Jesus and develop his Christology before committing it to writing.<sup>7</sup>

From the conservative side came John Wenham's *Easter Enigma*, which was an attempted harmonization of the four gospels in their accounts of the passion, death and resurrec-



tion of Jesus.<sup>8</sup> Wenham was criticized for his forays into speculation, but impartial readers also pointed out that this is inevitable if harmonization is ever to be achieved. What Wenham did was to show that harmonization is not impossible, so that the claim of the gospels to historicity deserves to be taken more seriously than it has sometimes been. Furthermore, it was generally recognized that Wenham was writing in defence of traditional orthodoxy, though he nowhere attempted to develop this. Even so, this reaction demonstrates the degree to which it is still assumed that the historicity of the gospels and traditional orthodoxy stand or fall together, and it reminds us why John Robinson failed to carry conviction when he tried to unite a radical theology to a conservative biblical criticism.

Specific attempts to unite a conservative view of the reliability of the gospels as historical narrative with a fairly traditional theological position which nevertheless was prepared to take the modern debates into account were made by I. H. Marshall<sup>9</sup> and C. F. D. Moule.<sup>10</sup> Marshall's study is more limited in scope, being primarily an examination of Jesus' self-understanding, using the main titles of divinity which are applied to him in the New Testament. He concludes that New Testament Christology makes sense only if we posit the belief that Jesus himself taught that he was the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Messiah-Christ and Lord. Moule endorses the same view, though perhaps somewhat more cautiously, and goes on to develop the idea of the 'corporate Christ', in which Jesus ceases to be merely an historical individual and becomes, in the understanding of the New Testament church, a cosmic figure who transcends individual personhood to embrace a new humanity in himself.

It is at this point that Moule deserts orthodox Christology, which says that each believer has a relationship with Christ, who enables him to approach the Father in the trinitarian communion which is our inheritance in the Holy Spirit, and opts instead for an all-embracing, essentially eschatological view, according to which Christ is the agent of the transformation of the entire creation — a universalism not all that distant from the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, although Moule acknowledges no specific debt to either of them.

Far more radical than Moule is J. D. G. Dunn,<sup>11</sup> who reduces his Christological understanding of the New Testament to two fundamental presuppositions. First, he argues that the early church worshipped Jesus as Lord, which soon came to mean God, even if this was not necessarily immediately clear at first. Second, Dunn argues for an ontological continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith; in other words, whatever happened on the first Easter morning, the early Christians believed that the Christ whom they met in the post-resurrection appearances was the same person as the Jesus whom they had known before the crucifixion. These two assumptions allow Dunn to claim a kind of minimalist orthodoxy whilst accepting the main substance of the classical liberal position on the composition of the New Testament writings, the emergence of early Catholicism, and so on. In a sense, therefore, he may be called the diametric opposite of John Robinson, and the perceived incongruity in his position has similarly failed to carry conviction.

Finally, representing an even more radical line, there is J. Mackey,<sup>12</sup> who accepted all the most anti-historical beliefs of the myth-makers and endeavoured to give their views a systematic framework rooted in the New Testament. It is Mackey's contention that Jesus was himself a myth-maker propounding a highly symbolic 'kingdom of God', and that the task of his followers, especially the apostle Paul, was to substitute a myth based on Jesus for the one created by him! Mackey's work is valuable chiefly because it shows us how far it is possible to go in rejecting history when constructing a Christological theory. In purely intellectual terms it represents a considerable achievement, but one which is too weakly grounded to be regarded as a serious contribution to theology.

### Orthodoxy

Mackey comes from a Roman Catholic background, which may explain why he takes the myth-building of the early church far beyond the New Testament. According to him the Pauline myth did not finally become orthodoxy until the defeat of Arius, which thus represents a watershed in Christological development.

The attempted rehabilitation of ancient heretics is a recurring feature of modern Christology, though until recently the figures usually selected for this honour have been either Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428), whose case rests on the fact that he was not condemned until 553, and Nestorius, who has been shown to have expressed agreement with the *Tome* of Leo, a document which was used at the Council of Chalcedon to reinforce his condemnation at Ephesus in 431. Scholars continue to argue over the merits of Nestorius' case,<sup>13</sup> but it seems as if the main efforts at rehabilitation may have shifted to the famous arch-heretic Arius. Certainly this was the intention of Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh<sup>14</sup> who argued that Arianism owed its distinctive Christology to soteriological considerations whose strength was such that the 'orthodox' opposition was reduced to a handful of diehards around Athanasius of Alexandria.

The belief that soteriology determined Christology in the Arian controversy represents an ingenious attempt to read a modern situation back into ancient times. Gregg and Groh have taken the 'functional' approach to Christology which is common in Germany, where Oscar Cullmann and Ferdinand Hahn have been its leading exponents, and applied it to the fourth-century debate. It is interesting in this connection to note that whereas Cullmann believes that the functional Christology characteristic of the New Testament gave way to a more ontological approach later on, Gregg and Groh seem to be saying that the Arian controversy was the moment when matters came to a head and the 'biblical' Christology represented by the functional soteriology of Arius finally succumbed to the ontological approach now associated with orthodoxy.

This view has been seriously challenged by Rowan Williams<sup>15</sup> who argues that it misrepresents the thrust of Arius' teaching. Arius, says Williams, was primarily concerned to deny the (faulty) ontological assertions of the church of Alexandria, which seemed to him to be raising Christ to such a level of divinity that the person of the Father and his rôle as *fons deitatis* were being compromised. Instead of this, Arius proposed an alternative ontology which would

leave the Father's uniqueness intact and at the centre of Christian theology. In general terms, Williams is certainly correct in his assessment of Arius' mind, though he may have underestimated the appeal of soteriological factors to some, at least, of his many followers.

One interesting feature of recent discussion is that traditional orthodoxy has come to be associated with the Council of Chalcedon, perhaps because it is the usual stopping place in university courses on early church history, even though that Council has little claim to such a distinction. This has been forcefully pointed out by E. L. Mascall<sup>16</sup> and two timely, though little known, studies bear him out.<sup>17</sup> More recently, however, there are signs that the neglect of post-Chalcedonian developments is being repaired, at least to some extent. David Calvert<sup>18</sup> extends his rejection of classical Christological terms to the period beyond Chalcedon, and Glenn Chesnut<sup>19</sup> does his best to refashion post-Chalcedonian terminology into distinctively modern concepts. Chesnut is particularly concerned to demonstrate that the exponents of Chalcedon, and in particular Maximus the Confessor, had a theology which can quite easily be transferred into existentialist terms. It is a brave attempt, but apart from the fact that it assumes that existentialism is *the* modern philosophy, it is open to the same kind of objection that Rowan Williams has levelled at Gregg and Groh. Once again we are faced with an attempt to graft a modern way of thinking onto an ancient author whose own perspective was rather different.<sup>20</sup>

### Modern reconstructions

Nevertheless it is fair to say that 'Chalcedon' is now widely used as shorthand to represent traditional orthodox Christology, and that recent speculative work in the field can largely be divided according to whether it accepts or rejects this heritage. This in turn involves a preference for either an ontological or a functional approach to the figure of Jesus. In view of the tendency of biblical scholars to opt for the latter, it is scarcely surprising that the majority of recent studies have done the same, but the ontological approach is by no means dead and has recently acquired some notable exponents and defenders.

Among the books devoted to a basically functional approach, we may mention the 1980 Sarum Lectures given by Schubert Ogden<sup>21</sup> who argues for an understanding of Jesus as the man who has given us the key to achieve authentic personal freedom. Ogden's approach is reminiscent of the existentialist morality of the 1960s, and he is clearly sympathetic to the authors of the *Myth*. However his approach is so firmly tied to the supposed desire of 'modern man' for the subjective experience of 'freedom' that any reference to the historical Jesus is obliged to serve this fundamental point. Because of this it becomes difficult to know whether Ogden is really presenting a Christology at all, or merely using Jesus-language as a hangover from the past which might still be useful for expressing human emotions today.

Much less radical than this is the work of Anthony Tyrrell Hanson,<sup>22</sup> who rejects the Chalcedonian framework without departing from the Bible or the theological tradition as a whole. Hanson argues that the teaching and experience of Jesus which the early Christians received obliged them to

develop a theology which allowed for distinctions within God. In particular, they were forced to develop a Logos, or Word, doctrine, according to which God could communicate with mankind through the activities of a particular human being. We appear to be on the road to a modern form of Arianism, though Hanson is careful to reject this. He also rejects the revamped adoptionism of Geoffrey Lampe,<sup>23</sup> though he is broadly sympathetic to the concerns which Lampe raises. In the end, Hanson pictures Jesus as the greatest of the saints, a man in whom God has revealed his Word but who nevertheless remains a finite creature who is not identical with that Word.

Hanson's work is especially notable for the amount of attention it gives to the question of Christ's pre-existence and the problem of the ongoing influence of his sacrifice as a mediatorial propitiation for our sins. Both of these concepts he resolutely denies, though in doing so he opens up the whole field of medieval and Reformation Christology, including the eucharistic controversies of the period, which have largely been left to one side in modern debates.

Roman Catholic theologians have also been prominent in advocating various forms of functional Christology, though their dogmatic commitment to Chalcedon has usually prevented them from being quite as radical as their Protestant counterparts. In general they have been content to stress the implications of Christ's complete humanity, particularly in the realm of his conscious self-awareness. 'A humanity completely open to God' is the way Piet Schoonenberg,<sup>24</sup> Karl Rahner,<sup>25</sup> Hans Küng<sup>26</sup> and most profoundly Edward Schillebeeckx<sup>27</sup> have described and developed their approach to Christ. For them the psychological experiences of a first-century Jew are all-important to our understanding of Christology, and it is the meeting of Jesus' self-consciousness with ours which makes him the model for us to follow in the pursuit of our salvation. To all of these writers, as to Hanson, the traditional ontological approach suffers from being drawn largely from the fourth gospel, which they all agree is a late and unreliable source.<sup>28</sup>

In opposition to this tendency there is the wide-ranging and solidly based work of Jean Galot, whose earlier writings were introduced to the English-speaking world by Eric Mascall,<sup>29</sup> and some of whose major work has now appeared in English.<sup>30</sup> Galot tackles the modern Christological debates head-on, and argues that only a return to the ontological categories of Chalcedon, suitably updated to embrace the concerns of modern psychological research, can solve the problems which theologians believe confront them. Galot insists that the biblical witness, taken as a whole, leads inevitably to the ontological definitions of Chalcedon, which he believes are sufficiently open-ended to accommodate modern concerns. He rightly criticizes many modern theologians for having rejected traditional terminology without either understanding it or bothering to investigate its hidden potential. Galot's work is a first-class restatement of traditional orthodoxy in modern terms, and deserves to be more widely known than is the case at present.

Another defender of the traditional ontological approach is Colin Gunton,<sup>31</sup> who argues that to neglect it is to fall back into the dualistic approach to reality which characterized ancient tendencies towards adoptionism and docetism. As

Gunton points out, modern reconstructions of Christology often bear more than a passing resemblance to ancient heresies, and he attributes this fact to the rather superficial rejection of the traditional orthodox inheritance on the part of modern theologians. Gunton's book is a fresh and learned philosophical approach to the subject and should be taken more seriously than it has been so far. Gunton does not appear to know Galot, but the two men have a good deal in common and their approaches complement each other in a quite remarkable way.

### The work of Christ

The predominance of a functional, soteriological approach to Christology is a reminder of the importance of the work of Christ within the framework of the doctrine of his person and natures. As Colin Gunton points out, modern theologians frequently miss the fact that the classical two-natures Christology had a profoundly soteriological purpose in ensuring that Christ was an adequate saviour of mankind and mediator between man and God. But although the soteriological theme has received great prominence, its content has been left remarkably vague. Very often the most that is said is that Christ is our 'liberator', a term which is usually understood in terms of individual emotional and psychological experience, though of course it has also been applied to social and political freedom in the context of the liberation theology which has grown up on the frontiers of Christianity and Marxism.<sup>32</sup>

The most serious critique of this from the traditional Roman Catholic perspective is that by Jean Galot,<sup>33</sup> who attempts a systematic application of Chalcedonian Christology to the saving work of Christ on the cross. Galot does not stop with the atonement, however, but extends his treatment to cover the resurrection and ascension of Christ, as well as the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Unfortunately, the wholeness of Galot's vision is compromised by a limitation of the substitutionary rôle of Christ's sacrifice to allow for a human contribution to the work of salvation, and a universalizing of redemption which has no place for the satisfaction of the Father's justice by the payment of the human debt of guilt.

It has been left to Protestant theologians to defend the classical teaching of the Reformation on the atonement, and this has been done in at least three works of substantial importance which have appeared in recent years. In Germany, Martin Hengel<sup>34</sup> has carefully demonstrated the validity of atonement language both within the circle of Jesus' followers and in the wider Graeco-Roman world. As it is often supposed that a concept of substitutionary sacrifice would not have fitted the socio-cultural context of earliest Christianity, this is a contribution of major importance. More strictly biblical in scope is the work of Leon Morris,<sup>35</sup> who shows in great detail just what the range of meaning inherent in Jewish and Christian concepts of atonement actually was. Morris' scholarship is unashamedly conservative, with a wealth of biblical reference and a constant concern to answer the charges levelled against the traditional teaching by scholars of an earlier generation like C. H. Dodd and Vincent Taylor.

Complementing Morris' work is the massive study by H. D. McDonald<sup>36</sup> who takes us through the traditional doctrine, the evidence of the New Testament for it, and the treatment which atonement has received in history. Complete chapters are devoted to the contributions of Anselm, Abelard, Dale, Forsyth, Aulén and Moberly, and no fewer than 28 theologians are briefly discussed in the last chapter, including Leon Morris (but not C. H. Dodd, for some curious reason). McDonald is a conservative in the Reformation mould, but he is always scrupulously fair to his opponents and his book is likely to become and remain a standard work of reference on its subject.

### Other approaches

One might expect, in an age dominated by Karl Barth, that there would be a steady stream of theological studies relating the doctrine of Christ to the Trinity, but although such studies have appeared from time to time, they have been surprisingly rare. No doubt the strong functional approach to Christology has had a lot to do with this neglect, but it is quite astonishing how far the issue has been left to the defenders of traditional credal positions. Since the appearance of James Dunn's *Jesus and the Spirit* there has been almost nothing of comparable significance, in spite of the widespread growth of charismatic and 'renewal' movements in the churches. Ecumenical interests have prompted the World Council of Churches to produce its excellent symposium on the *Filioque* dispute,<sup>37</sup> which has been supplemented more recently by Yves Congar,<sup>38</sup> but the only major work on the place of the Son within the Godhead is that by Louis Bouyer,<sup>39</sup> which has not had the circulation it deserves or will need if it is to make any serious impact on Anglo-Saxon Christology.

On a completely different track is Jaroslav Pelikan's recent work dealing with the place of Jesus in the history of culture.<sup>40</sup> This is an unusual subject which has seldom been studied, and never put together in such comprehensive detail. Pelikan takes eighteen different pictures of Christ which he sees as having dominated at successive periods in the history of the church, and he deals with each in the light of the theology, literature and art of its time. The book is a very useful reminder that Jesus has never belonged to theologians, and it even suggests to us that theology has reacted to the forces of the age in which it has been written more frequently than we have often thought. It is a book which deserves to be read and pondered carefully by all students of Christology, whatever their own particular approach to the subject might be.

Lastly, something should be said about the Statement of the Pontifical Biblical Commission which appeared in Latin and French in 1984 and has recently been translated into English with a commentary by J. A. Fitzmyer.<sup>41</sup> The Commission surveys the different trends which have appeared in modern Christology, and criticizes them for a one-sided approach to the Scriptures. Its remedy is a deeper and more comprehensive use of the Bible, including the Old Testament, for establishing a Christology which will have pastoral relevance in the church today. The document betrays no sign of denominational bias, though its comments on particular theologians are necessarily very brief. Here the commentary is a help because it fills in the background to the Commission's thinking as far as this can be done by one who was not a

participant in the discussions. The document is valuable not only as a handy reference tool, but also because of the remarkable Part II, which outlines the framework of what the Commission believes is a truly biblical Christology. This turns out to rely heavily on the covenant offices of prophet, priest and king as the key to an Old Testament Christology, and insists that Jesus can be understood only by giving priority to his filial relationship to God. It is this consideration, says the Commission, which ought to be the criterion of investigation into the meaning of Christ for believers today. The Protestant observer can hardly help wondering whether he has stumbled back into the pages of Calvin by mistake, since that is certainly the impression which this Statement gives.

As a call to the church to develop a relevant Christology, the Statement of the Papal Commission makes a fitting conclusion to a survey of the past decade. No-one can dispute that much has been said and written during that time, but it remains very much an open question how much of what has appeared will eventually form part of that great tradition which is the witness of God's faithful saints in every age to the reality of his presence with us in the person of Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup> J. Hick (ed.), *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London, 1977).

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of this see J. Ziesler, *The Jesus Question* (London, 1980), pp. 108-119; K. Runia, *The Present-Day Christological Debate* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 78-86.

<sup>3</sup> M. Goulder (ed.), *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued* (London, 1979); A. E. Harvey (ed.), *God Incarnate: Story and Belief* (London, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> See A. Heron, article review in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31 (1978), pp. 51-71.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London, 1976).

<sup>6</sup> See E. L. Mascall, *Theology and the Gospel of Christ* (London, 1977), pp. 111-120.

<sup>7</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (London, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> J. Wenham, *Easter Enigma* (Exeter, 1984). A similar approach to this can be found in M. J. Harris, *Easter in Durham* (Exeter, 1985), which is a scholarly rebuttal of the Bishop of Durham's denial of the historical resurrection of Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> I. H. Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (Leicester, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London, 1980).

<sup>12</sup> J. P. Mackey, *Jesus: The Man and the Myth* (London, 1979).

<sup>13</sup> For a full discussion see A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition I* (rev. edn, 1975), pp. 559-568.

<sup>14</sup> R. C. Gregg and D. E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (London, 1981).

<sup>15</sup> R. Williams, 'The Logic of Arianism', in *Journal of Theological Studies* 34 (1983), pp. 56-81.

<sup>16</sup> E. L. Mascall, *Whatever Happened to the Human Mind?* (London, 1980), pp. 28-53.

<sup>17</sup> J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, NY, 1975); P. T. R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East* (451-553) (Leiden, 1979).

<sup>18</sup> D. G. A. Calvert, *From Christ to God* (London, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> G. F. Chesnut, *Images of Christ* (Minneapolis, 1984).

<sup>20</sup> *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings* (London, 1985), gives some idea of his thought. But for a full treatment of the question see P. Piret, *Le Christ et la Trinité selon Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris, 1983) and F. M. Léthal, *Théologie de l'Agonie du Christ* (Paris, 1979).

<sup>21</sup> S. M. Ogden, *The Point of Christology* (London, 1982).

<sup>22</sup> A. T. Hanson, *The Image of the Invisible God* (London, 1982).

<sup>23</sup> G. H. Lampe, *God as Spirit* (Oxford, 1980).

<sup>24</sup> P. Schoonenberg, *The Christ: A Study of the God-Man Relationship in the Whole of creation and in Jesus Christ* (New York, 1971).

<sup>25</sup> K. Rahner, *Theological Writings* vols 1, 13, 16, 17 (London, 1974-81).

<sup>26</sup> H. Küng, *On Being a Christian* (London, 1977).

<sup>27</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus* (London, 1979); *Christ* (London, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> Hence the importance of J. A. T. Robinson's *The Priority of John* (London, 1985).

<sup>29</sup> E. L. Mascall, *Theology and the Gospel of Christ*, pp. 151-188.

<sup>30</sup> J. Galot, *Who is Christ?* (Rome, 1980).

<sup>31</sup> C. Gunton, *Yesterday and Today. A Study of Continuities in Christology* (London, 1983).

<sup>32</sup> A. Kirk, *Liberation Theology* (London, 1979).

<sup>33</sup> J. Galot, *Jesus, Our Liberator* (Rome, 1982).

<sup>34</sup> M. Hengel, *The Atonement* (London, 1981).

<sup>35</sup> L. Morris, *The Atonement. Its meaning and significance* (Leicester, 1983).

<sup>36</sup> H. L. McDonald, *The Atonement of the Death of Christ in Faith, Revelation and History* (Grand Rapids, 1985).

<sup>37</sup> L. Vischer (ed.), *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ* (Geneva, 1981).

<sup>38</sup> Y. Congar, *The Word and the Spirit* (London, 1986).

<sup>39</sup> L. Bouyer, *The Eternal Son. A Theology of the Word of God and Christology* (Huntingdon, Indiana, 1978).

<sup>40</sup> J. Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries. His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven and London, 1985).

<sup>41</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, *Scripture and Christology* (London, 1986).

## Four other gospels: review article

D F Wright

*Considerable scholarly attention has been paid in recent years to non-canonical gospel traditions. In this article our Church History Editor, who lectures at New College, Edinburgh, reviews a significant recent work in this area.*

J. D. Crossan, **Four Other Gospels** (Winston Press: Minneapolis, Chicago, New York, 1985), 208 pp., £13.95, ISBN 0-86683-959-3.

This book, which is subtitled 'Shadows on the Contours of Canon', is a first response to the challenge thrown down to scholars by Helmut Koester (and also in effect by Richard Bauckham in the fifth volume in the *Gospel Perspectives* series produced by the Tyndale House Gospels Project, *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, ed. D.

Wenham, Sheffield, 1985, pp. 369-403, esp. 369-374) to analyze the gospel tradition in primitive Christianity without isolating the canonical gospels from other gospel materials. Crossan's 'four others' are the *Gospel of Thomas*, Egerton Papyrus 2, the *Secret Gospel of Mark* and the *Gospel of Peter*. His method of study is the standard historical-critical one of 'transmissional analysis', as he prefers to call it. A careful reader of this book, he claims, will never see the canonical gospels the same way again. On the dust-cover James M. Robinson endorses this breathtaking claim, while George MacRae describes the volume more circumspectly as a work of 'intriguing speculation leading to new insights'.

Crossan's conclusions fall in with the growing tendency, particularly among American scholars, to regard non-canonical gospel traditions like those embodied in his four as basically independent of the canonical four. He writes for the general reader as well as for the

specialist (and hence includes in each case an account of the manuscripts and their discovery), and cannot avoid resting a good deal of weight on more substantial studies by other writers, although for each of his four he examines in detail one or more 'case studies'. It will be best to deal in turn with his evaluations of his four gospels.

(1) The *Gospel of Thomas* (*GT*) is a collection of sayings (logia) of Jesus, many of them very similar to their synoptic counterparts. It was discovered in Nag-Hammadi in Egypt in 1945. Though now in Coptic, it is widely believed to have been compiled in Greek or Aramaic (Syriac) by c. 150 at the latest. In Crossan's judgment, *GT* is completely independent of the canonical gospels, and they of it. Its independence, which does not necessarily mean that it is earlier or 'better' than our four, is accepted by an increasing number of scholars (but not by Craig Blomberg in his study of the parables of *GT* in *Gospel Perspectives* 5, pp. 177-205), but Crossan cannot be regarded as having strengthened the case for it. One of his two general arguments maintains that the apparently random sequence of sayings in *GT*, which has no compositional order at all, would be inconceivable if *Thomas* had derived them from our gospels. This is hardly convincing, partly because some elements of compositional design are evident in *GT* (e.g. keyword-linkage more significant than the trivial instances Crossan mentions, and more extensive than is normally allowed, if linkage by words like 'Lord' and 'many' is included, as Crossan implies it should be; and thematic connection, as in logion 33, which Crossan cites to prove his point about order), and also because Crossan's argument seems likely to count equally against *GT*'s dependence on any conceivable earlier (pre-canonical) collection of gospel traditions.

His second general reason argues that *GT* contains very little, if any, of the synoptists' redactional material. His example is logion 54, 'Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven'. Whether it is easier to believe that *Thomas* was 'mentally unstable' than that he is here dependent on Luke (and perhaps Matthew) is at least open to question, especially when we remember, as Crossan does later, that *GT* hardly ever uses 'God' at all, and perhaps never in a good sense.

Crossan's two case studies are of logia 64 (the Great Banquet) and 65 (the Wicked Husbandmen). The latter has been recognized from the earliest days of *GT* study as offering one of its strongest cases for a logion more primitive in form than its parallels in the synoptic gospels (but see Blomberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-190). At the same time the former appears one of the most obvious examples of tendentiously secondary development in *GT*, with its rejection of all forms of business and mercantile activity and perhaps marriage also. Crossan recognizes this, but sees the versions in Matthew and Luke as similarly developed interpretations of the original parable of Jesus, in both cases as 'allegories of Christian history' including the mission to the Gentiles. This is, however, much less evident in Luke than in Matthew, and Luke's version is also much closer than *GT*'s to the original form of the parable as generally reconstructed.

Nevertheless, Crossan's conclusions about *GT* would be among the least controversial in the book, were it not for his over-all assessment of the work. To assert that *GT* is 'what Jewish wisdom theology looks like after it has heard Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God' leaves out of account altogether *GT*'s advanced asceticism, which views the differentiation of the sexes as, in effect, the fruit of a fall to be overcome in the kingdom. Crossan leans too much on Stevan L. Davies' interpretation of *GT* in terms of a speculative wisdom theology. It is at best a misleadingly careless statement that *GT* uses 'Kingdom in place of the term Wisdom'; of scarcely one or two of *GT*'s many uses of 'Kingdom' is this at all plausible. Furthermore, Crossan is inaccurate in affirming that, in its understanding of Jesus as divine wisdom, *GT* 'either does not know or does not need any of those other titles used for Jesus elsewhere in early Christianity', for *GT* does use Son of Man, Lord and the Son (absolutely, alongside Father and Holy Spirit). Finally, if *GT* belongs to the borderlands between gnostic and catholic Christianity, was it ever hypothetically redeemable by some therapeutic 'Epistles of Thomas', 'just as the Pastoral Epistles redeemed Paul from such as the *Acts of Paul* and the Johannine Epistles redeemed John from such as the *Acts of John*'? Such a suggestion not only raises mind-boggling implications for the chronology of primitive Christianity but also fails

to give due weight to *GT*'s radical rejection of the divine creation of man and woman.

(2) The gospel fragments known as Egerton Papyrus 2 (EgP) are among the very earliest of all Christian manuscripts. Unearthed in 1934-5 and now in the British Library, the four scraps of Greek come from Egypt (probably Oxyrhynchus) and should probably be dated earlier than AD 150. Crossan goes into some detail on the make-up of a papyrus codex, but fails to redeem his promise to bring out the relevance of this discussion to his subsequent case study.

Again Crossan concludes that this 'Unknown Gospel' (as it has long been called) is independent of all the canonical gospels. Furthermore, it belongs to a stage prior to the separation of the synoptic and Johannine traditions, each of which may be dependent upon it, if there is any relation of dependence at all. I have re-examined the case for EgP's independence of our gospels in *Gospel Perspectives* 5, pp. 210-221 (cf. Bauckham, *ibid.*, pp. 377-378, 399 n. 5), and the reader is referred thither for a refutation by anticipation of much of Crossan's argumentation. I will confine myself here to a few selective comments.

Crossan repeats Koester's objection to the conclusion of Jeremias and others that EgP is dependent on our four gospels, namely that this would make EgP 'a spectacularly early witness for the four-gospel canon', but such a statement is doubly unfortunate. It forgets that one fragment of EgP reflects an obviously non-canonical miracle tradition, so that its dependence goes beyond the four gospels, and secondly, its alleged use of our four would not necessarily imply their canonical status at the time.

Crossan's case study focuses on the question about tribute (Mk. 12:13-17 par.; EgP lines 43-59, which probably break off incomplete). In this instance Crossan appears to regard the parallel in *GT* (logion 100 as dependent on the Markan or broadly synoptic version.) In claiming that Mark is here a rephrasing of EgP, Crossan provides only one argument of detail — Mark's relocation (to 7:6-7) of the accusation in EgP lines 54-59 drawn from Is. 29:13. Two considerations persuade him that this is a correct account of the relationship: first (if I have read the somewhat elusive sequence aright), that the introduction 'Well did . . .' (καλῶς) to the Isaiah text is uncharacteristic of Mark; and second, that Mark's omission of 'with their mouth' from Is. 29:13 is without rhyme or reason unless he found it in that form, as he could have done in EgP. But Crossan has failed to notice that the omission of 'with/in their mouth' is a variant of the LXX text itself (missing in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Alexandrinus). In any case, no special explanation is needed for an incomplete OT quotation such as this. To Crossan's first point it may be rejoined that we have no evidence to judge whether 'Well did . . .' was characteristic of EgP either, and, in any case, can it be truly said to be uncharacteristic of Mark in the light of 7:37 and especially 12:28,32? What can be affirmed with confidence is that Is. 29:13 fits in much better in Mk. 7 than in the tribute question in EgP, where Jesus' accusation seems out of place, for there has been no word of Jesus for his questioners to be faulted for disobeying. This comment does not apply in Mk. 7, where it is obvious that the *main point of the citation* is the last phrase of Is. 29:13; ' . . . teaching as doctrines the precepts of men'. A textual comparison here shows conclusively that Mark could not have got his version from EgP but is in fact very close to the LXX. Crossan's argument thus misses the wood for the trees.

(3) The *Secret Gospel of Mark* (*SGM*) is known of only from a letter ascribed to Clement of Alexandria which was found by the American scholar, Morton Smith, in 1958 in the monastery of Mar Saba not far from Bethlehem. The manuscript was written in the eighteenth century. The letter warns against the abuse by the heretical Carpatians of Mark's 'more spiritual' amplification (*SGM*) of his own gospel. Crossan accepts as a working hypothesis the authenticity of the Clementine letter, as have many, perhaps most, scholars qualified to judge, but he recognizes that a cloud of uncertainty will hang over the question so long as no other scholar is able to examine the original manuscript. The caution of this judgment, however, stands in stark contrast to the adventurous claims of the rest of Crossan's discussion of *SGM*. He concludes that 'canonical Mark is a very deliberate revision of *Secret Mark*', made necessary by the Gnostic

Carpocratians' misuse of parts of *SGM*. This is similar to Koester's view, but it is much weaker than it, for, unlike Koester, Crossan sees no need to posit a Proto-Mark used by Matthew and Luke. This means that, for Crossan, our Mark did not exist until c.120 or so at the earliest, for Irenaeus dates Carpocrates to this time, as a contemporary of Basilides and others (Eusebius, *H.E.* 4:7-9). Crossan unfortunately nowhere raises questions of dating.

His main argument for so bold a conclusion is that canonical Mark dismembered two passages in *SGM* and distributed the textual debris at various locations in the gospel. . . . Those dismembered fragments have kept ancient and modern interpreters puzzling over their meaning in canonical Mark.' Matthew and Luke independently found it necessary to depart from Mark's text at these points.

The credibility of this supposition rests or falls with the details of the case. According to the Clementine letter, *SGM* read, between Mk. 10:46a and 46b, 'And the sister of the youth whom Jesus loved and his mother and Salome were there, and Jesus did not receive them.' (Since it is hard to see how the Carpocratians could have made tendentious use of such a sentence, Crossan deduces that *SGM*'s text must have been more extended.) 'The youth whom Jesus loved', according to Crossan, was redistributed by Mark to 10:20-21, and 'Salome' to 15:40 and 16:1. Questions abound: What have the youth's sister and mother done not to deserve redistribution? Is 'Jesus loved him' in Mk. 10:21 any less 'dangerous' than the phrase in *SGM*? Is there any evidence that 'ancient and modern interpreters' have puzzled over the meaning of Mk. 10:20-21 — to say nothing of the two mentions of Salome?

From the longer misused passage in *SGM* (a version of the raising of Lazarus, it seems) Mark 'scattered . . . over the rest of the gospel' the following 'textual debris': Bethany to 11:1 (Luke obviously found no difficulty with Mark's debris); "Son of David, have mercy on me." But the disciples rebuked her' to 10:47-48 (but why the repetition of 'Son of David. . .?') What was Mark's text before this redistribution? — the appeal makes better sense in Mk. than in *SGM*, where it is uttered by [Lazarus'] sister); 'rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb' to 16:3; 'youth' to 16:5; 'raised him, seizing his hand' to 1:31, 5:41, 9:27 (although Mark uses this 'almost as a stock phrase', Crossan does not regard this as evidence of its originality in Mark — contrary to his reasoning on 'Well did. . . in EgP above; he also is wrong in claiming its omission from Mt. 8:15, the parallel to Mk. 1:31); 'began to beseech him that he might be with him' to 5:18; 'the youth, looking upon him, loved him. . . for he was rich' to 10:17-22 (the incident with the rich young man); 'came into the house' to 1:29, 2:15, 3:20 ('Mark intends to set up a rhythm of calling/visiting so that the case in *SGM* 2 is no longer anything particularly special' — but Crossan has here to admit that Matthew and Luke found no difficulty with Mk. 1:29 and 2:15; and is their omission of Mk. 3:20 attributable to its 'rather forced' reference to Jesus' being in a house?); 'after six days' to 9:2; 'the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body' to 14:51-52; 'mystery of the kingdom of God' to 4:11 (why the sole change in Mt. 13:11 and Lk. 8:9; to 'mysteries', should be viewed as a 'more expected format' is not made clear); 'the other side of the Jordan' to 10:1 (Crossan's reference here to Lk. 9:51 is mistaken; the awkward element in Mark here is 'and' [which he did *not* get from *SGM*] which Mt. 19:1 omits).

Crossan's comment on the last of these Markan relocations says it all: 'for Mark it was a simple question of storing some *SGM* debris somewhere safe!' He nowhere attempts to explain why Mark felt it necessary to scatter around *only these elements of SGM* debris. Why, for example, did 'going out of the tomb' not find a home elsewhere in canonical Mark, and likewise 'remained with him that night', to say nothing of the actual death and resurrection of the beloved youth? This is a crucial lacuna in Crossan's argument in view of his assertion that Mark's reason for retaining the dismembered fragments was 'to offset future Carpocratian usage' by being able to show that their favourite passages in *SGM* were later compilations built out of such fragments. Moreover, Crossan never faces the larger questions his theory provokes about the composition of Mark. He believes that *SGM* and canonical Mark were both produced by 'the same author or school'. Since canonical Mark is anti-Carpocratian and therefore not pre-Carpocrates, the composition of *SGM* cannot be dated before the

early 2nd century. Since Crossan is not sure (contrary to the clear implication of Clement) that *SGM* contained passion and resurrection narratives, where did 'the same author or school' get these from for canonical Mark c.125 in Alexandria?

Furthermore, the use Matthew and Luke made of Mark is strictly irrelevant to the pre-history of Mark itself. In fact, Crossan has considerably overstated their deliberate divergence from Mark's supposedly redistributed debris, and in any case, Crossan accepts that 'they found difficulties . . . with many other themes and topics in Markan theology'.

It may be sufficient to summarize and question such a hypothetical construction for it to start shaking alarmingly. We may bid it goodbye by noting how selectively Crossan chooses to use the Clementine letter. He rejects altogether its corroboration of the tradition of a Petrine basis to Mark's gospel, and its account of Mark's expansion of his original gospel into 'a more spiritual Gospel'. (Koester takes these items more seriously.) On the other hand, he takes with great seriousness Clement's account of the contents of *SGM*, making it in effect the fountain-head of the Markan gospel tradition, despite (a) the very limited information Clement gives us about it; (b) the complications for his (Crossan's) hypothesis of what Clement does tell us about it (Clement's summary statement of the additions that made *SGM* different from public Mark ['to the stories already written he added yet others and, moreover, brought in certain sayings. . .'] must provoke us to ask of Crossan how much more of our Mark may consist of *membra disiecta*, like unsuspected nuclear waste, from *SGM*?); (c) obviously secondary features in the two special passages of *SGM* Clement reports (e.g. the great cry heard from the tomb before Jesus has rolled away the stone; the conversation the youth has with Jesus even before they have left the tomb; Jesus' 'not receiving' the women at Jericho — unparalleled in the gospels' picture of Jesus' relations with women. Cf. J. A. T. Robinson's account of *SGM*'s Lazarus story as 'a much inferior tradition . . . historically pretty worthless' [*The Priority of John*, London, 1985, p. 221]).

The Clementine letter certainly calls for further study. It is perhaps a reflection of persistent doubts about its authenticity that it remains relatively neglected. (For example, if from Clement himself, it provides us with our earliest evidence of the tradition linking Mark with Alexandria. Furthermore, what it says about the production of Mark's gospel, even down to details of vocabulary relating to the material aspects thereof, suggests a fascinating tie-up with the arguments of C. H. Roberts in particular about the early Christian adoption of the codex form of the book. See my review in *History* 69 (1984), pp. 443-444, of Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* [Oxford, 1983].) Even the translation is not always clear, as is obvious if one compares that of F. F. Bruce in *The 'Secret' Gospel of Mark* (London, 1974) with Morton Smith's which Crossan uses. Meanwhile, however, Crossan's account of its significance, which, one must stress, is considerably more vulnerable than Koester's, seems acceptable only on the Tertullianic principle *credibile quia ineptum*.

(4) The headiest wine of all Crossan reserves for last, for he believes that the Passion-Resurrection Source which in his view constitutes most of the *Gospel of Peter* (*GP*) is not only independent of our four gospels but was in fact used by all four. He also holds that the present *GP* is a composite text, incorporating short units derived from our gospels.

The *Gospel of Peter* is more recognizably a 'gospel' than any of Crossan's other three candidates, although all that survives is an account of the passion and resurrection of Jesus. Until a few years ago (see below) its sole manuscript was one dating from the eighth or ninth century discovered at Akhmim in Egypt in 1886-7. I have dealt with aspects of this work elsewhere (cf. the essay referred to above, and also 'Apologetic and Apocalyptic: The Miraculous in the *Gospel of Peter*', in *The Miracles of Jesus [Gospel Perspectives 6]*, Sheffield, 1986), eds. D. Wenham and C. Blomberg, pp. 401-418; cf. also Papyrus Egerton 2 (the 'Unknown Gospel') — Part of the *Gospel of Peter?*, forthcoming in *The Second Century*). Nevertheless, certain comments are called for here.

(a) The *GP* that Crossan discusses is the text in the Akhmim manuscript. Although he records the recently discovered Oxyrhynchus

Papyrus 2949, which consists of a fragment of *GP* and dates from c.200, he nowhere assesses the significance of its considerable divergences from the much later Akhmim text (see my essay in *Gospel Perspectives* 5, pp. 222-225). The most obvious inference to draw is that the Akhmim text of *GP* is a markedly developed one, and cannot any longer with much confidence be presumed to present *GP* in its original form. The failure to consider the possible implications of this new papyrus, whose dating is not in doubt, is remarkable in a volume characterized by the boldest hypothetical reconstructions of textual relationships.

(b) One general effect of Crossan's account of the substantial priority of *GP* to the canonical gospels is that the most miraculous resurrection narrative of all becomes the earliest of the five. It is marked by (i) the heavenly descent and entry into the tomb of two men enveloped in light; (ii) the stone rolling back of its own accord; (iii) the exit from the tomb of the two, supporting or escorting a third figure (the two as tall as, and the third taller than, the heavens), followed by the cross; (iv) the cross responding 'Yes?' to a question from heaven, 'Have you preached to those who sleep?'; (v) a further descent of a man from heaven and his entry into the tomb; (vi) this resplendent young man's message to the women, from his seat in the tomb, that the one who was crucified had risen and departed whence he had been sent.

(c) Only the last of these elements is clearly paralleled in the four gospels. (There may also be a partial parallel between (i) and (ii) and Mt. 28:2.) Crossan recognizes that very little of *GP*'s narrative is reflected in the canonical accounts, but holds that parts of it have left their mark elsewhere. Thus Luke's 'two men' at the Transfiguration, empty tomb and ascension (9:30; 24:4; Acts 1:10) are said, without any evidence being advanced, to derive from *GP*. Mark in turn has transferred to his Transfiguration story the two men (who become his Elijah with Moses in 9:4), the heavenly height of the three (which becomes in 9:2 'led them up a high mountain' — a tall stor(e)y indeed!), and the great brightness and the heavenly voice (despite the sole linguistic parallel for either item being Mark's and *GP*'s common use of *φωνή* — scarcely the most distinctive of Greek words!).

Crossan frankly admits that these parallels are not 'very persuasive in themselves', and that 'it is very easy to dismiss the very idea of such a relocation and reinterpretation'. What predisposes him to accept it is Mark's relocation of the centurion's confession from a post-resurrection context in *GP*, subsequent to the happenings (i)-(v) in paragraph (b) above, to a crucifixion context (Mk. 15:39). Crossan believes that its position here is a clear instance of Markan redaction in the interests of his passion Christology. What he does not consider is how well the confession's form and location in *GP* fit in with its blatantly obvious tendencies (on which see my essay in *Gospel Perspectives* 6). These include the concern that the resurrection should take place before the eyes of the world — elders and scribes, the centurion Petronius and his troops and 'a crowd from Jerusalem'. Hence the confession has become a corporate one by the centurion and his company, as part of their report to Pilate, who himself shares their confession ('I am pure of the blood of the Son of God', 11:46) before commanding them to silence. This he does at the request of 'all', apparently another body of people who have also arrived at Pilate's door, where they profess their preference to 'incur the guilt of very grave sin before God' rather than be stoned at the hands of 'the people of the Jews'. Who are these 'all'? In Crossan's view, the Jewish authorities were part of the centurion's company who reported to Pilate, but he also identifies them with the 'all', even though the latter's arrival *chez* Pilate is clearly later than that of the group around the centurion. The incoherence here in *GP*, which Crossan fails to identify, is a consequence of the extraordinary lengths to which *GP* presses its apologetic *Tendenz*. In this light, relocation of the confession by Ps-Peter, prompted perhaps by its form in Mt. 27:54, is at least as probable as relocation by Mark.

(d) One final illustration of Crossan's questionable interpretation of relationships within the gospel tradition is provided by his making Matthew's version of the setting of the guard at the tomb (27:62-66) a variant of *GP* 8:28-33. The reason for the request in Matthew is the fear, occasioned by the memory of Jesus' prophecy that he would rise after three days, lest his disciples steal the body and fraudulently

declare his resurrection. *GP*'s reason is much more complex: the Jewish authorities, on learning that 'all the people' were lamenting and repenting of what had happened, took fright and asked Pilate for a guard for the tomb lest the disciples remove the body, the people believe that Christ was risen and then 'do us harm'. Crossan draws out the differences between the two accounts, but offers virtually no evidence for regarding *GP* as the original. He thinks the fact that Matthew locates the request on the Saturday was 'not very wise, since the tomb was then unguarded one whole night'. *GP*, he thinks, places it on the Friday. In its present form it does not, but Crossan holds that 7:27 ('we fasted . . . until the sabbath') belongs to the redactional additions made to the Passion-Resurrection Source by the compiler responsible for the final shape of *GP*. In any case, is *GP*'s 'failsafe apologetic' (cf. W. L. Craig, 'The Guard at the Tomb', *NTS* 30, 1984, pp. 273-281) not more likely to be secondary than Matthew's allegedly unwise failure to cover the Friday/Saturday night?

Furthermore, *GP*'s coherence becomes vulnerable on closer inspection. At 7:25 it is 'the Jews and the elders and the priests' who realize what great evil they had done themselves and begin to 'beat themselves' and cry woe, whereas at 7:28 'the scribes, the Pharisees and the elders' meet after hearing that 'all the people' were murmuring and 'beating their breasts' (Crossan's translations obscure the repetition of *κόπτομαι*). The solidarity of people and leaders at 7:25 dissolves into the polarization of 7:28 and sequel. Moreover, where does *GP*'s interest in having the tomb watched 'for three days' come from, if not from the tradition's memory of the prophecy found in Mt. 27:63? Yet again, why should the people suppose Jesus had risen from the dead merely because the disciples had stolen the body (*GP* 8:30)? Surely *GP* here also reflects a tradition that referred explicitly to some expectation or forewarning of resurrection, or at least linked the absence of the body to the people's belief by a mention of the disciples' proclamation of his resurrection. Moreover, if the people came to believe that Jesus was risen, why should the Jewish leadership fear harm at their hands? *GP*'s references to the leaders' own contrition (7:25; 11:48 — see above), albeit inconsistent with 8:28ff., suggest that they should themselves have welcomed the resurrection of Jesus and readily acknowledged their error in promoting his death. Once it is recognized that the reason given in *GP* 8:30 for wanting the tomb to be guarded makes little sense unless it reflects an earlier, fuller tradition (e.g. Mt. 27:63f.), its complexity is further compounded and its secondary character even more evident.

Nor should we fail to note the contrast between Matthew's brief and restrained mention of the sealing of the tomb (27:66) and *GP*'s elaborate description (8:31-33): the elders and the scribes went with Petronius and his troops to the tomb, rolled the stone across the entrance (why had this not taken place at the burial?) — obviously in order that it might be done now by Jews and Romans together, thereby strengthening the 'failsafe apologetic' of *GP*, affixed seven seals, set up a tent and posted guard. What price *GP*'s originality over Matthew at this point?

(e) Crossan distinguishes, as we have seen, between the original Passion-Resurrection Source, comprising most of our *GP*, and some elements taken from our gospels, and also the redactional links provided by Ps-Peter himself to facilitate the integration of these elements. The Passion-Resurrection Source presumably cannot be ascribed to the same writer as the second and final stage in the production of *GP*. Crossan does not touch on this question explicitly, but his theory implies a considerable interval between the two stages, during which the Passion-Resurrection Source enjoyed sufficient currency to be used in the compilation of all four canonical gospels and they in turn enjoyed sufficient currency to be all used by the final Ps-Peter. This last stage can hardly have been much later than c.150 (from the implications of Eusebius's report of the unmasking of *GP*) — which makes *GP*, to avoid coining a phrase, 'a spectacularly early witness for the four-gospel canon!' (Crossan accepts a date c.150 for Egerton Papyrus 2. Scholars have repeatedly noted parallels between *GP* and Egerton's 'Unknown Gospel'. Cf. my article forthcoming in *The Second Century*, referred to earlier.)

Since Crossan's hypothesis supposes two main contributors to *GP* (plus identifiable dependence on the canonical gospels in some



verses), one might expect some differences of vocabulary and style between them. This is another issue Crossan does not tackle. Although he might conceivably argue that Ps-Peter assimilated his redactional links to the style and language of the Passion-Resurrection Source and/or his borrowings from the canonical gospels, a comparison is one of the tests that his hypothesis invites. This is not the place to embark on a detailed exercise, if only because it is complicated by the fact that one of Crossan's redactional connections (2:3-5a) coincides very largely with the main fragment of P Oxy 2949, which has a divergent text (e.g. it lacks *σταυρίσκειν* of 2:3, one of *GP*'s two hapax legomena). But a preliminary enquiry reveals the following points: (i) Ps-Peter (i.e. the final compiler of *GP*) uses only *GP*'s characteristic designation of Christ, 'the Lord', at 2:3; (ii) his use of *ἐκείνος* (9:37; 11:43) to create a clear connection with what has gone before, also accords with *GP*'s usage (4:13; 10:38; 12:52; 13:56); (iii) Ps-Peter agrees with *GP* in the frequency of its use of *καί* as a conjunction – proportionately far more often than in any of the canonical gospels; (iv) some unusual words are used by our putative Ps-Peter (e.g. *τιρώσκω, κρύβω, 7:26; ἐπιχωρέω, 9:37; συνσέπτομαι*, 11:43), but the same is true of *GP* as a whole (see my study in *The Second Century* for a full listing); (v) while a range of vocabulary is shared by Ps-Peter and the rest of *GP* (e.g. *μνήμα, κυλίω, ἐπιφώσκω*), there is only one possible candidate for a distinctive Ps-Petrine vocabulary: *διανοόμεαι* (11:44), which is not used in the NT, and *διανοία* (7:26), which is, but very rarely. There is, it seems, little to be uncovered by this line of enquiry to support Crossan's analysis of *GP*'s text.

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A colleague of mine used to play chess with John Dominic Crossan. He remembers that his opponent tended to fall foul of the very

ingenuity of his own (Crossan's) elaborate schemes of play. What shall we say? Plus ça change . . . ? *Si parva licet componere magnis?* Eschewing the temptations offered by the language of gambit and checkmate, we merely observe that the gauntlet thrown down by Koester and Bauckham deserves to be taken up more happily than by this player.

Meantime, the traditional evaluation of the apocryphal gospels ought not to be hastily discarded, even if it requires qualifications, particularly in the light of the *Gospel of Thomas*. One or two of them may deserve to be regarded as later contemporaries of the latest canonical gospel, and the possibility that a handful of them may preserve primitive traditions independent of the canonical gospels or their sources cannot be discounted, at least for the *Gospel of Thomas*. But *Thomas* is almost in a class of its own (and in any case is a doubtful claimant to the title 'gospel', given its lack of anything but sayings of Jesus), and even Crossan's quartet represents an exiguous selection from a much larger number. On the great majority of these the traditional verdict remains incontestable.

Moreover, even if generalizations about the apocryphal gospels have become more vulnerable, it is still true that the exceptions to the general rule – much later and worthless for the quest of the historical Jesus – leave the big questions about the canonical gospels much as they have always been. To the historical-critical task of assessing the reliability of the canonical accounts, this tiny minority of their apocryphal rivals contributes at best nothing but additional material evidence of the same kind as that already available in the gospels themselves. They pose no challenge beyond those familiar from comparative gospel study, nor furnish new reasons for doubting the historical trustworthiness of their record.

## Book reviews

B. C. Lategan and W. S. Vorster, **Text and Reality. Aspects of Reference in Biblical Texts** (SBL Semeia Studies) (Philadelphia: Fortress/Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 123 pp., \$9.95.

This book by two scholars from South Africa contains four essays exploring some fundamental problems to do with the interpretation of biblical texts, and particularly with the way in which they refer to reality. The two authors carry on a debate with one another (and with numerous other scholars) throughout the book.

One of their main points of interest is to ask in what way biblical texts, narratives in particular, refer to the 'real world'. The question is an important one, and the answer which Vorster gives is an interesting and rather disturbing one: that biblical narrative is rather like a parable, that it is not a replica of reality, but reality remade. The David and Uriah of 2 Sam. 11 are not the 'real' David and Uriah but the 'narrated' David and Uriah. They are elements in a narrated world, and their actions and interplay should be interpreted accordingly. If we ask about circumstances behind the text – for instance, what the legal problem was which underlay Nathan's parable – we may be asking the wrong questions. We should interpret the text as it is, not a hypothetical 'reality' behind the text. Lategan has a different approach. He allows that the gospels, for example, are narrative structures imposed on events. But he maintains that the primary impulse behind them was the events of Jesus' life, preaching, death and resurrection. Nonetheless, he too proposes that biblical narrative does not function as a replication or representation of reality. Thus, the historicity of biblical narrative – the accuracy of its linkage with the 'real' world – is not so much questionable as ultimately irrelevant.

It may be that some branches of biblical scholarship have too readily assumed that the only way in which narrative can refer to reality is by being a replica of reality. This book offers an interesting and possibly helpful challenge and corrective to that assumption. But if it is true that reference within a narrative is only to the narrated

world, and not to the 'real' world, then any descriptive narrative becomes problematic. Is it the case that when I attempt to describe something that has happened, I merely succeed in creating a self-contained narrative world? That seems the logical conclusion of one thesis of this book.

There is a good deal more, though, in the book than this one thesis. It is rather technical in its style, and someone new to this field would probably find it hard to follow in places, but it is drawing attention quite forcefully to some far-reaching issues of interpretation.

W. A. Strange, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

Stephen Farris, **The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives: Their Origin, Meaning and Significance** (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), 220 pp., £9.95/\$13.95.

The subtitle indicates the structure of the book. Part I is a study of the *origin* of the three hymns. Farris commences by asking whether the hymns are Lucan creations, and finds considerable evidence that they are *not*; rather, he argues, Luke has attached them to their present contexts redactionally, adding v. 48 to the Magnificat and vv. 76-77 to the Benedictus to anchor them to their contexts. Luke uses the hymns to bring out the significance of the narratives.

Farris then asks about the original *language* of the hymns, and of Lk. 1-2 generally. Clearly they are written in Semitic flavour – but is this because they are translated from a Hebrew or Aramaic source? Or is Lk. 1-2, as Harnack argued, a pastiche of septuagintisms? R. E. Brown quipped that the linguistic opponents had fought themselves to a draw on the issue, but Farris, using and developing R. Martin's 17 syntactic criteria, is able to show that Lk. 1-2 has all the syntactic structure frequencies of *Translation Greek*, not of Original Greek (and this more markedly than many sections of the LXX sampled, and much more so than Paul or the Apocalypse), *whereas*

the second half of Acts witnesses to the fact that Luke is not himself naturally a Semiticizing writer; for here the syntactic structure frequencies are as purely Greek as Plutarch, and there are no features of Translation Greek. Now Luke might have been able to imitate LXX vocabulary and idiom to give an archaic impression in the infancy narratives, argues Farris, but he would not have been able consistently to hit the usual Translation Greek ratios of *en* to other prepositions; *kai* copulatives to *des*; preceding dependent genitives to post-substantive genitives; etc. The high incidence of Translation Greek features in Lk. 1 - 2 shows Luke is using a source of Semitic origin. This conclusion may not be novel, but it is now well grounded with convincing argument - this is a major contribution.

Next, Farris turns to the form of the hymns, and enters on a long discussion as to whether they are 'Eschatological Hymns' (Gunkel) or 'Declarative Psalms of Praise' (Westermann). The distinction may sound unimportant, but in fact it proves crucial. If 'Eschatological Hymns', then the aorists merely celebrate the certainty of as-yet-purely-future salvation events. If they are 'Declarative Psalms' they are to be understood as praise to God arising immediately out of a specific situational saving intervention: *i.e.* the aorists genuinely point to a past event. Farris shows the Lucan hymns fall in the latter category.

This has considerable implications for decisions about the setting in which the psalms first circulated - the topic of Farris' next chapter. They can no longer be regarded as hymns expressing traditional Jewish hope for the future arrival of a messianic figure (as has so often been argued): for they rejoice that a Davidic (at least in the Benedictus) messiah has *actually appeared*. So they are definitely Jewish and Christian psalms (not originally *e.g.* Jewish psalms redacted to apply to the Baptist, as Bultmann *et al.* had maintained).

Part 2 on the meaning of the psalms gives a brief introductory chapter on the use of them made by Luke's insertion of them in the development of themes in Lk. 1 - 2, and then gives a detailed, but unremarkable, commentary on each of the psalms individually. Part 3 (brief) on the significance of the hymns (for Luke-Acts) argues that the theology of promise-and-fulfilment and of 'Israel' in the hymns comes close to Jervell's understanding of these themes in the rest of Luke-Acts (*i.e.* 'Israel' is not a title for the church, but for national and, especially, believing Israel - the messianic 'restoration' of which leads to the influx of Gentiles as an 'associate people of God').

Parts 2 and 3 are good, but Part 1 is really the guts of this revised (even readable!) Cambridge PhD thesis researched at Tyndale House.

Max Turner, King's College, Aberdeen.

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Donald A. Carson, **From Triumphalism to Maturity: An exposition of 2 Corinthians 10 - 13** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984/Leicester: IVP, 1986), 186 pp., \$12.95.

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A stream of books continues to issue from the pen (or typewriter!) of Dr D. A. Carson, Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Illinois, USA. This book is the third of a series of expositions which Dr Carson has produced - the previous two being on Mt. 5 - 7 and Jn. 14 - 17. After an initial chapter discussing his reasons for focusing on these chapters and giving the possibilities regarding the relationship of chapters 10 - 13 to the rest of 2 Corinthians, we then have the exposition of the teaching of these chapters divided into seven sections.

The writer is initially concerned to expound Paul's own meaning in the light of the challenge to his authority at Corinth from the false apostles, but also is at pains to show the present-day significance and relevance of the Pauline teaching. His painstaking exegesis is based on sound biblical scholarship, but can be easily understood by any thinking Christian. The exposition is clearly based on a detailed knowledge of the Greek text, but he uses the New International Version as the basis for his comments.

The title of the book indicates the basic thrust of Paul's argument as he sees it, and is also the message which is relevant for us today. He

considers that the problem of *boasting* lies at the root of the challenge to Paul, as his opponents claimed superior gifts and success. Dr Carson applies this to much of the evangelical scene today, and feels that Paul's boasting in his sufferings rather than in his successes is a necessary antidote. Dr Carson does not explicitly name modern-day triumphalists, and readers in different situations will feel that his remarks are applicable in various areas. Certainly, as the present reviewer was reading this book alongside another, *Restoring the Kingdom - the radical Christianity of the House Church Movement* by Andrew Walker, he wondered if there was a certain relevance in Dr Carson's comments to this part of the British scene. The writer also warns us against the root of pride in our own ministries, and this is something each of us needs to heed.

The reviewer found this a very challenging and helpful book - a model of how exposition should be done. The message of the book too, he feels, is a relevant one. As far as British students are concerned, it appears that this book is, apparently, not readily available. A number of agencies stock Baker Book House publications, but none apparently stocks Dr Carson's expositions.

R. E. Davies, All Nations Christian College, Ware.

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Everett F. Harrison, **The Apostolic Church** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Exeter: Paternoster, 1985), xii + 251 pp., £12.95 (pb).

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This book is a competent survey by a veteran scholar, Professor Emeritus of Fuller Theological Seminary at Pasadena, California. After a short introduction to the political and religious background of the apostolic age, Harrison discusses briefly the history of the criticism of Acts, especially of its speeches, and affirms its historical value as a foundational document for much that follows. The main body of the book comprises three long chapters, tracing successively what he characterizes respectively as the external history and the internal development of the church, and concluding with accounts of eight individual NT churches.

This is a considerable repository of solid material, with warm and balanced expositions and thoughtful insights. Its approach tends to be thematic, theological and pastoral rather than primarily historical and critical. I suspect the treatment is directed more to the needs of the American seminary student than of the British university student, who might benefit from having the critical foundations argued more vigorously than Professor Harrison finds necessary to do here. The primacy given to Acts would for instance be strongly challenged by many. The case for the defence is well presented, but may seem a little bland and selective in the face of the radical criticism of some who may have the ear of students. But this is foundational. The 'external history' reads like a discursive theological commentary on the book of Acts. Indeed, the history is treated thematically, in a degree which fails to convey the dynamic of primitive Christian expansion. The events of the Jerusalem Council or the Galatian mission (pp. 57, 74) are skirted without indication of the cruxes they present. And the section on the break with Judaism comes to an end before AD 70 with little hint of the traumatic turning-point that must have been for both Christian and Jew. Professor Harrison clearly has his views on all these points, and occasionally draws attention to dischronic change (*e.g.* p. 83). In any case he generally operates within the temporal limits of Paul and Acts.

In fact the book is full of good things and my queries are mostly in areas of selection and presentation. Harrison majors somewhat on internal development, which is often the least accessible through the documents. He is most interesting in some of the accounts of individual churches, where he is dealing with the most concrete and particular. Evidence for early Christian teaching (*e.g.* pp. 110-114) is helpfully set out in numbered tabulations, and comments and summaries are often similarly enumerated. Ideas are frequently introduced through word studies. Altogether, it is perhaps more a book for reference than for rapid reading. That makes me regret the more the lack of an index. There is a good table of contents, but that is not analytical enough to supply the place of a detailed subject index.

An index of authors discussed would also be very helpful, though there is a good select bibliography for each chapter and section. The notes are limited to references.

**Colin Hemer**, Tyndale House, Cambridge.

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Fernando F. Segovia (ed.), **Discipleship in the New Testament** (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 213 pp., \$16.95.

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This collection of nine papers is the outcome of a three-day symposium during April 1982 at the Marquette University on the theme of *Call and Discipleship: New Testament Perspectives*. The result is a very noteworthy publication in more than one respect, and one that is a real benefit to NT studies as a whole.

An important asset of this volume is the illuminating introduction by Fernando Segovia. Here the distinctive contribution of this volume is characterized against the background of four previous major treatments of the topic of discipleship, all dating from the 1960s. In these contributions, the emphasis was largely on the religio-historical background of the concept and the historical Jesus and his disciples. In the present volume, attention is given to discipleship in its narrower (the first four studies) as well as its broader definition (the remaining five studies) of the self-understanding of early Christian believers.

Over against the previous studies, these essays are characterized by their emphasis on the analysis of the conception of discipleship in the various NT writings as independent literary and theological entities. This ties up with another important feature of this volume, namely that a wide variety of recent methodological approaches is being implemented here. Recent developments along the lines of literary criticism and narratology, the social world approach as well as more traditional approaches (be it influenced by recent literary developments) are reflected here. The result is a volume in which contemporary methodological advances are actually illustrated and implemented in a very commendable and enlightening manner. Although one should be clear about the inevitable presuppositions implied by these various approaches, this definite concentration on the respective books of the NT as coherent literary and theological entities is to be welcomed as a very timely application of generally accepted principles in the interpretation of texts to a typical NT theme.

Due to the diversity of the nine contributions, it is impossible to give here an adequate impression of the stimulating results of the different studies. A list of the well known names, and the books of the NT in which the theme of discipleship is addressed in their respective studies, should serve as an indication of the range and importance of this work: Werner H. Kelber, 'Oral tradition and Mark'; Richard A. Edwards, 'Matthew'; Charles H. Talbert, 'Luke-Acts'; Fernando F. Segovia, 'The Fourth Gospel'; William S. Kurz, 'Philippians 2 and 3'; Robert A. Wild, 'Ephesians'; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Revelation 14'; Luke T. Johnson, 'James'; John H. Elliott, '1 Peter 2:18-25'.

In his study on Mark, Kelber emphasizes the narrative pattern of discipleship as a parabolic role reversal: the initial role of insiders is reversed to one of outsiders. Interesting are the historical conclusions Kelber is willing to deduce from this as well as from the narrative withholding of Easter in Mark: the written gospel is seen to be a corrective reaction against a gnosticizing oral tradition. Edwards on the other hand refrains from any historical deductions and concentrates on the reaction of the reader to the information presented and withheld in Matthew's characterization of the disciples. This is in other words an experiment in reader-response criticism in which the primary concern is the text as well as the reader.

In his contribution on Philippians, Kurz takes as point of departure the literary unity of the present letter, and furthermore illuminates his discussion of discipleship as imitation of Paul and Christ in the light of a history-of-religions approach. Another stimulating contribution is Schüssler Fiorenza's discussion of discipleship against the background of Revelation as a poetic-rhetorical construction seeking to

convince its readers that following Jesus entails an uncompromising rejection of Rome.

One must agree with Segovia's verdict in his introduction to the volume that although this is only a beginning of our endeavour to reassess what Christian discipleship implied in the first century and entails now, it is undoubtedly a beginning in the right direction. These contributions not only deserve careful and interactive reading, but should provoke further research along these stimulating lines.

**H. J. Bernard Combrink**, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

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William R. Schoedel, **Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch** (Hermeneia — A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), xxii + 305 pp., \$34.95.

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Ignatius often strikes the modern reader as a complex and even unsympathetic person, with an unlikely appetite for martyrdom. Yet he is a figure of great significance for the history of Christianity in the immediately post-NT period, and his inclusion in a major biblical commentary series is justified by the very correct desire to set the canonical documents in the historical continuum of their immediate context.

Dr Schoedel presents a learned and balanced study of his difficult author. He accepts the consensus that the authentic Ignatius *corpus* comprises the middle recension of the seven letters. While careful to consider objections he thus reaffirms the classic position of Lightfoot and Zalan. It is of course often healthy to be ready to challenge a consensus, but in the present case it is rather a tribute to the thoroughness of these great scholars of the past that their work stands in the face of renewed sifting, and that a new commentary of this quality can continue to build upon an acknowledged indebtedness to them.

But Ignatian studies have moved beyond these foundational concerns, and Schoedel surveys the field in a full, yet admirably clear and concise introduction which sums up many of the positions argued in the commentary. He is very cautious about recognizing explicit NT citations in Ignatius, hesitant about some form-critical and rhetorical-critical approaches (though I should be yet more so), and cautious in treating religio-historical parallels. Thus he is reserved about seeing any Gnostic background, even if the milieu is tinged with a hint of 'Gnosis' or 'pre-Gnosticism'. He also rejects any background in the mystery religions or in Jewish Christianity, though he inclines more favourably to Hellenistic Judaism and to popular Hellenistic culture.

Yet Schoedel has his own distinctive thesis, following P. N. Harrison in his view that Ignatius' strong assertion of episcopal authority and unity through conformity is to be traced to division in his own church in Antioch, a division in which the success of his own ministry and his forthcoming martyrdom was at stake. This case merits careful consideration at the least, and relates to the attempt to grapple with the reiterated preoccupations of Ignatius' intense and unusual personality. The heart of the matter is the good case, which may be well grounded in usage, for taking *eireneuein* (*Philadelphians* 10.1; *Smyrnaeans* 11.2; *Polycarp* 7.1) to mean the restoration of internal harmony in the Antioch church rather than respite from persecution. It is this which comforts and vindicates Ignatius, and prompts his requests to the churches to send delegates to Syria.

Schoedel's explanation of the text is careful and learned. He prints his own translation and comments on the Greek, the format of the series. The commentary argues exegetically the positions outlined in the introduction. It is good that an author characterized by the use of force, even violent religious metaphors finds in his commentator a balanced scholar who will caution against reading theological significance out of hyperbole. One odd omission is that of any reference to the letters of Rev. 2 and 3 to Ephesus, Smyrna and Philadelphia. Their historical situation, especially in the most

problematic case of Philadelphia, may have light to shed on the passage about Judaizers (*Philadelphians* 6.1) or the 'archives' crux in 8.2, where Schoedel has a very helpful discussion.

This is quite a specialized book, well indexed, and with a wealth of bibliographical material. The student whose interests are focused within the NT canon may find his priorities do not extend to so deep a study of Ignatius, and Schoedel often interacts less with biblical than with patristic and later literature. But this important commentary will be indispensable for the initiated.

**Colin Hemer**, Tyndale House, Cambridge.

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**Arvin Vos, Aquinas, Calvin and Contemporary Protestant Thought** (Washington, D.C.: Christian College Press, 1985 — available from Eerdmans & Paternoster), xviii + 178 pp., £13.95.

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From the time of the Reformation, Thomas Aquinas has had a bad press in the Protestant world. Professor Vos, an American in the Reformed tradition, has come to his defence with 'A Critique of Protestant Views on the Thought of Thomas Aquinas' (the subtitle). There is an appreciative foreword by a Catholic professor of medieval studies.

This book falls into two distinct parts. The first two chapters offer a detailed comparison of the teaching of Calvin and Aquinas on the nature of faith. The next four chapters offer a broad reinterpretation of Aquinas' teaching on the relationship between faith and reason and between nature and grace. Here the scope is much broader than in the first two chapters. The contrast is no longer between Calvin and Aquinas but rather between the traditional interpretation of Aquinas and his actual teaching. A final brief chapter is entitled 'Toward an Appreciation of Aquinas'.

It is the second part, the reinterpretation of Aquinas, that is the most important. If Vos is correct, the whole Protestant tradition of interpreting Aquinas has been guilty of gravely caricaturing him. The present reviewer is not qualified to give a definitive verdict on this part of Vos' argument. But his case appears to be well argued and the traditional Protestant interpretation of Aquinas seems to be clearly in need of an overhaul.

If the Protestant interpretation of Aquinas is wrong, where did the error originate? Vos argues that the Protestants did not invent their misinterpretation of Aquinas but that it originates with the sixteenth-century Thomist cardinal Cajetan and thus entered the Catholic Thomist tradition.

In his exposition of the nature of faith (*Institutio* 3:2) Calvin sharply attacks a number of aspects of Roman Catholic teaching, such as the concepts of implicit faith and unformed faith. It is usually assumed that Thomas is the definitive exponent of the views which Calvin is attacking. But Vos argues that the views which Calvin attacks are not actually those of Thomas and that the differences between them lie in terminology more than substance. His case is persuasively argued and seems to be substantially correct. My own studies of Calvin have led me to similar conclusions in that while Calvin is opposed to Roman Catholic talk of 'free will' and 'merit', his own position comes extremely close to what at least *some* Catholic theologians mean by free will and merit. Why then, if their positions are very similar, was Calvin so dismissive of Thomas? Vos gives a twofold answer. In the first place, he argues that Calvin was largely ignorant of Aquinas. He notes correctly (p. 38f.) that Calvin only twice refers to Thomas in the *Institutio* — and one of these references is almost certainly derived from an intermediate source. In fact, in the whole of Calvin's works there are only two other brief passing references to Thomas. In short, there is no proof that Calvin had ever read any Aquinas first hand. In the second place, Vos argues that Calvin must be attacking contemporary Catholic theologians whose views are different to those of Aquinas.

Vos' case is basically sound, but it needs qualifying. Maybe Aquinas is not guilty of the position described by Calvin — but were Calvin's contemporary opponents either? It must not be forgotten

that Calvin uses rhetorical devices such as hyperbole and irony in attacking his opponents. It may turn out that the views which Calvin is actually attacking are not in fact so different from Thomas'. It is a pity that Vos does not go into the question of who were Calvin's actual opponents and what was their teaching. Again, Vos repeatedly concludes that the differences between Calvin and Thomas are more a matter of terminology than of substance (pp. 2, 18, 20, 37). This he has convincingly demonstrated, but are we therefore to conclude that the differences are negligible? How people choose to define and use words is not insignificant. It would be easy to demonstrate that Marxists who call capitalism unjust do not mean the same thing by 'justice' as would a capitalist. But it does not follow that the difference between them is *merely* terminological. Perhaps Vos is a little too quick to pass over the terminological differences.

In short, this is an important book that deserves to be widely read. It is all the more shameful, therefore, that the publishers have placed it beyond the reach of all but libraries, the wealthy and reviewers by charging such an exorbitant price for such a slender book. Doesn't Thomas have anything to say about fair pricing?

**Tony Lane**, London Bible College.

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**C. Samuel Storms, Tragedy in Eden: Original Sin in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards** (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1985), xii + 316 pp., \$12.75 (pb).

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This is a careful, honest and thorough exercise in historical theology. However, just because this whole work stands rather close in style and content to the thesis from which it is derived, those who do not have a serious commitment to tracing the development of Calvinist theology will find it hard going.

Nevertheless, Dr Storms has produced a very useful study of original sin in the theology of Jonathan Edwards, the criticisms of this theme in Calvinism which had to be met and some of the places where Edwards fails to make his position fully consistent. The writer has no doubt that Jonathan Edwards was a genius of 'scintillating brilliance and unbridled devotion'. At the same time the criticisms of orthodox Calvinism made by one of the first great English Arminian theologians, John Taylor (1694-1781), are carefully expounded with their strengths and weaknesses and the whole work of Edwards is put most helpfully into the context of an ongoing debate. Edwards' *The Scripture doctrine of Original Sin defended* (1740) was aimed directly at Taylor's writing but Dr Storms has also drawn on Edwards' earlier work, *A careful and strict enquiry into . . . Freedom of Will*, and, in the major fourth chapter of this work, has dealt with the problems which any orthodox Calvinist theology must face, of which the chief are concerned with the nature of human freedom of the will and with the whole problem of the origin of evil. Dr Storms gives very careful exposition of Edwards' own teaching on the freedom of the will and rates him highly. Not unfairly, however, he finds his treatment of the whole set of problems connected with the Arminians' allegation that Calvinism makes God the author of evil inadequate. Another area where Edwards is found less than wholly convincing is when he attempts to justify his teaching that God 'arbitrarily sustains an identity between all "selves" and Adam'. Nevertheless Jonathan Edwards succeeds most admirably in revealing the inadequacies of the Arminian alternative!

**B. R. White**, Regent's Park College, Oxford.

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**J. Miguez Bonino, Faces of Jesus** (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), 182 pp., \$10.95.

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A collection of thirteen essays by Latin American scholars, this book is divided into four parts, the first two identifying Christologies

present in Latin America today, the third detailing a new starting-point for Christology, and the last part being an application of some of the themes raised earlier in the book. The book does not pretend to be a full-blown Christology, accepting that its contribution is partial and fragmented. One possible drawback in such a format is needless repetition and that is one of the volume's frustrating features, as common liberation themes are stated in several essays.

Bonino makes it plain in his introduction that the aim is not merely to restate old Christological themes from a different perspective, and certainly issues familiar to more traditional scholars are rarely found. Leonardo Boff's use of biblical criticism which allows one to subject the gospels to 'scientific scrutiny' is somewhat familiar. Yet he is critical of liberal theology for its use of existential categories rather than rooting the message in history and taking the side of the poor. He offers a summary of his position outlined in 'Jesus Christ Liberator', seeking to argue that the divinity of Jesus is not to be sought outside his humanity. Is this to say he is no more than human? Boff is unclear. Similarly he insists that Jesus' way is more than mere philanthropy because it is lived with reference to the Father, but he does not explain what the reference is in concrete terms that would distinguish it from philanthropy. The other two essays in part one are to illustrate what 'inadequate Christs' are proclaimed in Latin America today. This is to bring out the point that 'a profound christological task lies before the Christian church'.

Part two takes this on a stage, looking at the meaning and significance of these inadequate Christs, how they were introduced with colonialism, and reinforce it, encouraging acquiescence among the oppressed. A balance is sought between proclaiming Christ as a heavenly monarch (reinforcing authoritarianism) and a suffering, passive servant (who only sympathizes with but cannot help the poor). To redress the travesty described in part two action is needed, and in the third part, 'Jesus and Politics', a basis for liberating praxis is laid. A true Christology will mean involvement, action, commitment to change society's structures. Much is made of there being different Christologies in the NT, the suggestion being that one chooses whichever is most needed in one's context, in this instance Jesus the liberator. Jesus is not portrayed as merely a revolutionary — he is not a Zealot — and his proclamation of the kingdom is not a programme or strategy for liberation but a religious, pastoral message, yet one which provides a dynamism for socio-political change. Though Jesus renounced violence and socio-political leadership, these actions are interpreted as prophetic and not normative for all Christians (see essay by Galilea). Croatto pictures a Jesus against tradition, laws and structures in order to let the human being emerge.

In part four Assmann denies that the search for better exegesis (Boff's scientific scrutiny?) will provide a more accurate or appropriate Christology. Rather the conflict of Christologies is due to socio-political conflicts. Through praxis, in conflict, we work for liberation with no definite definition before us. Vidales argues that as we undertake the liberating praxis a new Christology arises 'that will be incapable of formulation as a dynamic truth, because in a dogmatic truth the oppressed are never more than a human hypothesis'. Vidales, though, is more positive than Assmann on the validity of biblical studies.

Schurmann welcomes a number of trends in modern theology such as a resurgence of interest in the OT (NT is Hellenized) and functional Christologies, as only when the non-concrete ontological terms are thrown out can we have a relevant Christology to inform our praxis.

Rather than making a distinctive contribution to the theology of liberation in a particular subject (Christology) this volume with its somewhat uneven quality and views tells us little that we will not find in a more general introduction to liberation theology. Consequently one's reaction to the book will be much as one reacts to liberation theology in general — and its challenges will be much the same, in particular in this volume the warnings about preaching an ahistorical (docetic) Christ.

**Gordon R. Palmer, Aberdeen.**

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**Deane William Ferm, *Third World Liberation Theologies: An Introductory Survey* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), ix + 150 pp., \$10.95.**

**Deane William Ferm, *Third World Liberation Theologies: A Reader* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), ix + 386 pp., \$16.95. Both books available as a set for \$24.95.**

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For those of us who would like a road map into the field of liberation theology, Ferm's introduction to the theologians is a beginning. Sixty-seven theologians are introduced. However, the entries are by no means uniform. A major theologian might have six pages (Gustavo Gutiérrez), while another receive only a paragraph (J. B. Libânio). Not only is the treatment of individual theologians of different lengths, the space allotted to the various geographical areas varies greatly. All of Africa gets only seventeen pages (and eleven of those are devoted to South Africa), Asia receives twenty-three pages (divided unevenly among nine countries), while Latin America receives fifty-six pages of text. The space given to each region does not correspond to the number of theologians covered since only twenty-three Latins are represented, as against thirteen Africans and thirty-one Asians. Ferm is aware of the imbalance and explains it by what he claims is the larger amount of Latin American material.

Given the selective treatment, is the book a good introduction? The answer is a qualified yes, in the sense that Ferm has collated a vast amount of material and presented it in a digestible form. Two very commendable points are that Ferm manages to show the differences between the various theologians, and that he does interact with critical comments. One of Ferm's stated purposes is to demonstrate that liberation theology is not monolithic; this is certainly made very clear.

In regard to the various critics of liberation theology, it appeared to this reviewer that Ferm was trying to be very fair to the theologians while acknowledging, and at times agreeing with, their critics. On the whole it seems apparent that Ferm's sympathies are with the advocates of liberation theology. However, he deplores the lack of awareness of the majority of theologians of the question of sexist oppression. He regards their lack of conscientization at this point something that must be remedied. Actually, the feminist issue raises the point of the Latin Americans' lack of awareness with the contributions of the marginalized people in Latin America, the Indians and the blacks. This is forcefully commented on by Englebert Mveng of Cameroon. Ferm cites Mveng's comments on this problem and warns that liberation theologians must be aware of an elitism which sees their particular situation as normative for everyone.

The companion volume, a reader which contains twenty-seven theologians (ten Latin Americans, eight Africans, nine Asians) is a useful survey. Again Latin America gets twice as much actual space as Asia or Africa. However all the selections are well chosen and representative. Whether they are worth the cost of the book is another question, since presumably most readers will want to study the theologians represented in depth and will find the reader of negligible lasting value. The reader seems better suited to be used as a textbook in a course on liberation theology.

While Ferm's volume is uneven in its treatment of theologians and areas, it is still useful as an introduction to the subject. This reviewer could have preferred to see less of a defence of the theologians presented (especially the last chapter where Ferm spends eighteen pages out of 118 pages of text defending liberation theology against five major critics) and more analysis of the actual authors. Nevertheless, those new to the subject will find a useful beginning. Those already acquainted with liberation theology will find it a handy quick reference.

**James Stamoolis.**

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Willard M. Swartley, **Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women** (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983), 332 pp., \$15.95.

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'Appeal to the Bible does not in itself guarantee correctness of position.' So asserts Willard Swartley and to back this up he illustrates four areas where appeals to Scripture have reached differing and contradicting conclusions. This book, which comes from the 1980 Conrad Grebel lectures, is a case-issue approach to biblical interpretation. It describes how different interpretations on the issues of slavery, sabbath, war and women have arisen, then offers a comparative hermeneutical study, and goes on to propose a model of appropriate understanding of Scripture. There is no formal treatment of inerrancy, infallibility, inspiration, for that would not settle matters according to Swartley.

Slavery is dealt with in the form of a debate focusing on works written between 1815 and 1865. Swartley seems to assume a unanimity among his readers that slavery is evil, and so regards this as the safest place to start. Swartley says the abolitionists gave priority to theological principles and basic moral imperatives which carried greater weight 'than specific statements on a given topic even though the statements speak expressly to the topic under discussion'. This is a recurrent emphasis, though quite what these principles and imperatives are, and how they are derived, and what relationship they bear to statements in the text of Scripture, is not explained to us, and so remains perhaps the book's biggest weakness.

War is clearly the theme Swartley feels most keenly. He warned us at the outset about his pacifist bias, and though he tries to give non-pacifists a fair crack, quoting extensively from various writers and being careful not to lump different emphases together, his preference is very plain. Consequently he states some matters with a brevity because the point seems obvious to him, but it is not obvious to all, for instance his linking the doctrine of the atonement with pacifism.

The chapter on women disappointingly focuses on the ordination issue and does not consider issues such as language and the alleged patriarchal bias of theology as maintained by Daly, Fiorenza, Reuther amongst others.

One of Swartley's main points is that there is a diversity of views in Scripture. Furthermore it is not an even book — some parts carry more weight than others (he is repeatedly critical of what he calls the flat-book approach of fundamentalism), yet the existence of a canon is an indication that there are limits to the diversity (p. 189), and Swartley is hopeful that the Bible can speak with some clarity on social issues. He gives six instances of how people use the Bible for social issues, concluding that the church, to be faithful to Jesus' call to be salt and light, must seek to use the Bible in social issues.

In the fifth chapter he compares issues raised in the various case studies, offers principles for understanding Scripture and gives us his proposed method, which is that we should (a) *listen* carefully from *within* the text (observation); (b) *learn* helpfully from *behind* the text (meaning); (c) *live* freely in *front* of the text (significance).

Swartley covers a lot of ground in this book, though his conclusion is not startling, but the case-study approach might encourage some to reflect on many important hermeneutical issues he raises such as diversity in Scripture, relationship between OT and NT, context, and so on. In particular some people who would not think of picking up a textbook on hermeneutics may find this approach helpful. Swartley offers suggestions for group study and certainly some church groups could benefit from this work being studied. His tendency to present lists throughout the book makes it more suitable for study in sections rather than a straightforward reading of the text. For this reviewer its style was too reminiscent of a telephone directory.

Too little has been provided for the non-specialist on the subject of hermeneutics — we are grateful for this contribution which if used well will help us use the Scriptures more intelligently and faithfully in answering many important questions which need to be addressed.

Gordon R. Palmer, Aberdeen.

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I. John Hesselink, **On Being Reformed** (Michigan: Servant Publications, 1983), 152 pp.

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Subtitled 'Distinctive Characteristics and Common Misunderstandings', this book is intended as an introduction to the Reformed faith. The author grew up in a Dutch Reformed tradition, was a missionary in Japan where exposure to different traditions caused him to reflect on his Reformed beliefs, a reflection further spurred by studies with Brunner and Barth. This led him to conclude that Reformed theology is a middle way, neither liberal nor fundamentalist, and the book is an attempt to explain what 'Reformed' stands for. This is done by dealing with a series of questions and misunderstandings which the author insists he has encountered at different times.

The book is brief and hence generalizations abound: 'All theological systems rely to some extent on philosophical foundations. Augustine rested on Plato, Aquinas on Aristotle, Luther on Ockham, Calvin on Scotus. In our day Brunner draws on Kierkegaard, Barth on Kant and Hegel, Tillich on Schelling'; and of course the accuracy of such can always be questioned. Hesselink in short compass is wide ranging, introducing us to a vast range of works and theologians, past and present. This leads to some unfair summaries: e.g. Warfield's thesis in *Counterfeit Miracles* is that 'whereas it was quite appropriate for the apostolic church to be a "miracle-working church", spiritual gifts (charismata) of a miraculous kind necessarily passed away with [the apostolic church]'; Hesselink's views will be more acceptable to those who prefer Rogers and McKim or R. T. Kendall to, say, Warfield or John Murray or J. I. Packer. Federalism is an 'unbiblical notion' (this reviewer found both 'unbiblical' and 'notion' objectionable words here).

There are some points of detail that seem at least doubtful, such as the assertion that the Westminster Confession is 'a product of the Church of Scotland' (p. 10). Some points are well handled and are surprisingly needed. Very recently I heard a seminary president deny 'total depravity' because he could not accept that there was no good in humanity! Hesselink would have helped here, but this volume will only improve such gross errors, and is not a book for the *informed*.

Gordon R. Palmer, Aberdeen.

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Stuart C. Hackett, **The Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim: A Philosophical and Critical Apologetic** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 349 pp.

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In a very real sense Stuart Hackett, who is Professor of Philosophy of Religion at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has produced a *summa contra Gentiles*. Very similarly to Aquinas in his classic apologetic text, Hackett leads the reader from fundamental philosophical considerations such as epistemology and metaphysics, to theological truths and the need for an individual response to Christ.

The similarity to a medieval *summa* shows up most clearly in Hackett's careful interaction with alternative positions to his own. He informs us at the outset that he wishes to be more conciliatory in this work than he was in his youthful *Resurrection of Theism*. He has brought off this new style well, but without sacrificing cogency. In fact, the book gains in persuasiveness by Hackett's consistent fairness and courtesy to the other sides.

Of course Hackett's philosophy is not that of Aquinas. He supports a rational foundationalism in which the basic principles of knowledge are ('at least in part') logically independent of sense experience. With this apriorism (Hackett's own term) he comes out close to the epistemology of Kant.

Structurally this book holds a few surprises. It falls into line with most apologetic books in that after the initial philosophical basics, Hackett makes a case for theism. Then he argues for Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. Only after that section does he defend scriptural revelation in the Bible. His discussion culminates in an analysis of Christian experience.

There are two aspects to this book which make the content stand out. One is the aforementioned meticulous care of Hackett's argumentation. In this day books which are the culmination of decades of work are rare. The other distinctive is in Hackett's true expertise in Eastern thought which he brings to bear skillfully without flaunting it.

This book, like a *summa*, is not easy to read. Running summaries in the margins are very helpful, but do not take the place of engaging the text itself. The most suitable audience would be readers from a seminary level up, and it is as a text in a seminary apologetics course that the book is probably most helpful. Nonetheless, anyone serious about careful apologetics ought to work through it. Perhaps even, evangelicals can for once see beyond their preoccupation with the presuppositionalist-evidentialist debate and applaud the solid contribution Hackett has made here.

Winfried Corduan, Taylor University, Indiana.

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C. Stephen Evans, **Philosophy of Religion: Thinking about Faith** (Contours of Christian Philosophy series) (Downers Grove/Leicester: IVP, 1985), 192 pp., \$6.95/£3.50.

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This is the fourth book in a very helpful series of short introductory-level textbooks, written from an evangelical perspective on various aspects of Christian philosophy. C. Stephen Evans, who teaches philosophy at St Olaf College in Minnesota and is the series' general editor, has exchanged hats to write this lucid book which should be of interest not only to the would-be philosopher of religion, but to anyone who wishes to think about his or her faith. The book is admirably accessible to the non-philosopher, presuming little acquaintance with philosophical jargon and carefully defining technical terms as they are encountered.

The book consists of six chapters on the classical *loci* of philosophy of religion (*i.e.* the arguments for God's existence, religious experience, miracles, the problem of evil, religious language) bracketed by two chapters on faith and reason. These two chapters, though first and last, are actually the core of the book, for in them Evans explains and justifies the particular *kind* of thinking about faith which he employs throughout his study.

Evans defines the philosophy of religion as 'critical reflection on religious beliefs' (p. 11). But, he asks, can reflection about religion be *neutral*, or is *faith* the precondition for any correct thinking about religion? No and no. Evans avoids both a 'neutralism' and a 'fideism', preferring instead a model of thinking about religion which he calls 'critical dialogue'. Our thinking about faith is influenced by our prior commitments, but these commitments are open to criticism. Thinking about faith may therefore be rational, provided that we define 'rational' as a 'willingness to test one's commitments'.

The pages on argumentation (pp. 40-44) should cure anyone still looking for that irrefutable 'proof' of God's existence. Evans claims that no arguments for God's existence are ever rationally convincing to *all* sane people because of prior commitments they bring to arguments (*cf.* the author's *Subjectivity and Religious Belief*, 1978). Again, this need not lead to relativism so long as one is willing to put one's belief to the test.

Chapters 2-7 rehearse familiar debates in the history of the philosophy of religion, from Aquinas' arguments for the existence of God to Hume's treatment of miracles, and from the problem of evil to the logical positivists' attack on the meaningfulness of religious language. Evans also includes a small section (pp. 126-130) on the objections to religious belief from the *social* sciences (sociology, psychology) which many textbooks in this subject overlook.

The last chapter returns to the ever-present theme of the relation of faith and reason. Evans denies that the only choices open to the believer are either deductive certainty or an irrational leap of faith. Evans seeks a middle way, that of the *interpretive judgment*. (He mentions as instances of this kind of reasoning historical scholarship and literary criticism, but he could well have included the natural and social sciences, as these too are increasingly being seen to be

'hermeneutical'.) The first and last chapters converge in Evans' central thesis that '*an interpretive judgment is reasonable when it can survive the process of critical testing*' (p. 169). There is a pertinent reminder that, while we may hold our beliefs with a certain degree of uncertainty, no such halfway house is possible when it comes to day-to-day living.

This is a good book for getting oriented in the discipline, but the student whose appetite is whetted will want to use the bibliography at the end for further reading. Evans might have strengthened his case for the critical dialogue model of reason by explicitly linking it with wider contemporary discussions about the nature of rationality in the sciences. Evans' model of critical dialogue is best exemplified, for instance, in the work of Karl Popper, the philosopher of science, whom Evans fails to mention. Evans' introduction to the philosophy of religion comes, however, with a rare bonus: throughout the book he draws out the practical implications of various theistic and atheistic arguments, thereby *doing* apologetics rather than simply theorizing about it and thus challenging the reader to examine the premises which give direction to his or her own life.

Kevin Vanhoozer, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield.

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David Basinger and Randall Basinger (eds), **Predestination and Free Will** (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986), 180 pp., \$6.95. Essays and Responses by John Feinberg, Norman Geisler, Bruce Reichenbach and Clark Pinnock.

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Any book carrying this title would be controversial and therefore difficult to review. This book compounds the problem by its format: four major essays with three responses each. That's sixteen articles each deserving its own review! I will need to summarize my reactions to the book first in some comments on the format, then in some remarks on the general problems I find in all the essays.

The book is subtitled: *Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*. This is not really accurate (in comparison with other books in this series) because only two basic views are included. The areas of agreement between Messrs Pinnock and Reichenbach and between Messrs Geisler and Feinberg are so great as to eliminate any profound differences of view. They differ on philosophical points which the average reader will not readily find helpful in distinguishing their views. This is a poor editorial choice for a book which states: 'when discussing an issue as complex as the one before us, it is impossible to consider all facets' (p. 14). With such complexity why choose from such a limited and repetitive perspective? I think it is unfair to leave out a contributor from the more traditional Calvinist position but then to allow all four essayists to criticize this position. It makes it seem that the strong Calvinist has nothing 'logical' to say about divine sovereignty and free will since this was the criterion used to choose the essays (p. 14). The reader may also find it difficult to keep sixteen articles straight when trying to formulate a position based on what he has read. Since each article tends to shoot the others down one is left with the feeling that the traditional 'mystery/apparent paradox' position may be all we can hope for after all.

I admire the four authors for their desire to be biblical in theology and practical in application. I am disturbed, though, by a consistent lack of wrestling deeply with certain fundamental problems. None of the writers seriously addresses the effects of sin on human nature. They all grant man a large area of autonomy where he is totally free and able to accept or reject God's grace. Yet Christ, Paul and John speak of the need for man to be born again by the Holy Spirit, a need to be made alive from death, and the need for an anointing of the Spirit in order to know spiritual reality (Jn. 3; Eph. 2; 1 Jn. 2). This consistent biblical position challenges man's supposed total and inviolable freedom to choose to please God, the very definition of good. Each author presents a God who tries to save dead people by any persuasive means possible except by regeneration which is in fact God's sovereign means to overcome our spiritual death and active rebellion. I think the essayists put each person before God's law or will in the same way sinless Adam stood. Yet none seems to see the



implications of Adam's fall on our standing before God or our ability freely to choose good as sinners.

The consistent refrain of the book is that true freedom means God must keep his hands off our minds and bodies and just wait for us to respond to his overtures. He can only try to influence towards good. This is summarized by one author thus: 'God cannot both create free creatures and also eliminate all evil at the same time' (p. 45). My question is: What about heaven? Heaven is supposed to be a place with no tears, pain or death; where all sin and temptations are removed. How is God to eliminate these things while retaining freedom for the creature? If we answer, 'We'll be changed and glorified, does that mean we'll be less free, less human than we are now with our freedom to sin? It seems to me that there is a place in heaven for God's strong, determined will to prevail and where we are still gloriously free to be what God intends. If that is true for heaven, is it not possible to see even now a sovereign, dynamic God whose will is done and whose kingdom does come, working with rebellious creatures (free within the limits of their fallen natures)? One author is correct in saying that to ask 'how' is not to the point because this would imply a mechanism which God uses. But how are we to understand the infinite mind and abilities of the Creator? This book has difficulties defining man's freedom let alone God's freedom!

Newton said that two bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Something must give way. In trying to reconcile the two bodies of God's sovereignty and man's freedom it is God who is moved over to make room for man. God is often said to be unable to do many things because this would violate our freedom. The two basic solutions proposed involve changes in normal scriptural understanding. Messrs Pinnock and Reichenbach move away from the classic expressions of God's omniscience and omnipotence in order to protect an open-ended universe. Meanwhile, Messrs Geisler and Feinberg keep a stronger, traditional view of God but also emphasize man's ultimate autonomy in receiving God's grace. This completely misses the point of the fallenness of man and the need for radical renewal.

After reading sixteen articles about what God cannot do I prefer to leave the premise question unresolved for now but retain Scripture's high view of God's power and sovereignty and of man's true moral responsibility for his sin and sinful nature.

**Gordon Woolard, Brussels, Belgium.**

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David G. Benner (ed.), **Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), xxiii + 1,223 pp., \$39.95.

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This mammoth volume comprehensively covers the field of psychology from a Christian point of view. Written primarily with the needs of the North American researcher in mind, almost all the examples are drawn from the United States, as are the references to the laws regarding what is defined as criminal activity. This of course detracts from its cross-cultural usefulness. Indeed, all but seven of the 163 contributors are from the United States; of those seven, five are from Canada. Only two contributors therefore are not North Americans.

However, the majority of the articles are encyclopedia-type summaries of the major areas and are therefore useful surveys. This includes the articles on major figures in the field of psychology. As would be expected, European thinkers are well represented. The article on Paul Tournier is very good.

Theologians might be especially interested in the articles on conversion, confession, cults, demon possession, demonic influence and psychopathology, faith healing, inner healing, mass evangelism, psychology as religion, work, and worship, to name but a few. This reviewer found the treatment of the demonic exceptionally well handled. The above examples should serve to demonstrate the *Encyclopedia's* relevance to those who are not specialists in counselling but want a wider perspective.

The articles on counselling and counselling-related subjects are very useful to pastors engaged in a counselling ministry. The articles on cross-cultural psychology and cross-culture therapy show great

sensitivity to the need to adapt counselling techniques to different cultures or subcultures. The impersonal nature of American society is noted and the need in nearly every other society to build an interpersonal relationship before proceeding on with counselling.

The articles are well researched and provide many valuable insights. For example, the profile of the average recruit for a cult is a person with a passive father and domineering mother. Helpful bibliographies accompany most entries.

Working through the *Encyclopedia*, this reviewer found a number of articles which would be very valuable not only to the pastor engaged heavily in counselling, but to the student of theology who would broaden his perspective on the integration between Christianity and psychology. This reviewer could not help wondering if a smaller edition which would omit many of the technical articles but retain the core might not meet a real need and find even wider circulation. Perhaps in time we will see the *Concise Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology*.

**James Stamoolis.**

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Richard A. Muller, **Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally From Protestant Scholastic Theology** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 340 pp., \$12.95.

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As the title indicates, this book contains definitions of theological terms, phrases and even doctrines alphabetized according to the Latin or Greek word or words. By way of rationale for the book, the author rightly argues that the classical Greek and Latin theological heritage has bequeathed the church a plethora of theological terms and phrases which are often unfamiliar to the modern English reader. Add to the classical heritage the scholarly writings of the Reformers and the Lutheran and Reformed divines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who constructed elaborate theological systems, and the result is that the modern student is often confronted with theological terms whose meaning is unintelligible. Furthermore, the fact that modern theologians such as Karl Barth, Otto Weber and others have appropriated many of these classical theological terms in their writings perpetuates the problem for many a contemporary English reader. In order to render intelligible the rich doctrinal vocabulary from the past, the author has brought forth this helpful *Dictionary* for the English-speaking world.

The entries given in 325 pages of text vary in length from a simple English definition of the Latin or Greek theological term in less than one line to extended articles of more than four pages in the case of such key terms as *persona* and *Trinitas*. The longer entries usually include a brief history of the concept or doctrine, a discussion of alternative interpretations and a preferred explication of the theological concept. Thus the reader usually finds in the longer articles a concise but informative summary of historical and doctrinal information. In this respect the volume will prove useful as a sourcebook to which the student or specialist will turn rather frequently. A few of the numerous entries in the *Dictionary*, however, strike this reviewer as esoteric, and would seem to be rarely encountered by even the more serious historian or theologian (e.g. *alicubitas* or *paraphysica*). On the other hand, many of the articles contain a rich mine of doctrinal information that proves very informative (e.g. *communicatio idiomatum*, *extra calvinisticum*, *imago Dei*, *praedestinatio*, *voluntas Dei*, to mention a few entries). The *Dictionary* contains a helpful index of English terms, followed by the most important Latin and Greek equivalents.

In sum, the *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* is a very helpful tool for the serious theological student, educator or writer. It appears to fill a gap that has long existed in the English-speaking world. The non-specialist should find this work helpful, but I suspect that he or she will probably turn to one or more of the recently published dictionaries of English terms and doctrinal expressions for the needed information.

**Bruce Demarest, Denver Seminary, Denver, Colorado.**

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**Michael Goulder and John Hick, *Why Believe in God?***  
(London: SCM, 1983), 117 pp., £2.50.

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If you have ever wondered what is your theological hue — here is the answer! For Michael Goulder provides a colour chart for you. Crimson (and cardinal red for the Archbishop of Westminster!), blushing pink, magnolia and even snow white are on offer. Still interested? Then read on!

The book is the result of a debate on the existence of God between the respective authors which took place at the University of Birmingham in November 1982, attracting a fee-paying audience of nearly 200. Both authors contribute three chapters each. And as may be expected when old friends and ex-colleagues debate, there is a gentlemanly and dignified approach to the subject matter. If we were to think of it in boxing terms, it is more of a sparring match than a world title fight. And that leads us nicely back to colours again.

In the 'blue' corner we have Michael Goulder, short-time CICC member turned radical theologian, who felt the logic of his position demanded atheism and, accordingly, resigned his Anglican orders in 1981. As atheism according to Hick paints such a dark and depressing scenario, so Goulder's corner colour seems appropriate. In the other corner is Hick. At one time this corner would have been a definite 'red', since Hick lays claim to an evangelical conversion whilst a student over 40 years ago at Hull University. But now it is unmistakably 'white', to use Goulder's chart.

'Round one' is Goulder's pilgrimage to atheism, and 'two' is Hick's *apologia* that religious experience points to a transcendent Reality. 'Three' is an *exposé* by Goulder of the ambiguity of such experience and a devastating critique of radical theology which has dispensed with 'evidence' for 'experience'. Hick's reply in the 'fourth' only confirms Goulder's point in the 'fifth': 'how little, in John's view, God does. . . . It is close to the view known as Deism' (p. 87). By the 'sixth' Hick is looking for other 'opponents' outside the immediate ring'. Not quite a knock-out to Goulder, but a points win, I would say.

So atheism won the contest? On Hick's presuppositions I think so. But as Goulder concedes, 'The old red-blooded religion had a lot going for it. It carried the authority of heaven. . . . It culminated in the supreme act of divine humility, the incarnation. . . . It hushed man's guilt by the blood of the cross' (p. 95). If he had stayed with such a theology then we may conjecture that his seeming autobiographical *cri de coeur* ('open-hearted men seek a felt presence of God in years of prayer, and are disappointed', p. 63) would have been satisfied. Then he would have been in the 'red' corner. And what a 'fight' that might have been!

Steve Brady, London Bible College.

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**Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiology: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*** (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), translated by Robert R. Barr from the Portuguese ***Ecclesiogenese: As Comunidades Eclesiais de Base Reinventam a Igreja*** (Petrópolis, RJ: Editora Vozes, 1977), 115 pp., \$9.95.

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In spite of the grandiloquent title, this book is not really announcing the birth of a new church. Rather, it is about church renewal within the Roman Catholic Church through the *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* (CEBs). True, the reader will recognize the strident tones so characteristic of revolutionary fervour, but even this is attenuated in the hope that the CEBs will gain a hearing from the Catholic hierarchy, with its centuries-old views of what it means to be church. Boff is appealing for the CEBs to be accepted as legitimate expressions of church, in spite of the absence of priest, bishop and sacraments.

Before Protestant students dismiss out of hand such a seemingly distant concern, they should consider what the clamour is all about. Some Protestant observers (for example, Thomas Hanks, *God So*

*Loved the Third World*; Guillermo Cook, *The Expectation of the Poor*, both published by Orbis Books) have compared the ferment in the Catholic Church in Latin America to the turmoil of the 16th century European Reformation. Boff and other Catholic theologians may begin with ecclesiology rather than with soteriology, but as they gain a more biblical perspective of the church it affects their conclusions on many other basic doctrines. The result has been a profound rethinking of what it means to be the people of God in an antagonistic world.

Protestants will be enthusiastic about Boff's reflections on biblical passages dealing with the nature of the church as a faith community, the primary role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the congregation, the priesthood of believers (*i.e.* the role of the laity) and the importance of the exercise of spiritual gifts. Pastors and denominational leaders would do well to learn from his observation that to the extent that any church crystallizes decision-making in its hierarchy and organizational structure, it tends to dry up community. By contrast, Boff's sociological analysis seems insipid and unconvincing, in spite of a transparent burden for the plight of the oppressed.

Boff calls on Roman Catholic structures to accept the dynamic social expressions of the CEBs as the natural outgrowth of a vibrant faith: 'One need not be a Christian to be a good politician. . . . But to be a good Christian, it is necessary to be concerned with social justice, and social justice is a political reality. . . . Christians in the Brazilian reality who oppose qualitative changes in society are not just conservative citizens. They are Christians disloyal to the gospel, since they are being deaf to the cry of the oppressed that rises up on all sides' (p. 38).

In the second part of the book Boff deals with topics which emerged from an early 'Inter-Church Meeting' held in Itaici, Brazil. Here he deals with questions concerning the institutional form of the church, the ministry of the Lord's Supper by laypersons and the possibility of ordination for women. This section makes it clear that the book is basically only one part of a family debate which has been going on for the 10 years since this book was written in the halls of seminaries and bishops' councils. Protestants will not identify with Boff's views of faith, salvation, evangelism, the mediation of Mary or perhaps even with his idea of the church itself.

It would be a mistake for Protestants merely to observe this discussion from afar, or to denounce unbiblical emphases. Opportunities abound for authentic biblical reflection on the nature and mission of the church, and all those who can contribute to a greater understanding of the revitalization going on throughout the world should be welcome. While *Ecclesiology* may be easily dismissed as not contributing profoundly to the discussion, it serves to set an agenda to which Evangelicals can respond, if they are willing not only to talk about, but also become, God's church.

William T. McConnell, International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, São Paulo, Brazil.

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James Leatt, Theo Kneifel and Klaus Nurnberger (eds.), ***Contending Ideologies in South Africa*** (Cape Town: David Philip/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), x + 318 pp., \$10.95.

Richard John Neuhaus, ***Dispensations: The Future of South Africa as South Africans See It*** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), xvii + 317 pp., \$16.95.

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Those interested in unravelling the complex ideological conflict in South Africa have two excellent sources in these books. *Contending Ideologies in South Africa* gives a thorough and balanced assessment of the various philosophical positions current in South Africa. Covered are political liberalism (as represented by various political parties), Afrikaner nationalism, African nationalism (giving recognition to various types of expression), capitalism and socialism. The latter two are treated as both philosophic and economic systems. *Contending Ideologies* was produced by a committee and the

members are to be commended for the even-handed approach they maintained throughout the work. Each section sets the ideology studied firmly in its historical context, thereby providing an excellent mini-history of South Africa.

The concluding two chapters, which deal more specifically with ideology and theology, will no doubt interest readers of *Themelios* and may lead to applications of the principles discussed to other situations besides South Africa. One interesting inclusion is a lengthy section (80 pages) on Marxism as a philosophy. This is a good explanation and critique. However, this reviewer felt it might have been included more to inform South African readers of the book and did not carry the argument forward. The book has a very good bibliography and a complete index which enhances its usefulness.

The book by Richard Neuhaus, *Dispensations*, takes a different approach. Interwoven with solid historical background are interviews with South Africans of all types. We hear them describe in their own words how they see the current situation and what they hope and/or fear for the future. The interviews were skilfully done and ask the difficult questions that must be faced. Neuhaus also supplies his own analysis of the interviews which gives further insight into the people. All the famous names of the South African scene appear: Tutu, Boesak, Buthelezi, Bosch, along with many other less famous but representative of South Africa. If there is any shortcoming, it is in the relative absence of the little people: the migrant worker, the student, the homemaker, the domestic servant.

Throughout the book the Christian convictions of nearly all who speak are clearly seen. Most of the black leaders were trained in missionary schools and many are committed Christians. Furthermore, it is widely believed that Christians hold the key to reconciliation between the various racial groups.

I wish everyone who asks me questions about the situation in South Africa could take the time to read this book. The complex reality that is South Africa is expertly brought together by allowing those who must live in whatever the 'new dispensation' brings to speak for themselves.

**James J. Stamoolis.**

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J. G. Davies (ed.), *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (London: SCM, 1986), 544 pp., £19.50.

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Worship is an activity common to all Christians. It should, therefore, be the great unifying experience between Christians of all types. Sadly, it is not, and one of the main reasons it is not is quite simple — we all tend to assume that *normal* Christian worship (and by 'normal' we often implicitly mean 'that which God prefers') is the worship that we are used to in our local church (or that we wish existed in our local church). Our worship is the norm — everybody else's is a deviation. It is surprising how many intelligent, reasonable, committed Christians find it difficult to see their worship against a wider perspective than that of their own limited experience, 'taste' or prejudice. Here, however, is a book that, sensibly used, should go some way towards correcting such narrowness. This Dictionary supersedes *A Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, published in 1972. It is half as big again as its predecessor and, so rapid have the changes and developments in worship been world-wide since 1972, it has been necessary to add nearly 50 completely new entries, as well as rewriting some of the original ones. It is published in hardback, though a cheaper paperback version is much to be desired.

The entries are clearly set out in two columns per page, are cross-referenced to other entries both within the text of each article or section and frequently at the end, and nearly always have a bibliography. They tend to fall into a number of types, and the reader needs to be aware of this.

Some are short, factual definitions: so that if you look up 'Apse', for example, you will find a straightforward eight-line definition with no interpretation on the part of the contributor. Descriptive articles of this kind need not be short: looking up 'Liturgies' will bring you to 25 pages of general descriptions of the rites of Baptists, Brethren, Orthodox, Old Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Anglicans, and so on.

Other entries, particularly ones with a doctrinal edge, reveal the beliefs or preferences of the author. Thus, for example, the writer of the article on 'Oblation' concludes: 'Only the doctrine of the identification of the oblation of the Church, and of the individual member of it, with the oblation of Christ in the celebration of the eucharist as the divinely-appointed anamnesis of the latter is able to safeguard the uniqueness of Christ's oblation on the one hand, and provide for man's desire and need to offer all that he is and has to God on the other.' Such a statement *may* be capable of being squared with Scripture, but it is at face value not self-evidently so to many Evangelicals and needs to be treated cautiously.

While an issue like that raised in the last example is sufficient of an 'old chestnut' to be detectable by most Evangelicals, some, because of their very newness, are in danger of being swallowed uncritically. The article on 'Inclusive Language', for example, sets out in one and a half pages an at first sight very persuasive argument for the removal of male-dominated 'sexist' language from worship. It is only on reflection that you realize that the article makes no mention of the points that conservative Evangelicals and others would want to make about the 'givenness' and authority of Scripture, the nature of revelation, the God-given role of gender, headship and so on. On the contrary, the article gives the impression that opposition to inclusive language comes only because it 'strikes deeply at people's emotional feelings about their sexual and social identity'.

**John Fenwick**, Trinity College, Bristol.

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Spiritual Care* (translated by Jay C. Rochelle) (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

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While all of Bonhoeffer's major works have been translated into English, and many other languages besides, many English readers of Bonhoeffer's writings are unaware that there is a great deal which is yet untranslated. Indeed, the forthcoming new German edition of his collected works will run into 16 volumes, and the proposed English translation will introduce English readers to much of interest and significance. Jay Rochelle's translation of Bonhoeffer's Finkenwalde lectures on *Seelsorge* is a foretaste.

Bonhoeffer prepared and presented these lectures during the same period that he was working on his well-known *Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*. *Spiritual Care* is of the same genre, and in fact complements the other two volumes. Bonhoeffer is here pastor of the pastors, seeking to help them fulfil their parish responsibilities. *Spiritual Care* is, in the best sense of the word, a book of practical theology. That is, it provides a theological foundation for pastoral care, especially in the second chapter on 'Law and Gospel in Spiritual Care', and on that basis Bonhoeffer deals with some very practical aspects of the pastor's work. Technique is useful, and Bonhoeffer's has some very basic suggestions in this regard, but the aim of pastoral care is discipleship rather than personal well-being. We need to be reminded that the work of the ordained minister is not that of the religious counsellor or psycho-therapist, but the proclamation of the gospel, and that this is at the heart of pastoral care.

**John W. De Gruchy**, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

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