

# hemelios

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# themelios

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# Editorial: Evangelical and liberal theology

The most significant division in Christendom today is not the division between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, but rather between what we may call 'traditional Christian orthodoxy' on the one hand and 'liberalism' on the other. This important division is described and discussed in an excellent new book entitled *Essentials: A liberal-evangelical dialogue* by David Edwards, former editor of the SCM Press, and John Stott, formerly of All Souls Church in London (Hodder, 1988, 354pp., £5.95). They discuss, among other things, the authority and nature of Scripture, the cross of Christ, the miracles of Jesus, the Bible and behaviour, the gospel for the world.

They have much in common, but many of their disagreements are what one might expect: John Stott believes in an infallible Bible to which we must submit our thinking, whereas David Edwards thinks that we must distinguish in the Bible between what is true revelation of God and what is not. John Stott believes that in Christ's death God was taking on himself the judgment for our sins, whereas David Edwards finds such an idea unacceptable. John Stott accepts the historicity of the biblical miracles, whereas David Edwards has grave doubts about many of them, including the virgin birth (though not the physical resurrection of Jesus). David Edwards believes that it may be right for some people to live as practising homosexuals, whereas John Stott does not. John Stott is more emphatic than David Edwards on the reality of judgment and on Christ as the sole way to salvation.

The book is not new in setting out such differing opinions. What is new is to find a well-known liberal and evangelical discussing their opinions in one volume and in a very charitable and Christian way. The more usual procedure is for evangelical or conservative scholars to write books condemning liberalism and for liberals to write books blasting conservatism. This book is far more valuable than most of such works, because it is a dialogue not a monologue and because the two authors are such able and good representatives of their respective positions. Here we have a comparison of two well and strongly presented positions, not sniping by either side at the excesses of the other. It is a book that will be helpful to students, whether of evangelical or liberal position, both in (a) helping them to understand 'the other side' and (b) in clarifying their own positions.

It is a book which may also help readers of *Themelios* who come from an evangelical or conservative background and who are perplexed about how to react to the liberal theology that is dominant in many colleges and university departments. There are two opposite tendencies among evangelical theological students facing the challenge of liberalism. The first is to be thoroughly negative and suspicious towards it. Many Christian students come to theological or religious studies with warnings ringing in their ears about the dangers

of liberal theology. 'Beware,' they are told, 'of the false prophets in the theology faculties who will subtly woo you away from your traditional Christian faith, sowing doubts in your mind and leading you to unbelief.' Taking such warnings to heart, evangelical students often damn all liberal theology as heresy (and liberal theologians as heretics), and they ignore it as far as they can, except for purposes of passing exams.

The second and opposite tendency among evangelical theological students is to welcome liberal theology uncritically. Such students keep their practical Christianity in one compartment and their academic theology in another. In their private prayers they continue to treat the Bible as the Word of God, but in the lecture room they accept the very different views put forward by their teachers without seriously questioning them. The arguments seem plausible, and the theologians putting them forward seem good and often Christian people. The two-compartment approach usually works for a while, but sooner or later the simple evangelical faith of the past is consciously or unconsciously discarded and grown out of.

What are we to say of these two contrary approaches? Simply, that neither is satisfactory. More specifically, we suggest that four things come out of a reading of *Essentials*.

(1) The issues at stake between evangelicalism and liberalism are serious and of the greatest importance, and should be treated accordingly. It is fashionable these days to treat theological disagreement (and indeed the whole question of truth) as something trivial. This is the case in ecumenical circles, which tend to become ever wider circles embracing not just different denominations but even different faiths. It is true also in some charismatic and evangelical circles where unity in spiritual experience is felt to make doctrinal differences unimportant. There is a good side to this. Some of the matters that divide Christians are trivial. It is disgraceful to have fellow-Christians in the same village worshipping and working in separated congregations because of disagreement over forms of ecclesiastical government.

But not all our divisions are of that sort. The sorts of issues that David Edwards and John Stott discuss are very important indeed. It does matter enormously whether we regard the Bible's teaching in its entirety as God's Word and whether we see Jesus as a fallible or infallible teacher. It does matter enormously whether we believe you can come to God through other religions than that of Jesus, and whether we believe that people's eternal destiny is decided by their response to Jesus in this life, or whether there is a second chance beyond. It does matter whether we believe that practising homosexuality is always wrong or sometimes right.

Such issues do matter, and as theological students we need to be aware that we are dealing with life and death issues, which cannot be lightly treated. Those who warn of false prophecy are right, even if it is not always easy to recognize it when we see it. Jesus spoke of spiritual conflict with Satan and of 'wolves in sheep's clothing', and there is every reason to think that Satan and his wolves are as active in our theological faculties and colleges as anywhere else in the world, not just in subverting our morals but also in subverting our ideas and thinking. It is sadly true that theological students do fall away from faith and from their first love of the Lord. There is a popular, but dangerous, notion around that discussing theology is a neutral academic exercise – an academic game to be enjoyed. But the early church fathers, whom we sometimes ridicule for their arguments about theological niceties, were at least right in perceiving that theology and the theological error matter, and that we are involved in a spiritual battle.

What that means is that we must approach our studies alert to the dangers and with much prayer, remembering that we who teach will be judged with the greater strictness (Jas. 3:1). Not that we should be frightened or defensive: it is a great privilege to study and then to teach others about God's life-giving and liberating Word.

(2) A second lesson to be learned from *Essentials* is not to be dismissive of others, without seeking to understand and appreciate their position. This has often been a fault on the liberal side: the evangelical position on Scripture and on other issues has regularly been ridiculed, caricatured or just ignored as though it were not worth thinking about. Despite the increasing strength of evangelical scholarship in recent years, evangelical theology is still not taken as a serious and honest option by many people. Of course, one of the reasons for the liberals' dismissal of evangelicalism is that evangelicals have often had silly ideas. But it is quite inexcusable to ignore evangelicalism as a whole just because of its unthinking, maverick fringe. If *Essentials* suggests that liberals are beginning to respect the seriousness of evangelical theology, which has in its basic tenets been the position of a vast number of sensitive and intelligent Christian thinkers throughout church history, then this is a very welcome trend.

But the fault has not just been on the liberal side. Evangelicals and conservatives have also tended to be dismissive of liberalism, again partly because of the excesses of some on the fringe of liberalism. They have seen liberals as false prophets, not without reason in some cases; but they have not bothered to try to understand or sympathize with the genuine and Christian concerns of many liberal theologians. Even if it is true that liberalism is false doctrine, it does not necessarily follow that all or most liberal theologians are maliciously trying to deceive; in many cases their views arise out of a genuine Christian concern to understand and to communicate the Christian gospel in our modern context, and their arguments are often a lot more substantial than evangelicals allow. For example, on the question of the virgin birth, evangelicals often tend to assume that liberal questions about the historicity of the virgin birth are simply due to their anti-supernaturalism. But, although that has undoubtedly been a most influential factor, it is by no means the only consideration, and it is not fair or helpful to dismiss liberal questions about the traditional doctrines as though

they simply arise out of a refusal to believe in miracles. It is important therefore to seek to understand and not just to denounce.

(3) That leads into a third lesson to be learned from *Essentials*, a lesson about humility. It is one of the least attractive features of many politicians that they seem unwilling to admit their own mistakes and to question the traditions of their own political party. Theologians often fall into the same habit. But both David Edwards and John Stott speak of their own personal growth in understanding, and both question aspects of their respective traditions.

Such humility is important. Whether we like it or not, we are all mixed-up people in the sense that we all have some true understanding of God's truth and some misunderstanding. In this life we will never have a complete or perfectly accurate understanding of God's Word and his ways, which is why continuous prayerful study and listening is vital. This is important when we approach theological studies: we should approach them wanting to learn and to have our own mistaken ideas corrected, painful though it may be. One of the characteristics of evangelical theological students that endears them least to their teachers is their apparent unwillingness to learn. Sometimes the real problem may be that the student is unwilling to believe what the teacher believes – with good reason – but sometimes there is a wrong resistance to change and learning. We all need to cultivate a humble spirit and a desire to have our ideas corrected and modified where they are wrong.

This also applies to our own theological tradition. Evangelicals, like others, bring to their studies a whole range of traditional opinions, whether on questions of criticism (e.g. on the authorship of particular biblical books) or on questions of interpretation (e.g. on the interpretation of Genesis or Revelation). Such traditions are not to be despised. They often represent the conclusions of generations of able and godly interpreters, which we should be slow to abandon. Indeed many evangelical opinions have been the opinions of the church as a whole throughout church history. The arrogance that ignores the work of past generations and prefers the latest modern theory must be firmly resisted; it is an insult to the work of the Holy Spirit in past generations, and it has often been seen how modern scholarly ideas are no more than fads which last for a while and then are seen to be insubstantial (e.g. the tendency to dismiss John's gospel as theological fiction rather than historical record).

Having said that (emphatically), we should not elevate the traditions of the church, let alone of our part of the church, to the status of infallibility. It is the Word of God which is infallible, not our interpretation. One such matter of interpretation on which John Stott raises questions is that of the everlasting punishment of the wicked. He (in common with some other evangelicals) has no doubt that Scripture warns of final and terrible judgment eternal in its effects on those who fail to repent, but he believes that the wicked will be finally destroyed not maintained in everlasting agony (as evangelicalism, along with Catholicism, has in the main believed). John Stott will undoubtedly be criticized by some evangelicals for taking this view. But, whether he is right or wrong in his interpretation, we suggest that he is right to be

willing to question and think about his own tradition, not lightly, but cautiously and tentatively.

There is a tendency in some evangelical circles to see any modification of the positions of the Reformers, the Puritans or the evangelicals of the earlier part of our own century as a betrayal. But that is absurd: evangelical scholarship is much stronger now than it was fifty years ago, and we should expect to see our own traditions developing and even being corrected as we listen to the Word of God anew. There is a fear among some evangelicals that anyone who admits that a traditional evangelical view may be wrong is slipping into liberalism on the one hand or into Roman Catholicism on the other. But this is to elevate our own traditions too highly. We must certainly beware of not abandoning our commitment to biblical Christian faith: the secular pressures are as great or greater than ever, and it is right to beware of those pressures. But we must also be conscious of our need always to be reformed by and under the Word of God. John Stott sets an example in openness and yet faithfulness, being willing to rethink his own positions in the light of Scripture, but unwilling to abandon biblical positions (e.g. on homosexuality, or men and women in the church) under the pressure of secular liberalism.

(4) The final thing we note about *Essentials* is the loving, respectful tone of the book. There is a tendency among evangelicals to treat liberal Christians (and Roman Catholics too) with hostility and virtually as non-Christians. We find it difficult to disagree strongly with aspects of a person's theology, and yet at the same time to recognize him or her as a Christian brother or sister. This is partly because of a right perception about the danger and seriousness of false theology, and partly because some so-called Christians are so way-out as to make it very hard to see them as disciples of Jesus. But it is dangerous and wrong to generalize in a negative way. It is important to recall that all Christians are mixed-up people with mixed-up ideas to a greater or lesser extent – see the church of Corinth in NT times! Evangelicals who read *Essentials* will, I suspect, be impressed by David Edwards' sincere Christian profession, just as they often are by the commitment of someone like Mother Teresa. And yet there is often a lurking suspicion that this cannot be genuine Christianity because of the doctrinal issue. However, although doctrine does matter very much, correct doctrine

does not guarantee the genuineness of a person's Christian faith (as the NT makes very clear), nor does some incorrect doctrine automatically exclude a person from the kingdom of God (happily).

If it is true that there are evangelical and liberal Christians (and not just evangelical Christians and liberal non-Christians!), then it is imperative that we act in love towards each other and seek to understand each other and to overcome our divisions. *Essentials* represents a significant attempt to do this, not by covering over the cracks with deceptively pretty ecumenical wallpaper, but by honestly discussing our differences and seeking under God to find and to unite in his truth. Evangelicals may be tempted to question whether it is worth trying to do this, feeling that it is not a priority in a dying world and knowing the real practical difficulties that there are. But, although doctrinal differences do make some forms of ecumenical collaboration difficult or impossible, *Essentials* is a book which shows that progress can be made in bridging our divisions. In any case, if it is a question of priorities, we should remember that for Jesus it was a priority that his followers should live in love and unity; it was also a priority for Paul, great evangelist that he was.

Paul urges 'speaking the truth in love' as the way for the church to grow up into Christ (Eph. 4:15). May God make us faithful to his truth, strong in his love, and thus increasingly more united and effective as Christ's body in the world.

#### Editorial note

We warmly welcome to new Associate Editors: Colin Chapman of Trinity College, Bristol, as our religious editor and Martin Davie of Mansfield College, Oxford, as our church history editor. We also welcome Dr Craig Blomberg of Denver Seminary, Colorado as North American book review editor. Colin Chapman and Craig Blomberg will be known to many readers for their writings (including articles and reviews in *Themelios*). Martin Davie is completing his doctoral research on modern British Quaker theology at Oxford University.

The Theological Students Fellowship in the British Isles has been reconstituted (with a wider brief) as the Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship. The first RTSF secretary is Steven Singleton, who will be a Consulting Editor of *Themelios*. We are grateful to all these (and to continuing editors) for their willingness to help us.

# Hebrews and the anticipation of completion

Paul Ellingworth

*The author is translation consultant for the United Bible Societies and an honorary lecturer at the University of Aberdeen. Dr Ellingworth is currently completing a commentary on the Greek text of Hebrews (in the NICGT series); we are grateful for this article in anticipation!*

The story is told of two young typists who returned from a holiday in Majorca.

'Where's that?' asked one of their friends.

'I don't know,' one of the travellers replied. 'We went by air.'

The fact that this is told as a funny story points to a central fact of human nature: we expect things to fit together, and find it odd when they do not. It is what the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer has called 'the anticipation of completion' (*der Vorgriff der Vollkommenheit*).<sup>1</sup> We understand something only in relation to something else. 'Only connect' is the motto of us all. In particular, we understand something new only in relation to other things that we know already. And the end of our understanding – an end we never reach in this life – is to make coherent sense of our experience as a whole.

What, one might ask, has this to do with the Epistle to the Hebrews?<sup>2</sup> The analogy must not be pressed very far, but Hebrews is just a little like the typists' first view of Majorca, in that it at first appears an isolated block, unrelated to anything else in the NT. Our efforts to understand Hebrews are in large part efforts to relate it to other data which lie already in the circle of our knowledge and experience. They may be individuals mentioned in the NT, who for one reason or another may be candidates for the title of author of Hebrews. They may be groups of Christians among whom the letter may have been written, or to whom it may have been sent. They may be individuals or groups who, or literary corpora which, may have influenced the writer of Hebrews, either positively or negatively, or been influenced by him<sup>3</sup> in their turn. It may, of course, be the other way round, though that is not our primary concern in this article: the thing to be explained may be some aspect of our own situation on which we may hope that Hebrews may throw some light.

Our repeated use of the word 'may' indicates the impulse, the constantly renewed hope, with which the reader of Hebrews sets out to understand it in the light of some other area of his experience. The word 'may' also indicates that there is no guarantee against disappointment in this quest. 'Let us see', the reader asks himself, 'if Hebrews makes a little more sense in the light of what we know about ancient Rome; or early gnosticism; or the Psalms; or (in principle) anything else.'

The reader's mental databank is structured in such a way as to tell him, more or less accurately, how promising a

particular line of research is likely to be; though here, too, his presuppositions may limit as well as focus his vision. And of course, this process is not peculiar to the understanding of Hebrews: it is merely more clearly necessary in the case of Hebrews, because of Hebrews' apparent isolation from other parts of the NT. But it is important to emphasize from the outset that the aim of all this comparative study is to relate Hebrews to a wider area of knowledge, and thus to understand it better. To learn that Hebrews was written by someone called, for example, Madmannah, about whom nothing else is known, and who is on no account to be confused with the Madmannahs of Joshua 15:31 and 1 Chronicles 2:49, would not advance our understanding of Hebrews at all.

This general principle may be applied in at least three ways to the study of Hebrews. First, it may prove a useful thread to guide us through the maze of so-called questions of introduction.

## Authorship

Theories about its authorship are of two main kinds: they are intended to link Hebrews up, either with some other author and his writings, or with someone else who, from what we know of him, sounds the kind of person who might have written Hebrews. In the first group, claims have been made for Paul, Clement of Rome, Luke, the author of the (pseudonymous) Epistle of Barnabas, Peter, and Jude. Stephen may be placed in either group, depending on how precisely Acts 7 is thought to reproduce the form and content of his message. In the second group, those who have no other writing extant, Apollos is now clearly the leading contender, followed at some distance by Philip the Deacon, Silas, Ariston, and Priscilla (with Aquila); but evidence for and against such hypotheses is likely, in the nature of things, to be less firm than for members of the first group.

The leading contender in the first group has traditionally been Paul, but he has steadily lost ground, first among Protestants and later among Roman Catholics, as they came to sit freer to the 1914 decision of the Biblical Commission affirming Pauline authorship. As this development progressed, the theological question ('Is this writing generally accepted as embodying orthodox, apostolic teaching?') has gradually become disentangled from the literary question ('Does this writing bear the personal mark of this author?'), and the literary question has come to predominate.

A number of comments on this process are in order, since they relate to questions of authorship in general, not just to the question of Paul's possible authorship of Hebrews.

First, theories which attempt to fudge the literary question by appealing too heavily to the activity of secretaries are

methodologically defective: there comes a point at which they prove nothing, because they are stretched to prove anything.<sup>4</sup>

Second, it is a question unlikely ever to be resolved with mathematical precision, how much the language of a single individual may change in the course of his (adult) lifetime, and how much in it remains constant. All that needs to be said here is that the distinctive features of Hebrews' language (what linguists would call the author's idiolect) tend to place it at such a distance from all other NT writings as strongly to suggest a different author.

Third, a similar question may be asked about the author's theology, as long as it is asked sensitively, not polemically in the spirit of a medieval *sic et non* type disputation, nor as part of a search for contradictions or inconsistencies in the biblical record; such an approach tends to provoke an equally insensitive conservative reaction. The point at issue here is not whether Paul's faith is fundamentally different from that of the writer of Hebrews (or how, for example, the theology of the Letter of James relates to either or both), but whether the forms in which that faith is expressed, its distinctive emphases, are so different as to suggest a different author. The questions of language and theology, though distinct, can thus not be treated in isolation from one another.

The last and perhaps the most interesting question under this heading is whether the pendulum of interest has not swung too far from the theological to the literary question, and whether it is not time for it to swing part of the way back. Of course, questions once asked cannot be unasked, even if they remain unanswered for so long that people conclude they are unanswerable in this life, and therefore lose interest in them. It will always remain legitimate to ask whose pen wrote Hebrews, or whose voice dictated it. But for the understanding of Hebrews (and that, as we said, is the ultimate aim), it is probably more important to see, for example, reflections in John of Hebrews' teaching about Jesus' high priesthood, or a common concern in Hebrews and Romans with the vocation and destiny of Israel, than to argue about authorship in the narrow sense. Another way of putting it is to ask whether it is not more profitable to plot (if necessary on a multi-dimensional map) the respective theological positions of NT writers; their respective distances from one another; and the direction in which one travels from one to another,<sup>5</sup> rather than to concentrate attention exclusively on one individual or another. Such an approach would seem to be more in the spirit of the NT church itself.<sup>6</sup> It may also produce more solid results. To take two examples, one old and one more recent, W. Leonard's *The Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews*<sup>7</sup> and P. J. Deshpande's *St Jude as the Author of Hebrews*<sup>8</sup> contain valuable insights into the literary and theological affinities of Hebrews, insights which are however obscured rather than clarified by untenable claims for Pauline and Judan authorship respectively.

### Origins, date and purpose

A somewhat similar situation is found when one turns from the authorship of Hebrews to its geographical and intellectual setting, to the questions of when it was written, where and for what readers, questions which clearly interact with

one another and with the question of authorship. These questions, like that of authorship, may be asked and answered in a narrow or in a broad sense. An example of a narrow answer would be: Hebrews was written c. 68 from Corinth to Jewish Christians in Rome. An example of a broad answer would be: Hebrews was probably written from one centre of diaspora Judaism to another at a time of threatened but not yet deadly persecution (12:4), probably some considerable time after the establishment of the local church to which Hebrews is addressed (2:3f.; 12:7).

In practice, answers are likely to be somewhere between the two extremes, since some 'hard facts' are likely to be available, though not as many as would be needed for an exhaustive narrow answer. But in practice also, answers tending towards the broader end of the scale are likely to be more illuminating, not less, than the narrower answers. It is not, for example, the possibility that Hebrews was addressed to Rome that is in itself significant, but the possibility of drawing Hebrews within the network of everything else we know about Rome in the first Christian century.

So broader answers are not to be automatically considered as a second best, to be offered and accepted grudgingly in the absence of something more specific. Broader answers are also likely to offer more fruitful points of contact for application in a distant and different setting, such as our own. From this point of view, the main point is that the original readers were under threat of persecution; whether the persecution was that of Nero or Domitian, though a valid and worthy subject of historical research, is likely to be less immediately significant now.

Let us test this line of enquiry first in relation to the question of date, an area in which, as J. A. T. Robinson's *Redating the New Testament*<sup>9</sup> recalled, hard facts are few and far between, and speculation swirls around them like a Highland mist. Here the central argument is about whether Hebrews was likely to have been written before or after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70. There is general agreement that Hebrews was known and used (though probably not understood) by Clement of Rome, whose genuine epistle is generally dated c. 95.<sup>10</sup> Other relatively firm dates which call for consideration include the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Claudius c. 49; the Neronian persecution of 64 in Rome; and the more widespread, but also probably sporadic, persecution of Christians by Domitian in the early 90s. How these are related to the situation in which Hebrews was written and first read, and to other, less chronologically precise, data, is a matter on which scholars are by no means agreed. Generally speaking, perhaps paradoxically, an assessment of the situation is first made on the basis of less precise data, and the precise data are then fitted in. In other words, relative chronology is given priority over absolute chronology.

On the one hand, most continental scholars<sup>11</sup> argue for a date after 70. For example, Braun (3) argues succinctly for a date between 80 and soon after 90, on the grounds (a) of Hebrews' high Christology, (b) 'the wearying of the local congregation . . . which conditions [?] the author's special insistence on the nearness of the parousia' (1:2; 3:13; 9:26; 10:25, 35-39; 12:3, 12f.), and (c) the fact that these are not

first-generation Christians (2:3). Timothy, however, is still alive and able to travel (13:23).

Most Anglo-Saxon scholars, on the other hand, prefer a date before AD 70. They would reply to Braun and others that Hebrews' references to the past (2:3; 5:11f.; 10:32) need go no further back than the earlier part of the readers' own lives; that it need not take many years for people's faith to grow cold, for those who heard the Lord to attest the faith to others (2:3), for the congregation's first leaders to pass away (13:7), or indeed for a high Christology to develop.<sup>12</sup>

The central question remains: granted that the author of Hebrews makes no clear or direct reference to the destruction of the temple, is this because he is concerned, not with contemporary events, but only with Christian faith and its OT foundations,<sup>13</sup> because the temple had been destroyed many years before; or on the contrary because it was still standing? It seems almost<sup>14</sup> impossible to imagine that he would have written of the old covenant as merely 'ready to vanish away' (8:13) if the central cultic expression of that covenant had in fact already vanished. If this correlation of the chronological data is indeed correct, the way is open in principle for a further correlation in which Rome could be the place to which Hebrews was addressed; the readers' earlier sufferings (10:32-34) could have taken place under Claudius; and the expectation of further persecution (12:4) could reflect the situation under Nero before 64. But none of this achieves the certainty of proof; it is a question of how various details can most satisfactorily be related to one another within a coherent general picture.

A second area in which the 'anticipation of completion' may lead to a greater understanding of Hebrews is in considering its literary structure; first in itself, then in relation to the content of Hebrews.

Analysis of literary structure has been pursued perhaps more rigorously for Hebrews than for any other NT writing; yet still there is no unanimity about it. The main reason for this may lie in the conflicting presuppositions of the scholars concerned in this debate.

Three main positions may be distinguished. The first, represented by most older and some more recent commentators, affirms (or more often assumes) that literary structure must be determined by content.

The second, represented by A. Vanhoye,<sup>15</sup> studies literary structure for its own sake, winning thereby the independent support of those linguists who, since Saussure,<sup>16</sup> have emphasized the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs.

The third position, represented by Dussaut,<sup>17</sup> has much in common with that of Vanhoye, but goes beyond it by proposing a detailed structure consisting of seven pairs of panels of almost equal length.

The three positions differ also with respect to their presuppositions regarding the author's conscious intention – something on which direct evidence is naturally hard to come by. The first and third positions have in common the apparent assumption that the author followed a conscious plan; in the first case, a plan based on the content of his message, and in the third case, a plan which is an end in itself. Vanhoye's position does not require this assumption: there

is ample evidence that writers and indeed speakers may follow even quite complex chiasmic patterns without being aware of the fact.

The main problem with Vanhoye's proposed structure arises when one attempts to explore its implications for the semantically oriented activity of translation. One may advise translators to take account of the structural features as far as possible, while recognizing that, as structural features, they come within the same general category as plays on words, which are normally not directly translatable. For example, it may be advisable to translate *ἄπειθειαν* in 4:6 and *ἄπειθειας* in 4:11 in the same way (e.g. 'because they did not believe' in 4:11 as in 4:6, rather than GNB 'because of their lack of faith'); but there are other places where the structural feature has no semantic content (e.g. *βλέπετε* . . . *μῆποτε*, 3:12; *βλέπομεν*, 3:19), and the translation must therefore normally be quite different.

The wider implication is that a coherent understanding of Hebrews, as of any other text, involves making distinctions as well as recognizing relationships: understanding does not involve assimilating all the data to one another in an amorphous mass. If there is to be assimilation, if the principle of 'anticipation of completeness' continues to operate, it must be at a higher or deeper level: in common language, what the writer says, and the literary skill with which he says it, contribute to a common purpose.

It is in the definition of this purpose that the principle finds its third application. Linguists apply, most commonly to individual clauses or sentences, a distinction between 'old' and 'new' information<sup>18</sup> which may be applied also, with some modification, to higher levels of discourse. If a text contains no new information, it will normally<sup>19</sup> have no communicative function, in the sense that the reader or hearer will soon recognize the fact and switch off his attention. If, at the other extreme, a text contains no old information (no semantic overlap with earlier sentences), and no assumed information (no semantic overlap with the intended receptor's previous knowledge and experience), then the text will have no communicative function for the opposite reason that it will be unintelligible. Communication depends to a very great degree on the complex and delicate balance and interplay between the old and the new.

This principle is a most productive one in the exegesis of a document such as Hebrews.

Firstly, it offers a useful frame in which to evaluate the clues to significance provided by study of Hebrews' literary structure, and thus to transcend without abolishing the distinction between sense and form on which we commented above. Every language, for example, has its own ways of conveying emphasis, and the author of Hebrews uses skilfully (and distinctively) the resources of NT Greek in this as in other respects. Commentators remark on his sparing use of the name *Ἰησοῦς* at climactic points; Vanhoye sees in the occurrence of *Χριστός* in 9:24 the very centre of the whole epistle. Now emphasis does not always indicate new information; but the careful exegete will note indications of emphasis, and ask himself *why* this or that word or phrase has been emphasized, and what is its place in the development of the thought, within the sentence or over a longer span.



The distinction between old and new information may be extended in another way also. A great deal of attention is rightly paid to the study of possible influences on the formulation of a document such as Hebrews. How far, and in what ways, was it influenced by the OT? by Philo? by Qumran? by pre-gnostic currents? The example of Philo is of particular interest. There is widespread agreement that the OT (and the continuing tradition of its exegesis) is the primary literary<sup>20</sup> influence on Hebrews, and a growing reaction against earlier exaggerations of Qumran-Essene and pre-gnostic influences. Opinion regarding the possible influence of Philo on Hebrews is more evenly divided.

The monumental work of R. Williamson<sup>21</sup> notwithstanding, the verbal echoes of Philo in Hebrews remain as striking as the differences of thought between the two writers. The apparently conflicting facts are perhaps best held together on the assumption that the writer to the Hebrews read Philo with the same selective understanding as Clement was later to read Hebrews. A filtering process was at work, similar *mutatis mutandis* to the process whereby a non-western people may select and develop certain aspects of western civilization (including a western presentation of Christianity) to the exclusion of others.

Once this process is detected, one may then seek to identify the factor which limits more complete understanding or assimilation, and whether the factor is, in this wider sense, 'new' or 'old', creative (like Christianity for the author of Hebrews) or reactionary (like Clement's attempt to re-establish a form of Jewish sacerdotalism within the Christian church). It is not necessary, with Williamson, to deny any Philonic influence on Hebrews to agree that the heart of Hebrews' message is not Philonic but Christian. That negative conclusion is a necessary step on the road to a positive understanding of what Hebrews' distinctive message is.

## Content

A full statement of that message, or even a full survey of current discussion of the main problems in understanding that message, necessarily lies beyond the scope of a brief article. It may, however, be helpful to suggest ways in which the pre-understanding of a reader standing in a particular exegetical tradition, and the 'anticipation of completion' of any reader, may influence his decisions on particular issues. Three such questions among others<sup>22</sup> may be mentioned: (1) the pre-existence issue in Hebrews 1; (2) the nature of Hebrews' (vertical and horizontal) dualism; and (3) Hebrews' teaching about apostasy.

### (1) Pre-existence in Hebrews 1.

That *δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας* (1:2), '[the Son], through whom [God the Father] made the worlds' (less probably, 'the ages'), assumes the Son's pre-existence at the time of creation is surely one of the hard facts of exegesis. The doctrine is assumed, not stated; this feature of what we might consider a high, developed Christology is treated by the author as part of the stock of 'old information', familiar teaching, which he and his readers share. He does not need to develop or defend it, as he will later defend his more original teaching about Jesus' high priesthood, or as in the

present context he is stating and developing teaching about Christ's exaltation. The reference to Christ's role in creation appears to be thrown in, in an unexpected position, almost as an afterthought – even though, in terms of the formal structure of the passage, it may be part of a highly wrought chiasmus.<sup>23</sup> Uncertainty remains on a number of secondary issues, such as the significance of 'today I have begotten you' in 1:5, or the construction and meaning of the introduction to the quotation in 1:6. But to deny any reference to Christ's pre-existence in 1:2 requires in the reader a negative prejudice amounting to invincible ignorance. The reader who, approaching this text with an open mind, accepts that its writer, and probably his readers, believed that Christ was present and active in the creation of the universe, will find the same belief reflected in such texts as Jn. 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6 and Col. 1:16. The reader may thus be encouraged, tentatively and without forced harmonization, to 'anticipate completion' of a more far-reaching kind in the teaching of the NT as a whole.<sup>24</sup>

### (2) Hebrews' dualism

'Dualism' in this context refers to an aspect of Hebrews' view of the world, namely the distinction between heaven and earth. I have argued elsewhere<sup>25</sup> that the author of Hebrews works with two types of spatial language: one vertical, perhaps largely traditional, which presupposes but does not describe in detail an intermediate sphere (as in Philo) populated by angels;<sup>26</sup> the other horizontal, owing more to the author's own reflection, used primarily in speaking of Christ's sacrifice, and making no reference to an intermediate sphere. At the end of the day, it is difficult to be sure whether this argument is unduly influenced by the presupposition that Philo contributes little to Hebrews' theology (as distinct from his language), or whether it provides evidence to support or confirm that presupposition. In other words, is this hermeneutical circle vicious or virtuous? A full answer requires the consideration of a much wider range of data; and even then, opinions may differ and conclusions be less than final. The question of Hebrews' dualism opens out onto the wider problem of the relative strength of biblical and extra-biblical influences on the writer. On this, I can only state a working hypothesis which has tended to harden into a conviction: namely, that when all due allowance has been made for the penetration of Hellenistic ideas and practices into (especially diaspora) Judaism,<sup>27</sup> the author of Hebrews remains essentially a man of one book, and that book the Bible.<sup>28</sup>

### (3) Hebrews' teaching about apostasy

There are two main aspects of this question: first, what does Hebrews' teaching about apostasy (6:4-6; cf. 10:26f.; 12:16f.) mean? and second, what form of apostasy does the author fear for (some of) his readers?

To take the second, relatively simpler, question first, there has been much discussion about whether Hebrews was written to warn the readers against falling back into Judaism, to incite them to world mission, to uphold the absoluteness of Christianity, or to combat some specific heresy.<sup>29</sup> The more specific the attempts to define Hebrews' adversaries, the less convincing tend to be the arguments, perhaps

because Hebrews is essentially a pastoral, not a polemical, writing. Even if reference to a specific group of adversaries is left out of account, Hebrews describes the danger to the readers' faith in less detail than, for example, in Paul's attacks on the righteousness of works. Nowhere does the writer of Hebrews leave his readers any room for the hope that, if they abandon faith in Christ, they may find, so to speak, a fallback position in their former (in particular, Jewish) beliefs and practices. Christ has made the old covenant old (8:13), so that there is now nowhere else to go. To abandon Christ, or to accord him anything but the highest place in the universe, is not to adopt an alternative religious option, but simply 'to fall away from the living God' (3:12). The author's stance, the position which he commends to his readers, is that which Simon Peter expressed as a rhetorical question: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life' (Jn. 6:68).

An answer to the question of what Hebrews' teaching on apostasy means depends partly on the solution of a number of detailed exegetical questions. For example, for whom is it 'impossible' (6:4)? Does *παραπεσόντας* in 6:6 imply that, in the author's view, some had in fact committed apostasy? How should one translate *ἀνασταυρῶντας* in 6:6, and the following *ἐαυτοῖς*? These are legitimate and important questions which, however, exceed the scope of this article. In reading some treatments of the problem, however, one is conscious of a hidden, illegitimate question: Does the writer of Hebrews really mean what he says? In hermeneutical terms, the question points to a pathological condition, and as such deserves not so much a direct answer as a sensitive treatment of the condition of which it is a symptom.<sup>30</sup> The condition is one in which the exegete feels his 'anticipation of completion' to be under threat, either because he finds in these hard passages of Hebrews teaching which has no exact parallel in the NT,<sup>31</sup> or which appears to conflict with other NT teaching; or, more generally, because it conflicts with his understanding of the nature of God as revealed in Christ; or, in the most general sense, because it conflicts with his anticipation that the purpose of God will itself not stop short of completion.

There are several possible resolutions of this agonizing tension, some more satisfying than others, though none, perhaps, entirely so. First, one may abandon the struggle, and relegate Hebrews (largely because of its teaching on apostasy) to a place on the edge of the canon (Luther) or entirely outside it,<sup>32</sup> a quasi-Marcionite procedure which tends to create as many problems as it solves. Second, one may lower one's expectation of consistency within the NT to a level which allows within it unresolved tensions regarding the fate of apostates; this procedure tends to lead, at best, to the acceptance of an area of agnosticism, even on matters on which the NT does have something to say; and, at worst, to a lowering of the authority of the NT itself. Third, one may attempt a fresh anticipation of completion by relating these negative aspects of Hebrews' teaching to the author's overriding positive emphasis on the supremacy of Christ and the finality of his sacrifice. May the writer, in the last analysis, not be saying: 'I can see nothing more that God can do, beyond what he has done in Christ; I can therefore see no hope for those who abandon him'? Or is even this a watering down of the writer's stern *ἀδύνατον*?

<sup>1</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 3rd ed., 1972), p. 278; E.T. *Truth and Method* (London, 1975), p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> For surveys of scholarship on Hebrews, see E. Grässer, 'Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963', in *Theologische Rundschau* 30 (1964), pp. 138-236; G. W. Buchanan, 'The Present State of Scholarship on Hebrews' in J. Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults* (Festschrift Morton Smith, Leiden, 1975), 1, pp. 299-330; J. C. McCullough, 'Some Recent Developments in Research on the Epistle to the Hebrews', in *Irish Biblical Studies* 2/1980, pp. 141-165; 1/1981, pp. 28-46; and H. Feld, *Der Hebräerbrief* (Darmstadt, 1985), pp. 1-102. For bibliographies, see C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris, 1952), 1, pp. 379-407; 'Paul. Épître aux Hébreux', in *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* VII (Paris, 1962), cols. 272-9; *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Sources Bibliques, Paris, 1977), pp. 44-54; H. Feld, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-141.

<sup>3</sup> Probably not 'her', as Harnack brilliantly argued ('Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes', *ZNTW* 1 (1900), pp. 16-41); the masculine participle in 11:32 is difficult to explain away. Generally, however, in this article, masculine pronouns include both genders wherever the context permits.

<sup>4</sup> Fortunately Hebrews is not beset by the problem of pseudonymity: it is a strictly anonymous writing, as far as the oldest manuscript tradition is concerned.

<sup>5</sup> There is an analogy with the Claremont Profile Method for grouping NT MSS.

<sup>6</sup> Notably 1 Cor. 3:4-9, 21-23.

<sup>7</sup> London, 1939.

<sup>8</sup> An unpublished thesis of 1981 which develops independently a hypothesis originally proposed in A. M. Dubarle, 'Rédacteur et destinataires de l'Épître aux Hébreux', *RB* 48 (1939), pp. 506-529.

<sup>9</sup> London, 1976.

<sup>10</sup> Robinson's arguments for an earlier date for 1 Clement have not been generally accepted; see A. Lowth in *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers* (Harmondsworth, 2nd ed., 1987), p. 20. Nor has the contention of A. Mees, 'Die Hohepriester-Theologie des Hebräerbriefes im Vergleich mit dem Ersten Clemensbrief', *BZ* 22 (1978), pp. 115-122 and others, that Hebrews and 1 Clement depend on a common source; see P. Ellingworth, 'Hebrews and 1 Clement: Literary Dependence or Common Tradition?', *BZ* 23 (1979), pp. 292-299; H. Braun, *An die Hebräer* (Tübingen, 1984), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Except A. Strobel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Tübingen, 1975), p. 83.

<sup>12</sup> This argument is generally accepted by H. Feld, *Der Hebräerbrief* (Darmstadt, 1985), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> See 5:14; 8:3-5; 9:6f.; 10:1, present tenses in such passages being understood as timeless.

<sup>14</sup> The qualification is necessary because one cannot prove a negative. It is an astonishing fact that Jane Austen never refers to the Napoleonic wars; but the analogy cannot be pressed, since Hebrews is concerned with worship, but Jane Austen is not concerned with war.

<sup>15</sup> Especially *La Structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (Bruges and Paris, 1963; 2nd ed. 1976). L. L. Neeley's 'A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews', *OPTAT (Occasional Papers in Translation and Textlinguistics)* 3-4 (September 1987), pp. 1-146, is a linguistic approach which suffers from insufficient attention to earlier studies of the literary structure of Hebrews.

<sup>16</sup> *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris, 1915); *ET Course in General Linguistics* (New York, 1959).

<sup>17</sup> A. Dussaut, *Synopse structurale de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris, 1980).

<sup>18</sup> W. A. Chafe, *Meaning and the Structure of Language* (Chicago and London, 1970), ch. 15. Other linguists use different terms, such as 'theme' and 'rheme'.

<sup>19</sup> There are borderline cases such as formalized greetings and liturgical formulae.

<sup>20</sup> This assumes that the Christian tradition reached the author in a predominantly oral form.

<sup>21</sup> *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden, 1970). This was largely a reply to C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris, 1952), 1, pp. 39-91. At the time of writing, Williamson's 1988 *SNTS* paper reconsidering this issue is not available.

<sup>22</sup> The writer is indebted to the editor for setting these questions.

<sup>23</sup> A. Vanhoye, 'Christologia a qua initium sumit epistola ad Hebraeos (Hebr. 1:2b, 3, 4)', in *Verbum Domini* 43 (1965), pp. 3-14, 49-61, esp. 10-14.

<sup>24</sup> Or even the Greek Bible, if Wisdom 1:7 is seen as influencing the formulation of some of the NT texts just mentioned.

<sup>25</sup> P. Ellingworth, 'Jesus and the Universe in Hebrews', *Evangelical Quarterly* LVIII, 4 (October 1986), pp. 337-350.

<sup>26</sup> L. K. K. Dey, *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews* (Missoula, Montana, 1975).

<sup>27</sup> M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (2 vols., London and Philadelphia, 1974).

<sup>28</sup> The case for extra-biblical influence on Hebrews has been most influentially expressed by E. Käsemann in *Das wandernde Gottes-*

*volk* (1939, 4th ed. 1961); ET *The Wandering People of God* (Minneapolis, 1984).

<sup>29</sup> D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (London, 1961-62; 3rd edn. 1970), pp. 703-710, followed by H. Feld, *Der Hebräerbrief*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>30</sup> One is reminded of the many occasions on which Jesus 'answered' one question with another.

<sup>31</sup> Though there are partial parallels with such passages as Mk. 14:50, 66-72; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Acts 5:3f.; cf. H. Braun, *An die Hebräer* (Tübingen, 1984), pp. 170-173.

<sup>32</sup> J. C. Fenton, 'The Argument in Hebrews', in E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Evangelica* Vol. VII (Berlin, 1982), pp. 175-181.

# Truth, myth and incarnation

Melvin Tinker

*We are glad for this further contribution to Themelios from the Anglican chaplain at the University of Keele. Many readers will recall his article a year ago on 'The priority of Jesus: a look at the place of Jesus' teaching and example in Christian ethics'.*

## Introduction

It is now some ten years since the controversial volume *The Myth of God Incarnate*<sup>1</sup> entered the theological scene, creating something of a major storm the likes of which had not been seen since *Honest to God* in the early '60s. In the wake of the furor which followed, a wealth of literature was generated, the subject matter of which tended to revolve around some of the key issues raised by Wiles, Hick, Cupitt *et al.* Hard on the heels of *Myth* came another collection of essays entitled *The Truth of God Incarnate*.<sup>2</sup> This was followed by *Incarnation and Myth - The Debate Continued*<sup>3</sup> which formed the substance of a colloquy between some of the authors of *Myth* and others of a more orthodox persuasion. In the meantime a steady stream of articles and books have flowed from the pens of scholars showing that the Christological/Incarnational debate is still very much on the theological agenda.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, during the decade which has elapsed since the writing of the *Myth of God Incarnate*, many of the original contributors have moved on in their positions. John Hick no longer sees 'Christianity at the Centre' (the title of an earlier book) but prefers to speak of the 'Centre of Christianity',<sup>5</sup> with the Christian religion being viewed as just one amongst many lying on the edge of a universe of faiths. Michael Goulder, feeling the tension between his personal convictions and those formally held by the Church of England in which he was an ordained priest, decided to resign his Anglican orders. Perhaps the most significant shift has been in the thinking of Don Cupitt, who has taken leave of God altogether, at least in so far as God has been traditionally conceived by Christians down the ages, so much so that on one television programme the renowned atheist A. J. Ayer claimed Cupitt as one of his own!

Such developments in themselves provide a clear indication of the central place incarnation doctrine has in Christian belief, such that a reinterpretation of this necessitates a thoroughgoing revision of all the other major strands of the faith if some sort of coherence and consistency is to be achieved.

For example, it has long been recognized<sup>6</sup> in Christian theology that questions concerning the 'who' of Jesus are integrally related to questions about the 'what' of Jesus, *i.e.* what he has achieved by way of the cross (function) cannot be divorced from who he is in his person (identity). Accordingly, a shift in one's conception of Christology will mean a necessary shift in one's understanding of soteriology, and vice versa. But it does not end there, for there will be other knock-on effects in the related areas of revelation, hamatology (nature of sin) and the uniqueness or otherwise of the Christian faith in relation to other religions. That such matters are still 'alive' is further indicated by the more recent concern over what has become known as the 'Durham Affair'.

The purpose of this article is not to retrace old ground but to stand back and take another look at some of the claims of the mythographers to see just how viable their case really is. Instead of approaching the subject head on, we shall take a more indirect route via a consideration of a trilogy of concepts which lie at the heart of the debate, namely those of truth, myth and incarnation. Having examined each of these in turn, we shall then try and assess one major attempt at bringing the three together as made by one of the representatives of the *Myth* school, John Hick.

## Truth

We begin with the notion of 'truth'. What do we in fact mean when we say that such and such a thing is true? Even a moment's reflection will reveal that no clear-cut universal answer can be given, for whatever answer might be proposed, it will largely depend upon what it is we are referring to and the given context in which it occurs. For

example, we might want to make the claim that 'This man is true', by which we mean that he is an honest and reliable fellow and can be counted on without question. This obviously carries a different sense to the claim that ' $2 + 2 = 4$  is true'. Here it is being maintained that given the basic axioms of mathematics, the relation between the numbers 2 and 2 are such that when added together they always yield the answer '4'. Following this through, even a cursory consideration of the way the notion of truth functions within different disciplines underscores the fact that the sense of the term varies. A literary critic may claim that certain of Shelley's poems are 'true', a claim which has quite a different resonance to the physicist's contention that Einstein's theory of relativity is 'true'. Therefore J. R. Lucas is quite correct when he writes, 'There is no single criterion of truth. Different disciplines have different criteria, often unspecified, sometimes where specified, liable to conflict'.<sup>7</sup>

The plurality involved in establishing criteria for assessing a truth claim can be illustrated by way of three simple examples. The proposition that 'All bachelors are male' is of the order of an analytical statement and as such is necessarily true since the idea of 'bachelorhood' by definition entails the notion of 'maleness' and to deny the latter would involve a logical contradiction. Here the veracity of such claims can be determined by formally examining the relation between the concepts involved.

By way of contrast, the claim that 'It is raining' requires a different approach. Unlike the former example, this statement is not *necessarily* true, but is dependent upon its correspondence with certain facts. As such it is known as a 'synthetic statement'. In this case it is relatively easy to establish the veracity of the truth claim – one simply goes outside to look and the coincidence of dark clouds and falling water droplets should convince any reasonable person of its truth status.

Our third example is the claim 'My wife loves me', which although belonging to the same class as the previous statement is a little more tricky to handle. The husband who makes the claim might feel justified in doing so on the grounds of a cumulation of evidence – e.g. the display of loving actions, faithfulness, verbal reassurances and so on. But someone might wish to tighten up this whole approach by introducing an element of 'falsification', by asking what circumstances would count *against* the original claim, thus rendering it false? Supposing for instance that the wife walks out on her husband, would this mean that the husband's original claim was untrue? Not necessarily, for supposing that the husband had not been paying enough attention to his wife recently, such action may be a calculated means of jolting him into mending his ways and so far from falsifying the husband's earlier claim, it becomes supporting evidence in its favour.

This brief discussion of different truth claims highlights for us a very important principle, namely that when it comes to human affairs and interaction between persons, determining what is 'true' can often be a complex, intuitive and subtle business. Indeed, there is every reason to suppose that this equally applies to scientific, historical and metaphysical pursuits. Thus going beyond Lucas, it might be more appropriate to view language as an interconnecting network

with a wide range of truth claims aligned along a spectrum, with those of a formal analytical nature at one end, and those open to empirical sense verification at the other, with the majority of others lying somewhere in between, the truth value of which is ascertained by a mixture of reason, observation and inference. Within the personal sphere of activity, all of these factors come into play in determining what is the case, and yet it is important that allowance is made for that which is inherent in all human interaction, namely a degree of 'opacity' or 'mystery'. Even when we disclose something of ourselves to another person, we at the same time hide something of ourselves. The mysterious (although not irrational) element and all the ambiguities that it can produce is vital for personal interaction since it elicits and establishes that which is integral to such interaction, namely trust.

All of this has direct bearing upon our present discussion, for it should sound a note of caution to those who would dismiss such talk about incarnation as 'meaningless' on the basis of applying too narrowly defined, and thus inappropriate, criteria. If the basic analogy of God's relation to the world and his activity in that world is that of interaction between persons, then just as allowance is made for ambiguity and imprecision in the human domain, one would expect at least a similar degree of tolerance in the divine. Far from this being a plea for a new form of obscurantism, it is a passionate enjoiner that we take seriously the personal analogy between divine and human activity and recognize the useful insights it can yield in matters of doctrine as well as setting definite limits. This is not to say of course that one begins with the human and works towards an understanding of the divine (the weakness of natural theology), but that this is something which is *given* in God's special revelation in Scripture and so should be taken seriously.

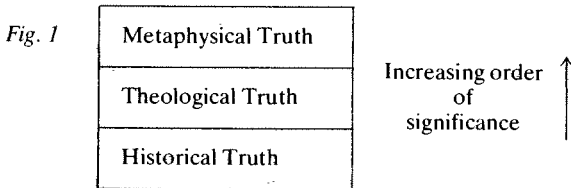
To summarize what has been said so far: the notion of truth is as varied as are the means of establishing it. As well as paying close attention to the context in which the concept functions, we also need to note the way the concept is used. Here we may borrow a term from Wittgenstein and say that the notion of truth cannot be considered in isolation from the particular 'language game' in which it operates. Accordingly, some philosophers have designated the concept of truth as being 'polymorphous'. Anthony Thiselton ably demonstrates that the biblical data itself bear this out in identifying at least six different senses associated with the word according to context and function.<sup>8</sup>

Although it is possible with some qualification to speak of truths varying according to context or language game, there must be certain features or 'family resemblances' between them which provide some sort of universal point of reference, otherwise it would not be possible to associate 'truth' in one field with that in another. At least four such features will be suggested here. In the first place, to claim that we know the truth amounts to maintaining that we can see things as they really are without *substantial* distortion or concealment. One may go so far as to claim that one has grasped the essence of a thing, and so come close to the Greek etymological root for truth – *altheia* – a state of unhiddenness. In the second place, truth is contextual in that no truth claim can be considered independently of the wider frame-

work of ideas of which it is a part. Thus the claim that 'God is love' by itself means very little. It begs the immediate question, 'Which God are we speaking of?' Is it that of Hinduism, Islam or the Judaeo-Christian tradition? What is more, whatever meaning is thought to be conveyed by this statement will in part be dependent upon purported divine *action*, for the notion of 'love' cannot be conceived in the abstract, but only in relation to events. Thus straight away one is drawn into a consideration of a constellation of other beliefs arising out of a desire to assess the truth status of one statement. Thirdly, we would propose that although contextual, truth is universal. This means that if Jesus is both God and man, he remains so regardless of culture or background beliefs. Finally, the actual perception of truth inevitably contains a personal element and as such it is something which makes its claim upon us for recognition. Although personal, truth is not subjective, the product of whim or fancy. In this way truth stands over and above us (being objective), sometimes coming home to us with considerable force such that we exclaim 'it hit me between the eyes' or 'the penny dropped'.

These four features of truth converge in the traditional Christian claim that in the person of Jesus and the events surrounding his life, death and resurrection, God's truth has been fully and finally manifest (Jn. 14:6; Heb. 1:2). The doctrine of the incarnation is in part an attempt to express that conviction conceptually – not simply that in Christ we have an expression of 'truth' in an abstract way, but that he is very God who is the Truth. As such the doctrine acts as an organizing principle with explanatory power. But as we shall see below, lying at the heart of the *Myth* debate is the challenge that such an understanding is both misplaced and outmoded, requiring a radical overhaul. Before we turn to this challenge, however, we would do well to look at the way truth at one level can provide the basis for development at a higher level.

In a highly stimulating paper, John Macquarrie<sup>9</sup> draws attention to three levels of truth constitutive in theological investigation. These are: historical truth, theological truth, and metaphysical truth. Macquarrie proposes that there is a progression in significance as one proceeds from one level to another. This means that theological truth builds upon historical truth, so metaphysical truth is an outworking of the theological. Although Macquarrie himself does not suggest it, the relations between the three levels tend to be conceived like three stories in a building, thus:

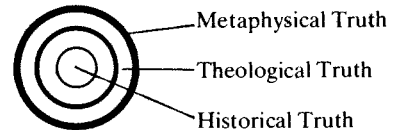


The problem with this model is that it creates the impression that as one moves from a lower level to a higher level, the lower is left behind and is devoid of further relevance. Or to change the metaphor slightly, it can be likened to the different stages of a rocket: once the upper stages have been

launched into orbit, the lower stages can be jettisoned as superfluous.

One suspects that something like this is occurring in the writings of those who would advocate a more existential approach to theology. A much more satisfactory way of conceiving the relations between the historical, theological and metaphysical would be as a series of concentric rings or spheres, with the historical elements providing the inner core which is taken up into, and transcended by, the theological and metaphysical, thus:

Fig. 2



This representation safeguards the essentially historical nature of Christianity which has at its centre an historical person and particular events, providing not only 'raw' material for theological and metaphysical reflection, but checks and controls as well. It should be pointed out, however, that the actual relations are more subtle and complex than the diagram suggests since metaphysical presuppositions and beliefs will to some extent 'colour' one's view of the 'historical', as well as the 'historical' shaping the 'metaphysical'. Nevertheless, in serving to underscore the main features of interdependence between the three levels of truth, the above model provides a useful aid.

In speaking of historical truth, we are referring to what happened. The procedure adopted in order to ascertain this will involve some measure of sifting through the available evidence and attempting some sort of reconstruction. Theological truth arises out of a careful reflection upon that historical core, drawing out the significance in terms of God and man.

Metaphysical truth is the result of further exploration into the philosophical and conceptual implications of what is said to have occurred as having theological significance. To a large extent it is this process which underlies the formulation of the great creeds, themselves having been weaved within a metaphysical matrix. But in terms of language, the creeds contain a fine mixture of statements which are historical ('crucified under Pontius Pilate'), theological ('died for our sins') and metaphysical ('being of one substance – *homoousios* – with the Father'). But are any of the credal formulations to be considered 'mythical'? Traditionally, much theological language, including incarnational language, has been taken as *factual*, *informative* (telling us about something) and *explanatory* (unpacking the significance). But some, like John Hick, are of the opinion that very early on in the church's history, the category mistake was made of taking certain statements as explanatory in nature (akin to scientific hypotheses) when they should have been comprehended mythically. The upshot of this position is that while the idea of the incarnation might be mythically true, it is not literally true (*i.e.* factually true). Whether such a contention can be shown to have any solid foundation will in

part be determined by one's understanding of what constitutes 'myth', and it is to a consideration of this question that we now turn.

### Myth

One of the major criticisms levelled at the book *The Myth of God Incarnate* is the way its different contributors tended to use the term 'myth' in a plurality of ways often without specifying the sense in which the term was actually being used. Invariably this led to some confusion and obscurity of thought which a book of such a highly provocative nature could have well done without. The reader who is perhaps entering this area of debate for the first time would be well advised to read Maurice Wiles' helpful paper, 'Myth in Theology',<sup>10</sup> in which he discusses several different usages of the concept 'myth'. This would alert the unsuspecting student to the ways in which this term can be used in so slippery and evasive a manner.

Our starting point however will be George Caird's work in *Language, Imagery and the Bible*<sup>11</sup> in which he undertakes a most illuminating analysis of the various categories of myth in relation to different disciplines. In so doing, he clears away a lot of the fog which tends to bedevil most discussions of the subject. He begins by pointing out that 'myth' is used in two general senses. In common parlance, a myth is something which is essentially untrue and is thus a synonym for falsehood. Indeed, this appears to be the way the NT writers handle the word (cf. 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; Tit. 1:14). It would not be wide of the mark to suggest that it was this association that was in the minds of many when the notorious book hit the headlines and so was seen as an outright denial of the Christian faith. (This suspicion is corroborated by the appearance of the counter-book – *The Truth of God Incarnate*.) In theological circles however, the term has become linked with a movement which uses it as an overarching concept embracing all such 'God-Talk'. The name which is best known in this context is that of Rudolph Bultmann who advocated a programme of 'demythologization' in order to make the 'gospel' intelligible to modern man. This is what Bultmann has to say on the matter: 'Mythology is the use of imagery to express the other-worldly in terms of this world and the divine in terms of human life, the other side in terms of this side'.<sup>12</sup> In effect what Bultmann is claiming is that myth is a theological use of metaphor, a non-literal way of speaking. Caird on the other hand makes out a convincing case that as far as the Bible is concerned, where myth is used it is a *specialized* form of metaphor.

According to Caird, this special literary class of myth is capable of fulfilling a number of different functions. It may be performative – able to change things, possibly leading people to a deeper sense of commitment. It may be evocative – appealing to the imagination through that which is impressive, mysterious, sublime. Myth may have a cohesive effect, binding a group together by creating a sense of identity through an inherited tradition. But myth may also be referential, pointing to something beyond itself – an ontological aspect of reality. Caird therefore likens myth to a lens whereby the user in effect says to his audience, 'Here is a lens which has helped me understand the world in which we live and the way God relates to it; look through it yourself and see what I have seen'. Or to change the imagery, myth

may be compared to a cartoon. At one level, a cartoon may be more representative of the character of a person or the hidden significance of a situation than a photograph. Of course, if it is a literal representation which is sought, then a photograph should do the trick, but if it is some underlying aspect of reality that is sought, then a sketch or cartoon might be more appropriate.

Caird cites what he considers to be an unambiguous example of myth in the Bible – Isaiah 14:12-15 – where the prophet makes use of a story about the planet known to us as Venus, but which the Hebrews would have called 'Heylel' – 'Bright Shiner' or 'son of the dawn'. According to the Babylonian myth, Heylel aspired to make himself King by scaling the mountain ramparts of the heavenly city, only to be vanquished by the all-conquering sun. Within the biblical context however, the myth is taken and reapplied to a different referent and so given a different sense, namely the king of Babylon. He like Heylel in the story had aspirations for world dominion and he too would meet with a similar fate, but in his case it is the one true God Yahweh who will bring about his downfall. In this way, Isaiah like any good preacher is drawing upon stories common at the time and giving them a spiritual edge and application and so bringing the point home in an evocative manner.

Now, given that there is some warrant for seeing the Bible as using myth in the way outlined above, is there any justification for claiming that the doctrine of the incarnation functions in the same way? This brings us to our final analysis in our trilogy – the use of the concept 'incarnation'.

### Incarnation

The English word 'incarnate' can function either as an adjective or as a verb. Verbally, it literally means to 'render incarnate' or to 'embody in flesh'. Söderblom defines it as follows: 'The term incarnation is applied to the act of a divine or supernatural being in assuming the form of a man or animal and continuing to live in that form upon earth'.<sup>13</sup> However, both this definition and the verb 'incarnation' (Latin *incarnatio*) can be misleading, for they almost imply an entering *into* a man (*incarnation* – Greek *ensarkosis*), thus amounting to little more than a form of divine possession. Surely Professor Moule<sup>14</sup> is right when he suggests, somewhat guardedly, that it would be more in line with the traditional understanding of the incarnation to speak of 'carnation' or *sarkosis* – God *becoming* man while not ceasing to be divine.

However, in Christian circles the term 'incarnate' is rarely used as a verb. Instead it is the adjectival form which is predominant, acting as a sort of 'title' – 'Jesus – God Incarnate'. Even so, the verbal idea is the one which underlies this usage and is the most pertinent to our discussion.

Upon closer inspection, both the denotation and connotation of the term 'incarnation' reveals something rather interesting. In speaking of divine action, in the main we have to resort to analogy, usually the sort of personal analogies mentioned earlier in the article. Accordingly, God can be spoken of as 'revealing', 'saving', 'forgiving', etc. – activities which are equally found in human affairs, but in this case heavily qualified in relation to the divine. But the concept of 'incarnation' is *not* analogical, it is not something which is to

be found in the sphere of human activity which in some ways has a corresponding aspect in divine activity. This means that ironically, according to Bultmann's own definition of 'myth' given earlier, 'incarnation' falls outside this classification because it is *not* something which is 'common to this side' of experience. Nevertheless, it still might be argued that while 'incarnation' provides an instance where theological language is being used in a way that is strictly speaking not analogical, it still constitutes an elaborate and picturesque way of speaking, one which is akin to figurative speech and so in this sense might be termed 'myth' to distinguish it from factual discourse. This appears to be the position of John Hick, and it is to an assessment of his attempt to provide an account of the relations between truth, myth and incarnation that we now turn.

### Truth, myth and incarnation – John Hick

In his book *God and the Universe of Faiths*,<sup>15</sup> published before *The Myth of God Incarnate*, John Hick defines myth in the following way: '[Myth] is a story which is told but which is not literally true, or an idea or image which is applied to something or someone but which does not literally apply, but which invites a particular attitude in the hearer. The truth of myth is a kind of "practical truth" consisting in the appropriateness of the attitude it evokes – the appropriateness of the attitude to its object which may be an event, a person or set of ideas.'<sup>16</sup> Here Hick distinguishes 'myth' as a story which functions to evoke an 'appropriate attitude' in the hearer (which he believes the incarnation is designed to do) from factual discourse, hypothesis or model. Hick maintains that mythical language is not 'literally true', which presumably means that it cannot be taken as being descriptive or explanatory except in a very oblique sort of way. By way of example, Hick cites the story in Genesis 2 of the fall of man, which he says has this mythical quality of being able to convey a timeless truth common to human experience. In his treatment of the story of the incarnation, Hick places it logically on a par with Genesis 2, pointing out that when in the past the incarnation myth has been taken as being of a theoretical nature, a type of theological hypothesis, this has led to a dead end as well as a morass of logical contradictions. The only viable alternative, according to Hick, is that the story be seen as 'myth'. When that is done, then it functions perfectly well in evoking an appropriate attitude to Jesus as Saviour.

But one may ask, how did it come about, historically speaking, that Jesus of Nazareth, who was clearly human, was eventually conceived by his followers in terms of 'God and Man'? Hick provides an explanation. He suggests that in experience the early followers of Jesus did seem to encounter God in a remarkable way through him and such was the nature of this encounter that their religious experience had to be interpreted in terms of the language of 'ultimates' – a step which occurred within two generations of Jesus' death. The end result of this interpretative process was the application of the ultimate language form, namely to speak of Jesus as God incarnate, which attained its full crystallization at Chalcedon. Thus according to this reconstruction of events, to say that Jesus is 'God incarnate' means no more than that God was encountered in Jesus.

Hick's position is backed up by two other considerations,

one philosophical, the other historical. Philosophically, Hick is of the opinion that incarnational language, if taken 'literally' (*i.e.* as explanatory), is incoherent. It appears to be of the same order as speaking of a 'round square'. Historically Hick, together with many of the other contributors to *Myth*, believes that the amount of reliable historical information that we actually have concerning Jesus is so scanty that it renders it impossible to construct such a lofty doctrine as we find attempted at Chalcedon. This means that if one is working to the model proposed in Fig. 2, then the inner historical core is so insubstantial that the outer layers become very thin indeed. Of course this is of little consequence to Hick for he considers it an error of the greatest magnitude to view the incarnation as 'metaphysical truth' anyway.

This, then, is Hick's basic thesis. But in the light of the foregoing discussion, how convincing is it? We would suggest that it is seriously to be found wanting for the following reasons:

1. Although there is some similarity between Hick's presentation of 'myth' and that put forward by Caird, in that both are a means of 'seeing-as', the function of myth on Hick's view is severely limited. While not denying the possible evocative effect of true myth, surely it amounts to something more than an effective tool producing some kind of 'practical truth' (whatever that might be)? It is not at all clear why 'myth' cannot have some explanatory role, providing some insight into the way things actually *are*. Neither has Hick satisfactorily demonstrated that the doctrine of the incarnation is of the same order as say Isaiah 14 or Genesis 2, rather it is simply *assumed* to be the case or perhaps more to the point it is placed within this category by default on the premise that it *cannot* be of a factual nature, which again is an assumption and is not demonstrated.

2. As William Abraham has argued,<sup>17</sup> it is highly questionable whether there is the inner religious necessity to describe an 'encounter with God' in the language of ultimates as Hick postulates occurred with the followers of Jesus. In the OT there are plenty of examples where God was encountered, especially through the prophets, but there is not the slightest indication that there was an attempt to apply the 'language of ultimates' to such people. When one enquires why this is so, then one comes across one of the most salient features of Judaism, namely its ardent monotheism, which resisted any identification of man with the divine, except in terms of divine action. And yet this is precisely the milieu in which the 'high' Christology began to develop, with the type of language normally reserved for God amongst Jewish monotheists being applied to Jesus (*e.g.* 'author of life' – Acts 3:15; 'Judge of all men' – Acts 10:42; 'Creator' – Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16; identification with Yahweh – Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:10; *cf.* Is. 45:23). Pure religious experience (if there is such a thing) is surely an adequate basis upon which to construct an account for such a development. It is more plausible to postulate a cumulative interaction of factors which were brought to bear upon the early church to look for categories to provide some sort of *explanation* for this remarkable person and the events surrounding his life. Jesus' teaching, his authority, self-understanding, lack of sense of sin, miracles, prophecies, resurrection and ascension and the

giving of the Holy Spirit, when taken together would cry out for some explanation, an organizing principle. Inevitably, the early Christians would have seized upon those categories which were ready to hand, especially those of the Jewish Scriptures in order to apply them to Jesus under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Hick is therefore quite correct in saying that the followers of Jesus would need to search for a language of ultimates to be applied to him, but grossly wide of the mark in suggesting a sufficient cause.

3. Hick's comparison of the incarnation with the fall also leaves much to be desired in that he ignores some very significant *disanalogies* which bring into question a major plank in his thesis. First of all, while it could be maintained that the story of the fall in some way reflects the common experience of man, that cannot be claimed with regard to the story of the incarnation. This is highly specific and does not flow from some general experience. In the second place, the story of the fall is set in antiquity, whereas the story of the incarnation is firmly placed within history, and relatively recent history at that. This fact creates a significant distance between the events related in the NT and their accompanying importance and the world of 'myth'. Adolf Koberle's comment is most apposite at this point: 'The history of salvation that is directly linked to the name of Jesus is fundamentally different from the world of myth. By its very nature myth is without historical context, it describes events of nature that occur and reoccur in cycles'.<sup>18</sup>

4. Hick's main philosophical point is also open to question. Certainly the simple assertion 'Jesus is God' does appear to create the logical inconsistency that Hick describes.<sup>19</sup> But when this is said (and note that it is not a term used in the NT; the nearest we get to it is 'The Word of God', which is later identified with Jesus) it is often as a form of 'theological shorthand'. But surely, the great debates of the past resulting in the sophisticated formulations of the creeds in themselves testify to an awareness of the difficulties involved; hence the painstaking way in which formulations have been arrived at to ensure that such contradictions are avoided. Neither the NT writers nor the early Fathers ever thought that Jesus was God *tout simple*. Nevertheless, the conviction was expressed that although he was not *totum dei* (all that God is without remainder) he was *totus deus* (everything God himself is). Again this was forged out of the experience of Christ, moving towards some conceptualization of Jesus' relation to God within the confines of monotheism. Certainly in so doing the church entered the realms of paradox, stretching human language to the limit, but nothing less than this would be expected if anything like the traditional doctrine of the incarnation is correct.<sup>20</sup> As we saw earlier, why do the mythographers not allow for a greater amount of ambiguity in the realm of the divine as they no doubt do in the sphere of human relations?

5. Following on from this, one might also question Hick's censure that one should not treat the doctrine of the incarnation in a way similar to scientific models, *i.e.* as having explanatory value. If the reply is that it is a myth and myths are not to be treated in that way, then that simply begs the question. What is more, the alleged gulf between the function of 'myths' and scientific hypotheses is perhaps not as great as some suppose. The American philosopher W. V. O. Quine has remarked that 'The myths of Homer's

gods and the myths of scientific objects differ only in degree and not kind'. After all, what are models, but abstract representations of a reality formulated in accordance with the evidential data? Traditionally, the doctrine of the incarnation has been seen in this way and like the scientific models, some of which are antinomies (apparently contradictory), it has proved highly successful as a means of articulating and conceptually grasping something to which the biblical data decisively point, namely that in Jesus, God became man.

6. In our view Hick's historical scepticism is not wholly warranted. The question of the historicity of the Gospels is outside the immediate scope of this discussion and the reader is referred to other works which deal with this.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that without sufficient historical warrants it is difficult to see how the Jesus story can even function as 'myth' in the way Hick suggests. Certainly it might provide a 'good read', maybe being evocative in some way. But what *reasons* can be adduced to convince a person that it should be accepted, even as conveying some general religious truth, which in fact it does not purport to do? The traditional claim is that the story is rooted in actual events, whereas on Hick's account what these events are we do not really know, and so the story functions simply as story, perhaps tugging on the heart strings, but having little, if any, epistemic power to elicit rational acceptance.

What is more, if the amount of historical knowledge about Jesus is as scanty as Hick believes it to be, then why not look to some more recent figure in history about whom we know much more and in whom 'God has been encountered'?

7. It is not true to say, as Hick does, that the language of incarnation was designed to evoke an appropriate attitude towards Jesus. The creeds were written for those who *already* had an attitude of reverence and belief. In some measure they were an attempt to *justify* that attitude rather than to evoke it. The matter of evocation is secondary and consequent upon the primary matter of explanation. If Jesus is *factually* the eternal Son of God, then it is appropriate that I respond to him in worship and gratitude. If he is not, then what is it I am supposed to respond to? On Hick's reckoning such a response is quite misplaced.

8. What one is left with on the basis of Hick's thesis is so vague as to be contentless. What does it *mean* to speak of 'encountering God in Jesus'? Indeed what value is there in speaking of God 'acting' in Jesus? To speak of God acting in Jesus is as helpful as saying that Jones is acting. Unless there is definite specifiable content (which the NT and traditional doctrines provide), such talk is little more than verbal padding. Indeed, one suspects that the ideas of Hick and the other mythographers only gain credence by cashing in on traditional Christian currency which they have declared bankrupt. In other words such views are parasitic upon traditional Christianity and can only survive at the expense of the host doctrines which they are trying to sap of vitality.

### Concluding remarks

While it may be conceded that there is a literary category of 'myth' through which truth might be conveyed, it is not the category most applicable to the doctrine of the incarnation. When this is attempted, as in the case of Hick, the resulting



construct is unable to bear the theological weight placed upon it. Neither is it able to provide as satisfactory an explanation either of the biblical data or the historical and phenomenological factors leading to the formulation of the traditional doctrine of the incarnation. By far the most satisfactory understanding of the function of the doctrine is that it is informative, possessing great explanatory power and operative within the framework of factual discourse.

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

<sup>2</sup> Michael Green (ed.), *The Truth of God Incarnate* (Hodder, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Goulder (ed.), *Incarnation and Myth – The Debate Continued* (SCM, 1979).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. E. Harvey (ed.), *God Incarnate, Story and Belief* (SPCK); D. F. Wells, *The Person of Christ* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott); George Carey, *God Incarnate* (Arena); John Stott, *The Authentic Jesus* (Marshall's); H. H. Rowdon (ed.), *Christ the Lord* (IVP).

<sup>5</sup> John Hick, *The Centre of Christianity* (London, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Martin Kähler: '... without the Cross there is no Christology nor is there any feature in Christology which can escape justifying itself by the Cross', cited in J. Moltmann's *The Crucified God* (SCM, 1975), p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> J. R. Lucas, 'True', *Philosophy* Vol. XLiv (1969), p. 184.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Paternoster, 1980), pp. 411-415.

<sup>9</sup> John Macquarrie, 'Truth in Christology', *God Incarnate, Story and Belief*, pp. 24-33.

<sup>10</sup> Maurice Wiles, 'Myth in Theology', *Myth of God Incarnate*, pp. 148-165.

<sup>11</sup> G. Caird, *Language, Imagery and the Bible* (Duckworth, 1980).

<sup>12</sup> R. Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth* 1 (1953), p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> N. Söderblom, 'Incarnation', in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (T. & T. Clark, 1914).

<sup>14</sup> C. F. D. Moule, 'Three points of Conflict in the Christological Debate', in *Incarnation and Myth – The Debate Continued*, pp. 131-141.

<sup>15</sup> John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (Macmillan, 1973).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167.

<sup>17</sup> William Abraham, *Divine Revelation and the Limits of Historical Criticisms* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 72ff.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Carl Henry (ed.), *Jesus of Nazareth, Saviour and Lord* (Tyndale Press, 1966), p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> For an excellent discussion of this see Richard Sturch's paper, 'Can one say "Jesus is God"?' in *Christ the Lord*, p. 326.

<sup>20</sup> For a more recent and thoroughly readable presentation of this line of thought see Alister McGrath's *Understanding Jesus* (Kingsway, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. I. H. Marshall, *I Believe in the Historical Jesus* (Hodder); D. Wenham, R. France and C. Blomberg (eds), *Gospel Perspectives I-VI* (JSOT Press).

## The alien according to the Torah

Georges Chawkat Moucary

*This article was first published in French in the magazine Ichthus (no. 132, 1985, pp. 3-10). It has been translated by Joye Smith, and is reproduced by kind permission. The author, who grew up in Syria and then studied Christian and Islamic theology in France, is now on the IFES staff in France.*

*The article is not a technical OT study, but rather an attempt to bring a broad sweep of OT teaching to bear on a sensitive issue that is of importance in most countries of the world. The original French article led to correspondence and an exchange of views in Ichthus no. 134 (1986), pp. 31-38. Ichthus is obtainable from 2 rue Antoine Pons, 13004 Marseilles, France.*

Job, Rahab,<sup>1</sup> Ruth and Naaman<sup>2</sup> were all foreigners whose lives became in some way intimately involved in the history of Israel. Yet these two men and two women, as outstanding as they were, represented only a small portion of the foreign population within the borders of Israel that numbered, at the time of Solomon, 153,600 people.<sup>3</sup> Compared with the total Israelite population at that time, this was an impressive number of aliens.

What was the status of the foreigner in Israel? How was the native population to view them? What meaning did their presence have for Israel? What future was promised them by the prophets, both the alien residing in Israel as well as all foreigners, including those living in their far-distant homelands?<sup>4</sup> Such are the questions we must ask if we are genuinely concerned by what is happening today in Israel

between Israelis and Palestinians or, for that matter, between aliens and natives in any part of the world.

### A question of vocabulary

First, the Torah speaks of differing types of foreigners, employing a precise vocabulary to distinguish those aliens established in Israel from those living outside Israel. Those within Israel are *either* (1) *gēr*: from the verb *gūr*, meaning to live as a foreigner in a country not one's own; it often follows the noun as if to emphasize the nature of the foreigner's life in Israel.<sup>5</sup> In this article the word will be translated 'alien' or 'immigrant'; or (2) *tōšāb*: from the verb *yāšāb*, which means to sojourn in a country that is not one's own. Sometimes this word is followed by the verb *gūr*, apparently for the same purpose.<sup>6</sup> We will translate it 'resident' or 'guest'. *Gēr* and *tōšāb* have similar meanings and are associated in many passages.<sup>7</sup>

Those living outside Israel are *either* (3) *nēkār* and *nokrī*: two nominal adjectives derived from the same root, designating the true foreigner, one who lives in his own land.<sup>8</sup> This will be translated as 'foreigner'; or (4) *zūr*: a term that also designates the foreigner settled in his own land. This will be translated as 'stranger' or 'unknown'.

Because of the similarity of *nēkār* and *zūr* they are associated in many texts.<sup>9</sup> Apart from certain instances where they take on a specific meaning,<sup>10</sup> these terms may describe individuals,<sup>11</sup> though more often they refer to

foreign peoples in a relation of conflict with Israel. In such a context, 'foreigners' become imbued with antagonistic qualities: proud, menacing, pagan, threatening.<sup>12</sup>

In order to understand what the Torah has to say in regard to foreigners, it is essential to bear in mind the differing terminology and in particular the distinction made between those living in Israel and those living outside.

### **The example of Abraham**

The history of Israel begins with God calling Abraham to leave his native country for a country unknown to him. God's call thus takes on the colour of exile.<sup>13</sup>

Abraham arrives in the land of Canaan, a land that God promises to his descendants.<sup>14</sup> A severe famine strikes, forcing Abraham to go into Egypt, where he lives for a while.<sup>15</sup> He then returns to Canaan and God makes a covenant with him, announcing that his descendants will be aliens in a foreign land.<sup>16</sup> Abraham then moves on to live for a time in Gerar, in the south of the country.<sup>17</sup> There he seals a pact of peace with Abimelech, king of the Philistines.<sup>18</sup> When Sarah dies at Hebron, in Canaan, Abraham asks the inhabitants of that land to sell him ground in which to bury his wife. Generous with him, they make him a gift of the land. Abraham refuses this generosity, saying that he is an alien and a guest among them.<sup>19</sup>

This statement may surprise us since it refers to land that Abraham, by divine promise, could have considered his own. Indeed it reveals to us the noble mind of the patriarch. Abraham had not abandoned his native land in order to receive another in its place. One might think he was waiting for God himself to fulfil his promise. But quite aside from demonstrating his patience and his detachment from material things, Abraham's attitude indicates how the 'father of believers' saw himself in regard to the One who called him. To confess, in effect, that one is an alien on the earth and a guest in God's earthly house is the distinctive mark of a faith that holds God to be the possessor of all things and man to be but a passing shadow.

### **The Israelites: aliens and guests**

After his father's death, Isaac leaves for Gerar to live in the home of King Abimelech.<sup>20</sup> He then returns to Hebron where he will be buried.<sup>21</sup> His son, Jacob, leaves for the home of his uncle Laban in Mesopotamia.<sup>22</sup> He will not return to Canaan until years later.<sup>23</sup> Like Abraham, Jacob and his sons are obliged to emigrate to Egypt;<sup>24</sup> but their exile will be long. They will never again see the Promised Land: their descendants will live and die in exile. Centuries later, Moses will come forth to lead the Israelites out of Egypt; and Moses, in his turn, will take refuge in Midian. There he gives to his son the name of Gershom, for he says, 'I have become an alien in a foreign land.'<sup>25</sup> Twice an alien or immigrant, he could have added!

Did this experience as an alien, which was the condition of all the patriarchs in Canaan<sup>26</sup> and of all the Israelites in Egypt,<sup>27</sup> end with the conquest of the Promised Land? Yes, in one sense, since they thus found themselves in the land promised by God through Abraham. But the question lingers: Did the land then become theirs?

Let us observe how the Torah justifies the law of the Jubilee in relation to the repurchase of property in Israel: 'The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and guests.'<sup>28</sup> In other words, the law was given to remind the Israelites that their conquest of the Promised Land did not make them its owners, but rather its caretakers. We would do well to meditate on this lesson in humility. With one stroke, the law placed the Israelites in a right perspective of their relationship to God. Abraham, their father, was more than an example: he was a model, not only for them but for all, Christians and Muslims alike, who claim him as their spiritual forebear.

### **The status of the alien in Israel**

Once the Israelites were established in the land of Canaan, their community life was placed under the authority of Mosaic law. Given the significant number of aliens in their midst,<sup>29</sup> it would have been surprising for this law *not* to have taken them into account. However, the law does give precise instructions with regard to the status of aliens living in Israel. The celebration of the Passover represented for every Israelite the commemoration of a primal event for Israel: it would seem to be natural, therefore, to restrict this celebration to Israelites. However, with the exception of foreigners passing through the land and there only temporarily,<sup>30</sup> all aliens who had linked their destiny to Israel and had undergone ritual circumcision could participate in the Passover. The law that was valid for Israelites was valid for them as well.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, the validity of all laws in the land extended to these immigrants. The Sabbath<sup>32</sup> was established, in part, to allow the alien to rest.<sup>33</sup> The products of the sabbatical year were gathered to feed all, native as well as immigrant.<sup>34</sup> The laws regarding the Day of Atonement,<sup>35</sup> offerings,<sup>36</sup> the prohibition on the consumption of blood,<sup>37</sup> ritual purity,<sup>38</sup> idolatry and blasphemy,<sup>39</sup> the sacred meal,<sup>40</sup> inability to pay one's debts,<sup>41</sup> slavery,<sup>42</sup> atonement for sins,<sup>43</sup> the cities of refuge,<sup>44</sup> and the law of the talion,<sup>45</sup> all show that aliens living in Israel were closely associated with and even integrated into the national life. The solemn act sealing this relationship probably was their participation in the making of the Covenant,<sup>46</sup> confirmed by their commitment to respect the law.<sup>47</sup> Since the law was both a religious constitution and a civil code, this commitment signified a dual allegiance, to the God of Israel and to the nation itself.

### **You will love the alien as yourself**

Without a doubt, the Torah encouraged the integration of the immigrant into the community; yet the Torah also emphasizes the precariousness of the alien's situation. This is indicated by the fact that the commandments concerning the immigrant are often the same as those concerning either the poor,<sup>48</sup> or the Levite,<sup>49</sup> or the widow,<sup>50</sup> or the widow and the orphan,<sup>51</sup> or the Levite, the widow and the orphan,<sup>52</sup> or the poor, the widow and the orphan.<sup>53</sup> The situation of all of these persons was fragile, so that the Torah gave them an attention and protection commensurate with their vulnerability.

But the commandments concerning the alien prescribed for Israelites in the Torah are distinctive in that the Israelites themselves had been aliens in Egypt;<sup>54</sup> they were well able

to identify with the immigrants and 'to know how it feels to be aliens'.<sup>55</sup> So they are neither to exploit the alien nor to oppress him,<sup>56</sup> but rather to render justice between their brothers and the immigrants without partiality.<sup>57</sup> If they refuse to respect the rights of aliens, they will fall under the curse of the law.<sup>58</sup>

In day-to-day life, everything is not simply a matter of justice. God loves the alien and is partial to no one,<sup>59</sup> and it must be the same for the Israelites: 'The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself . . .'<sup>60</sup> – if, that is, they want to conform to God, taking the love he has for them as a model. The Israelites will be generous to the aliens, giving them a share from their triennial tithe,<sup>61</sup> leaving them the excess of the harvests,<sup>62</sup> and inviting them to participate in their celebration.<sup>63</sup> This was to be their way of saying that they too are aliens in the sight of God.

### The prayer of the alien; his intercession in favour of the foreigner

We hear in the Psalms the echo of the Torah in the soul of the faithful Israelite. He recognizes his own inherent weakness, being an alien on the earth, and this leads him to ask God to show him the commandments so that he may follow the way of righteousness.<sup>64</sup> He begs God to answer his prayers and to hear his cry, for, he says, 'I dwell with you as an immigrant, a guest, as all my fathers were.'<sup>65</sup> Having no illusions about his lowly position before God, rejected by his own because of his loyalty to him, the psalmist gives vent to his suffering because he has become 'a foreigner to my brothers, a stranger to my own mother's sons'.<sup>66</sup>

In this context, it is not difficult for him to identify with the alien in his country who, as he himself, endures the injustice of men '[who] slay the widow and the alien; [who] murder the fatherless'.<sup>67</sup> So he calls on the God of righteousness and compassion, '[who] watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but [who] frustrates the ways of the wicked'.<sup>68</sup>

On the eve of his death and at a time when the preparations for the construction of the temple were completed, David addresses a prayer to God that expresses, with a heightened sense of his own frailty, man's relationship to God:

Now, our God, we give you thanks and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are aliens and guests in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope.<sup>69</sup>

How better to express the nakedness and brevity of man's existence in the face of the generosity and eternity of God?

In his prayer of inauguration of the temple, Solomon recalls the faithfulness of God to his promises concerning Israel. His prayer, which exalts the divine majesty, rises for a moment above the land of Israel, and regards the foreigner come from a distant country to pray to God in this house:

As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm – when he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from your dwelling place, and

do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel . . .<sup>70</sup>

This glimmer of universalism will become, in the message of the prophets, a great light illuminating the immigrants in Israel, as well as more distant strangers.

### The good news of the prophets to the aliens and foreigners

Recalling the equality before the law of both Israelites and aliens,<sup>71</sup> the prophets denounce the oppression of the alien in Israel.<sup>72</sup> They call Israel to treat the alien justly.<sup>73</sup> Malachi announces the coming of the Lord in person to judge those who violate the right of the alien, thus disdaining divine law.<sup>74</sup>

But the prophets do not simply remind their listeners of the commandments of the Torah. Ezekiel assures the aliens that they will inherit the land in the same way as the Israelites.<sup>75</sup> Isaiah announces to the immigrants<sup>76</sup> as well as to the foreigners<sup>77</sup> that they will be fully incorporated into the people of God. They will all come to pray in his house which will be called a 'house of prayer for all nations'.<sup>78</sup> They will participate in the construction of the new Jerusalem and in the celebration of her rites.<sup>79</sup> They will make her flocks to graze and will work her land<sup>80</sup> with joy and peace.<sup>81</sup> The city will be forever freed from all her enemies, and her inhabitants 'will serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them'.<sup>82</sup>

### Contemporary perspectives

The debate over immigration is a burning issue in many parts of the Western world. A review of the biblical passages concerning the alien shows that God's Word calls believers to adopt a hospitable attitude toward immigrants, marked by a true spirit of charity, in the best sense of that term. Their precarious position should be an added motivation not to exploit aliens, but to respect their rights and to treat them with goodness and justice. This opening, welcoming attitude contrasts, of course, with the spirit of self-absorption, suspicion and rejection human beings assume all too quickly in response to what is foreign to them. If I am content simply to exist alongside the foreigner, making no effort to know him or understand him, I will be more likely, in crisis, to consider his presence as a threat to my existence. If, on the other hand, I make the effort to meet with him, I discover beneath his foreignness a neighbour who symbolizes God's call to me to broaden my horizons and to live with my brother in a common humanity.

And how can we not see the connection between the remarkable teaching of the Torah on the foreigner, given in precise terms to Israel, and the present-day situation of 'foreigners' in Israel? I intentionally put this word in quotation marks, for the irony of history is such that the Palestinians are considered by Israelis today to be strangers in their own homeland. Has the weight of history become so heavy that this reversal of situations fails to provoke our indignation? Is not the responsibility of those who love Israel precisely to remind her, as did the prophets of old, of the teaching of her own scriptures? Should the messianic prophecies abolishing the distinction between the Israelites and aliens remain but a dead letter until the coming of the Messiah? Or rather, do they not constitute a directive to

follow now, so as to announce the messianic reign? The mission of Christians, awaiting the return of Christ, is to inscribe in the present time the meaning of the history which his return will reveal. Would it be otherwise for those who transmitted to us the messianic hope?

Finally, the presence of immigrants is in itself, for believers, a sign: a sign that believers themselves are aliens and immigrants before God. Their existence, in other words, is as fleeting as a shadow or a breath; and what goods they possess are but expressions of the generosity of their Creator. To be conscious of one's status of alien on the earth means, for the believer, not only to act accordingly with regard to the alien living within one's borders; it also means to marvel at the paradox of the great vocation given by God to his humble human creature:

When I consider your  
heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,  
what is man that you are  
mindful of him,  
the son of man that you care  
for him?  
You made him a little lower  
than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory  
and honour.  
You made him ruler over the  
works of your hands;  
you put everything under  
his feet . . .

(Psalm 8:3-6)

(Scripture quotations have been taken from the New International Version of the Bible.)

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. Jos. 2.  
<sup>2</sup> Cf. 2 Ki. 5.  
<sup>3</sup> Cf. 2 Ch. 2:16-17. Foreigners provided the bulk of the manpower for the building of the temple (cf. 1 Ch. 22:2; 2 Ch. 8:7-8).  
<sup>4</sup> Cf. Is. 57:19.  
<sup>5</sup> Ex. 12:48-49; Lv. 16:29; 17:8, 10, 12; 18:26; 19:33-34; 20:2; Nu. 9:14, 15, 16, 26, 29; 19:10; Jos. 20:9; Ezk. 20:9; 47:22.  
<sup>6</sup> Lv. 25:6, 45.  
<sup>7</sup> Gn. 23:4; Lv. 25:23, 35, 47; Nu. 35:15.  
<sup>8</sup> 1 Ki. 8:41.  
<sup>9</sup> Jb. 19:15; Pss. 69:8; 81:9; Pr. 2:16; 5:10, 20; 7:15; 20:16; 27:2, 13; Is. 28:21; 61:5; Je. 5:19; La. 5:2; Ob. 11.  
<sup>10</sup> To describe the laity not of Aaron's descendants (Ex. 29:33; 30:33; Lv. 22:10, 12, 13; Nu. 1:51; 3:10, 38; 17:5; 18:4, 7; cf. 25:5); the unauthorized fire (Lv. 10:1; Nu. 3:4; 26:61); unholy incense (Ex. 30:9 RSV); the adulterous woman (Pr. 2:16; 5:3, 20; 6:24; 7:5; 22:14; 23:27); idols (Gn. 35:2, 4; Dt. 31:16; 32:12, 16; Jos. 24:20, 23; Jdg. 10:16; 1 Sa. 7:3; 2 Ch. 14:3; 33:15; Pss. 44:21; 81:9; Is. 2:25; 43:12; Je. 3:13; 5:19; 8:19; Ezk. 16:32; Ho. 5:7; Dn. 11:39; Mal. 2:11); persons (Gn. 31:15; Jb. 15:19; 19:15) and things (2 Ki. 19:24; Pss. 137:4; Pr. 23:33; Ho. 8:12; Zp. 1:8) unknown or corrupt (Is. 17:10; Je. 2:21), or simply with reference to another person (1 Ki. 3:18; Pr. 14:10; 27:2).

- <sup>11</sup> Gn. 17:12, 27; Jdg. 10:16; Ru. 2:10; 2 Sa. 15:19; 1 Ki. 11:1, 8; Ezr. 10:2, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 44; Ne. 9:2; 13:26, 27, 30; Ec. 6:2.  
<sup>12</sup> 2 Sa. 22:45, 46; Pss. 18:44-45; 54:5; 109:11; 144:7, 11; Is. 1:7; 2:6; 25:2, 5; 29:5; Je. 5:2, 19, 51; 30:8; La. 5:2; Ezk. 7:21; 11:9; 28:7; 30:12; 31:12; Ho. 7:9; 8:7; Ob. 11.  
<sup>13</sup> Gn. 12:1-5.  
<sup>14</sup> Gn. 12:6-9.  
<sup>15</sup> Gn. 12:10.  
<sup>16</sup> Gn. 15:13.  
<sup>17</sup> Gn. 20:1.  
<sup>18</sup> Gn. 21:23, 24.  
<sup>19</sup> Gn. 23:4.  
<sup>20</sup> Gn. 26:1-3.  
<sup>21</sup> Gn. 35:27.  
<sup>22</sup> Gn. 32:5.  
<sup>23</sup> Gn. 31-33.  
<sup>24</sup> Gn. 47:4.  
<sup>25</sup> Ex. 2:22; 18:3.  
<sup>26</sup> Ex. 6:4.  
<sup>27</sup> Dt. 26:5.  
<sup>28</sup> Lv. 25:23.  
<sup>29</sup> See note 3.  
<sup>30</sup> Ex. 12:43, 45; Dt. 14:21; 15:3; 17:15; 23:21.  
<sup>31</sup> Ex. 12:19, 48, 49; Nu. 9:14; cf. 2 Ch. 30:25.  
<sup>32</sup> Ex. 20:10; Dt. 5:14.  
<sup>33</sup> Ex. 23:12.  
<sup>34</sup> Lv. 25:6.  
<sup>35</sup> Lv. 16:29.  
<sup>36</sup> Lv. 17:8; 22:18; Nu. 15:14-16.  
<sup>37</sup> Lv. 17:10-13.  
<sup>38</sup> Lv. 17:15; Nu. 19:10; Dt. 14:21 is the only text in which the immigrant and the foreigner are associated.  
<sup>39</sup> Lv. 20:2; 24:16.  
<sup>40</sup> Lv. 22:10 excludes the guest as well as the Israelite 'layman'.  
<sup>41</sup> Lv. 25:35. Note that this text explicitly associates the immigrant and the guest with the brother.  
<sup>42</sup> Lv. 25:44-46 allows the Israelites to take slaves from among the clans of the temporary residents, just as Lv. 25:47-54 authorizes an immigrant or a guest to take slaves from among the Israelites, with the condition that they guarantee them the right to be rebought at any time and, in any case, to be freed the year of Jubilee.  
<sup>43</sup> Nu. 15:26, 29, 30.  
<sup>44</sup> Nu. 35:15; cf. Jos. 20:9.  
<sup>45</sup> Lv. 24:22.  
<sup>46</sup> Dt. 29:10; cf. Jos. 8:33.  
<sup>47</sup> Dt. 31:12; cf. Jos. 8:35. Note the consequences of Israel's violation of the law with regard to the immigrant (Dt. 28:43) and to the foreigner (Dt. 29:21).  
<sup>48</sup> Lv. 19:10; 23:22; cf. Ezk. 22:29.  
<sup>49</sup> Dt. 26:11.  
<sup>50</sup> Dt. 24:17.  
<sup>51</sup> Ex. 22:21-22; Dt. 10:18; 24:17, 19, 20, 21; 27:19; cf. Pss. 94:6; 146:9; Je. 7:6; 22:3; Ezk. 22:7; Mal. 3:5.  
<sup>52</sup> Dt. 14:29; 16:11, 14; 26:12, 13.  
<sup>53</sup> Cf. Zc. 7:10.  
<sup>54</sup> Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lv. 19:34; Dt. 10:19; 16:12; 23:8; 24:18, 22; 26:5.  
<sup>55</sup> Ex. 23:9.  
<sup>56</sup> Ex. 22:20; 23:9; Lv. 19:33; Dt. 24:14, 17.  
<sup>57</sup> Dt. 1:16-17.  
<sup>58</sup> Dt. 27:19.  
<sup>59</sup> Dt. 10:18-19.  
<sup>60</sup> Lv. 19:34; cf. Ezk. 47:22.  
<sup>61</sup> Dt. 14:29; 26:12-13.  
<sup>62</sup> Lv. 19:10; 23:22; Dt. 24:19-21; 26:11.  
<sup>63</sup> Dt. 16:11, 14.  
<sup>64</sup> Ps. 119:19.  
<sup>65</sup> Ps. 39:12.  
<sup>66</sup> Ps. 69:8.  
<sup>67</sup> Ps. 94:6.  
<sup>68</sup> Ps. 146:9.  
<sup>69</sup> 1 Ch. 29:13-15.  
<sup>70</sup> 2 Ch. 6:32, 33; cf. 1 Ki. 8:41-43.  
<sup>71</sup> Cf. Ezk. 14:7.  
<sup>72</sup> Ezk. 22:7, 29; Zc. 7:10.  
<sup>73</sup> Je. 7:6; 22:3.  
<sup>74</sup> Mal. 3:5.  
<sup>75</sup> Ezk. 47:22, 23.  
<sup>76</sup> Is. 14:1.  
<sup>77</sup> Is. 56:3.  
<sup>78</sup> Is. 56:6-7; cf. Ezk. 44:9; Joel 4:17.  
<sup>79</sup> Is. 60:10.  
<sup>80</sup> Is. 61:5.  
<sup>81</sup> Is. 62:8; cf. Ho. 7:9; 8:7.  
<sup>82</sup> Je. 30:8-9.

# Recent commentaries on the Acts of the Apostles

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Two decades ago W. C. van Unnik could speak of Luke-Acts as 'a storm center in contemporary scholarship'.<sup>1</sup> Not only were there many differences of opinion among scholars concerning fundamental issues of interpretation, but there was a decidedly negative tone to some of the research, particularly in Germany. It was not simply that the older view of 'Luke the historian' was rejected and a new appreciation of the author's literary and theological creativity established, but 'Luke' (certainly not the traditionally identified missionary companion and friend of Paul) was regarded as betrayer of the early Christian eschatology, preacher of a 'theology of glory' rather than 'theology of the cross', perverter of the theologies of both the Jerusalem church and of Paul, and a formative force in the development of 'Early Catholicism'.<sup>2</sup> The author's perspective was frequently compared and contrasted with that of Paul, generally to the former's disadvantage.

Building on the pioneering work of Martin Dibelius (1883-1947), Hans Conzelmann and Ernst Haenchen set the tone for the critical debate in the 'sixties. Although they established without question the importance of the author of Luke-Acts as a theologian in his own right – a view that would be contested by no one today – the dogmatism with which both expressed their views on the most debatable issues tended to divide Lukan researchers into two groups, a small group of disciples and colleagues working in the Conzelmann-Haenchen tradition and a much larger group reacting to what they considered to be the extreme and speculative views put forward by the first group.

A decade later Charles H. Talbert used the image of 'shifting sands' to characterize the current state of Lukan studies.<sup>3</sup> The position of 'Luke the theologian' had become firmly established in NT scholarship, but there tended to be an array of competing schema for interpreting Lukan theology and little agreement concerning even the most basic issues. Today, however, the situation has radically changed. Gone is the shrill debate and sloganism of the 'sixties, and even much of the uncertainty of the 'seventies; and in their place is a growing body of constructive research of a very high quality.

Some of the most recent work has been done cooperatively, as in the very fruitful seminars on Luke-Acts held at the annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature in the 'seventies and early 'eighties.<sup>4</sup> Other work has been done by individual younger and older scholars who have chosen to make the Lukan writings the focus of their academic study and, as a result, have produced a host of significant dissertations, monographs, essays and, in a few cases, major commentaries. If I were to choose an image for the more recent research, I would select that of a garden. The soil of Lukan studies has been carefully cultivated, a variety of promising seeds has been planted, it has been well watered, and there is evidence of much growth. Although it is not yet time for the full harvest, the 'first fruits' that are already evident give us reason to hope for a bumper crop in the not too distant future.

The student who begins a study of Luke-Acts today is well served by a number of excellent guides to the scholarly discussion.<sup>5</sup> In a recent article,<sup>6</sup> I have attempted to trace the broad contours of the discussion, give an impression of some of the most fruitful

conclusions, and suggest possible directions for further study. In the present essay I will comment on a few of the current commentaries.

Pride of place among recently published commentaries on the Acts of the Apostles goes to the magisterial two-volume work by Gerhard Schneider,<sup>7</sup> available at present, unfortunately, only to those who read German. Giving due recognition to the fact that Acts is a continuation of the Third Gospel,<sup>8</sup> Schneider stresses the author's concern for continuity between the time of Jesus and the time of the church. He introduces his carefully crafted and clearly presented material by a judicious survey of research on Acts and his conclusions on the major issues (the book's literary method and genre; the relation of Acts to the Third Gospel; the use of sources; the question of authorship, date and place of writing; the author's historical method; the theology of Acts; the textual tradition; and the history of the Acts in the church and in modern scholarship). His conclusions, both in his introduction and in the text of the commentary, are often: 'We can't be certain!' – which has led Ferdinand Hahn (*art. cit.* in note 5, above) to complain that he wished Schneider would come to definite conclusions more often, though not everyone would regard this habit of scholarly caution a liability.

After a lengthy introduction, Schneider, following the example of Luke himself, moves on to write 'an orderly account' (*kathexes*, Lk. 1:3) of the exegesis of Acts. Each pericope is introduced by a brief bibliography, followed by a German translation of the Greek text, an overview of the passage as a whole, and verse by verse comments on the grammar, literary and historical setting, and, above all, the theology of Acts. Sandwiched in between the exegesis of individual passages are twelve important excurses, treating of the ascension of Jesus, the twelve apostles as witnesses, OT citations in Acts, Pentecost and the Holy Spirit, Peter in Acts, possessions and the renunciation of possessions, the miracle stories, the Christology of Acts, the parousia, the Hellenists and Samaria, Paul in Acts, and the so-called Apostolic Council and its Decree. Curiously, there are only two excurses in the second volume. Perhaps this is due to the limitations of space, but it leads to a bit of an imbalance between the two.

Schneider's commentary is by far the best work available on Acts to date: it is a generation more up-to-date than Haenchen, balanced and comprehensive in its evaluation of the breadth of recent scholarship, and chock-full of useful data. It is to be hoped that it will soon find a British or North American publisher willing to invest in its translation, thus making it available to a much wider audience.

Another significant German commentary is the one by Rudolf Pesch in the influential 'Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament'. Also in two volumes<sup>9</sup> – do German scholars write short commentaries? – it is aimed at a broader audience than Schneider's work. Pesch's commentary is noteworthy in its concern to link the text of the Scripture to the contemporary life of the church, including renewal themes. The author himself, a Roman Catholic and tenured professor of NT at the University of Freiburg, took the radical step of resigning his university appointment to join in the ministry of a lay renewal movement that seeks to combine concerns of faith, theological education, Christian community and social action within a modern metropolis (Munich). Pesch's stance gives his work a focus similar to that of Australia's Robert Banks, though he comes out of a very different ecclesiastical ethos.

The world of NT scholarship has been waiting impatiently for more than a decade for the publication of C. K. Barrett's commentary on Acts in the International Critical Commentary series, which is in the process of being up-dated.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, we have to be content with

the numerous articles and comments he has been publishing in a variety of *Festschriften*, journals, and volumes of collected essays.<sup>11</sup>

While we await Barrett's *magnum opus*, we should not neglect several recent commentaries that, though written for a more popular audience, represent a very high level of scholarship. I. Howard Marshall has certainly been among the more prolific of NT scholars during the past decade. Close on the heels of his monumental commentary on the Gospel of Luke<sup>12</sup> came a much smaller work on Acts.<sup>13</sup> The serious student should not be put off by the non-technical format, for the author is clearly on top of contemporary Lukan research. Acts is interpreted as the second part of Luke's 'story of "Christian beginnings"'. Luke connects the story of Jesus with the story of the early church, telling how the good news had started, and how it had spread over the Mediterranean world from Jerusalem to Rome.<sup>14</sup> And by the very manner in which he tells the story in (Luke-) Acts, he stresses five major points: (1) There is an essential continuity between the mighty acts of God recorded in the OT and those occurring in the ministry of Jesus and in the experience of the early Christian communities; (2) Central to the church's existence is mission, taking the good news 'to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8); (3) In spite of opposition to the Christian mission and message, the word of God continues in its triumphal progress; (4) The inclusion of the Gentiles in the church is no accident of history but rather part of God's own plan; and (5) The experience of the earliest Christian communities, including their principal leaders (especially Peter and Paul), provides a model for the next generations of the church.

Although Marshall is in the tradition of F. F. Bruce<sup>15</sup> and attributes to the author of Acts a higher standard of historical accuracy than do many contemporary Lukan scholars, the accent in his commentary is clearly on the theological interpretation (which has been the focus of most recent study). And, in this regard, he offers the person who is charged with preaching or teaching the Book of Acts in a local church context good value.

Aimed at a similar audience are the recent commentaries by David John Williams<sup>16</sup> and Gerhard Krodel.<sup>17</sup> Both authors are clearly abreast of the best of NT scholarship. Using the Good News Bible text (though often departing from it on the basis of the Greek text), Williams takes a slightly more conservative view than does Krodel on the historicity of Acts. Still, he recognizes that Luke was no chronicler of past events but rather an artist who 'interpreted, selected, and arranged the events of his narrative to explicate a theme, and anything that did not bear on that theme he ruthlessly omitted'.<sup>18</sup> Luke is not interested in 'church history' as such, but rather only one strand of church history, namely 'how it took the road from Jerusalem to Rome and how, at the same time, it passed from mission to the Jews to preaching God's message to the Gentiles. . .'.<sup>19</sup> Luke's concern is that of a pastor: he is concerned to write history, but history with a message for the church in his day, to tell the story of Jesus that continues 'wherever his Spirit finds men and women ready to believe, to obey, to give, to suffer, and, if needs be, to die for him'.<sup>20</sup>

Krodel's commentary contains a more detailed introduction than does Williams'. Without being unduly technical, he seeks to make the general reader aware of the key issues of contemporary criticism. He discusses the question of authorship (if a Gentile, he was exceedingly steeped in the OT: perhaps he was a Hellenistic Jew or a proselyte, at the very least a 'God-fearer'), literary craft of the author (an artist who selects, abbreviates, idealizes, uses repetitions, combines traditions, simplifies, overemphasizes, occasionally confuses, and, above all, tells a gripping story), Lukan theology ('Luke wrote a narrative of salvation history in which he updated biblical history'<sup>21</sup>), the speeches (literary compositions intended for the reader, but incorporating prior traditions), sources (Luke certainly had access to more traditional materials than many scholars have assumed, though we may find it hard to reconstruct them),<sup>22</sup> the relation of history and theology in Acts, and the question of the text ('Western' text interesting but not original).

According to Krodel, Luke-Acts could be entitled a *History of Salvation*, with subtitles 'From Jesus to Paul', 'From Jerusalem to Rome', or 'From Jews Only to Gentiles Also'.<sup>23</sup> Volume two is in the form of a 'historical monograph' that traces the development of

the early Christian mission from Peter to Paul and from Jerusalem to Rome. According to Luke, 'God's purpose and plan [Greek *boule*, Lk. 7:30; Acts 2:23; 4:38; cf. 3:18; 5:38-39; 13:36; 20:27] is the force that directs the story of Jesus and of the church in history'.<sup>24</sup> He does this by showing that (1) the growth of the church is the work of God (2:41; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; etc.); (2) the Holy Spirit is the source of the apostles' inspiration in their witness to the Lord Jesus (1:8; 2:17; 4:29-31; 6:10; 13:2-4; 15:28; 16:6-7; 20:23; 20:28; 21:4; etc.); (3) all that happened was an outworking of God's promises in Scripture (1:20; 2:16-18; 13:41, 47; 15:15-18; 28:26-28); and (4) prophecies have been fulfilled by the events that have taken place (the prophecies of angels [Lk. 1:13-21, 26-37; 2:10-12; Acts 27:23-24]; contemporary prophets like Zechariah [Lk. 1:67-79], Simeon [Lk. 2:28-35], and Agabus [Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11]; Paul [Acts 20:22-23; 27:22]; Jesus, the 'prophet like Moses' [in the Gospel Jesus predicted his passion, death and resurrection, as well as Peter's denial; he also promised the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8), protection to Paul (Acts 18:9-10) and wisdom for his followers to testify under pressure (Lk. 21:15), all of which is fulfilled in the narrative of Acts], and the OT prophets [Acts 2:17; 15:16-18; 28:26-27]).<sup>25</sup>

Luke's historical monograph 'serves his theological purposes, but this insight may not diminish the fact that Luke the historian wanted to write history and not fiction. . . . As a historian, Luke deserves a place among the great historians of antiquity. After all, to Greek and Latin historians of Luke's time the Christian movement was a matter that could either be ignored or else be ridiculed. . . . By recognizing the invincible rise of Christianity, Luke was a better historian than anyone else among his contemporaries.'<sup>26</sup> While traditionalists may be too enthusiastic in their assumption that they can harmonize all the discrepancies between Acts and the letters of Paul, the radical scepticism that marked the research on Acts in an earlier period was equally unjustified, according to Krodel.

The latest addition to the 'Hermennia' series of commentaries is a translation of Hans Conzelmann's volume from the 'Handbuch zum Neuen Testament'.<sup>27</sup> Although students and scholars whose German is either rusty or non-existent will find it useful to have this material in English dress, it is really quite dated (first published in 1963, slightly revised in 1972). It reads more like a lexicon of linguistic and historical information arranged in the order of Acts 1:1-28:31 than a commentary, so it will be primarily of use to those preparing detailed exegetical and historical studies rather than those concerned to teach and preach from Acts. Furthermore, Conzelmann's once influential but now largely discredited perspective on Lukan theology permeates his interpretation, giving it a somewhat antique flavour. His extremely sceptical stance concerning the historical value of Acts will also render this elaborate and beautifully produced commentary of less interest than an entirely new volume in the same series might have been.<sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, the only fully comprehensive, scholarly and up-to-date commentary on Acts is the work by Schneider, and it is accessible only to those who read German. The fruits of the past quarter-century of increasingly positive Lukan studies have yet to be harvested in a major commentary on Luke's second volume, though Marshall, Krodel and Williams present some of the firstfruits of this harvest in a non-technical format. In addition to the commentary by C. K. Barrett mentioned above, two other major commentaries are in preparation at present, namely, by S. Scott Bartchy for the 'Word Biblical Commentary' and by W. Ward Gasque for the 'New International Greek Testament Commentary'. Until any of these is complete, the two volumes by F. F. Bruce<sup>29</sup> and the classic commentary by E. Haenchen<sup>30</sup> will remain the standards in English.

<sup>1</sup> 'A Storm Center in Contemporary Scholarship', in L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (eds.), *Studies in Luke-Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), pp. 15-32.

<sup>2</sup> See W. G. Kuemmel's response to this hyper-Lutheran critique of Lukan theology: 'Current Theological Accusations Against Luke', *AndNew! Quart* 16 (1975), pp. 131-145.

<sup>3</sup> 'Shifting Sands: The Recent Study of the Gospel of Luke', *Interp* 30 (1976), pp. 381-395.

<sup>4</sup> Following consultations in 1972 and 1973, a Luke-Acts study group was formed under the able leadership of Charles H. Talbert and continued to meet regularly for more than a decade. Papers from the seminars are contained in the *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar papers*, published annually by

Scholars Press. A collection of the early papers was published as *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Danville, VA: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978); and, more recently, a second collection. *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Studies Seminar*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984). Numerous other studies that originated in these meetings have been published in journal articles, monographs and other collections.

<sup>3</sup>On the work prior to 1970, see W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). For the pre-critical study of Acts, see Paul F. Stuehnenberg, 'The Study of Acts before the Reformation: A Bibliographic Introduction', *Nov Test* 29 (1987), pp. 100-136.

On recent work on Luke-Acts as a whole, see Emilio Rasco, *La Teologia de Lucas: Origen, Desarrollo, Orientaciones*. Analecta Gregoriana 201 (Rome: Gregorian University, 1976); Francois Bovon, *Luc le théologien. Vingt-cinq ans de recherches (1950-1975)* (Neuchâtel and Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1978); Martin Rese, 'Neuere Lukas-Arbeiten: Bemerkungen zur gegenwertigen Forschungslage', *TheolLitZeit* 106 (1981), pp. 225-237; Earl Richard, 'Luke - Writer, Theologian, Historian: Research and Orientation of the 1970's', *BibTheolBull* 13 (1983), pp. 3-15; and Martin Rese, 'Das Lukas-Evangelium: Ein Forschungsbericht', in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* 1/25.3, W. Haase (ed.) (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1985), pp. 2259-2328.

On Acts itself, see Erich Graesser, 'Acta-Forschung seit 1960', *TheolRund* 41 (1976), pp. 141-194, 259-290, and 42 (1977), pp. 1-68; Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte 1* (see n.6, below), pp. 11-186; Eckhard Plumacher, 'Acta-Forschung 1974-1982', *TheolRund* 48 (1983), pp. 1-56, and 49 (1984), pp. 105-169; and Ferdinand Hahn, 'Der gegenwertige Stand der Erforschung der Apostelgeschichte: Kommentare und Aufsatzbaende 1980-1985', *TheolRev* 82 (1986), pp. 117-190.

Jacob Kremer (ed.), *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie*. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 48 (Gembloux, Belgium: Duculot, 1979), brings together 30 papers by leading researchers who seek to survey major areas of study and thus offers a good introduction to the diversity of contemporary scholarship. The most recent collection of essays by Dom Jacques Dupont, one of the most prolific commentators on Acts in the present century, covers the past two decades of research and a wide variety of topics: *Nouvelles études sur les Actes des Apôtres*. Lectio Divina 118 (Paris: Cerf, 1984). Guenter Wagner, *An Exegetical Bibliography of the New Testament: Volume 2: Luke and Acts* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), offers a selected bibliography, arranged by chapter and verse.

<sup>4</sup>W. W. Gasque, 'A Fruitful Field: Recent Study of the Acts of the Apostles', *Interpretation* 42 (1988), pp. 117-131.

<sup>7</sup>*Die Apostelgeschichte: 1. Teil: Einleitung. Kommentar zu Kap. 1, 1-8, 40. II. Teil: Kommentar zu Kap. 9, 1-28:31*. Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Freiburg, Basel and Vienna: Herder, 1980 and 1982).

<sup>8</sup>Schneider prepared the ground for his work on Acts by writing an important commentary on the Third Gospel (*Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 2 vols., Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 3/1 and 3/2 [Guetersloh: Mohr, 1977]), two important monographs on Lukan theology (*Verleugnung, Verspottung und Verhoer Jesu nach Lukas 22, 54-71: Studien zur lukanischen Darstellung der Passion*, Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 22. [Munich: Koesel, 1969]; *Parusiegleichnisse im Lukas-Evangelium*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 74 [Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1975], and

numerous essays on Luke-Acts (e.g. 'Der Zweck des lukanischen Doppelwerks', *BibZeit* 21 [1977], pp. 45-66; 'Stephanus, die Hellenisten und Samaria', in *Les Actes*, ed. J. Kremer [cf. n.5 above], pp. 215-240).

<sup>9</sup>*Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2 vols., EKKzNT V/1 and V/2 (Zurich: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986).

<sup>10</sup>The volume on Acts was assigned to a variety of authors in the original series but was never completed, thus leaving a very large gap to be filled!

<sup>11</sup>See his earlier work, included in his *New Testament Essays* (London: SPCK, 1972), pp. 70-115; also 'Paul's Speech on the Areopagus', in *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World*, ed. E. W. Farshol-Luke (London: SPCK, 1974), pp. 69-77; 'Acts and the Pauline Corpus', *ExpT* 88 (1976-77), pp. 2-5; 'Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders', in *God's Christ and His People*, edd. J. Jervell and W. A. Meeks (Oslo, Bergen and Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), pp. 107-121; *Theologia Crucis - in Acts?*, in *Theologia Crucis - Signum Crucis* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1979), pp. 73-84; 'Light on the Holy Spirit from Simon Magus (Acts 8: 4-25)', in *Les Actes*, ed. J. Kremer, pp. 281-295.

<sup>12</sup>*The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Text Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

<sup>13</sup>*Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: IVP; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

<sup>14</sup>Marshall interprets 'all that Jesus began to do and teach' (Acts 1:1), referring to the Gospel, as implying that Acts (volume two) deals with 'all that Jesus continued to do and teach' (Acts, p. 20; *Luke*, p. 87; *contra* E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* [E. T., Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], p. 137, *et al.*).

<sup>15</sup>At the time of writing, revisions of both of Bruce's major commentaries on Acts are in the press. See note 29.

<sup>16</sup>*Acts*, A Good News Commentary (San Francisco: Harper & Row; London: Marshall Pickering, 1985).

<sup>17</sup>*Acts*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986).

<sup>18</sup>Williams, *op. cit.*, p. xxi.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xxii.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xxix.

<sup>21</sup>Krodel, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup>See Jacob Jervell, 'The Problem of Traditions in Acts', in his *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), pp. 19-39.

<sup>23</sup>Krodel, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>27</sup>*Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

<sup>28</sup>See my review below in this *Themelios*; cf. W. W. Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 247-250, 291-295.

<sup>29</sup>*The Acts of the Apostles* [on the Greek text], 2nd edn (London: Tyndale; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952); and *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament = New London Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1952). Both have been reprinted many times and, as indicated above, revised editions are in the press. On Bruce's work, see my *History*, pp. 257-264.

<sup>30</sup>*The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971). On Haenchen, see Gasque, *History*, pp. 235-247.

## Women and the kingdom of God: three recent books

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*Kathy Keay (ed.), Men, Women and God (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1987), 304pp., £5.95;*

*Ann Loades, Searching for Lost Coins (London: SPCK, 1987), 118pp., £4.95;*

*Susanne Heine, Women and Early Christianity (London: SCM, 1987), 182pp., £6.95.*

Beginning with the assumption that those already convinced of the need for discussion of feminist issues within Christian theology (or those at least interested in the question) will need no persuasion to read this article, I will begin by addressing those who are *not* so convinced, or even interested. The main emphasis of this article, which arises out of the 3 books reviewed, is an emphasis on the breadth and seriousness of the issues raised by feminist theology. Feminist theology - or the concern for women's interests and problems and for the elimination of any injustices - is not concerned only with the debate over the ordination of women and the interpretation of the passages in Genesis, and in the NT - although this is where evangelical debate often begins and ends. To be sure,

these are important questions, but they are not the only, or even the most important ones. A concern with women and their interests involves a whole range of issues and debates which reach into the heart of our gospel of redemption and out in practical ways into every area of our society. As such, these issues and debates are *not* of relevance only to women or only to those who might be labelled as 'too liberal' or 'too radical' really to merit our attention. Although they are issues which raise strong feelings on both sides, conservative and evangelical theologians should take account of the *full* extent of the debate and respond to it.

The three books which are the basis of this review article appear at first sight to be a rather heterogeneous and arbitrary selection. However on a more careful examination, there are some interesting and important connections, and together they provide a good introduction to feminist issues within Christian theology, raising some of the dominant questions, and indicating the range of the discussion. What the books do, taken together, is to present the case for feminism to be taken seriously by *everyone* who is concerned with understanding and living in accordance with the Christian message. They demonstrate that the question of the status and role of women and women's experience is not a side-issue for Christian theology and the church, but that it raises questions which are central to our faith, and which have implications extending into just about every area of life.

Where the three books are most obviously disparate is in their authorship and in the level of audience they are pitched at. *Men, Women and God (MWG)* is a collection of short chapters by a wide range of evangelical authors, from backgrounds and work situations as varied as the subjects of the chapters, covering the role of women in Scripture and in the church, the roles of men and women in society (considering education, work, politics, racism and the media), and finally 'biological' questions about women (family and breadwinning roles, singleness, rape and lesbianism). This book also has the broadest audience in view, being on the whole (though see below) very readable and accessible to non-theologically trained Christians, although this is *not* at the cost of its content which merits attention also from those who have training and interest to explore the issues in greater depth and at a more academic level.

*Searching for Lost Coins (SLC)* is written by Ann Loades, a senior lecturer in philosophy of religion and ethics at Durham University, and is also fairly accessible. Its style, and the range of material which is drawn on, particularly literary sources, make it very enjoyable, and it would be an interesting and stimulating read for those with little or no theological background. Its argument is, however, rather elusive or understated, and a careful reading together with greater awareness of the issues are necessary in order to draw out the *significance* of what Ann Loades is saying, and the conclusions she comes to.

*Women in Early Christianity (WEC)* is the most academic of the three, not so much in its style as in its content, and is written by a Professor of Theology in the University of Vienna. It is concerned with a particular aspect of feminist theology – its methodology and use of historical sources – and it considers this complex subject in some detail. Susanne Heine explores issues which are very important for Christian theology as such, not only for feminist theology, and this book will probably be most useful to those with some academic theological competence.

Although this is certainly not all they do, *MWG* and *SLC* serve, in rather different ways, as a good introduction to Christian feminism. Ann Loades' book is a series of lectures and does not give a history or chronological account, but she does indicate some of the background to the present debate on feminism, looking first at some of the features of feminism in its connections with Christianity, as it began to be articulated in the nineteenth century in growing demands for civil rights, social and educational reform. Her brief sketch highlights how much change there has been in the situation of women in formal terms – in terms of changes in legislation and in economic and intellectual spheres – but it also raises the question as to how much the situation of women has changed materially, in practice, as the attitudes which lay behind the outdated legislation are not by any means unknown to us in the 1980s. (Professor Heine also makes this point.) Part of the reason for this is, of course, that an understanding of women as naturally or ideally inferior or subordinate is often now, as in the past, based on particular interpretations of Scripture.

Although this is not the central concern of Ann Loades' book (she looks briefly at some of the biblical questions in Chapter 4), she identifies this question – the question of the interpretation of biblical texts – as the present-day agenda. This is based on the 'working assumption' that we are still concerned about *Christian* feminism – I'll refer to post-Christian feminism later.

The interpretation of biblical texts is where *Men, Women and God* begins, being concerned with specifically Christian and evangelical views of feminism. There are three chapters particularly looking at the texts by Elaine Storkey, Andrew Kirk and Faith and Roger Forster. These present a good summary of the main arguments. However they are very condensed, and I would think that someone not already familiar with the discussion might find these chapters rather hard to digest. In this first section of *MWG* there is also a chapter by Dave Tomlinson entitled 'A Masculine Confession'. This chapter is particularly valuable because it highlights the question indicated above about the extent to which assumptions and attitudes to women have failed to change with legislation. It is also valuable because it makes it very clear that feminism is not only an issue for women – Dave Tomlinson talks not only of the responsibility of men to make changes in their lives and thinking, but also of the 'crippling' effects sexual inequality also has on many men.

Part II of *MWG* provides further demonstration of the prevalence of the last century's attitudes to male and female roles in our society. These attitudes are still at work in the enormous inequalities in education and at work, in the running and policies of government and in the media, and of course there is a vicious circle particularly in the case of the media (this is a very good chapter) which reinforces the very values and assumptions on which it relies for its effectiveness, such as the idea of man as the 'natural' breadwinner (Chapter 13).

Given this evidence of the problems and injustices which still exist for many women, Part III considers 'biological' questions – questions of relationships and roles, the breakdown of the family, the place of singleness, rape and lesbianism. I was disappointed that this section included nothing about abortion, which is a key issue in 'secular' feminism, because many Christians are all too ready to pronounce upon the subject as an ethical debate without relating at all to the real problems and human suffering involved. However the other chapters are certainly to be welcomed. The most valuable thing about the book is that it clearly shows that Christian feminism is concerned about practical involvement in *every* area of life, and not solely with questions over hermeneutics and ordination. It also demonstrates the urgency of the situation, showing up the extent of real injustice and suffering, and showing up the inconsistency between the claims of Christianity of justice and liberation for all, and the practice of the church and society. It is very important that feminism is seen not as a concern with sexism alone, but as part of a greater concern for justice, and this is brought out by the chapter on women and racism. As a whole, this book should prove a very good resource and will hopefully raise the level of awareness of the issues among Christians who are often neither very well informed nor very concerned. It presents us with the need for the church – men and women working together – to get involved actively in working for change and promoting justice.

Whereas *MWG* indicates the breadth of the debate about feminist issues in *practical* terms, the other two books we are concerned with indicate the breadth of the discussion in *theological* terms. Their concerns are much broader than the usual conservative evangelical debate, which tends to concentrate on the interpretation of texts and questions of church policy, dismissing much of the wider academic discussion as too liberal or radical to be of value. Whatever our conclusions about feminist theology we must, however, be involved in the discussion and these books merit attention not least because they indicate the scope of that discussion, including not only issues of interpretation and methodology, but also our understanding of the nature of God and of redemption, our understanding of history, the relationship between theory/belief and praxis, the significance of traditions about Mary and the use of non-biblical sources.

Both Susanne Heine and Ann Loades are concerned to explore what the history of Christianity can offer to feminist debate – whether it can be used to justify, to illuminate or to provide a prototype, good or bad. Susanne Heine's work will be of most interest to those concerned to look at some depth into what is happening in feminist



theology and its implications and significance for theology as such. She is concerned particularly about the negativity and prejudice within feminism, which often leads not only to a negative rejection of masculinity but also to the rejection of the supposedly 'male' objective scientific method in our appropriation of history. This can result in a subjective approach to history, which is not only re-interpreted but sometimes also reconstructed, and to the invention of a 'new' history for women.

Her concern with history leads Heine to argue for what seems to be a 'post-critical' approach, incorporating the insights of Polanyi and Lonergan (she does not refer to them herself) and Karl Mannheim. This approach acknowledges at the outset the unavoidability of our own subjective interest, our own tradition and selection of the material. History, she argues, can neither legitimate nor disqualify a particular point of view. Either side of the debate can use history to form their own 'chain of legitimation' and history is thus an ambiguous resource. There is a necessary and inseparable dialectic between the historical 'object' and the present, and interested, 'subject'. This insight is not by any means new, but certainly needs to be emphasized again and again, because it is only just beginning to affect the way in which theology is done. Indeed, I am not sure that Susanne Heine has succeeded herself in taking full account of this dialectic as she claims that we should make use of 'the exact reading which is in accordance with texts and authors' (p. 37). She fails to relate her insistence on the unavoidability and necessity of personal interest, in our selection and interpretation, to her call for this 'exact reading', which involves 'reflective and theorizing detachment', leaving aside one's own interest. However despite this confusion Heine does highlight very important questions about theology, not just about feminist theology, and we can learn much from what she says about understanding the complexity of the history within which we stand, the 'many-sidedness of human reality and conditioning', and the complex relationship between this horizon and our interpretation of history which is itself a complex of effects and interests. Her call for awareness of our own interests and willingness to put ourselves in question by the results obtained from looking at the tradition – to be part of a hermeneutical circle or spiral – is also well-timed in the context of feminist debate.

More specifically Susanne Heine is concerned with distortions of history produced by overly determinative feminist interests which argue that Christianity was/is responsible for hostility to women. She looks at some of the historical examples – such as Genesis, Paul, Tertullian and Clement – and shows that the human reality behind these interpretations is more complex than some scholars would have us believe. She is also particularly concerned to re-evaluate the tradition of gnosticism, claimed by Elaine Pagels in her influential book *The Gnostic Gospels* as a Christian heresy which 'supplemented and corrected' false developments in Christianity in its understanding of God as Mother and Father and in giving greater prominence to women. Heine argues cogently that Pagels' method is 'reflective-historical'; that is, her own feminist interest predominates to the extent of offending against historical honesty. Heine argues rather that gnosticism accorded no great value to femininity but rather to asceticism. Sexuality as part of the fallen, material world is seen as something hostile to God, and to be overcome, and the gnostic God was not so much Mother and Father as an androgynous being.

Susanne Heine's own interpretation of Christian history, acknowledging her feminist interest but aiming at historical honesty rather than a search for legitimation, is illuminating and is the most accessible part of the book. She attempts not a historical reconstruction of a feminist Jesus but a depiction of Jesus, in the context of sociological analysis, as the criterion for assessment and correction of our contemporary situation. Although she does see Jesus as departing from the social conditioning of his time, reversing customary values by the inclusive nature of his group, she argues that this radical shift was possible because it was combined with a radical ethos, a subversive practice and a basic ascetical attitude. With the development of the community life of the church there was a change from this radical exodus-type existence to a more settled existence within the home (where the woman was wife and mother) as the centre of Christian praxis, and so tensions arose between Christian theory/faith – summed up in the 'all one' of Galatians 3:28 – and praxis, and it is this tension which is seen in the conflicts in Paul's writing. Heine thus gives a sociological explanation for the develop-

ment of hierarchicalism and indicates something of the depth of the problem which cannot be simply explained or dismissed as misogyny or patriarchy.

Heine's sequel, *Christianity and the Goddess* (SCM, 1988), which has only just arrived on my desk, is subtitled 'Systematic criticism of a feminist theology'. She pursues the concerns of the first book in more detail, with a critical survey of feminist theories about God as Mother, the goddess myth, matriarchy, Jesa Christa, and the question of a 'feminine science'. Although very critical, Heine shares the motivation and concerns of the feminists she critiques, and for those interested in feminist theology at greater depth, this book is well worth consideration.

This problem of the relationship between theory and praxis is central to the problem of interpreting the NT and drawing from it criteria for our lives today. It is part of the same discussion as that which speaks of the culturally relative elements of the NT, in distinction from the principles which are valid cross-culturally, a discussion Elaine Storkey and Andrew Kirk indicate in *MWG*.

Another extremely important point which Susanne Heine is concerned with, and which evangelicals are too ready to dismiss, is the question of what women *do*, when faced with conflict or with monolithically subordinating positions which are hard to relate to convictions about God's justice and about the way Christ calls and commissions his people. Ann Loades is also concerned with the problem of how women react to these problems. She refers, like Heine, to the uneasy transition of the original Christian communities into clearly defined, institutional organizations, and notes that one way in which women in early Christianity escaped male domination (as well as the perils of childbirth) was by retreat into chastity and asceticism, and sometimes into scholarship as a kind of intellectual asceticism. She explores the strange relationship between the idealistic exaltation of women and misogyny and fear of women's sexuality and demonstrates how although sexual asceticism *could* lead to a measure of freedom for women, it could also lead to asexuality and very bizarre behaviour. This tradition was particularly harmful when it developed into a morbid over-identification with Christ as a suffering victim, although it offered a way of being 'in Christ' to which gender is irrelevant. The effects of this kind of spirituality, frequently combined with anorexia as in the case of Simone Weil, are alarmingly depicted, and equally alarming are the corresponding images of God and God's dealings with human beings. Ann Loades considers further our understanding of God in the light of feminist debate, looking also at 'Mary' traditions and symbolism. Her conclusion is that it is vital for our theology and our understanding of God in particular to express co-inherence and mutuality between women and men, that we need both female and male metaphors to 'indicate divine wholeness' whilst wanting to avoid slipping into the tradition of the all-sufficient male who embodies femininity only in an all-competent androgyny.

Having considered the effects on women in history of subordination in the church, Ann Loades ends where Susanne Heine also ends, with the position of women in the church today – which is also, of course, the central concern of *MWG*. Heine concluded, on gnosticism, that although femininity as such was not held in particularly high esteem, women did in practice hold positions of prominence and authority which they were, by that time, not allowed within Christianity, and that this practice was mirrored in many heretical movements. She argues that 'Heresies do not emerge by chance; they are also provoked. Feminist theology today is a clear warning signal'. That is, where our churches do not integrate the theory of Galatians 3:28 with the practices of their community life, they are laying the foundations for the next exodus of heretics. Ann Loades similarly talks of the need for reconstruction within Christian theology, and notes that for some this will result in the abandonment of Christianity in the development of post-Christian feminism. All three books thus present a sobering picture of the situation where, just as women left Christianity in favour of heretical movements in the past, today there is a danger of the same thing happening. Many women find help and support *elsewhere* than within Christian churches (*MWG* highlights this in practical terms) and the church is often either negative or indifferent to the problems and issues involved. Those concerned with conservative and evangelical theology should be aware of the way in which they are seen by others within the broader spectrum of the theological debate, and should be aware that women *are* abandoning

Christianity because of its failure to respond adequately to their concerns.

This is *not* to say that Christian theology and the Christian church should respond by being all things to all people, but it *should* be concerned to remain true to its own faith, to struggle for consistency between its practical community life, and its claims of redemption and oneness for all in Christ, the mutuality of all – of whatever sex,

class, background, race and so on – as equally and together bearers of God's image. These books highlight also the fact of human fallibility, the fallibility of human thought and life, and this in turn highlights the need for us to be self-critical, to hold ourselves accountable to one another, in the light of Christ, in our theology as well as in our relationships, putting into practice our proclamation of the justice and inclusiveness of the kingdom of God.

## Five Christian books on AIDS

John Wilkinson

*Dr Wilkinson, who comes from Edinburgh, is a community health specialist with expertise in medicine and theology. He has a major work forthcoming on medical ethics. The books he reviews in this article are:*

*Caroline Collier, The 20th Century Plague (Lion, 1987), 95 pp., £1.95.*

*Patrick Dixon, The Truth about AIDS (Kingsway, 1987), 251 pp., £4.95.*

*Jack Dominion, Sexual Integrity: The Answer to AIDS (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987), 149 pp., £4.95.*

*Bill Kirkpatrick, AIDS: Sharing the Pain (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988), 148 pp., £3.95.*

*Margaret White, AIDS and the Positive Alternatives (Marshall Pickering, 1987), 118 pp., £4.95.*

There can be few literate members of Western society who are unfamiliar with the acronym AIDS, or its French equivalent SIDA, for both terms have rapidly found a place in everyday speech. AIDS stands for the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is *acquired* because it is not hereditary, although an immune deficiency of similar mechanism but unrelated causation may be hereditary. It is an *immune deficiency* because it produces failure of the defence system of the body to protect it against infection. Finally it is called a *syndrome* because it is recognized as a collection of symptoms which may occur together, but is not regarded as being a disease in its own right. AIDS is, in fact, the final stage of the infection of the human body by the AIDS virus, now generally known as the human immunodeficiency virus or HIV for short.

### The emergence of AIDS

AIDS was first reported in June 1981 as occurring amongst promiscuous male homosexuals in the large urban cities on the east and west seaboard of the United States. Its cause was at first unknown although its behaviour resembled that of an infection. Two years later the virus was identified in the Pasteur Institute in Paris. Since its first recognition, the syndrome has been reported from most regions of the world, notably from Africa where there is some evidence that the infection may have originated in Zaire.

### Medical experience of AIDS

We have only known about AIDS for eight years and are ignorant of its long-term features. We do not know, for example, if everyone who is infected with HIV will eventually and inevitably progress to the fatal end-stage of AIDS, or whether there are factors which will operate to prevent this progression. This means that we should be careful in our usage of the term AIDS. All AIDS is HIV infection, but not all HIV infection is AIDS. When the syndrome first appeared the mass media seized on the term AIDS and used it exclusively. They gave the impression that all HIV infection was AIDS and so contributed to the initial panic which swept the United States. As medical experience of the infection increases we shall be able to see our present problems in a better perspective than we can now.

### Christian interest in AIDS

The five books which form the subject of this review article are all from Christian publishers. Four of them were launched together at a joint news conference in London in November 1987. This must indicate a Christian interest which is unusual especially when the topic they are concerned with is a medical one. Several reasons suggest themselves in explanation of this Christian interest. These may be personal, social, ethical and theological. Christians must be concerned with the threat to human life and happiness which HIV presents in most areas of the world, and do what they can to minimize this threat. They must emphasize the relevance of Christian ethical behaviour to the transmission of HIV infection, and they must wrestle with the moral and theological issues which arise from the sudden appearance of such a condition so intimately bound up as it is with human behaviour.

These five books then are an expression of the current Christian interest in HIV infection and AIDS. Their authors represent a wide theological spectrum and four of them are doctors. Inevitably, the medical authors cover much common ground. For this reason it might have been better if they had combined in the joint production of one book rather than in the joint launching of four books at the same news conference. Let us now look at these books and try to assess their value to the readers of *Themelios* who may be involved now or in the future in the pastoral care of HIV-infected persons.

### The 20th Century Plague

Dr Caroline Collier was a general practitioner in Stourbridge until she was appointed the AIDS Lecturer and Resource Officer of the Christian Medical Fellowship in April 1987. Her book is the shortest and the cheapest of the five under review and she manages to pack a great deal of information into its ninety-five pages. However, because of its brevity the book tends to give a more dogmatic tone to its statements than do the other books. This was illustrated by the reception the book received from the Press who accused Dr Collier and the Christian Medical Fellowship of drawing up a plan for the control of AIDS and HIV-infected persons based on compulsory testing of the population for HIV infection and segregation of those found to be positive in separate towns or cities. In fact, such a plan was only mentioned as an option in the book and was not put forward as the official view of the author or the Christian Medical Fellowship.

### The Truth about AIDS

This book is the longest of the five books and is the most comprehensive in its coverage of the subject. Its author, Dr Patrick Dixon, is in terminal care practice in London and he has read and travelled widely in the preparation of his book. It contains by far the greatest number of references (mostly medical), but still manages to be very readable and very practical. If you can afford only one book on AIDS, then this is the one to buy.

### Sexual Integrity: The Answer to AIDS

The author of this book is Dr Jack Dominion who is a well-known consultant psychiatrist with a special interest in the ethical and social

problems of sex and marriage. Dominian is a practising Roman Catholic who does not always find himself in agreement with the teaching of his Church, as this book illustrates. He regards the arrival of AIDS as a fundamental challenge to contemporary sexual morality and urges a total rethinking of modern sexual behaviour. His own contribution to this he summarizes in the phrase *sexual integrity* which he prefers to the word chastity because of the unfortunate repressive associations which that word has acquired. His book needs careful reading for he uses psychological terms which are not always as precise as students of ethics and theology would prefer. Thus he appears to be able to find room in his phrase *sexual integrity* for the acceptance of homosexual relationships and even premarital heterosexual intercourse provided these are based on loving personal relationships. Some of the author's arguments could result in the justification of AIDS-promoting behaviour rather than forming the answer to the problems raised by AIDS.

#### **AIDS: Sharing the Pain**

This is the only book by a non-medical author amongst the five being reviewed. Bill Kirkpatrick, the author, is an Anglican minister who runs a counselling centre in central London and has written his book to provide pastoral guidelines for those involved in caring for persons with HIV infection. It gives the impression that it originated as a commonplace book compiled out of the author's experience and reading in the course of his ministry to HIV-infected persons. He provides useful checklists concerning matters to be covered in HIV counselling. The last forty pages of the book form a helpful repository of information on facts, literature and agencies related to AIDS and its problems. The book reflects the high Anglican tradition of its author, but will also be found valuable by those who do not belong to this tradition.

#### **AIDS and the Positive Alternatives**

Dr Margaret White is a general practitioner in Croydon and an elected member of the General Medical Council. She has written previously on the Christian position on abortion. Her book on AIDS is popularly written, well-researched and contains some apt quotations. The 'positive alternatives' mentioned in the title of the book are chastity before marriage and fidelity after marriage, the twin pillars of Christian sexual ethics.

#### **The prevention of HIV infection**

The World AIDS Summit held in London in January 1988 concluded that the single most important means for the prevention of AIDS was the dissemination of information to the people at risk about how HIV infection was spread. The information contained in these books is therefore to be welcomed, especially as it is provided in a Christian context and with reference to Christian values. However, information is not enough. Man needs also motivation. It is just not true that if he knows the right thing to do, he will automatically do it. He needs to be motivated to do it. It is just here that the Christian church can make a vital contribution with its message that human nature and human conduct can be changed. This is the message of the gospel and this is the answer to AIDS. If a man, or woman, knows that the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16) then the risk of HIV infection is removed. It is the church's responsibility that the education of those at risk of HIV infection is not confined to biology, but firmly set in the context of Christian values and Christian ethics. In this way the church will be practising true preventive health care.

#### **The care of persons with HIV infection**

At present there is no cure for AIDS, only drugs which may delay its progression. The treatment of AIDS is therefore palliative and needs to cover all aspects of the life of those affected by the syndrome. These will include personal, domestic, social and spiritual aspects. They demand the total care of the whole person. This again is where the Christian community can make an important contribution. There is much useful guidance about ways in which this might be done in these five books, notably those by Dixon and Kirkpatrick.

#### **The challenge of the future**

It is widely believed that the world is still only in the early phase of a global and fatal epidemic. This situation presents a challenge to Christian members of the caring professions and to the Christian community as a whole. There are signs that the church is beginning to respond by the appointment of specialist workers and the planning of AIDS hospices, but much more will be needed in the years to come. Let us hope and pray that the church will be able to take an effective part in combatting this twentieth-century plague, and not be found wanting in the hour of human need.

## **Book Reviews**

Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (eds.), **New Dictionary of Theology** (Leicester/Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), xix + 738 pp., £17.95.

This is the best one-volume dictionary of Christian theology I have read. The student wishing to possess a comprehensive and authoritative reference work on the broad themes of Christian thought, both past and present, could do no better than to add this work to his or her shelves, or persuade some generous acquaintance to make a gift of it. It compares favourably with its main rivals, such as *The New Dictionary of Theology* (SCM Press) and the somewhat larger *Marshall-Pickering Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. It cannot be compared directly with the magisterial *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, as this latter work includes substantial blocks of material relating to the history, liturgy, spirituality and ordering of the main churches. Nevertheless, as a dictionary of *theology*, the present volume can even hope to rival this most eminent publication from OUP.

What, then, are the strengths of this work? It may help the student reader if the present reviewer identifies some features which he suspects will prove invaluable as a study or research resource. First, the work is *up-to-date*. There are excellent articles on very recent theological writers such as Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, and the rising star of Tübingen, Eberhard Jüngel. A

number of entries reflect developments of importance in more recent years, such as an excellent critical article on 'Liberation Theology', with a valuable bibliography. Similarly, many of the bibliographical references given date from the period 1980-87, allowing the reader to ascertain what recent material is available for further study. This naturally leads to the second strength of the work: it is *user-friendly*. In other words, it genuinely aims to assist the reader develop his or her knowledge, by explaining technical terms, contextualizing historical developments or personalities, and by indicating helpful further reading material. Thirdly, it is generally *reliable*. In other words, you can treat the views expressed in this volume as, on the whole, being trustworthy, reflecting the best contemporary scholarship. The present reviewer was delighted with the overall standard of this volume, which marks a considerable achievement for both the publisher and editors.

It is easy to fault this work on points of detail. For example, it would have been helpful if an entry 'Tradition' had referred the reader to the entry 'Scripture and Tradition' (pp. 631-633): the casual reader might gain the impression that the question of the nature and status of tradition was not dealt with within this volume. The bibliographies are also open to serious criticism at points. For example, consider the article on the important 19th-century writer, Ludwig Feuerbach. What is the point in drawing the reader's attention to the German-language article 'Ludwig Feuerbachs Lehre von der Religion' (1966), and failing to note Marx Wartofsky's brilliant, readily-available English-language study *Feuerbach*, issued in paperback in 1982, which deals with precisely this question at far greater depth? In a work orientated towards English-language readers, it is perfectly reasonable to refer the reader to German-language studies, where no better English-language material exists – but this is certainly not

the case here! Inevitably, there are more general weaknesses in a volume of this kind, which is obliged to draw upon a wide range of contributors. 210 international contributors are responsible for more than 600 articles, and the present reviewer is inclined to suspect that some contributors are perhaps less able than others. Nevertheless, the overall standard is remarkably high, with flashes of brilliance evident on page after page.

In summary: an invaluable work of reference for the student, which is likely to see active service on his or her bookshelves for many years.

Alister McGrath, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

Dale Patrick, *Old Testament Law* (London: SCM, 1986), 278 pp., £8.50.

This clearly written book aims to 'survey the legal texts of the Pentateuch and familiarize the reader with basic concepts and theories of current scholarship into biblical law'. It may be said at once that the author succeeds admirably in attaining these objectives.

Patrick first of all deals helpfully with definitions of Law, before moving on to consider 'How Law is Studied by Critical Scholars'. His lucid sketch of source criticism (pp. 14-19) highlights the pivotal role of Deuteronomy in current hypotheses. Patrick's own contribution is made in the context of the standard source-critical framework. Interestingly, at no point in the discussion of source criticism or in the bibliography at the end of the chapter is any indication given that there might be any uncertainty in applying the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis to the composition of the Pentateuch. Nor is any warning given on p. 14 of possible difficulties in the application of ANE material as 'aids' to interpretation of the biblical texts.

The second chapter also deals with form criticism, the types of legal corpora, and the categories of apodictic and casuistic law. Patrick offers clear discussion (though 'series' and 'codes' which he began to use on p. 8 are not defined until p. 20), and on p. 24 provides a useful diagram of the categories he is going to work with. He modifies apodictic law into 'addressed commandments' and 'capital crimes' and casuistic law into 'casuistic primary law' and 'casuistic remedial law'.

The bulk of the following chapters are devoted to expounding certain major tracts of OT Law: chapter 3 'the Ten Commandments', 4 'The Book of the Covenant', 5 'The Deuteronomic Law', 6 'The Holiness Code and Priestly Law'. Chapter 7 changes course to deal with 'The Written and Unwritten Law'. Here Patrick argues forcefully for the view that 'for the period during which the legal tradition was in formation, the law of God was an unwritten Law' (p. 189). 'The law which the judicial system enforced was an unwritten law woven into the fabric of society and discovered in the course of judicial deliberation' (p. 198). Chapter 8 deals with 'Law and Covenant'.

The concluding chapter attempts to address the question 'what is the meaning of this law for the twentieth-century reader?' (p. 249). Patrick notes perceptively that 'the legal texts of ancient Israel were preserved and edited for the religious community that arose from the ashes of national destruction. The Bible in its present form, thus, was not intended to be used as evidence from the ancient past but was intended to be the living word of the living God for the living people of God (Judaism). The law contained in the Bible is meant to become an address to the members of that community and can be an address to the people which claims to be the "new Israel" (Christianity)' (p. 250). Not all his suggestions for appropriating the message of the law will commend themselves and the readers of this journal may find more help on this point in G. J. Wenham's two essays ('Grace and law in the Old Testament'; 'Law and the legal system in the Old Testament') in B. N. Kaye and G. J. Wenham (edd.) *Law, Morality and the Bible* (Leicester: IVP, 1978).

It is beyond the scope of this review to discuss in detail many of the exegetical issues raised by Patrick's study. Something of his approach may be seen in the way he handles 'The Deuteronomic Law'. Here Patrick attempts to combine von Rad's hypothesis that Deuteronomy's origins are to be sought among the rural Levites with the alternative hypothesis that the book is a product of the northern

tribes. Although he interacts briefly (and negatively) with Weinfeld — who holds that Deuteronomy reflects the 'Assyrian state treaty form' — Patrick never interacts with those who believe Deuteronomy to reflect the earlier 2nd millennium state-treaties, and this despite listing two such scholars (Kline and McCarthy) in his bibliography! Having conceded that there are parallels between 'D's condemnation of incitement to apostasy' in Deuteronomy 13 and 'provisions of Hittite and Assyrian treaties', Patrick then adds 'the interpreter should not overextend the analogy between treaty and covenant, however' (p. 107). Why not? Because it might provide real, as opposed to hypothetical, grounds for dating Deuteronomy, and that to the second millennium BC?

Patrick frequently asserts the utopian character of Deuteronomy's legislation. With regard to the provision in Deuteronomy 13:13-18 that the community should put an *Israelite* city under the ban Patrick writes, 'Although the author undoubtedly composed these paragraphs in all seriousness, they have the ring of utopian theory. That Israelites would be willing to inform on family or friends or destroy a whole city is doubtful. No biblical narratives evidence such willingness' (p. 108). It might be suggested, *au contraire*, that Jdg. 20, which recounts the sequel to the rape of the Levite's concubine by the Benjaminites of Gibeah, does in fact evidence what Patrick denies. For in Jdg. 20 the 'whole' of Israel goes out against the tribe of Benjamin, and at enormous cost (Jdg. 20:21,25). And it is noteworthy that in both Dt. 13 and Jdg. 20 those who are to be removed from Israel are described as 'sons of Belial'.

Patrick rather ends up in a blind alley over Dt. 17:14-20 on kingship because of his late dating. He contends that the account depends particularly on 1 Sa. 8, but he goes on, 'It is noteworthy that D ignores those traditions in 1 Sa. 7-12 which depict the monarchy as instituted by God to deliver Israel from its enemies. D also ignores the theology that elevated the Davidic dynasty to a sacred status. . . . Clearly, the Deuteronomist is not an apologist for the Davidic monarchy and exponent of Judean tradition: he speaks, rather, for the theocratic-democratic north' (p. 119). But if Dt. 17 predates the Davidic dynasty, of course 1 Sa. 7-12 is 'ignored' and the alternatives presented by Patrick are in that case both anachronistic.

Or again, Patrick's mystification as to why Dt. 25:17-19 should contain 'a command to exterminate the Amalekites' when it 'comes from the centuries following the disappearance of these desert marauders' (p. 139) is set in a different context entirely if Dt. in fact comes from a time when the Amalekites were indeed alive and well.

Taken as a whole, however, this is a readable exposition of OT Law from the standpoint of critical orthodoxy which actually goes beyond mere description and attempts to salvage the Law for the contemporary Christian. The publishers are correct in their claim that 'there is no other book available quite like this'. It requires discerning reading — which it will repay.

David G. Deboys, Tyndale House, Cambridge.

B. G. Webb, *The Book of The Judges. An Integrated Reading* (JSOTS 46: Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 280 pp., £11.95 (subscribers £8.95).

This book is a revision of Webb's Ph.D. thesis entitled *Theme in the Book of Judges: A Literary Study of the Book in its Finished Form* (Sheffield University, 1985). Both works mark a somewhat new departure in study of the book of Judges, which has been the object of much historical enquiry, but little literary investigation.

Chapter one of the book argues that reading Judges as a unity is a sound course of action, despite the tendency of recent decades to see it more as a collage of stories. Chapter two looks at the Jephthah story as one unit, in an attempt to assess what the story appears to say as a whole. Particular attention is paid to the presence of themes which seem to run through the different parts of the story. This procedure is then applied to the book as a whole in chapters three to five. Chapter six draws some tentative conclusions as to how future study of Judges and the Deuteronomistic History might be affected by Webb's reading of the book.

There are certain limitations to this attempt to arrive at an 'integrated reading' of Judges. Firstly, the kind of approach adopted by Webb could be considered as being too subjective. Luis Alonso Schökel, who has been a pioneer of literary approaches to Scripture, has said that a professor speaking his feelings out loud does not constitute new OT scholarship. Webb has however been aware of this danger, and throughout the style of the book is cautious rather than bold. Indeed, far from using his insights to form the basis of far-reaching assertions, Webb has limited his conclusions to a mere four-and-a-half pages (pp. 207-211).

Secondly, the procedure followed raises several questions relating to how ancient Israelite literature should be read. Is this 'an' integrated reading in the sense that other integrated readings would be just as valid? What about the issue of authorial intention? The thematic links that are outlined beg the question as to whether such literary unity is the result of conscious thought or not. Understandably, these questions are not addressed; their treatment would have required considerable extra space.

Despite the caveats outlined above, this book has much to commend it. Few passages raised difficulties in my mind, with the possible exception of the account of Shamgar (pp. 132-133). Rather, I found Webb's conviction that there are themes which connect the stories convincing. The most important contribution of the volume to my mind is the suggestion that the story of Samson recapitulates the history of Israel in the period of Judges in a symbolic manner (summarized on p. 179). Samson is accordingly to be understood as a symbol of Israel herself (p. 201). Webb moreover sees the Samson story as the climax of the book; this suggests that the concern of the book of Judges is to focus on Israel's wayward behaviour in her relationship with God, as mirrored in Samson's relations with Philistine women.

This suggestion is a new one. If Webb is correct in this way of reading the book, then there are implications for other narratives. Do any other characters in Judges behave in this way? Is the behaviour of Israel a key concern of other passages outside Judges which appear to be stories focusing on an individual? These questions call for investigation.

This book will be a valuable tool for those wishing to study the book of Judges.

**David F. Pennant, Nottingham.**

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**Joel Rosenberg, King and Kin: Political Allegory in the Hebrew Bible** (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 255 pp., n.p.

Joel Rosenberg's recent book provides a significant and stimulating discussion of political allegory in the Hebrew Bible. Rosenberg refers to the Bible's 'political import', a phrase which he explains in detail. The many biblical writers were of course concerned with advancing particular views of God, of morality, and of religious practices in general, and they were also great story-tellers (as for example the books of Genesis, Esther, and Jonah testify). But Rosenberg's point is that the biblical writers were also deeply concerned with describing Israel's political community and existence. For this reason, topics such as leadership, justice, crime, political stability and instability, and relationships between the rich and poor were of primary concern to the writers. Thus Rosenberg offers a needed balance to any who might describe the Hebrew Bible *only* in terms of its 'literary' merit or *exclusively* in terms of 'spiritual' categories.

By focusing on the styles, themes, and structures that are found from Genesis to 2 Kings (particularly the Garden Story (Gn. 2-3), the Abraham narrative (Gn. 12-25), and the history of David (1 Sa. 16-2 Ki. 2)), Rosenberg is able to call attention to their interrelation. Genesis is described as a companion work to 2 Samuel, a kind of 'midrash' or commentary on the Davidic history. Within the book of Genesis itself, an overall pattern may be discerned. At the end of each of the patriarchal stories, certain aspects of the Garden Story (Gn. 2-3) reappear. In these narrative units, a main character (a) leaves a homeland and/or kin, (b) allows one son to be preferred,

(c) suffers exile from the adopted home, (d) experiences the downfall of the favoured son, and (e) witnesses a son in exile.

When discussing each of these stories or story cycles, Rosenberg does not supply commentary in the traditional manner. His approach, like the biblical material itself, is episodic. He offers 'a series of short, interlocking essays, each seeking to pinpoint some moment in the institutional history of ancient Israel brought to bear in the narrative action or dialogue' (p. 111). The series of essays are illuminating (particularly those related to the Davidic history), but the reader is not always sure how they relate to each other and to the thesis of the book. Although disjointed, certain ideas are, however, particularly significant. For example, in place of simple one-for-one encodement (an interpretative practice which has justifiably given allegory a bad name), Rosenberg suggests that allegory is best understood not as a mode of something outside of the biblical text but rather *in* something textual. In his words, 'allegory is that which shows — or hints of — the relation between signs, words, and texts, a relation only fully fused in the experiences of reading, and fused in a manner that induces or encourages further reading. The allegorical sign thus always points away from itself toward an "other"' (p. 202).

The lack of lists and intricate diagrams in this book often enhances the argument. Students of the Bible should consider this fine book.

**Kenneth M. Craig, Jr, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.**

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**Adele Berlin, The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 179 pp., n.p.

In recent years biblical scholars have focused less on source-critical questions (Who was the author of the biblical book? How many were there? When was the book written?) and more on synchronic (sometimes called 'literary') approaches, but the flowering of literary studies of the Bible has concentrated on prose narrative to the neglect of verse. A few scholars are beginning to consider biblical poetry in the light of recent trends. Adele Berlin's *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* follows her *Poetics and Interpretation in Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield, 1983) and reflects the overall shift in focus from prose to poetry.

Berlin's investigation is based on the poetics of Roman Jakobson, a modern linguist who was not working with the Bible, and thus stands apart from such studies as Wilfred G. E. Watson's *Classical Hebrew Poetry* (Sheffield, 1983) and Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (Basic Books, 1985). Jakobson demonstrated that parallelisms are not limited to one genre (*i.e.* prose as compared to poetry) but are linguistic equivalences that transcend genre distinctions. Thus the definition which Berlin offers throughout her book is much broader than that found in other studies on biblical poetry where parallelism is described exclusively in terms of semantic and/or grammatical equivalences existing between two lines.

In the initial chapters, Berlin surveys various positions on biblical poetry beginning with Robert Lowth's famous *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753) and ending with various contemporary models (T. Collins, S. Geller, M. O'Connor, and J. Kugel). She succeeds in demonstrating that Kugel was able to maintain that biblical poetry and prose are indistinguishable only because he identified parallelism as the sole distinguishing mark for biblical poetry. Berlin's conclusion in the opening chapters, more in line with traditional biblical scholarship, is that poetry exists where *terseness and parallelism* occur in a high degree, whereas prose is found where these features are less prominent (but never lacking completely).

A review of the remaining chapters indicates that the discussion is technical and intricate, written for students interested in a linguistically based description of biblical parallelism. Chapter three contains a discussion of the grammatical aspects of parallelism and is divided into two sections (morphologic and syntactic). The fourth chapter deals with lexical and semantic aspects of parallelism. Berlin draws from psycholinguistic theory (particularly theory related to word association) and succeeds in showing that word pairs are more the product of normal linguistic association than a poetic substratum unique to biblical Hebrew. While biblical scholarship has been

moving in this direction, no arguments have been as convincing as the one Berlin offers here.

In the fifth chapter, phonological (or sound) aspects of parallelism are discussed in terms of 'sound pairs', and Berlin concludes after isolating numerous examples that sound pairing is as significant as other types of linguistic equivalence.

Unfortunately, each of the chapters remains largely independent. Perhaps a more integrated discussion would have resulted if the *hierarchy* of linguistic functions had been explored in true Jakobsonian fashion. Since grammatical, lexical, semantic and phonological aspects of parallelism are discussed along with psycholinguistic theory, the discussion is more technical, though none less significant, than that offered in her previous book on biblical prose.

**Kenneth M. Craig, Jr.**, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*.

Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Wisdom* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1987), 202 pp., £4.95.

The strength of this book is its breadth and seriousness as a work of theology, vigorously pursued in full loyalty to Scripture. True to its title, it begins with Christ as the key to our handling of the OT, and in particular to our understanding of what wisdom is, before taking us back to Genesis and on to the flowering of wisdom with David and Solomon. There follow three chapters which discuss in turn Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes as 'the perception of order', 'the hiddenness of order' and 'the confusion of order'; then a selection of wisdom passages elsewhere; finally, for this part of the book, a chapter entitled 'Wisdom in Old Testament Theology', in which it is argued that the link between the Wisdom writings and those that deal with Salvation History is their common concern with the theology of Creation. That is, that in both, there is a strong consciousness of the original harmony, now marred, between God, man and the rest of the created world; and while Salvation History reveals God's progressive work of redemption and restoration, the Wisdom writings concentrate on the present mixture and mystery of order and disorder with which we find ourselves confronted. Returning to the NT, the final chapters pursue the theme further under the headings 'Christ and the Perfection of Order' and 'Christians and the Transformation of Order'. Each chapter is preceded by a summary, and followed by a set of questions for study.

In his preface the author points out the scarcity of books which discuss 'the relationship of Old Testament wisdom to the New Testament in general, to Christ in particular, and to the Christian life'. In making good this lack, he writes as non-technically as possible, but from a wide knowledge of specialist contributions and with a scholar's self-discipline. The result is a book which is quite exacting, but stimulating and calculated to enlarge one's grasp of what Scripture is (as he would put it) 'on about'.

At a few points I was left unconvinced. The section on 'Christ our Wisdom' appears to extend the doctrine of the imputed merits of Christ into a realm where it does not properly apply, with the statement that 'In ourselves we still suffer from the foolishness of worldly wisdom, but in Christ we are perfectly wise, for he is our wisdom before God'. Or again, 'Whatever wisdom is, we possess it perfectly in Christ' (p. 26). This surely reduces imputation to absurdity, and needlessly so, since it is enough that the 'treasures of wisdom and knowledge' in him are for us to explore and be educated by, as we 'learn Christ'. Are we offered honorary degrees in this field?

Another query relates to the concept of the monarchy as Israel's 'coming of age', in the sense that with the appointment of royal counsellors God's people began now to order their affairs more by wisdom than by rote, seeking the principles behind the letter of the law. Yet this was as old as Moses, at least at the local level. 'Choose wise, understanding and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads' (Dt. 1:13). With David and Solomon there was certainly a flowering of *literary* wisdom, but their disastrous politics owed more to the guile of men than to the fear of the Lord. Guile, too, characterized the 'wise' women of Tekoa and Abel (cited on p. 54 in support of the author's contention), and, we might add, the

unspeakable Jonadab (2 Sa. 13:3ff.) – for in itself the adjective *hākām* which is applied to all three of them says nothing about spiritual maturity.

But these small quibbles, if they are justified, are far outweighed by the solid merits of this study, with its wise discussion of the many areas in which our flawed thoughts and systems need the correction of biblical wisdom: not merely as found in the OT but as interpreted and completed in the NT. I strongly recommend it.

**Derek Kidner**, Cambridge.

**Hans Conzelmann**, *Acts of the Apostles*, trans. by James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel and Donald H. Juel; ed. Eldon Jay Epp with Christopher R. Matthews (Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible: Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), xlviii + 287 pp., \$37.95.

This commentary by the influential NT professor at Göttingen University was first published in 1963 and revised in 1972. It has been a standard reference work for many years and is now being made available to a much wider audience through translation into English and incorporation into the attractive format of the Hermeneia series.

Although Conzelmann's monograph on the theology of Luke (German: *Die Mitte der Zeit*, 1954; E. T.: *The Theology of St. Luke*, 1960) set the tone for much of the academic debate concerning Luke-Acts in the 'fifties and 'sixties, his commentary on Acts has been overshadowed by the much larger and more accessible work of Ernst Haenchen (in the German 'Meyer' series 1956, with subsequent revisions; E.T.: 1971). The person who turns to this volume will immediately understand why this is so, since it is much more of a source book of historical, grammatical, textual, philological, and critical materials useful for the study of Acts than a full commentary in the normal sense of the word, though the material is arranged by the editors in a manner to make it much easier to use than the German original. Still, it must be said at the outset that students would be best advised to stick with the more comprehensive commentaries of Haenchen and F. F. Bruce (Greek text: 1951; *NICNT*: 1952; revised editions of both volumes are in the press at time of writing) for detailed assistance, consulting Conzelmann as one would a lexical or grammatical aid. Those who can read German will wish to consult the more recent commentaries by Gerhard Schneider (2 vols., *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 1980 and 1982) and Rudolf Pesch (2 vols., *Evangelisch-Katolischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 1986), which are both more up-to-date and more extensive than Conzelmann or any other commentary available in English at the present time.

As we have come to expect from the Hermeneia series, the volume is magnificently produced. It is both a joy to behold and to hold in one's hands. The paper is of a very high quality; the mixture of typefaces, both attractive and imminently readable; and the cloth binding, designed to withstand hard use. The front endpaper reproduced the Greek text of Acts 5:12-21 from the reverse side of uncial MS 0189, the oldest MS of Acts as well as the oldest parchment MS of the NT (2nd/3rd cent.). The English translation included in the commentary is the RSV adapted to Conzelmann's interpretation. Sources and texts are quoted in Greek or (occasionally) Latin, but they are normally translated for the aid of the non-specialist. Eleven appendices of longer texts are contained at the end of the commentary, followed by a select bibliography (up-dated slightly by the editors) and extensive indices of biblical, early Jewish, early Christian, Greek and Latin writings, as well as Greek words, key subjects and modern authors.

But when we open the wraps and look inside Conzelmann's work, we find a number of features that make it unsatisfactory as a primary commentary on Acts. First, it is extremely dated. Much work has been done on Luke-Acts since 1963 (or 1972). More importantly, many of Conzelmann's most distinctive ideas (e.g. his suggestion that '[f]undamental to Acts is a picture of the whole of salvation history divided up into three epochs: the time of Israel, the time of Jesus (as the centre), and the time of the church', p. xiv) have been discredited by more recent scholarship. Secondly, Conzelmann is extremely

limited in his perspective. He shows little awareness of the breadth of the ecumenical enterprise of NT scholarship: his world is the world of German Protestant scholarship, and even here he tends to enter into dialogue with a rather limited group. Only infrequently does he draw from or refer to the work of Roman Catholic researchers or British exegetes (e.g. Bruce gets but one passing reference!). Thirdly, his knowledge of the primary sources of historical research – the inscriptions, the coins, the excavations, the geography, even the Graeco-Roman literature – is obviously second-hand. Conzelmann is much more at home in conversation with his small circle of theological colleagues and in discussing possible (but often implausible) hypotheses concerning historical backgrounds than he is in handling essential historical data. Fourthly, the author tends to be unduly dogmatic. To back up his (frequently disputed) opinion he will cite a reference as if it contained the demonstration of his point, when in fact, the scholar cited actually offers no proof but simply makes the same assertion. It just goes to show that fundamentalists are not the only ones guilty of proof-texting!

In spite of its inadequacies, however, Conzelmann's commentary will be very useful as a source book for the study of Acts. It will rarely be given the last word, but it certainly will be found useful. It belongs alongside your lexica, grammars and concordances more than among your standard commentaries.

**W. Ward Gasque, J. Omar Good Visiting Distinguished Professor of Evangelical Christianity 1987-88, Juniata College, Huntingdon, PA, USA.**

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**Aida Besançon Spencer, Paul's Literary Style. A Stylistic and Historical Comparison of 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:13, Romans 8:9-39 and Philippians 3:2-4:13** (Jackson, Mississippi: Evangelical Theological Society, 1984), xiv + 338 pp., \$13.95.

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A careful reader of the Pauline corpus will be aware of the differences between Paul's letters in such matters as theme and warmth and of tone. In this book Spencer addresses the question of whether the differences between 2 Corinthians, Romans and Philippians extend to the matter of the style of writing. She begins with a description of the study of literary style. This involves the analysis of a text using certain 'stylistic operators' in order to obtain objective, verifiable data. Spencer uses ten operators, such as the analysis of the function of verbs, of imagery and of the variety of sentence length. The historical context of the three books under investigation is then briefly discussed. Spencer detects a similar problem of disunity in all three congregations addressed by Paul, whilst also noting the differences in the causes of this disunity. In addition, the receptiveness, warmth and intimacy of relationship between the congregation and Paul also differs in each case.

Spencer then investigates the three texts by using her ten stylistic operators in order to determine which elements in Paul's style are variable and which are constant. She detects such constant stylistic traits as Paul's tendency to use abstract nouns and general images, and the use of active rather than passive verbs. Noteworthy stylistic differences include the use of a clear and simple writing style along with much irony and indirectness in the 2 Corinthians passage, and the use of personal asides and imperatives in writing to the Philippians. Spencer concludes that Paul has a distinctly different style of writing in each of the three passages investigated. The major reason for this difference in style is not the time and place of writing, the theme, or the use of an amanuensis, but the audience. Specifically, their amiability or receptiveness toward Paul, their relationship (or lack thereof) as spiritual children of Paul and their subjection to external opponents are all important factors here. Thus Spencer shows in a detailed analytical way how Paul adapted his style as he communicated with different congregations.

The book is not intended for students but is rather a contribution to the scholarly study of stylistics. At times Spencer makes too much of small differences in statistics. She needs to show when a small difference is statistically significant and when it is not, particularly in view of the fact that she has selected three short passages from larger letters. In addition, the significance Spencer draws from some

stylistic features is often far from self-evident. For example, do shorter words really help create an effect of timelessness (p. 181)? Gibson's work on Modern American Prose Style is occasionally referred to in order to draw out the significance of some features. But how relevant is American style to Paul's Greek? The matter is not discussed. Admittedly in a new area of investigation Spencer does not have many comparable studies to draw on. Yet the leap from observation of a stylistic feature to a statement of its significance is a difficult one and Spencer does not spend enough time showing why her particular interpretation is correct in each case.

These points aside, the book has some helpful insights in what is a new field of investigation.

**Paul Trebilco, St John's College, Durham.**

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**J. Stevenson, A New Eusebius. Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337, rev. by W. H. C. Frend** (London: SPCK, 1987), 404 pp., £12.50.

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Thirty years after it was first published, a book which has been an unrivalled resource for English-reading students (and teachers) of the early church for a whole generation has been given a new lease of life. Professor Frend has not only supplemented Stevenson's collection with a selection of extracts from the Nag Hammadi library of gnostic writings found in 1945, but has also rearranged the order of the documents, grouping them into specific subjects within a chronological framework. A few other additions have been made, and a larger number of omissions of material judged to be of lesser importance or interest. The result is a compilation totalling twelve fewer documents than Stevenson's first edition. Because only a dozen or so bear the same numbers in both editions, it will be virtually impossible to use the two together in a class of students. (There is no concordance to lessen the difficulty.) This must be judged an unfortunate by-product of what is now undoubtedly a more valuable source-book of early Christianity. The notes and bibliographical information have been brought up to date but not drastically revised.

The accession of the Nag Hammadi material is the most significant difference between the two editions, although whether most students will make much of the brief excerpts from the *Gospel of Thomas* (placed, it should be noted, under not Gnosticism but 'Jewish Christianity: Encratism [Severe Asceticism]') is doubtful. One is surprised not to find anything from the new Cologne-codex account of Mani's life, and the lack of inscriptions remains perhaps the most obvious gap. But *A New Eusebius* is assured of a life of continuing usefulness. There is no substitute in historical study for tackling the source themselves, and there is no more convenient access to them for the church to the age of Constantine than this book.

**D. F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh.**

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**Helge Stadelmann, Grundlinien eines bibeltreuen Schriftverständnisses** (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1985), 140 pp., n.p.

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Most evangelicals tend to think of Germany as the home of radical biblical scholarship and theology, but appearances can be deceptive, and within recent years there has been a most welcome revival of evangelical theology among younger scholars, the fruits of which are being seen in a series of technical works and more popular presentations. Dr Stadelmann is one of the leaders of this movement. He has shown his expertise as a biblical scholar in his monograph on *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter* (Tübingen, 1980), and has now written a short, non-technical book on the evangelical understanding of the Bible. It is unusual to review non-English publications in *Themelios*, but it would give an unfair picture of the state of scholarship – and of evangelical scholarship in particular – if we totally failed to do so. Let Dr Stadelmann's work, therefore, stand here as representative for so much more that equally deserves mention and commendation.

Dr Stadelmann writes from the kind of standpoint associated with the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, and therefore much of what he has to say will not be new to English-speaking readers. But he also writes for the German situation, and he has his own important contribution to make to the topic. He singles out two themes in his book. The first is the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Writing, it would seem, primarily for his fellow evangelicals, and assuming that they are unlikely to be taken in by the excesses of radical scholarship, he develops his case over against 'positive' scholars who, in his opinion, do not go far enough in asserting the full inspiration of Scripture. Naturally Brunner and Barth come in for criticism, but also a number of scholars within the Pietistic wing of the church. Over against them he shows how the evangelical doctrine of Scripture has had a distinguished list of supporters right through the history of the church and he develops briefly the biblical basis for the doctrine along familiar lines.

His second theme is the interpretation of the Bible, and here Dr Stadelmann pursues less familiar topics. He finds himself in opposition to the kind of interpretation prevalent in some German circles (and elsewhere) which relies on the Spirit and ignores the accepted 'methods' of study. Equally he rejects historical criticism of the Troeltschian variety. He stresses how the Holy Spirit works through our minds in study. He allies himself with E. D. Hirsch in stressing the need to discover the intention of the author, and he further emphasizes the basic clarity of Scripture understood in its 'literal', *i.e.* 'natural' sense. Above all, he insists that interpretation must include application to the modern reader so that he can be brought to the point of obedience to the text. Here he grapples with the problem of finding a method of applying the text that will be a part of interpretation and not an optional addendum. He wants to be able to say, 'the interpreter finds the Word of God in and with the text, not somewhere behind the text' (p. 102), and yet he recognizes that not all parts of Scripture speak to us in the same way. So along with the need for 'spiritual' and 'methodical' exegesis he makes an interesting plea for a 'salvation-historical' approach which recognizes and takes into account the various epochs of biblical history and then asks whether the text spoken in a particular epoch is relevant for me in my epoch: 'not everything in the Bible is directly applicable to me' is the conclusion which he reaches (p. 127), and therefore it is the principles behind some texts rather than the texts themselves which apply to me. What is lacking is a discussion of how we know whether what was said in a particular epoch is directly relevant to us in ours.

Dr Stadelmann's treatment of these difficult issues is always clear and simple. His book is probably too brief to offer a fully convincing defence of his view of biblical infallibility and inerrancy; my feeling is that he cuts some corners in his defence and is not likely to persuade those who do not already agree with him. This is not to say that the case is necessarily a weak one, but for a proper defence of it one still needs to go elsewhere, *e.g.* back to Warfield. He has difficulties in defending Luther, who argued that Scripture was indeed inerrant and then proceeded to de-canonize those parts of Scripture which he could not harmonize with the rest. However, he well and truly puts paid to some modern objections to the evangelical doctrine of Scripture. I find it puzzling that he seems to doubt whether some of his German evangelical colleagues such as G. Maier hold fully to the inerrancy of Scripture.

But one can only welcome a book such as this and pray that the author will find many sharing his basic theological outlook, whether or not this book is convincing in every detail. And all students should certainly pay heed to the wise dictum of A. Schlatter which is quoted: 'Scientific study is first of all seeing, second, seeing, third, seeing and over and over again seeing.'

**I. Howard Marshall**, University of Aberdeen.

quite substantial and highly stimulating article by the philosophical theologian James Olthuis, followed by three short responses and a concluding reply by Olthuis himself.

My first recommendation as regards this book would have to be to start at the end. That is to say, read G. T. Sheppard's response before attempting the rest of the collection. My reasons for suggesting this are two-fold. To begin with, Sheppard's contribution is brief (a mere four or five pages); secondly, and more importantly, it provides an excellent account of the historical and political background to the hermeneutical debate that this volume contributes to, highlighting the various reasons why Olthuis' view may, lamentably, find few friends within the evangelical community.

But what is Olthuis' view? His essay in this book, which is an expanded version of a paper delivered at a conference in Toronto, does not make easy reading, particularly for those unfamiliar with the philosophical traditions upon which he draws. In essence however, Olthuis is seeking to develop a hermeneutic which is *less* dependent upon (but not totally independent of) the pseudo-scientific techniques of the historical-critical method, utilizing instead some of the insights of post-critical thought. He points out that while all Christians would accept the notion of biblical authority, there is little agreement as to what constitutes that authority. Because our view of biblical authority is so tied up with our belonging to a particular community there exists, says Olthuis, '... the ever present danger that we declare all those whose concepts of biblical authority are not the same as ours to be heretics, infidels, and hypocrites ...' (p. 11).

Olthuis calls on us to recognize the fact that the way in which we submit to the scriptures is not solely the product of a pure and simple faith, but rather it involves the articulation of that faith within a particular tradition, asking particular questions at particular points in history. In the light of this observation we ought to exercise a deep humility as regards both *our* submission to the scriptures and also the manner in which other communities live out their submission to them. Olthuis' concern with the reader's response to Scripture could represent an encouraging redressing of a balance which has been almost exclusively biased towards the quest for 'objective, authorial intention'. However nobody likes to be told that their view is coloured by a particular pair of tinted spectacles and thus we find the first response to Olthuis' essay, by Clark Pinnock, to be a negative one.

Pinnock rejects Olthuis' approach as ultimately subjectivist in its down-playing of evidentialist methodology. However, it would seem that the bulk of Pinnock's criticisms stem from a misplacing of Olthuis within the so-called existentialist tradition, grouping him with, among others, that evangelical bogeyman Bultmann (p. 56), in an attempt to show that truly conservative scholars ought to turn their backs on Olthuis' views as they do on Bultmann's. Yet Olthuis should more properly be placed within the tradition of the phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michael Polanyi and Hans-Georg Gadamer. The work of these men, from which Olthuis is obviously drawing, does much to demonstrate that a personalist view of knowledge, such as the one which Olthuis is expounding, is by no means an exercise in subjectivism.

The second response to Olthuis, by Donald Bloesch, is rather more considered. He rightly identifies Olthuis' indebtedness to the phenomenologists and is both encouraging and appreciative of Olthuis' contribution, while being at the same time suspicious of its weaknesses, calling for greater clarity in areas where post-critical thought is notoriously hazy.

This reviewer has no hesitation in recommending this volume to both teachers and students alike as an example both of how the questions of hermeneutics ought to be addressed in the light of our century's increasing dissatisfaction with the mechanistic thought-forms of the last century, and also of the way in which evangelicals choose to greet such a development.

**Michael Alsford**, London Bible College.

Donald G. Bloesch, **The Battle For The Trinity** (Michigan: Servant Publications, 1985), 106 pp., \$10.95.

J. H. Olthuis with D. G. Bloesch, C. H. Pinnock and G. T. Sheppard, **A Hermeneutics of Ultimacy** (Lanham, NY, London: University Press of America, 1987), 90 pp., £8.95.

This book, which, as the title would suggest, is about hermeneutics, forms part of the Christian Studies Today series and consists of a

The sub-title, 'The Debate Over God-Inclusive Language', gives indication of what the book covers, while its title is an indication of



what Bloesch believes is the significance of the male-female language debate. Nothing less than the traditional doctrine of God is at stake, and as one might expect from an evangelical author, the authority of Scripture is not far behind. Modern culture, alien philosophies are captivating the church and Christian thought, and though our first task is to say yes to God's gracious election and redemption of the world, we still need to say no to heterodoxy. In Bloesch's view the resymbolization of the language of faith alters the way in which God and the world are conceived. Our knowledge of God's truth is analogical and if the analogy is changed so too is the knowledge conveyed. This matters because although our knowledge is analogical it has a universal reference, God's witness to himself in the saving acts testified to in Scripture. The symbols we use cannot be changed without some change in what they signify being made, and so to change terms such as Father, Son and Holy Spirit inevitably changes our understanding of God: 'To replace the foundational symbolism of faith with more inclusive symbolism such as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer is to abandon the ontological or essential Trinity for the economic Trinity, in which the three terms refer only to a threefold activity of God and not also to a threefold relationship within himself' (p. 51).

Of course for some feminists this is the whole point, but if God is an objective reality and if he has described himself to us and we have no other access to knowledge of him, such changes cannot be written in without creating a new religion. There is also for Bloesch a deep soteriological concern: 'It could be that the shift towards a more inclusive language for God is motivated partly by an ideological or cultural bias that envisions a one-world community characterized by liberty, equality and fraternity (sic), a kingdom of freedom brought about by social engineering, rather than a kingdom of heaven to be inaugurated by divine intervention and presaging the collapse and overthrow of the kingdoms of this world' (p. 55).

The book offers an overview to the debate, describing different strands within feminist theologies, their different aspirations, discussion on religious language, which theologians have provided stimulus to the feminist movement, and a look at the biblical perspective as Bloesch sees it. He notes in this discussion great similarities between the modern feminist theologies and Gnosticism, both of which stressed the immanence of God and neglected his transcendence. At stake in both cases is monotheism against a naturalistic religion. In the chapter on the biblical data he points out that much of the opposition to biblical faith came from the goddess religion of fertility cults and claims that similar values are enshrined in much feminist theology. One other comparison he makes much of is between feminism and the German Christians of the 1930s, which was another example of particular cultural ideology dictating to the content of Christian theology.

Many of the key issues are brought out in this short book, which is perhaps too short in places to be fair to all the views he is trying to represent. His treatment of the religious language debate is never too technical for the non-specialist and his pastoral and kerygmatic concerns prevent the book from becoming too dry, which it threatens to do in one or two places where he is listing other people's views. His sympathy to Barth will not endear his work to all evangelicals, especially where he deals with revelation, but this is a valuable study, salutary to those likely to be too quickly swayed by contemporary trends and yet sufficiently sympathetic to be fair and realistic to the complexities and feeling of the debate.

**Gordon R. Palmer, Glasgow.**

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Roger Hooker and Christopher Lamb, *Love the Stranger (Christian Ministry in Multi-Faith Areas)* (London: SPCK, 1986), 160 pp., £4.50.

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*Love the Stranger* is from SPCK's series the New Library of Pastoral Care. Like the whole series, this book is written for people concerned with pastoral care and the wider social context.

The obvious advantage of the book is that the authors have had experience in India and Pakistan and both now work in the English

scene. Over against that positive feature is the fact that this is an Anglican book aimed at the full-time ordained ministry. Those of us starting from different presuppositions which break the parish mould find the literature frustrating.

But the central fact tackled by this book is undeniably very significant. The multi-faith dimension in the British Isles has visibly shattered the long-held view that Christianity is the only practical religious option for the Anglo-Saxons or Celts. The numerical presence is itself compelling — at least 800,000 Muslims, 320,000 Hindus, 300,000 Sikhs, 100,000 Buddhists (not to mention 385,000 Jews) — in that there are more Muslims than Methodists, Hindus than Baptists, Sikhs than the URC and Buddhists than Pentecostals!

At the heart of the matter is the question of the attitude of Christians to other faiths. Since culture and religion are so clearly one — and as racism has reinforced this — we face a formidable task in unlocking this dilemma. And is it to be done by evangelical confrontation or ecumenical dialogue? That is the question!

Since 'the history of Christian relations with those of other faiths is for the most part a very dismal tale', some of the practical approaches outlined are of real interest. These include seeing ministry as

- (1) 'Loitering with intent'. Like Jesus, to begin where people are and not where we want them to be;
- (2) 'Problem-solving' — getting alongside people in their difficulties;
- (3) 'Ritual Specialist' — learning from, and interpreting, worship and practices.

These are but the beginning because, if they are taken seriously, difficulties will immediately arise from the expectations of a congregation unless they can be carried by the clergy into a fresh understanding of mission. The role of the local church and models of ministry are both areas for exploration here.

But, even more deeply, the attitudes Christians take to others is crucial. Can we learn from other faiths? Is there any objective knowledge, possibility of contrasts or affirming similarities? The writers maintain there is much to learn and much to gain.

Yet, ultimately, what is the relationship to be between faith and the faith? — that is the question for Christians. In pursuing it, we have to acknowledge that this scandal of particularity is offensive to others. 'Hindus deeply resent the Christian claim that salvation is to be found only through Christ.'

If we are prepared to hold to our own deep-seated convictions about the lordship of Christ (no other name) and come to an understanding of other faiths, we are encouraged to face up to three tasks:

- (1) To read the Bible with new eyes: 'the assumptions we bring to our reading of the Bible profoundly affect the message we think we take from it.'
- (2) To ask whether real dialogue has been undertaken. Principles of dialogue are affirmed: dialogue begins when people meet each other, dialogue depends upon mutual understanding and trust, dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community, and dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness.
- (3) To see if we accept the fact that 'the piety of the environment' is 'breaking down under the pressure of urban and industrial change'! In other words, that religious cultural conditioning is no longer the key coding and determining principle in shaping human life.

While I fully accept all three theses — and underline that those of us in inner-city ministry have long been compelled to face all three tasks at the different level of the working-class culture — I am still left asking myself whether Christian ministry in multi-faith areas can have any cutting edge without a clarity of conviction which may (perhaps must) show itself in a posture of confrontation rather than accommodation. Yes, we have to 'love the stranger' and yes, we have to 'name the name'. It is not an 'either or' but a 'both and'.

The book is a diving-board into a deep pool — and the appendices will provide techniques for the activity and rescue-lines when you get into difficulties. A very full bibliography, grouped under key sections, a list of relevant church groups, an essay on 'New Religious Movements of Indian Origin' and a case-study on mixed marriage are there for your use.

**Colin Marchant, London.**

C. René Padilla, *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 199 pp., £10.95.

As the author says in the introduction to the book, 'All the essays have been written in the last decade . . . and reflect the international theological dialogue that has taken place in Evangelical circles since the 1974 Lausanne Conference.' The papers were originally delivered as lectures at several different conferences, and this inevitably means that sometimes the same ground is covered more than once.

Mr Padilla addresses topical issues of the church today including Evangelism and Social Concern, Contextualization of the Gospel and New Testament perspectives on Christian Lifestyle. He urges us to ask ourselves big questions, *i.e.* 'The big question we Christians always have to ask ourselves with regard to our culture is which elements of it should be retained and utilized and which ones should go for the sake of the gospel?' He later on highlights the problem of the 'contextualization of the gospel with a view to demonstrating the need for theological reflection in the Third World'. I would go along with Mr Padilla's problems and questions, and with his plea for more 'biblical gospel and faithful church'. I wish, however, that there was more attempt to answer the questions and the problems. For example, how can we in the West know what elements of our Christianity are primarily cultural? I felt too that the book lacked sparkle, and there could have been much more positive contribution stating some of the areas where cultural liberation has occurred, and where poor and rich are together sharing the 'triumphs of his grace'. Having said that, the book is helpful, and gives a lot of biblical material for further study.

J. C. Hall, Durham.

Emilio Castro, *Sent Free. Mission and Unity in the Perspective of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 102 pp., £3.25 pb.

This book is made up of five chapters that focus on one of the main areas of debate in the missionary scene today — the kingdom of God. I reached the end of ch. 2, and with a sense of excitement wondered what would be Mr Castro's thinking on mission and the kingdom of God in the world. Chs. 1 and 2 looked at various parts of the world where mission is responding to different challenges — at Latin America and the burdens brought about by history, at Asia and the challenge of a culturally relevant Christianity, at Africa and its longing to 'revolutionize' Christianity and at the West where, because of dwindling numbers, the churches are obliged to rethink mission. The book then moves on to look at the tension often seen, especially in the West, between priority of evangelism or/and social concern.

I was not disappointed when I came to the last three chapters. Primarily Mr Castro seeks to show that the Lordship of Christ is at the centre of the vision of the kingdom of God. This Lordship means that we are called to accept and welcome the total invasion of Christ in all aspects of our work and evilness. We are called to preach, to love, to obey and to be free to respond to new challenges. There are many good quotes and questions in the book, *e.g.*, 'Missionary freedom means asking Christ what we shall do, and being perpetually prepared to do what he asks of us'; 'Missionary freedom — the capacity to respond in love to the need of all'; 'How do we testify today anew, to the Servant King of the Kingdom of God?'

I would have welcomed questions at the ends of chapters for churches or missionary societies to discuss, and I would have welcomed too a little more spelling out of what Christian love is. We often interpret this only through Western eyes, and maybe our understanding of love, like other aspects of Christian experience, needs to have its cultural blinkers removed. Not all would go along with the idea of 're-annual of Asian religions' (p. 8), but basically the book is stimulating and challenging to us and has left me wanting

to know how as individuals and as a church we can increasingly be part of that 'invasion of love'.

J. C. Hall, Durham.

Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds* (Leicester: IVP, 1986), 368 pp., £8.95.

This is a masterly handbook. It covers concisely a biblical overview and an historical survey, and discusses five contemporary issues. Of course, the charge of superficiality may be justified. On the other hand, where else is there such a magnificent biblical and historical survey on Pastoral Theology?

Derek Tidball is to be commended for his wide scholarship, his biblical thinking and his sensitivity to students' needs. The book reflects a pastorally concern for academic students keen to learn the essentials without becoming too weighed down with detail. The reader leaves the book appetized as well as nourished. This volume ought to be on the shelf of every theological student and every pastor, to be taken down and used in rather the same way that the *New Bible Commentary* might be — as a speedy, concise and ready reference.

Ours is a pragmatic age with a constant call for relevance and an impatience with theory. It is quite possible that Tidball's book will be dismissed or ignored (to the great loss of the would-be reader) until such time in the future when some Twentieth-Century Theological Book Society will discover its value and reprint it as one of those gems never previously appreciated.

If the reader is looking for a guide to pastoral practice he had better turn elsewhere. Here is a basic Pastoral Theology — a study of God and his revelation set within a pastoral framework. It establishes firm principles from which pastoral practice may be deduced.

Wisely — and unusually — it begins with the Ministry of God, a theme repeatedly found in the OT but rarely discussed in pastoral theology. Sadly the promise of this early section is not developed further later on in the work on the NT. Issues such as his Fatherhood, grace and redemption are missing and in that major sense the work is lacking. However, there is so much else that will help the reader to understand the nature of a biblical view of pastoring. Tidball makes the point (p. 50) from Isaiah that 'The basic problem was simply that they had a wrong conception of God' — which, after all, is fundamental to pastoral work. As such it really needs following through into the NT survey.

Tidball sets a good example of biblical understanding by the way he treats each section of Scripture. The reader will benefit greatly from his main thesis but will also learn something of how to handle Scripture faithfully using the critical apparatus at his disposal without falling into the trap of unhealthy and negative academic attitudes.

The historical survey (chs. 7-11) is as scholarly as the biblical, though I regret the paucity of material and discussion in the chapters on the early church and the Middle Ages — 32 pages on 1,200 years seems unbalanced when there are 68 on 400 years; however, that is not untypical of our evangelical 'school'.

The clear summaries of the influential — Luther, Bucer, Calvin and Baxter — are so very helpful and stimulating. That on Schleiermacher is both commentary and cautionary and is very valuable for that.

The contemporary issues raised by psychology are not ignored though perhaps they deserve more attention particularly in the light of the Adams' emphasis and the increasing influence of Hurding's 'Roots and Shoots'.

The five contemporary issues are pertinent — Belief, Forgiveness, Suffering, Unity and Ministry — and reflect a developing stream of thought. The clear emphasis on 'forgiveness' and the exposition of this is very commendable — the subject needs greater emphasis in evangelical pastoring today and is one of those fundamental issues comparatively ignored in theological writing this century. However, in all the five chapters there seems a marked absence of biblical thinking in terms of conviction and conclusion. Contemporary comprehensiveness along with a mature desire for understanding seems to have taken the edge off convinced biblical pastoral theology. In particular, the chapter on Ministry lacks commitment — it may 'satisfy' all sides but will not do more.

The summaries or conclusions at the end of some chapters are good — so good, in fact, that where they are omitted they are greatly missed (chs. 5, 6, 8 and 11). The writer is to be commended for his wide-ranging bibliography. That in itself is a remarkable resource and provides material for further thought and constructive study.

This book deserves reading. It would be a valuable 'set book' for second/third year theological students.

**Peter Manson**, Spurgeon's College.

**A. Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals* (London: SPCK, 1987), x + 197 pp., £5.95.**

Since writing his book *Animal Rights: A Christian Assessment* (SCM, 1976), Andrew Linzey has been the unofficial chaplain of the animal rightists. His new book shows that he has changed somewhat in the past 10 years, as he admits. There is a change of style. His first book was highly polemical. This one could not be so described, though it still has a sharp cutting edge. There is also a deeper appreciation of the theological issues involved, and of earlier discussion of them in Christian tradition. Most importantly, there is a significant shift in emphasis in regard to his basis for the defence of animal rights.

In his earlier book Linzey defended the concept of sentience (understood as the capacity to experience pain and pleasure) as the basis for animal rights. He now recognizes that this is inadequate and that a more rounded theological criterion is needed. He therefore proposes the concept of the *theos-rights* of animals. By this he means that God as Creator has rights in his creation, which is of inherent value to him. The non-human creation therefore makes an objective moral claim on us that is nothing less than God's claim on us. This might seem to imply that vegetables, insects, and stones have rights too. Linzey responds to this point by arguing that in the Bible a special status is given to the creatures which are said to be composed of flesh and blood and to be animated by Spirit (Linzey always spells this with a capital 'S' in this context). Linzey takes this group to consist of humans and other mammals. He notes that the birds and fish are created on a different day from humans and animals in Genesis 1. However, he goes on to stress that this distinction is not to be taken to mean that other creatures have *no* value. They must still be treated as having *some*, if lesser, value in God's eyes. Therefore they still demand our respect.

This is only the bare core of Linzey's argument. He seeks to support it in the first two-thirds of the book by detailed arguments from Scripture and Christian tradition. One can only applaud his determination to find a Christian and theological basis for animal rights, even when one disagrees with his use of Scripture (e.g. his appeal to Ec. 3:19-20 to support the idea of animals having souls) or the relative weight he gives to it and tradition. The rest of the book has some thought-provoking discussions of practical issues of animal liberation. Here there is a refreshing lack of a judgmental attitude towards fellow-Christians who disagree with him, e.g. over vegetarianism. In fact he urges animal rightists to beware of self-righteousness in their attitude to others.

Here then is a balanced, Christian, attempt to argue the case for animal rights. Even if it does not carry full conviction in all its arguments, it will enrich the debate about the issues. It is well worth reading.

**E. C. Lucas**, London Institute for Contemporary Christianity.

**Dietrich Ritschl, *The Logic of Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 310 pp., \$24.95.**

Readers of *Themelios* could well be attracted to Ritschl's attempted integration of history, criticism and verification with ethics and

doxology. But they are likely to be disappointed with Ritschl's 'brief account of the relationship between basic concepts in theology'. The book dismisses a transcendent God, rejects an informational revelation, and minimizes Christ's atonement and resurrection.

Ritschl's 'theology' is not about God, or God's cognitive revelation, but his own religious insights concerning some Jews and Christians. He has no theism because it allows him no freedom (p. 140), no supernatural being (or two-storey reality, p. 104). Ritschl has discovered that God has not attained, but is 'on the way to his goal' (p. 148).

Ritschl's discoveries turn up no supernatural revelation. 'The term "revelation" in the traditional sense should be avoided in theology' for in that construct 'Something is said to human beings which they cannot say themselves' (p. 103). The traditional statement that the meaning and goal of every living being are to know God is no longer 'correct' (p. 197). Although God himself apparently cannot communicate truths to us, '*God himself* is discovered with the discovery of implicit axioms' (my emphasis). As he admits, 'this raises a mass of difficulties'. The mass of difficulties does not keep people from talking about God, however. 'The task of theology is not to be seen in the direct explanation of God but in the explanation of language about and to God' (p. 35).

What Ritschl discovers in the Bible is Jewish and Christian talk about and to God. 'The expectation that the Bible contains a collection of uniform tangible doctrinal statements of which direct use can be made in a "biblical theology" is a fiction' (p. 68). In place of revealed information he claims 'verification through the Spirit' for his 'rediscoveries'. These may occur on the 'occasion' of studying traditions which rest in the biblical writings. If many experiences or manifestations are arranged in the memory of believers, the totality of these experiences and their connections can be described as 'the revelation of God' (pp. 103-104). Ritschl's ultimate concern seems to be to avoid any 'devaluation of secular wisdom and empirical knowledge' (p. 104). In the process, however, he loses the heart of the information revealed through specially prepared, gifted, and inspired prophets and apostles — the gospel. Uncritically he endorses the conclusions of higher criticism for the last 200 years and relegates the Bible to pre-scientific and mythical ways of thinking (p. 11).

Ritschl's 'linguistic phenomenalism' (p. 105) enables him to seek truth in whatever language leads to his particular ecumenical goal. The insight that becomes regulative for him finds that YHWH chose the people of Israel from all the nations and in Jesus Christ the church from the Jews. Hence only toward the Jews is Christian missionary activity illegitimate (p. 164). But Ritschl does not have a primarily missionary orientation with anyone because that 'would lose sight of human beings' (p. 199).

Who was Jesus Christ? The basic question is answered with extreme brevity and little clarity. Jesus is 'God's participation in the suffering and death of humanity' (p. 177). A basic part of a theological statement about the death of Christ includes the concept of 'representation' (p. 189).

The 'story' of Christian beliefs focuses on the coherence of religious insights to the effect that God is the one who elects, who with Jesus shares in suffering and heals in the Spirit (p. 174). The hope of the future lies in overcoming what separates humanity through the hope of unifying Jews and Gentiles (p. 262).

Unfortunately Ritschl's hope of unifying Jews and Gentiles minimizes the one sound foundation which spiritually united the Jewish apostles with the first-century Samaritans and Gentiles (Acts): the living triune God, the Father sending the Son, the incarnation, God-man's reality as the Messiah, his sacrifice once for all providing justly for forgiveness from sin's guilt, redemption from sin's power and reconciliation of sinners, his supernatural resurrection from the dead and courageous proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For an evangelical attempt at integrating historical, biblical, systematic, apologetic and practical theology, see G. Lewis and B. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (vol. 1, Zondervan, 1987).

**Gordon Lewis**, Denver Seminary.

# BOOK REVIEWS

- Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (eds.)* **New Dictionary of Theology** (Alister McGrath)
- Dale Patrick* **Old Testament Law** (David G. Deboys)
- B. G. Webb* **The Book of The Judges. An Integrated Reading** (David F. Pennant)
- Joel Roserberg* **King and Kin: Political Allegory in the Hebrew Bible** (Kenneth M. Craig, Jr.)
- Adele Berlin* **The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism** (Kenneth M. Craig, Jr.)
- Graeme Goldsworthy* **Gospel and Wisdom** (Derek Kidner)
- Hans Conzelmann* **Acts of the Apostles** (W. Ward Gasque)
- Aida Besançon Spencer* **Paul's Literary Style. A Stylistic and Historical Comparison of 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:13, Romans 8:9-39 and Philippians 3:2-4:13** (Paul Trebilco)
- J. Stevenson* **A New Eusebius. Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337** (D. F. Wright)
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- J. H. Olthuis with D. G. Bloesch, C. H. Plinck and G. T. Sheppard* **A Hermeneutics of Ultimacy** (Michael Alsford)
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- Roger Hooker and Christopher Lamb* **Love the Stranger (Christian Ministry in Multi-Faith Areas)** (Colin Marchant)
- C. René Padilla* **Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom** (J. C. Hall)
- Emilio Castro* **Sent Free. Mission and Unity in the Perspective of the Kingdom** (J. C. Hall)
- Derek Tidball* **Skilful Shepherds** (Peter Manson)
- A. Linzey* **Christianity and the Rights of Animals** (E. C. Lucas)
- Dietrich Ritschl* **The Logic of Theology** (Gordon Lewis)



**TSF**

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