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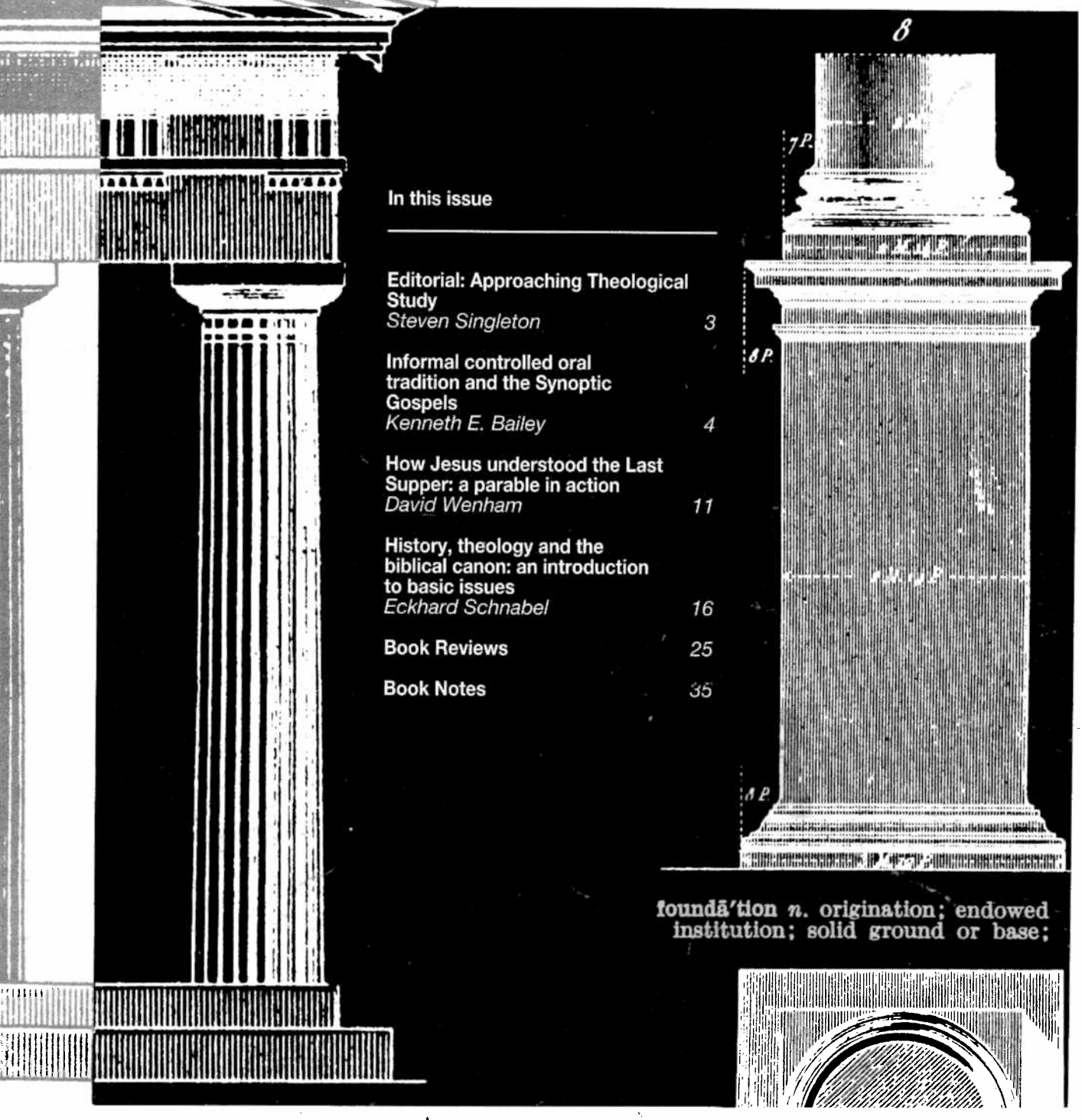

In this issue

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Editorial: Approaching Theological Study

Over the last six years my job as Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship (RTSF) Secretary has taken me to many departments of theology and religious studies throughout the UK and Republic of Ireland. The interregnum between *Themelios* general editors has given me the opportunity to put some of my reflections about theology and religious studies gleaned from those visits on paper. What follows, then, is a personal view – the theological world as I have encountered it, mainly through the eyes of students.

One of the things that I was taught in a hermeneutics course at college was the danger of word studies and etymologies. However, a little rule bending now and then can help illustrate a point. So, despite the pain it may cause to linguists, let me indulge in a bit of modern day 'etymologising' (if there is such a word!).

Theology is an odd sort of discipline. It is one of those 'ologies' in which it is possible to remain uncommitted, agnostic or completely unconvinced by the object of study. I suppose it is just possible to think of a biologist who did not believe in life; a geologist who did not believe that the earth really existed; a physiologist who thought that the body was a mere projection of the mind or of human experience; or even a psychologist who didn't believe in psyche, however that is defined. The strange thing is that you can be a theologian and either be unsure of the existence of God or even believe that God does not exist. Though when that happens we should perhaps abandon the title 'theology' and use something like the study of religion.

There may be reasons why this situation is the case. They may even be good reasons, but it is puzzling. Many of the students I have known have found such a state of affairs disconcerting, and even disturbing.

Many theology and RS students begin their courses with the thought that it ought, at least in theory, to have some sort of link to Christian faith. Questions like, 'Will this course enable me to live and think in a more mature Christian fashion?' or 'Will this course help me to deepen my commitment as a disciple of Jesus?' are usually not far from the minds of such students. Of course, there is a real possibility that the student who asks such questions has misunderstood the whole discipline of theological study. Wrong expectations will always lead to frustration. But that is only one side of the story, and maybe it is about time that theology as it is currently practised accepted some of the blame. So when I am asked questions like this I repeatedly find myself replying 'YES, it can and it should, and, NO, it doesn't always work that way'. The trouble is, like many other things in life, theological study (and religious studies also) is just not that simple and straightforward.

That raises the important question of what theology is and how it should be studied. I know all too well that these issues are far from simple and could easily fill a full *Themelios* article (and more). However, from everything I have seen and experienced of the world of theology, I have become convinced that theology should never be divorced from the dimension of personal faith. If it is, it can go by many names, but I am not sure that we can honestly use the term 'Christian theology'.

I find it very difficult to imagine, for example, the Reformers ever allowing theology to become divorced from faith. After all, it was Luther who said, 'It is living, dying and even being condemned which makes a theologian, not reading, speculating and understanding.' One day we will have to share the new creation with people who have actually proved Luther's saying to be true. I find that a sobering thought, especially when I am tempted to think that reading and speculating is all that it takes to make a theologian.

It is a fact of life that theology often deals with theologians and their ideas and not with God. It seems to me to be realistic expectation to hope that theology should not only grapple with ideas and concepts about God, but grapple with the reality of God himself. If this is so, how should we, then, define theology? A. McGrath suggests that 'Theology is reflection upon the God whom Christians worship and adore' (*Christian Theology: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, p. 117). Christian theology is not simply a body of data from which personal experience has been excised and is permanently excluded. It is better to think of it as an attempt to articulate and demonstrate the coherence of our faith that is the result of our encounter with the God of the Bible. Theology, as many students perceive it today, has become a discipline that at the end of the day will struggle, and maybe even fail, to prove its value to the community of faith. It is theology that has as its core and matrix an encounter with the living God that will grip us, enthuse us, transform us and give us confidence in what we believe and in the good news that we are called to proclaim.

However, that is not the way theology is usually approached at university. It has its own language and jargon and can seem to many to be a closed world. I think it was during my exam revision that for the first time I discovered the change that had taken place between someone like Calvin and modern theology. One might be tempted to think that someone had changed the rules somewhere along the way!

It is possible that someone reading the last few paragraphs might think that I am depreciating academic study in a flurry of anti-intellectualism. That could not be further from the truth. However much we might wish things were different, we have to learn to live with things as they are and to make the most of the opportunities God has given to us. Studying theology, wherever that might be, is a privilege, even if it can cause problems. There is just no substitute for the hard work and hard thinking that theology demands. The questions that it raises need to be answered and it will do no good to bury our heads in the sand and wish that things were different. That is surely at least a part of what Romans 12:1-2 requires of us. A truly Christian theology is a deeply thoughtful theology that has its roots and driving force in a mission-centred, worshipping community. If in the course of our studies we can work towards that goal there is a real possibility that we might be able to bring theology back from the wasteland in our churches. That is a goal worth pursuing wherever we are at in our theological pilgrimage, and is the vision to which the RTSF is committed.

Steven Singleton, RTSF Secretary, *Themelios* Consulting Editor

Informal controlled oral tradition and the Synoptic Gospels

Kenneth E. Bailey

Professor Bailey is Theologian in Residence in the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East (Cyprus) and Research Professor of Middle Eastern NT Studies (Jerusalem). He has had extensive experience of Middle Eastern life which, in this article, he uses to examine the traditions that lie behind the Synoptic Gospels. We are glad to be able to bring this article, which was originally published in the Asia Journal of Theology *5 (1991), pp. 34–54, to the attention of a wider readership.*

Some understanding of the oral tradition behind the Synoptic Gospels is an unavoidable presupposition of NT interpretation.[1] The pedagogy of the rabbinic schools was a well-known formal method of tradition transmission and its methodology is reflected in rabbinic literature. No other alternative is described in the writings of the period. The reason for this is that anthropologically speaking, what 'everybody knows' cannot be described; it functions unconsciously. Given this reality, the modern Western researcher can posit the tradition transmission of the rabbinic schools or project some other tradition transmission method modelled after the researcher's own inherited Western experience or imagination. The latter at times involves the imposition of Western cultural models and mental attitudes into a Middle Eastern cultural world. A great deal of subjectivism is often involved. From the point of view of the present writer, who has spent more than thirty years living in the Middle East (teaching in a Semitic language), mental gymnastics incredible for Middle Eastern peasant people are at times assumed by Western oral tradition theories. We are convinced that our Middle Eastern cultural world provides a concrete alternative to these Western models.

Indeed, unique sources for NT research in a Middle Eastern context are available in two forms, manuscript and oral. As to manuscript sources, many unknown Arabic and some Syriac and Coptic Christian exegetical treasures await exposure. This aspect of research is easily understood. But what is meant by oral sources?

In the summer of 1983 Professor Helga Sedan of the Archeology Department of the American University of Beirut led an excavation of the ancient tell of Busra al-Sham in the Howran district of southern Syria. The excavators concentrated their efforts on the Middle Bronze Age of 1800–1700 BC. In the course of their digging Professor Sedan found construction patterns that were, to her, incomprehensible. Discovering her frustration, the village workmen took the excavators to the far side of the modern village to observe the peculiar construction techniques of their village and district. Being an archaeology department from Beirut with 115 years' experience in the Middle East, they were intellectually and emotionally prepared to discover the answers to the puzzles of their Bronze Age excavations in the building techniques on display among the living inheritors of the ancient village tradition. In fact, this is what happened. By watching the modern villagers build a house they were able to interpret Middle Bronze Age data that had previously been a puzzle.

Turning from archaeology to textual criticism, in the 1970s in Beirut it was my privilege to teach a class of Middle Eastern students on the subject of textual criticism. I opened the subject by surveying the types of errors that had crept into the text of the NT. During the discussion one bright Iraqi student said quietly, 'You have not discussed my major problem.' We then discovered that the student, Mr Yousef Matti, had spent ten years as a monk in the Syriac Orthodox monastery of Mar Matta in northern Iraq and that for seven of those years he had been engaged in the scriptorium copying manuscripts. His major problem was, we were told, the flies! Fly specks? No! The flies *drank* the ink before the page was dry. The ink was made by the monks themselves, using an ancient formula. The process took six months and the product was fairly thick. Flies would drink parts of the letters before the ink had had an opportunity to dry on this polished, non-porous paper. Plurals in Syriac are made with dots. Yousef told us he would carefully finish a page, lay it in the sun to dry, and on return discover that his plurals had suddenly become singulars due to the drinking of the ink by the flies!

In reflecting on the revelations of that particular class, a number of realities became evident. The ex-scribe was not a knowledgeable textual critic. Most of what was presented to him during the lecture he found valid. He confessed that he *always* corrected the grammar of his exemplar. He could not add to many of the technical aspects of the Western science of textual criticism. He *could*, however, offer the unquestionably authentic reality of his own experience which added a valuable dimension to the topic under discussion. Indeed, through Mr Matti we could enlarge on our understanding of a classical form of tradition preservation that had survived intact to the present time.

The subject of this paper is Middle Eastern oral tradition and the Synoptic Gospels. In many ways, Mr Matti presents the stance of the present writer in regard to the current topic. It is not our intention, therefore, to review all the secondary literature on the question of Middle Eastern oral tradition. Rather, like Yousef Matti, we intend to present the concrete reality of our own experience of more than three decades of life and study in the Middle East among communities of great antiquity that still preserve in oral form much of what is important to them. The reality we have experienced, and here attempt to analyse, we are calling *informal controlled* oral tradition. It is the intent of this paper to state briefly the position of the form-critical school of Bultmann, which we will call *informal uncontrolled* oral tradition. We will then turn to the work of the Scandinavian school of Riesenfeld and Gerhardsson, which can be called *formal controlled* oral tradition. C.H. Dodd will represent for us a median position. Our own experience has uncovered a specific discernible methodology functioning in traditional Middle Eastern village life that provides a structure for such a median position. It is our hope that these findings may offer a clarified model for consideration and further study in regard to the oral tradition behind the Synoptic Gospels.

Models for oral tradition

The Bultmannian view: informal, uncontrolled oral tradition

The Bultmannian view of the Synoptic tradition is perhaps most succinctly set forth in his monograph, *Jesus and the Word*, where he writes: 'I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist.'[2] The author feels, moreover, that the various layers of the tradition can 'on the whole be clearly distinguished',[3] and

that even much of the earliest layer of Palestinian Aramaic materials must be 'rejected as secondary'.[4] He is anxious to examine this 'complex of ideas in the oldest layer of the Synoptic tradition'. He writes: 'What the sources offer us is first of all, the message of the early Christian community, which for the most part the Church freely attributed to Jesus.'[5]

The tradition transmission presuppositions of this view (with its many variations) can be described as *informal uncontrolled* oral tradition. Bultmann does not deny that there *is* a tradition stemming from Jesus, but asserts that it has, for the most part, faded out. The community, he feels, was not interested in either preserving or controlling the tradition. Furthermore, the tradition is always open to new community creations that are rapidly attributed to the community's founder. It is *informal* in the sense that there is no identifiable teacher nor student and no structure within which material is passed from one person to another. All is fluid and plastic, open to new additions and new shapes. This view offers us a complex of ideas from Palestine, ideas synthesized from various sources by the community to meet its needs. This, however, is not the only view currently argued.

The Scandinavian school: formal controlled oral tradition

In sharp contrast to the form-critical view is the Scandinavian school of Riesenfeld and Gerhardsson. In his initial essay, 'The Gospel Tradition and Its Beginnings', Riesenfeld argues that the *Sitz im Leben* of the gospel tradition is not the mission preaching,[6] nor is it the 'communal instruction of the primitive church',[7] but rather it stems from the person of Jesus. He writes: 'The words and deeds of Jesus are a holy word, comparable with that of the Old Testament, and the handing down of this precious material is entrusted to special persons.'[8] For Riesenfeld, the beginning of the gospel tradition lies with Jesus himself.[9] He grants that the material is collected and shaped by the primitive church, but for him, 'the essential point is that the outlines, that is, the beginnings of the proper genius of the tradition of the words and deeds of Jesus, were memorized and recited as holy word'.[10] He concludes, 'Jesus is the object and subject of a tradition of authoritative and holy words which he himself created and entrusted to his disciples for its later transmission in the epoch between his death and the parousia.'[11]

This position was then filled out with a much larger work of exacting scholarship by Gerhardsson entitled *Memory and Manuscript* (1961),[12] and then in *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity* (1964).[13] In the former of these two works the details of the transmission of 'the Oral Torah' are set forth with care. The mnemonic techniques, condensations, use of written notes, techniques of repetition, are all documented with precision. Then, turning to the gospel tradition and early Christianity, the 'word of the Lord' is explained as a word passed on using the above-mentioned devices of the Jewish schools. Evidence from Luke and Paul is presented to demonstrate that Jesus taught his disciples like other rabbis and that the early church organized a 'college' of the apostles along Jewish lines. Evidence for this is found in the recitation formulas, the frequent references to 'the tradition' and 'the word of the Lord', and the importance of Jerusalem as a source from which the word proceeds. Gerhardsson's conclusion to the matter is: 'When the Evangelists edited their Gospels, . . . they worked on a basis of a fixed, distinct tradition from, and about, Jesus – a tradition which was partly memorized and partly written down in notebooks and private scrolls, but invariably isolated from the teachings of other doctrinal authorities.'[14]

This view can be described as *formal controlled* oral tradition. It is *formal* in the sense that there is a clearly identified teacher, a clearly identified student, and a clearly identified block of traditional material that is being passed on from one to the other. It is *controlled* in the sense that the material is memorized (and/or written), identified as 'tradition' and thus preserved intact.

In his evaluation of this view,[15] W.D. Davies offers the Scandinavians high praise for their contribution and quotes the following passage from Gerhardsson, where Gerhardsson writes, 'All historical probability is in favor of Jesus' disciples, and the whole of early Christianity, having accorded the sayings of one whom they believed to be the Messiah at least the same degree of respect as the pupils of a rabbi accorded the words of *their* master.'[16] Davies then adds, 'I find this reasonable; its consequences are, of course, significant for one's approach to "the tradition" '.[17] His main criticism concerns the place of and emphasis on the spirit:

> What we are more particularly concerned to note now is that the interpretive activity of the earliest communities involving the setting of events and words in the light of the Old Testament, was likely to lend fluidity rather than fixity to the material transmitted, a fluidity in which event and meaning, *ipsissima verba* and their interpretation, would tend to merge.[18]

C.H. Dodd also enunciated a median position that perhaps reflects the stance of many where he writes:

> When all allowance has been made for . . . limiting factors . . . the changes of oral transmission, the effect of translation, the interest of teachers in making the sayings 'contemporary' . . . it remains that the first three Gospels offer a body of sayings on the whole so consistent, so coherent, and withal so distinctive in manner, style and content that no reasonable critic should doubt, whatever reservations he may have about individual sayings, that we find reflected here the thought of a single unique teacher.[19]

In summary, the sayings of Jesus can perhaps be compared to water which comes out of a spring at the top of a mountain. Bultmann insists that the water seeps into the ground and disappears. Further down the mountain water trickles out of the ground at various points and gradually gathers into a small stream. Unsuspecting villagers who have never climbed the mountain, yet knowing that there *is* a spring at its top, uncritically assume that the water comes from the spring. In fact, most of it does not, but the question is irrelevant. In sharp contrast, the Scandinavian school answers – no, there is an iron pipe fixed to a concrete catchment pool at the very top. This pipe stretches all the way down the mountain and the evangelists can drink from it at the bottom, assured that they are drinking pure spring water, unadulterated by the soils and plants of the mountainside. Dodd and many others answer – put the water from all the various rivulets at the bottom of the mountain through a filter and you get the same-tasting spring water. Thus, there can be no doubt about a single unique source for that water. Dodd suggests *no theory* as to how the water got down the mountain. The specific purpose of this paper is to set forth a concrete methodological model that we are hopeful may provide structure for a median position. As we approach the Synoptic tradition the current options seem to be: assume the pedagogy of the rabbinic schools, project some form of radical kerygmatizing, or 'muddle through' somewhere in the middle. As in the case of Yousef Matti and his thirsty flies, we hope to sidestep abstract Western theories and concentrate rather on concrete Middle Eastern human realities with the hope that from them a new abstraction can be formulated that will be appropriate to the Synoptic data in our hands.

An alternative way forward: informal controlled oral tradition

Initially we can observe that both the Bultmannian and the Scandinavian models still exist around us in the Middle East today. The *informal uncontrolled* oral tradition can be labelled 'rumour transmission'. Tragedies and atrocity stories naturally slip into this category and when tragedy or civil strife occur, rumour transmission quickly takes over. From 1975 to 1984 the present writer was *awash* in such oral transmission in Beirut, Lebanon. A story of three people killed in a bread line in front of a bakery by a random shell quickly became a story of 300 people massacred in cold blood when the account was retold by angry compatriots of the victims.

On the other hand, the *formal controlled* oral tradition is also a living reality. This form of tradition is most visible publicly in the memorization of the entire Qur'an by Muslim sheiks and in the memorization of various extensive liturgies in Eastern Orthodoxy. Nielsen, in his monograph *Oral Tradition*, notes, 'Turning to West-Semitic culture we remark that it is quite apparent that the written word is not valued highly. It is not considered an independent mode of expression . . . the written copies of the Qur'an play an astonishingly unobtrusive role in Islam.'[20] In his famous autobiography, Taha Hussein of Egypt describes his memorization of the Qur'an as a young boy of eight (around the turn of the century), and with it the learning of

Alfiyat Ibn Malik.[21] The latter work is a collection of 1,000 couplets of Arabic verse, each of which defines some aspect of Arabic grammar. It was my privilege to study in Cairo in the fifties under a venerable Islamic scholar, Shaykh Sayyed, who had both of these works fully committed to memory with total recall at the age of 75. I would bring to him a couplet of Arabic poetry and ask him if it was in the Qur'an. He would close his eyes for a few seconds, mentally flip through the entire Qur'an, and then give his answer. Similarly, any point of grammar evoked the quotation of one of the 1,000 couplets of *Ibn Malik*.

Shaykh Sayyed is the inheritor of an attitude and a methodology that is at least as old as Plato. In his *Phaedrus*, Plato has Socrates record what he heard from ancient Egypt regarding a conversation between two Egyptian gods, Thamus and Theuth. Theuth was credited with the invention of geometry, astronomy, dice and letters. So Theuth was discussing the importance of his invention of letters with his fellow deity Thamus, and proudly spoke as follows:

> This invention will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories; for it is an elixir of memory and wisdom that I have discovered. But Thamus replied, 'Most ingenious Theuth . . . you who are the father of letters have been led by your affection to ascribe to them a power the opposite of that which they really possess. For this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practice their memory . . . you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with since they are not wise, but only appear wise.[22]

Gerhardsson documents the fact that the rabbinic tradition held much the same view for the same reasons – the passing on of the memorized tradition provided opportunity for explanation and discussion as to its meaning, while the cold lifeless book did not. In the same period Plutarch described the historian's task in his famous *Plutarch's Lives*. He wrote:

> As he [the historian] has materials to collect from a variety of books dispersed in different libraries, his first care should be to take up his residence in some populace town which has an ambition for literature. There he will meet with many curious and valuable books: and the particulars that are wanting in writers, he may upon inquiry, be supplied with by those who have laid them up in the faithful repository of memory. This will prevent his work from being defective in any material point.[23]

One has a distinctively different feel for such things, having for two years observed, in Shaykh Sayyid in Cairo, a living counterpart of this ancient methodology.

Turning to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, his Grace George Salibo, Syriac Orthodox Bishop of Mount Lebanon, has described to me the tradition of the great St Ephrem the Syrian. In the late second century Bardaisan, the poet and heretic, disseminated his views not by authoring heretical texts but by composing stanza after stanza of seven-syllable-per-line Syriac hymns. Nearly 200 years after his death his material was still firmly entrenched in the Syriac community. St Ephrem in the late fourth century was anxious to counteract the heresies of Bardaisan. But he could only fight fire with fire. To compose a book disputing Bardaisan would have been pointless – who would read it? So the great saint himself composed stanza after stanza of poetry using the same seven-syllable-per-line metre and poured it, as it were, into the same lake. Because of the quality of the poetry and the cultural receptivity to the metre, his new orthodox hymns were received by the grass-roots community and the hymns moved by themselves all across the Syriac Church, displacing Bardaisan's heresy. In this theological battle of the giants no writing was involved. So today, at the 'Atshani Syrian Orthodox seminary in Lebanon, the students converse only in fourth-century Syriac and, in that same classical language, sing St Ephrem's hymns by the hour. Books? There are no books – who needs them?

So *informal uncontrolled* oral tradition and *formal controlled* oral tradition are both still very much alive in the Middle East. The first results from natural human failings; the second is a carefully nurtured methodology of great antiquity that is still practised and held in high regard by both Christians and Muslims. But at the same time we also have in the Middle Eastern traditional cultural world a third phenomenon with a unique methodology all its own, that to my knowledge is unknown in NT circles and has never been analysed. This I have chosen to call *informal controlled* oral tradition. This reality also preserves within it material of claimed great antiquity and has all the markings of an ancient methodology. In regard to this *informal controlled* oral tradition we will examine in turn the setting in which it functions, the nature of the functionaries, the kinds of material retained, the controls exercised by the community, and the techniques for introducing new material. We will then reflect briefly on the significance of this type of oral tradition for the Synoptic tradition and finally attempt some preliminary conclusions. The Synoptic problem is beyond the scope of this essay. Our goal here is to introduce *new data* that we feel worthy of consideration as a background for approaching a wide range of interpretive questions related to the Synoptic Gospels.

The setting and the reciters

As indicated by the title, the setting is *informal*. The traditional scene is the gathering of villagers in the evening for the telling of stories and the recitation of poetry. These gatherings have a name: they are called *haflat samar*. *Samar* in Arabic is a cognate of the Hebrew *shamar*, meaning 'to preserve'. The community is *preserving* its store of tradition. By *informal* we mean that there is no set teacher and no specifically identified student. As stories, poems and other traditional materials are told and recited through the evening, anyone can theoretically participate. In fact, the older men, the more gifted men, and the socially more prominent men tend to do the reciting. The reciters will shift depending on who is seated in the circle. Young people can have their own *haflat samar* where the same selection process prevails but produces, naturally, different reciters. I have often been seated in such circles when some piece of traditional oral literature is quoted. I might not happen to know the story and so proceed to ask what it is all about. Someone then says, 'Elder so-and-so knows the story.' The ranking social/intellectual figure then proceeds to tell the story with pride. By contrast, in the recitation of *formal controlled* oral tradition there is a specifically identified teacher with a recognized title and a specifically identified student. The two of them often meet in a special building, a school or college.

Nielsen discusses Middle Eastern story-telling but has turned to bedouin culture and noted the professional story-tellers who, he claims, roam from campfire to campfire telling their tales. I am not an expert in bedouin culture and so cannot comment on his undocumented remarks. I do know how these things work in the settled, traditional village. The elders are on couches lining the walls, doing the reciting. Everyone else in the room and in the adjoining rooms are the informal 'students' listening to the elders pass on the tradition of the community. Anyone in the community can be a reciter. No official story-tellers or official students are designated. Those who dominate the recitation process shift naturally, much like the shifting of speakers in the average group discussion. Who does the talking is determined by who is there. At the same time, there *are* parameters. Only those within the community who have grown up hearing the stories have the right to recite them in public gatherings of the village. I can recall vividly, in the village of Kom al-Akhdar in the south of Egypt, asking a particular person about the village traditions. He was in his sixties and seemed to be an appropriate person to ask. He offered a few remarks and was soon interrupted by others around the circle who said,

'He wouldn't understand – he is not from this village.'

'How long has he lived here?' I queried.

'Only thirty-seven years,' came the calm answer.

Poor fellow – he didn't understand, he was an outsider – only thirty-seven years – surely not long enough to be allowed to recite the village traditions in public.

Types of material retained

What, then, are the types of material preserved in this *informal*, yet *controlled*, oral tradition?

The first are short pithy *proverbs*. Professor Hezkial of Assiut College in the south of Egypt has collected over 2,000

southern Egyptian village proverbs.[24] In 1974 Anis Frayha of Lebanon published a significant collection of Lebanese counterparts entitled *Mu'jam al-amthal al-Lubnaniyah (Dictionary of Lebanese Proverbs)*.[25] Then in 1978 Dr Hani al-Amad produced a noteworthy work entitled *al-Amthal al-Sha'biyah al-Urduniyah (The Popular Proverbs of Jordan)*.[26] Most recently, in 1985 two volumes of proverbs were published in Jerusalem by 'Isa 'Atallah of Bethlehem with the title *Qalu fi al-Mathal (The Proverb Says . . .)*.[27] This latter work includes 6,000 proverbs, the vast majority of them popular and colloquial in nature. Significantly, this work is subtitled 'Mowsu'ah fi al-Amthal wa al-Hikam al-Sa'ira' (Encyclopedia of Current Proverbs and Wisdom Sayings). Of particular interest to our topic is the word 'Current'. We are here observing a community that can create (over the centuries) and sustain in current usage up to 6,000 wisdom sayings. Other cultures express their cultural values visibly in buildings and monuments. One of the major ways Middle Eastern peoples express their values is through the creating and preserving of wisdom sayings that are rich and satisfying to them and to anyone who is privileged to participate in that same language and culture. Indeed, our own culture has within it some such wisdom material floating in oral form, such as 'a stitch in time saves nine'. But Middle Eastern society (as we have noted) preserves orally thousands of such wisdom sayings.[28]

The second type of material is *story riddles*. These are not riddles in the Western sense of a riddle, where the questioner puts a brain-twister to the listener. Rather, in the story the hero is presented with an unsolvable problem and comes up with a *wise* answer, like Solomon with the one baby and the two mothers. The account of Jesus and the woman taken in adultery (Jn. 7:53–8:11) also fits into this category.

A third literary form is *poetry*. In Lebanon and Palestine the poems are of two distinct types. First are the classical poems that are recited from known authors. This material is now mostly published. The poetry of pre-Islamic Arabia was preserved for hundreds of years in oral form and finally committed to writing.[29] But there is a second type called *zajal* which is a distinct unlettered form of verse, composed by intelligent villagers who are not necessarily literate. The material has some syllable counts and some end rhymes but the feature that is most prominent is a distinctive repetitive tune used for recitation. A *zajali* (a man with the skills required for the creation of this type of village verse) is a famous man. His verse will be recited all across the district in which he lives. Such men are in heavy demand at weddings and other festive occasions because of their ability to create stanzas *ad lib*. Two of them can respond to one another in *ad lib* verse like masters of ceremonies trading toasts or jokes. In the seventeenth century a *zajali* Maronite monk composed a complete history of the Maronite church in *zajal*. His work was transmitted orally for over 200 years.[30]

Fourth is the *parable* or *story*. These begin, 'Once there was a rich man who . . .' or 'a priest who . . .' or 'a soldier who . . .' and so forth. They are told like stories anywhere both to instruct and to entertain.

Fifth are *well-told accounts of the important figures in the history of the village or community*. These are often told in the present tense, irrespective of their age. For example, in the cliffs behind the village of Dayr Abu Hinnis, in the south of Egypt, there are Middle Kingdom cave-stone quarries that were inhabited by Christians during the times of Roman persecution. Local Christian villagers tell visitors, 'When the Romans came, *we* escaped to the mountains and *our* men sneaked down to the river at night to get water.' As we will note, the same villagers tell stories of the founding of the monastery that gave birth to their village. *I* know that they are telling stories from the fourth century and before. They know the account only as *min ziman* (from long ago). If there is a central figure critical to the history of the village, stories of this central figure will abound. These stories are local and can be heard only in the village that considers these recollections important for its identity.

Controls exercised by the community

This brings us to examine the *controlled* nature of this transmission. Nielsen records Gunkel's recollections of story-telling by the grandfather of the German home passing on German folk tales. This is *not* the type of setting that we have observed. No-one will tell the grandfather that he is telling the story incorrectly. Rather we are discussing informal but *controlled* oral tradition. What then are the controls?

Essentially, the controls are exercised by the community itself. The material is passed on *in public* in the formal setting of the *haflat samar* described above. The seated community exercises control over the recitation of the tradition. Three levels of flexibility can be observed. Two of the above-mentioned types of tradition fall into the first level, two into the second and one into the third.

(i) No flexibility

The first level allows for *no flexibility* – not even of a single word. *Poems* and *proverbs* fall into this category. If the reciter makes a mistake, he subjects himself to public correction, and thereby to public humiliation. As the present writer has observed over a period of thirty-seven years, Middle Eastern village culture is a shame–pride culture: that is, it is a culture in which the child is not told, 'That's wrong, Johnny' (appealing to an abstract principle of right and wrong), but rather, 'Shame on you, Johnny', appealing to a sense of honour. If the reciter quotes a proverb with so much as one word out of place, he will be corrected by a chorus of voices. If the reciter is uncertain he will ask, 'How does that proverb go?' And the community will assist him from their collective memory. The poetry has its own inner poetic structure to assure its preservation. The structure/form will be recognized even by people who do not know the particular poem being recited. This is true both of the classical poems and the village *zajal* poems. As in the case of the hymns of Ephrem the Syrian, most of the poetry is so well known that no one *dares* recite it unless he is sure that he has the poem accurately memorized.

(ii) Some flexibility

The second level of flexibility allows for *some* individual interpretation of the tradition. *Parables* and *recollections of historical people and events* important to the identity of the community fall into this category. Here there is flexibility *and* control. The central threads of the story cannot be changed, but flexibility in detail is allowed.

An example is perhaps appropriate. Sixteen years ago, seated in a *haflat samar*, someone responded to the group conversation with *'Wafaqa Shannun Tabaqa'* (Shann was pleased to accept Tabaqa). I immediately sensed that this was the punch-line of a story, and the story was unknown to me. So I asked, in good biblical fashion, 'What mean ye by these things?' The circle quickly sensed the formal nature of what was happening, and someone said, 'Rev. Dagher knows the story.' In fact, they all knew it, but the ranking patriarch was given the honour of telling the story to the newcomer. The story had three basic scenes and the proverb as a punch-line at the end.

Ten years after hearing this story I dredged it up out of my memory and ran an experiment in one of my classes in Beirut. The class contained village boys from Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. The Egyptian had not heard it. The other four knew the story in all its details. Had any of them ever read it? No, they had only heard it orally. They all knew it as an old story and thus as part of the tradition. 'Did I tell it correctly?' I asked. Answer – yes. We then examined what must be present in the recitation for them to sense that I was telling it correctly. We produced a list. The proverb that appeared in the story (the punch-line) had to be repeated verbatim. The three basic scenes could not be changed, but the order of the last two could be reversed without triggering the community rejection mechanism. The basic flow of the story and its conclusion had to remain the same. The names could not be changed. The summary punch-line was inviolable. However, the teller could vary the pitch of one character's emotional reaction to the other, and the dialogue within the flow of the story could at any point reflect the individual teller's style and interests. That is, the story-teller had a certain freedom to tell the story in his own way as long as the central thrust of the story was not changed.

So here was continuity *and* flexibility. Not continuity and change. The distinction is important. Continuity and change could mean that the story-teller could change, say, 15 per cent of the story – any 15 per cent. Thus after seven transmissions of the

story theoretically *all* of the story could be changed. But continuity *and* flexibility mean that the main lines of the story cannot be changed at all. The story can endure a hundred transmissions through a chain of a hundred and one different people and the inner core of the story remains intact. Within the structure, the story-teller has flexibility within limits to 'tell it his own way'. But the basic story-line remains the same. By telling and retelling, the story does not evolve from A to B to C. Rather, the original structure of the story remains the same but it can be coloured green or red or blue.

In C.S. Lewis's introduction to his anthology of the writings of George MacDonald,[31] he makes a point relative to our topic. He discusses the relationship between a story and the words in which that story is expressed. He points out that a great story consists of a particular 'pattern of events'. It is that particular 'pattern of events' that nourishes and delights the listener, not a particular set of words. Lewis grants that if the means of communication are words, 'it is desirable that [the story] should be fairly written', but he adds, 'this is only a minor convenience' (pp. xxvi–xxvii). When the community is reciting stories and parables using *informal controlled* oral tradition it is indeed passing on, in Lewis's words, 'a particular pattern of events' in a community-controlled, yet informal, setting. The overall pattern of events is fixed, as are some of the words used in expressing that pattern – but not all the words. The individual story-teller is allowed freedom within limits.

Historical narratives important to the life of the individual village also fall into this second level of flexibility that provides for both continuity and freedom for individual interpretation of the tradition. Again an example will help clarify this aspect of our topic. Twenty-five years ago Father Makhiel of the village of Dayr Abu Hennis told me of the founding of his village. The Romans came in the second century and built the city of Antinopolis. Later, Christian monks built a monastery at the edge of the city for the specific purpose of witnessing to their faith in the pagan city. To support themselves they made workmen's baskets from palm leaves, but rather than give the baskets the functional two handles, the monks put a third handle on the side. As they sold the baskets in the market of the city, customers were attracted by the quality and price, but amazed at the three handles.

'Why have you put three handles on these baskets?' they would ask.

'Well you see,' the monks would reply, 'this has to do with what we believe.'

'How interesting. What is it that you believe?' would come the query.

'Well, we know that God is three in one, just as this basket is one basket and yet has three handles,' the monks would respond.

So, by design, the livelihood of the monastery provided an opportunity for witness. The story is a simple historical recollection that survives from the fourth century. Again, flexibility is possible and authenticity is assured. To change the basic story-line while telling that account in the village of Dayr Abu Hennis is unthinkable. If you persisted, I think you would be run out of the village. They have told it the same way for centuries. Thus, in summary, stories, parables and historical narratives have continuity and flexibility in their recitation.

(iii) Total flexibility

The third level of flexibility in the *haflat samar* can be observed in the telling of jokes, the reporting of the casual news of the day, the reciting of tragedies in nearby villages and (in the case of inter-communal violence) atrocity stories. Within this classification of material there is no control. Flux and gross exaggeration are possible. *The material is irrelevant to the identity of the community* and is not judged *wise* or *valuable*. It floats and dies in a state of total instability. It does not enter the tradition and is soon forgotten or reshaped beyond recognition.

Techniques for assimilating new material

Thus far we have been examining only old material and how it is preserved, controlled and passed on. What then of more recent material? Here we would observe an oral tradition community as it enters new material into its oral store of recollections judged worthy of preservation. The case we have in mind centres in the nineteenth century around John Hogg, a Scottish missionary who was the founder of many of the Protestant churches in the south of Egypt. A biography of John Hogg was published by his daughter in 1914,[32] primarily from his letters and papers. But, in the tradition of Plutarch mentioned above, she also used oral sources. Indeed, her father had been dead only twenty-eight years when she was assembling her material.

John Hogg was the primary founder of the new Egyptian Evangelical community. Each village had and has its own stories of what he said and did. The more dramatic of these stories have moved from village to village among evangelicals, but each account is primarily preserved in the village of origin.

In the late fifties I encountered this same tradition. One village proudly told of how he was preaching in a village courtyard and the mayor, anxious to cause trouble, sent a village guard up onto the adjoining roof to urinate on him. Hogg stepped aside, took a handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his head and continued preaching without looking up. The mayor was so shamed and impressed that after inquiry and study he joined the infant church and became one of its leaders.

In a trouble-maker's home in the village of Nazlet al-Milk Hogg was asked, 'Dr Hogg, do you seek to obey what is written in the Gospels?'

'I do,' answered Hogg.

'Very well then,' they said, 'in the Gospel it says that the evangelist is to eat what is set before him. Do you accept that?'

'Yes,' came the reply, whereupon they placed in front of him a dried cow manure patty of the type that village homes use for cooking fuel and said to him, 'Very well, then, eat *this*!'

Hogg reflected momentarily and answered quietly, *'Da akl in-nar. Eddini akl al-bashar wa akulha'* (This is food for a fire. Give me food for people and I will eat it). The present writer is fully confident that the above Arabic sentence is a record of Hogg's exact words spoken once over a hundred years ago and here recorded for the first time.

In the village of al-Muti'ah he anchored his houseboat on the river at the edge of the village. After some time village children began gathering and in turn composed a taunt song which they sang every time he came down from or returned to the houseboat. The taunt song was along the following lines:

> Mister John Hogg is too tall.
> Crack his head and see him fall.

Hour after hour, day after day, this became tiresome. Hogg decided that something had to be done. So he purchased a large sack of hard candy and told the children that he really appreciated their song. Would they sing it for him? Delighted, the children then sang the song with gusto. He then expressed gratitude and passed out hard candy to the singers as a reward. This continued for a number of days until the sack of hard candy was finally finished. On the next occasion they sang the taunt song as usual. He offered his usual thanks and praise, but there was no candy. The children complained, 'Where is our candy?' He answered, 'I don't have any more candy.' They responded testily, *'Well*, if you don't give us any candy we won't come here and sing your song for you!!' The candy was not forthcoming and so the children stomped off, never to return. The incident occurred about 1870. It was proudly reported to me in 1961 by the al-Muti'ah Evangelical community, complete with taunt song.

Before the First World War John Hogg's daughter dipped into this same oral tradition and in her biography of him told how he was waylaid at night by a band of robbers who demanded valuables. He quickly surrendered a gold watch and his money, but indicated that he had a treasure worth far more. They were curious. He pulled a small book from his pocket and spent the entire night telling them of the treasures it contained. By morning the band, convicted of the evil of their ways, sought to return his watch and money and pledged themselves to give up highway robbery. Hogg took the watch but insisted that they keep his money, and indeed then financed the gang personally

until they could establish themselves in legal employment. Thus, like Plutarch (and St Luke, *cf.* Lk. 1:1-2), Rena Hogg had available to her both written and oral sources.

John Hogg was the founder of the community. Stories of what he did and said, particularly in contexts of conflict, became a part of the tradition of the community, and were passed on in their *haflat samar*. Rena Hogg dipped into that tradition in 1910. I dipped into the same tradition in 1955–65 and found the same stories told in almost the same way. The tradition will last in those villages as long as the community he founded survives or until they acquire electricity and television.

Thus we have observed some material of great antiquity passed on in the *informal controlled* oral tradition. Other material in the tradition is a mere hundred years old. The writing down of the material (particularly in a second language) did not halt the oral recitation of that same material nor curtail its controlled flexibility. Furthermore, we discovered verifiable evidence of authenticity in oral transmission at least from 1914 to 1960.

But what is the process of *entering* new material into this form of tradition? We will limit ourselves to two illustrations, one a parable and one an historical incident. First, the parable. The official head of the Protestants in Lebanon was, until his recent death, the Rev. Ibrahim Dagher. Rev. Dagher was an authentic reciter of the *informal controlled* oral tradition of his community. In the autumn of 1967 a theological college in Lebanon where I was teaching was requested by its Board to conduct a series of public lectures relating to the war in June. We did so. The last of the series was led by three Middle Eastern pastors. Each spoke in turn. The first two gave a strong, fair, rational appeal for support of the Palestinian cause. They spoke for some forty-five minutes. Lastly, Rev. Dagher, a Lebanese nationalist, rose to his feet. He spoke as follows:

> Once there was a bedouin who had a camel. On a cold night the camel said to the bedouin, 'My *nose* is very cold. May I put my nose in your tent?' The bedouin said, *'Tafaddal'* (please go ahead). A bit later the camel said, 'My *ears* are very cold. May I put my ears in your tent?' The bedouin said, *'Tafaddal.'* Then the camel said, 'My *neck* is still in the cold wind. May I put my neck in your tent?' The bedouin said, *'Tafaddal.'* The neck of the camel is very strong. When the camel had his neck in the tent he jerked his powerful neck upwards and struck the top of the tent with his head, and the tent collapsed on the bedouin and on the camel.

Rev. Dagher then sat down. That was eighteen years ago. The present text is, to my knowledge, the first time that this parable has ever been recorded on paper. The audience instinctively recognized that the camel symbolized the Palestinians, the bedouin referred to the Lebanese and the tent represented Lebanon. The point of view expressed is that of the Lebanese nationalists. My purpose here is not to agree or disagree with Rev. Dagher's views, but rather to examine the methodology of the authoritative figure in an *informal* controlled oral tradition community. The conceptual content of the parable is straightforward. He was saying, 'We the Lebanese have welcomed our Palestinian brothers into Lebanon, but there is danger lest they break down the social and political structures of Lebanon and bring the whole country crashing down around our ears.' The climate in which we lived in 1967 would *not* have allowed such a public statement. But, he did not say anything! He just told a 'simple' (?) story. A number of analytical observations can be made.

First, the author was the leader of the community. Second, the parable was told in a conflict setting. Third, an old familiar story was retold but with some critical revisions. Everyone in the audience *thought* they knew how the story was going to end. They assumed that in the end the camel would drive the bedouin out of the tent. The *revisions* in the traditional story went off like a mental hand-grenade and Rev. Dagher's main point was located in those revisions. Fourth, we all participated in a 'language-event'. Fifth, the author of the parable gave what his fellow Lebanese deemed a 'wise answer' and thereby gave the community a good feeling about the rightness of following this particular leader. Sixth, the lecture hall was electrified and the parable was rendered quite unforgettable to all those present irrespective of their views. I venture to suggest that we have recorded above at least 80 per cent of Rev. Dagher's *ipsissima verba* even though I heard the parable *once* eighteen years ago. All of this happened in the modern sophisticated city of Beirut, not in a small rural village, yet the parable survived. Protestant circles and was retold all across the Middle East. Indeed, in the summer of 1984 the parable was repeated to me intact in Bristol, England, by a witness who had heard it in Jordan in the late sixties. Such is the strength of *informal controlled* oral tradition in the Middle East.

What, then, of an historical event? For this I would turn to a wedding in the village of Dayr al-Barsha in the south of Egypt in 1958. I was out of the village and missed the wedding. At village weddings hundreds, or even thousands, of rifle rounds are fired into the air in celebration. Much of the ammunition is old and the guns are fired carelessly. At times, as in this case, tragedy results. In the celebrations after the wedding ceremony a friend of the groom fired his rifle. The gun did not go off. He lowered the gun and then the defective bullet fired, passing through the groom who was killed instantly.

A week later I returned to the village without knowledge of the tragedy. I was first met by the man in whose courtyard I parked my car before entering the row-boat to cross the Nile to the village. The man asked me if I had heard the story: *'Sima't al-qissa?'* he queried. 'No,' I answered. He related the event to me. At its climax he said:

> Hanna fired the gun. The gun did not go off. He lowered the gun. The gun fired [*durib al-bundugiyya* – passive]. The bullet passed through the stomach of Butrus. He died. He did not cry out, 'O my father', nor 'O my mother' [meaning he died instantly without crying out]. When the police came we told them, 'A camel stepped on him.'

The boatman asked me the same question: *'Sima't al-qissa?'* (Have you heard the story?). He then related his version of the tragedy, but when he came to the above-mentioned climax he repeated almost the exact phrases I had heard from the first witness. The same conversation then took place with a boy on the far bank of the river. He also wanted to know if I had heard the *qissa*. He related a 12-year-old boy's view – but when he came to the climax of the story, the same verbiage emerged, almost word by word, verb by verb and tense by tense. On reaching the village I observed the same phenomena in turn with the village guards, with the mayor during a courtesy call, and with the village preacher with whom I was staying.

After some reflection and with the help of my good friend Rev. Rifqi, the village pastor, a bit of analysis was possible. When a death like this occurs the critical question becomes: is the family of the dead man going to blame the person who held the gun (in which case blood vengeance must be exacted and said person will be killed by the groom's family), or has the grieving family accepted the tragedy as an act of God (in which case some payment will be made but the police will be told nothing and sent back to their provincial headquarters)? So, after about three days, the community decided together that this was an act of God, hence the use of the divine passive verb (so common in Luke), 'The gun fired' (passive). God fired the gun, not Hanna. The police were told, 'A camel stepped on him', meaning 'We have settled this among ourselves and we don't want any police interference in the internal affairs of our community.' We note in passing that no deception is intended or perpetrated (Middle Eastern peoples communicate *magnificently* using a very sophisticated double-talk). The police in this case knew *exactly* what had happened. *Unofficially* and privately all the details are given to them. But after the above community theological decision and the ensuing condensation of the story, the police can *officially* examine all 5,000 people in the village and receive the same answer from all. So, in roughly three days, a summary of the *climax* of the event (with interpretation) was crystallized and was available on all the various sociological levels of the village, from the young boy in the street to the boatman on the river, up through the village guards to the mayor and the preacher.

This particular story will not be told for more than a generation. The characters involved were not founders of the community. If the two families were leading families it might last two or three generations. Anyone in their teens at the time of the event would be able to retell it for the rest of his/her life. Thus the story might survive fifty years. The families involved will tell it some time longer. But what of the present witness? I am not an acceptable reciter of the village tradition. I did not grow up in that village, but I heard all of this twenty-eight years

ago – and the central core is still indelibly fixed in my mind. Why? Because it was firmly implanted in my memory that first week by the constant repetition of the community condensation. Each retelling included the above-mentioned central core of information recited, in each case, with nearly the same words.

This same phenomenon of community repetition of a central core of information in a story or event was also on display in worship. Often while preaching I would tell a story new to the community. At the conclusion of the telling of the story the attention of the congregation would literally break up in what I discovered was a form of oral shorthand. The elder on the front row would shout across the church to a friend in a loud voice, 'Did you hear what the preacher said? He said . . .' and then would come a line or two of the story including the punch-line. People all across the church instinctively turned to their neighbours and repeated the central thrust of the story twice and thrice to each other. They wanted to retell the story that week across the village and they had to learn it on the spot. The preacher was not *allowed* to continue until they had done so. Through such incidents it was possible to observe *informal controlled* oral tradition functioning at close range, and watch it solidify and orally record information for transmission. As we have noted, there was a relatively inflexible central core of information and along with it a community-controlled freedom to vary the story according to individual perspectives.

The significance of informal controlled oral tradition for Synoptic studies: some preliminary conclusions

So, in Luke 1:2 we are told of eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, the *hoi . . . autoptai kai huperetai . . . tou logou. Huperetes* is the Greek word for the Hebrew word *hazzan*.[33] The *hazzan*, as a synagogue official, was responsible, among other things, for the scrolls in the synagogue. Indeed in Luke 4:20 the *hazzan/huperetes* is clearly an official in a synagogue (and is handling the scrolls). But in Luke 1:2 we read the *hazzan/huperetes* of the *word*. The single definite article in Luke 1:2 makes it likely that these specially designated people were also eyewitnesses.

It is my suggestion that up until the upheaval of the Jewish-Roman war *informal controlled* oral tradition was able to function in the villages of Palestine. Those who accepted the new rabbi as the expected Messiah would record and transmit data concerning him as the source of their new identity. Then in AD 70 many of the settled villages of Palestine were destroyed and many of the people dispersed. Thus the Jewish-Roman war would have disrupted the sociological village structures in which the *informal controlled* oral tradition functioned. However, anyone twenty years old and older in that year would have been an authentic reciter of that tradition. It appears that the earliest church may have refined the methodology already functioning naturally among them. Not everyone who lived in the community in the village and heard the stories of Jesus was authorized to recite the tradition. The witness was required to have been an *eyewitness* of the historical Jesus to qualify as a *huperetes tou logou* (*cf.* Lk. 1:2). Thus, at least through to the end of the first century, the authenticity of that tradition was assured to the community through specially designated authoritative witnesses. At the same time, with the destruction of the controlling communities which monitored and passed on the tradition, the corruption evidenced in the apocryphal gospels is explainable.

Thus, in summary and conclusion, here we have observed a classical methodology for the preservation, control and transmission of tradition that provides, on the one hand, assurance of authenticity and, on the other hand, freedom within limits for various forms of that tradition. Furthermore, the types of material that appear in the Synoptic Gospels include primarily the same forms that we have found preserved by *informal controlled* oral tradition such as proverbs, parables, poems, dialogues, conflict stories and historical narratives. In the case of John Hogg, the material was preserved because it was a record of the words and deeds of the founder of the community and thus an affirmation of the identity of the reciters of that tradition. We are convinced that the same can be affirmed regarding the Synoptic tradition. In the light of the reality described above the assumption that the early Christians were not interested in history becomes untenable. To remember the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth was to affirm their own unique identity. The stories had to be *told* and *controlled* or everything that made them who they were was lost.[34]

The Synoptic tradition can be compared to an automobile. For a long time we have known that the machine has an accelerator which provides for movement. But the 'car' also has a *brake* that controls and, when necessary, stops that movement. The many reasons for *movement* in the Synoptic tradition are well known and have been noted by Dodd and Davies quoted above. While affirming that freedom of movement, it has been our intent here to study the 'braking system' that keeps that movement within limits and assures continuity and authenticity to what is being transmitted. Rather than a modern subjective Western model, we are confident that a traditional Middle Eastern cultural model is more appropriate to the materials at hand.

Paul makes use of the recitation formula, 'What I have received I delivered unto you'. Thus some *formal* controlled oral tradition existed, and anyone with a good memory could, and can, become a reciter of what he/she has memorized. But Paul cannot become a reciter of the *informal* controlled oral tradition. He cannot become a *huperetes tou logou*. Thus he does not try. He presumes only to make passing references to the specific Jesus sayings in the Synoptic tradition. Following C.S. Lewis's formulation, Paul knows 'the pattern of events' of the passion. His writings are brilliant theological interpretations of that pattern of events with reflections on the ethical implications that stem from it. The evangelists in turn rely on the reciters of the tradition and produce the gospels.

We are not suggesting absolute categories. The pedagogy of the rabbinic schools may well lie behind some of the material. The assumptions of radical kerygmatizing are perhaps less helpful. Needing to account for both event and interpretation, continuity and discontinuity, fixity and fluidity, it is our suggestion that the *informal* yet *controlled* oral tradition of the settled Middle Eastern village can provide a methodological framework within which to perceive and interpret the bulk of the materials before us.

[1]The Gospel of John has been deliberately omitted from the discussion in order to limit the scope of the essay.

[2]R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Scribners, *c.* 1921, 1958), p. 8.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 12.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 13.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 12.

[6]Riesenfeld, 'The Gospel Tradition and its Beginnings', in *The Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), p. 11.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 14.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 19.

[9]*Ibid.*, p. 22.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 26

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 29.

[12]B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1961).

[13]*Idem, Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity. Coniectanea Neotestamentica* XX (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1964).

[14]Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, p. 335.

[15]W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964).

[16]Gerhardsson, *ibid.*, p. 258.

[17]Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 466 n. 1.

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 477.

[19]C.H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 22.

[20]Eduard Nielsen, *Oral Tradition. Studies in Biblical Theology* No. 11 (Chicago: Alec R. Allensen, 1954), p. 21.

[21]Taha Hussein, *An Egyptian Childhood: The Autobiography of Taha Hussein*, tr. E.H. Paxton (London: G. Routledge, 1932).

[22]Plato, *Phaedrus*, 274C–275A, tr. H.N. Fowler in *Loeb Classical Library* I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 560f.

[23]Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives* (Cincinnati: Applegate and Co., 1855), p. 545.

[24]Hezkial, *al-Amthal al-Misriyah*, an unpublished MS listing over 2,000 Egyptian proverbs. The Arabic text with a translation into English is currently in the hands of Dr Kenneth Nolin, R.R. 1, Fredricktown, PA 15333, USA.

[25]Anis Frayha, *Mu'jam al-Amthal al-Lubnaniyah (Dictionary of Lebanese Proverbs)* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnan, 1974).

[26]Hani al-Amad, *al-Amthal al-Sha'biyah al-Urduniyah (The Popular Proverbs of Jordan)* (Amman, 1978).

[27]'Isa 'Atallah, *Qalu fi al-Mathal: Mowsu'ah fi al-Amthal wa al-Hikam al-Sa'ira (The Proverb Says: Encyclopedia of Current Proverbs and Wisdom Sayings)* (Bethlehem, 1985).

[28]See also G.W. Freitag, *Arabum Proverbia* (Bonnae ad Rhenum: A. Marcum, 1837), three vols.

[29]Luwis Shaykhu, *Shu'ra'al-Nasraniyah qabl al-Islam* (Christian Poets Prior to the Rise of Islam) (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1967).

[30]This information was acquired from an author, scholar, attorney-at-law and lay reader of the Orthodox Church in Lebanon, Mr Wa'il Khayr. Mr Khayr (a research scholar for the Middle East Council of Churches), in a series of extended conversations during 1980–84, introduced me in depth to this remarkable aspect of Lebanese traditional culture. The same poetic phenomenon exists in Palestine, as reported to me by Dr Geries S. Khoury of the Ecumenical Center for Theological Research, Tantur, Jerusalem.

[31]C.S. Lewis, Preface to *George MacDonald: An Anthology* (London: Collins, 1983).

[32]Rena L. Hogg, *Master Builder on the Nile* (New York: Flemming Revell, 1914).

[33]*Cf.* Walter Bauer, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University Press, 1957), p. 850. Bauer documents the probable use on a Roman-Jewish grave of *huperetes* in referring to a synagogue attendant. This official, called the *hazzan* in Hebrew, is referred to as a synagogue attendant twice in the Mishna (M. Yoma 7:1, M. Sotah 7:8). Safrai writes, 'The head of the synagogue had an adjutant, the *hazzan (hzn)*, undoubtedly *huperetes* of Luke 4:20, who acted as executive officer in the practical details of running the synagogue' (S. Safrai, 'The Synagogue', in S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 935f.). It is clear that the synagogue had its *huperetes* as an official in the institution of the synagogue. Is it not possible that this is the key to an understanding of the *huperetai tou logou* in the Christian church who appear in Lk. 1:2? At the earliest stage of its history the church had neither buildings nor formal institutional structures that needed staff. Rather, it had a tradition that was precious to it. As the church grew and spread there was perhaps a need for those who were naturally qualified to recite the tradition to carry a special title and, with the title, a unique responsibility.

[34]We are not suggesting an early separation between the church and the synagogue. The evangelicals of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine live in harmony with others in their cities, towns and villages. They tell stories relating to their identity when they meet as a special fellowship within the wider community. Early Hebrew Christians had accepted Jesus (at least) as their unique spiritual guide. Meeting with their fellow Jews on Saturday, they would naturally meet in a special fellowship on Sunday to recite their own unique tradition which gave content to their own special identity.

How Jesus understood the Last Supper: a parable in action

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Jesus' parables

Jesus was a brilliant story-teller. He used parables not simply to add spice to his teaching, but in order also to involve people personally in his ministry and to challenge people very directly with his message.

The drama of the Good Samaritan

Take the parable of the Good Samaritan. In order to understand the force of any of the parables, we need to see them in their historical, geographical and social context. In the case of the parable of the Good Samaritan the most important thing to realize is how badly Jews and Samaritans normally related to each other in Jesus' day. The Jews regarded the Samaritans as half-pagan (though their ideology may not in fact have been very unorthodox), and the religious Jew tried to have as little to do as possible with Samaritans (see Jn. 4:9; 8:48).

This attitude had its origin right back in OT times, when Samaria was conquered by the Assyrians and a substantial part of its Jewish population was deported, being replaced with pagan settlers (see 2 Ki. 17). Although these immigrants learned the local religion of Israel, they were never regarded as religiously *kosher* by the Jews of Jerusalem, and there was constant enmity and tension between the Jews and the Samaritans. In the book of Nehemiah we read of conflict between them when the Jews were rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem (*e.g.* Ne. 4–6). It is not perhaps surprising that at some point – we are not quite sure when – the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. But the building of a rival temple to the temple in Jerusalem rubbed salt into the wound so far as the Jews were concerned, and in 128 BC, when the Jews were temporarily in the ascendant militarily, they marched to Gerizim and destroyed the Samaritan temple, lock, stock and barrel, gloating over the thoroughness of their destructive action. The question of the temple continued to be a very sensitive one to Jews and Samaritans (see the Samaritan woman's conversation with Jesus in Jn. 4:20); in AD 6 some Samaritans broke into the Jerusalem temple at night and scattered human bones there, thus defiling the sacred place just before a Jewish feast – an unfriendly act, to say the least, that will have confirmed the Jews in their hostility towards their neighbours.

The tensions between Jews and Samaritans were liable to come violently to the surface at any time, not least when Jewish pilgrims passed through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem; Jesus himself faced such hostility when he was going up to Jerusalem (see Lk. 9:53, 54: 'They would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"' Notice the mutual antagonism between Jews and Samaritan!). To avoid such hostility the Jews of Galilee would often avoid the direct route to Jerusalem via Samaria, preferring to go the long way round on the far side of the Jordan river – a route that brings you up to Jerusalem through Jericho.

The second bit of background to the parable has to do with that road. It is a road that in only seventeen miles descends quite precipitously from 2,500 feet above sea level to 770 feet below sea level, Jericho being near the River Jordan and the Dead Sea down in the Rift Valley. The Jerusalem–Jericho road is steep, very rocky and ideal terrain for highwaymen. It has been a notoriously dangerous road for travellers right up into our present century; in Jesus' day it was desirable for pilgrims to travel in groups (or caravans) for safety; in the Middle Ages the Crusader order of Templars specifically had the task of protecting Christian pilgrims coming up to Jerusalem.

Given this background, we can begin to appreciate how Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan 'works'. Jesus describes a

man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, a road familiar to his listeners. They could picture the rocky dangerous road, and sympathize with the lonely traveller going down it. They will not have been surprised to hear that he 'fell among thieves', and they will have felt for the man, being robbed and stripped and left half dead. But then a sign of hope: someone coming, a priest! A lot of priests lived in the Jericho area, and so we (as Jesus' hearers) are not surprised to see one coming down from Jerusalem, perhaps after his priestly duties. Our hopes are raised for the poor man lying half-dead by the roadside, but then the priest passes by on the other side. Our hopes are dashed. Jesus' Jewish hearers may well have nodded their heads at this point: 'Yes, that's the clergy for you. Religious maybe, but . . .' Then a Levite comes. Again our hopes are disappointed; again Jesus' hearers will probably have nodded their recognition of the situation: 'That's religious people for you . . .'

So far Jesus' story has been one that has gripped his hearers' attention, involving them in the action. And so far they have been with him – sympathizing with the poor man and recognizing Jesus' portrait of the religiously hypocritical. But what next? The way the story should go on for Jesus' hearers is that now a layman – an ordinary Jew – will come and do the decent thing for the poor man by the roadside. That would have made a most satisfactory story. Instead Jesus says, 'But a Samaritan while travelling came . . .' This is not how the story should go! For Jesus' Jewish hearers this is a decidedly difficult turn in the story. Samaritans are irreligious half-castes with whom we like to have as little as possible to do. The thought of a Samaritan coming up to me and helping me is very uncomfortable. But Jesus describes the Samaritan not just coming and doing the bare minimum to help the muggers' poor victim: no, the Samaritan does everything, bandaging the wounds, pouring in his own oil and wine, putting the man on his donkey, taking him to the inn, paying the innkeeper for several days' care, even promising to return and pay anything extra that may be needed. Going the second mile is not in it! The Samaritan is amazingly kind!

What are Jesus' hearers to make of this story? It is a gripping account, which then takes a problematic turn. Jesus challenges his hearers through the story to choose whether they are going to continue with their traditional prejudice, which wanted to limit their neighbour-love to fellow Jews (see the question that introduces the parable in 10:29), or whether they will accept Jesus' revolutionary attitude which is that our love should be even for our enemies (Mt. 5:44). Jesus invites his hearers to 'Go and do likewise' (10:37) – to be like the amazingly generous, unprejudiced Samaritan of the parable.

Scholars have described what happens in a parable like that of the Good Samaritan as a 'language-event'.[1] The parable does not just give us information about the sort of people we should be; it involves us and confronts us with a choice – a choice between our old prejudice (dislike of the Samaritans and others) and Jesus' new way of the kingdom of God (love of enemies, such as Jesus himself exemplified).

Not all Jesus' parables are such powerfully engaging dramas; but it is illuminating to see the Last Supper as just such a parabolic drama, and it is helpful to interpret the Supper as we would a parable.

General principles in parable interpretation

In interpreting parables we need, as we have seen, to understand their context. First there is the historical/social/geographical/religious context of first-century Palestine (*e.g.* the history of Jewish/Samaritan relations, the geography of Palestine). Secondly, there is the context of Jesus' teaching: Jesus proclaimed the coming of God's revolutionary kingdom, and his parables must be seen in this context, not for example in the context of modern psychology (Jesus was not intending to teach non-directive caring counselling through the portrayal of the Good Samaritan, but rather something about the revolution he had come to bring!). Thirdly, there is the context of the story in the gospels and the hints or direct indications that the evangelists give us about the interpretation (*e.g.* the question of the lawyer: 'Who is my neighbour?', and Jesus' final comment: 'Go and do likewise', help us to see that the parable is about revolutionary neighbour-love, and that it is not the sort of complex allegory of salvation – Adam falling into sin and being rescued by Christ – that ancient interpreters supposed).

Another key to understanding Jesus' parables is appreciation of the form or shape of the particular parable being interpreted. The old allegorical method that saw significance in every detail of the parables (for example, the two coins in the parable of the Good Samaritan) and the more modern scholarly view that Jesus' parables all have only one point are both mistaken. Each parable must be judged on its merits: we must see how it is constructed, what the points of emphasis are, and so on. The parable of the sower with its description of the four types of soil is – obviously enough – constructed as a multi-point parable; the parable of the Good Samaritan is much more nearly a one-point parable (about neighbour-love), though there is probably a negative point about empty religion (the priest and the Levite) as well as a positive point.

The Last Supper

Given this preliminary discussion of method, we can turn to the Last Supper itself. The relevant NT texts are Matthew 26:20-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-38; John 13:1-30 (*cf.* 6:52-58); 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

a. The background and context of the Last Supper

What is the background to the story of the Last Supper and the context in which it must be interpreted?

i. Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God

The first thing to say is that the Last Supper story must be seen in the context of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God, because this was so central to his ministry. We must interpret the Supper in a way that fits in with Jesus' proclamation that 'the kingdom of God has come near' (Mk. 1:15).

What did he mean by this proclamation? To put it very simply: he meant that the day of God's salvation which the OT promised and which his contemporaries were longing for had dawned. First-century Palestine was, of course, an occupied country: the Roman imperialists had been in control of the country for almost a hundred years, and, although the Romans were relatively benign rulers, the high taxation that their subjects had to pay was a great burden on a poor country, and it was in any case extremely irksome to have to live under a culturally and religiously alien superpower. Jesus' announcement of God's new day – of the day of God's rule – was good news.

Jesus explained that God's marvellous OT promises to his people were being fulfilled in his ministry (Lk. 4:18-21: 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled'; *cf.* Mt. 13:16-17), and he demonstrated the truth of his claim in action (Mt. 11:2-6): he healed the sick, he welcomed sinners back to God, he broke through the social barriers of his day (for example, between Jew and Samaritan), he changed selfish people like Zacchaeus into generous people. He was visibly overcoming that 'strong man' Satan and restoring the 'rule' (or kingdom) of God (Mt. 12:22-32, especially 12:28). He did not bring the kingdom all at once (to the disappointment of his disciples), but he saw himself as starting the process, like a sower sowing his seed that would produce the harvest (see the parables of Mt. 13).

ii. Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem

If the broad context of the Last Supper was Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God, the more particular context was his last journey up to Jerusalem. Jesus had come up from Galilee with his disciples to the holy city in order to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. This journey was, as Jesus made clear and as his disciples recognized, one of particular significance. We read that 'Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem' (Lk. 9:51), and his disciples recognized that there was something special about this journey (see Mk. 10:32). They knew that something momentous was to happen in Jerusalem. According to Luke 19:11 they hoped that Jesus was now going to complete the revolution that

he had begun, driving out the Romans and rewarding them with positions of privilege in the new regime (Mk. 10:35-37). Their excitement was evident as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and they welcomed him as king.

But Jesus' own understanding was different. Yes, the journey was of momentous importance. But he had spoken mysteriously of the need for him to suffer (*e.g.* Mk. 8:31-33): his disciples found this incomprehensible. It did not fit into their understanding of the kingdom. But Jesus knew himself to be on the way to his death.

The Last Supper comes in this context – of excitement and anticipation and of Jesus' death. Jesus was, of course, right. The Last Supper led directly to Jesus' betrayal ('on the night that he was betrayed . . .', 1 Cor. 11:23), to his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane and to the crucifixion.

iii. Passover time

The third thing to note by way of background is that the Last Supper took place at Passover time. Passover was a great pilgrimage festival for the Jews. The German scholar Joachim Jeremias has calculated that Jerusalem's regular population was around 30,000; it was quite a small city by our standards. But Jeremias reckons that perhaps 100,000 pilgrims came to Jerusalem each Passover. We can imagine the crowds and the excitement of the feast, the packed guest-houses and camping grounds, even out as far as Bethany.

Passover was tremendously important for the Jews, being the annual celebration of God's deliverance of his people from Egypt (Ex. 12, *etc.*). They remembered the exodus under Moses, the great liberation from slavery. The festival was a feast of remembrance *and* of identification: it was seen not just as a celebration of what happened 'to them', *i.e.* to distant ancestors, but also as a celebration of what God did 'for us' as a people.

It was not only a backward-looking festival, but also apparently a feast of anticipation. A rabbinic saying runs as follows: 'In this night we were delivered, in this night we will be delivered', and a modern Jewish scholar[2] speaks of Passover time as 'permeated by a thirst for, and an immediate expectation of, salvation'. The celebration of God's liberation in the past and the anticipation of this future liberation will have had a special poignancy in the face of the Roman occupation of Palestine.

The focus of the feast was the Passover meal. According to Matthew, Mark and Luke the Last Supper was a Passover meal. John's gospel gives a different impression, suggesting that the Passover meal took place after, not before, the crucifixion. This divergence between the Synoptics and John is a particularly knotty question of gospel harmony, and there are various different explanations: was Passover celebrated on two different days of the week by different Jewish groups (there is some evidence of this)? Did Jesus celebrate Passover early with his disciples, because he knew that he was going to be arrested very soon? Is John referring not to the Passover meal itself as happening after the crucifixion, but to other festal meals that took place in Passover week? We will not explore these suggestions here, but simply express the opinion that the Last Supper was indeed a Passover meal. Even if it was not, the argument of this article is not seriously damaged: on any reckoning the Last Supper took place in the Passover season and had a Passover background.

If it was a Passover, what probably happened? Jeremias thinks that the Passover pattern was roughly this: on the thirteenth day of the month Nisan (March/April) all unleavened bread was cleared out of the houses in preparation for this feast of unleavened bread. On the afternoon of the fourteenth the Passover lambs were killed in the temple, and then in the evening the family would gather for the meal, which would be served on low tables, with everyone reclining around the tables on couches or cushions. It may have been customary to dress in white.

The first course was eaten after the father of the family had prayed, giving thanks to God for Passover day and for the first cup of wine – there were four cups in the course of the meal. The wine would be drunk, and the first course consisted of bitter herbs dipped in a sauce of fruits and spices.

Then came the main 'service' part of the meal (or the liturgy), when the father of the family would explain the exodus story and its meaning in response to leading questions from one of his sons. A hymn was sung (probably Psalms 113, 114), and the second cup of wine was drunk.

Then came the main course. First, the father would give thanks for the unleavened bread, which he would break and pass to his guests. We may guess that it was at this point that Jesus took the bread and interpreted it as 'my body'. Then the roast lamb would be served with herbs and sauces. After this had been eaten the father would give thanks for the third cup of wine, the so-called 'cup of blessing'. We may guess that it was this cup which Jesus took 'after supper' and spoke of as 'my blood'.

The meal would then end with the singing of more psalms (Pss. 115–118) – the gospels tell us that Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn before going out into Gethsemane; there was a final cup of wine, then the blessing and dismissal.

Whether or not all the details are correct, seeing the Last Supper in this sort of context makes a lot of sense. It makes sense of the details of the Supper as described in the gospels, including the interesting 'longer text' of Luke's gospel, which has Jesus give two cups to his disciples, one before the bread and one after (Lk. 22:17-20). More importantly, it helps make sense of the Supper as a whole, as we shall see.

The form and wording of the story

Although the first Lord's Supper was probably a Passover meal, the Synoptic Gospels focus their description on the two actions of Jesus in taking the bread and the wine and giving them to the disciples. This was what was distinctive about this Passover, and these actions together with Jesus' words explaining his actions must be central in our interpretation of the Supper. The words vary slightly in the different gospels, but not in any way that complicates our task significantly.

The significance of the Eucharist

i. Jesus' death

Given the context and paying attention to the form of wording of the story, we can proceed towards an explanation of the Last Supper and Jesus' so-called eucharistic actions. The first and most important thing to say is, to use Paul's words, that the Supper is a proclamation of the death of Jesus: 'As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death' (1 Cor. 11:26). This we learn not just from Paul, but also from the context of the Supper, which took place 'on the night that he was betrayed', and from the central action of Jesus in taking bread and wine and speaking of them as 'my body' and 'my blood'. This acted parable of Jesus was a parable about his death. Of course, Passover itself was a festival in which a sacrificial death was central: the death of the lamb brought salvation to the people.

ii. The Passover

That brings us on to one of the most important keys to the interpretation of the Last Supper, namely its Passover context. It was no accident that Jesus spoke of his death in this context: he deliberately came up to Jerusalem at Passover time, and he told his disciples how much he wanted to celebrate Passover with them (Lk. 22:15). By choosing to speak of his death in the Passover context Jesus was showing to his disciples that his death was to be a liberating event, rather like the exodus. It was, when you think about it, a quite extraordinary thing for Jesus to do – for him to use the occasion of the great Israelite celebration of God's salvation to speak of his own death. In anyone else we might think of it as arrogance, but Jesus was making a deliberate point by doing so – he was interpreting his death as a liberating event like the Passover. The thought of Jesus' death as a liberation comes out too in that vitally important verse, Mark 10:45: 'The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.' The word 'ransom' suggests a price paid to free someone from slavery or imprisonment. Jesus' death is seen as bringing liberation. The Greek word for 'ransom' is related to the word 'redemption', a term often used in the OT for the exodus – for the liberation of Israel from Egypt.

Jesus' death is portrayed in the Last Supper as a new Passover: as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 5:7: 'Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us.'

But what sort of liberation does Jesus' death bring? Obviously not liberation from Egypt this time. What then? Before answering that question we must note the 'covenant' language used by Jesus in the Last Supper. There is a slight variation in the wording used at this point between Matthew and Mark on the one hand, who have Jesus say, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many' (Mk. 14:24; Mt. 26:28), and Luke and Paul on the other, who have the words 'This cup . . . is the new covenant in my blood' (Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). The slight difference in wording is not very important; perhaps the Luke/Paul version is a clarification of the more original Matthew/Mark version. But the point that Jesus speaks of the wine in terms of covenant blood is common to both.

The background to this language is, like the whole Passover idea, found in Exodus 24:6-8, where Moses after explaining to the people the law of God and the terms of the covenant (or agreement) between God and themselves throws the blood of sacrifice on the altar (symbolizing God) and on the people. Thus the old covenant between God and his people was publicly sealed.

In speaking of his blood in covenant terms Jesus is implying that his death is a new covenant-making event. We have a new Passover, a new exodus, and a new covenant being established between God and his people. The OT, of course, had looked forward to such a new covenant, most explicitly in Jeremiah 31:31-34, where the prophet says:

> The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

It is this new covenant promised by the OT prophets that Jesus brings (see Paul's teaching in 2 Cor. 3); it is this new covenant that Jesus speaks of at the Last Supper.

We can now answer the question about what sort of liberation Jesus' death effects. It is not this time liberation from someone like Pharaoh; it is rather liberation from the sinfulness and powerlessness experienced under the old covenant. The new covenant brings forgiveness ('I will forgive their iniquity') and inward transformation ('I will put my law within them'). Jesus' contemporaries looked for political liberation from Rome; Jesus in his ministry proclaimed a greater liberation – from sin and from the power of the cosmic imperialist, Satan (the 'strong man' of Mk. 3:27). His liberating work was evident in his ministry, as he cast out demons from people; but his death was the supreme defeat and exorcism of Satan, as Jesus explains in John 12:31 when speaking of his death: 'Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.'

How does Jesus' death achieve this liberation? The clue to this is in Jesus' words: 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.' The language used here, in particular the last two words 'for many', is reminiscent of the great description in Isaiah 53 of the 'servant' of the Lord who suffers terribly for others, bearing the sins of 'many'. Jesus sees himself as that servant. The idea comes out also in Mark 10:45, where Jesus speaks of himself as one come to serve and 'to give his life a ransom for many'. Isaiah speaks of one who 'was despised and rejected . . .', and explains, 'Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . By his knowledge [or 'through his humiliation'] shall the righteous one my servant make many to be accounted righteous . . . He poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sins of many' (vv. 5, 11, 12). The picture in Isaiah 53 is of people deserving the judgment of God for their sins – compare Paul's pithy diagnosis of the human condition in Romans 6:23: 'the wages of sin is death' – but of that judgment being taken by the servant. Jesus sees his work on the cross as being that servant's saving ministry. He took the 'cup' of divine judgment that we deserved (see Mk. 10:38; 14:35, 36; *cf.* Ps. 75:8; *etc.*); he experienced our God-forsakenness to set us free (Mk. 15:34).

We are now in a position to sum up schematically the point about the Last Supper being set against the context of the Passover:

The Passover	*The Lord's Supper*
In the old age of law and prophets.	In the new age of kingdom.
Was the great festival meal of people.	Is to be the new celebratory God's meal of God's people.
They remembered the Passover sacrifice, the exodus from Egypt, the new beginning for covenant people.	To remember the sacrificial of Jesus, bringing freedom from sin, the new covenant of the Spirit.
By participating, Jews associated themselves with this salvation and covenant.	By participating, Jesus' followers associate with his redemption and covenant.
Looking back to exodus and forward to God's salvation.	Looking back to cross and forward to the kingdom.

iii. The kingdom

We emphasized that the Last Supper must be seen in the context of Jesus' kingdom teaching, and we are now in a position to see that Jesus' death, as celebrated in the Supper, is a kingdom-anticipating, kingdom-producing event. Jesus' words at the Supper associate it with the coming kingdom: thus in Luke 22:16 Jesus promises that 'he will not eat Passover again until fulfilled in the kingdom', and in Mark 14:25 he says, 'Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God'. In saying these things Jesus is not simply making an interesting statement of fact; rather he is implying a strong connection between his death and the coming kingdom. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:26 says that in the Eucharist we 'proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'. The meal looks forward to the coming kingdom.

But what exactly is the connection between cross and kingdom? We have already suggested that in a real sense the cross makes the kingdom which Jesus preached possible. Just as the Passover made possible the exodus and ultimately the Promised Land, so the cross makes possible the new covenant and the kingdom. The first Passover dealt with Pharaoh, the second brings release from Satan and sin. During his ministry one of the things that offended people about Jesus was his mixing with sinners, his offering of the kingdom and of forgiveness to sinners. People rightly asked who he was to proclaim forgiveness. How could he do so? The answer lay in something else his contemporaries found hard to comprehend – namely the cross. Jesus could preach forgiveness to sinners, because he was to take their judgment on himself.

iv. Acted parable

Much of what has been said so far in this article is very familiar. But we now come back to the thought of the Last Supper as an acted parable. On the night of his arrest Jesus did not just gather the disciples and say: let me explain what is going to happen when I die. Instead he took bread and wine, said, 'This is my body . . . this is my blood', and gave it to them. Why? We have already seen how Jesus' parables, like that of the Good Samaritan, were verbal dramas that involved and challenged people in a very personal way. The Last Supper was the same: in it Jesus symbolically acted out what he was about to do on the cross before his gathered disciples. And he did not just act it out before them: he involved them personally, in a terribly vivid way.

We have got so used to the eucharistic words and actions that they hardly move us: but for those first disciples to be given the bread and the wine, to be told "This is my body . . . this is my blood', and to be invited to eat and drink must have been a bewildering and even shocking thing. We can imagine them questioning in their minds: 'Your body? Your blood? Eat it,

drink it?' What was Jesus doing? Not simply giving them theological information, but rather giving them a theological experience. In the Last Supper they experienced for themselves what the cross was all about – about the body and blood of Jesus being given up, broken, poured out *for them*, and about the need to take that death to themselves ('eat . . . drink'). The Supper spoke vividly and powerfully of the love of Jesus through the cross.

In this case we are dealing not just with a 'language-event', as we were with the parable of the Good Samaritan, but with something even more powerful. Marriage counsellors explain to couples that communication between people happens in all sorts of ways – through words ('I love you'), visually (through our eyes, through how we dress, *etc.*), through touch (the handshake or the kiss), even through smell (*e.g.* perfume!). The Lord's Supper is multi-media communication: it speaks to us of the death of Christ and of the love of God in words, but also visually and through touch – we see and take the bread and wine – and even through taste – we eat and drink.

The Lord's Supper is brilliant communication. We cannot see God (though in his ministry his followers did), but God has given us a multi-media sign, bringing home to us the reality and meaning of our Lord's death. The Lord's Supper is not magic, not a trick of converting bread and wine into something else; but it is a brilliantly acted parable that communicates the love of God demonstrated on the cross to us in a way that involves us and challenges us. It communicates to us that that costly act was for us; the death of Jesus is something he shares with us; the death of Jesus is something we are to take to ourselves, into our very being. Paul expresses this thought about the Lord's Supper when he says, 'The bread which we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?' (1 Cor. 10:16).[3] The cross is no abstract idea, but the source of our life, food for our spiritual life, as we take it to ourselves. The Lord's Supper is both a way that God communicates to us – communicates the death of Jesus – and also a way that we can take the bread and the wine to say that we accept into ourselves the death of the Lord.

There has been a lot of discussion as to whether John 6:53-54 is referring to the Lord's Supper. I take it that Jesus' words in 6:53, 'Truly, truly, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you' are a vivid way of saying: 'Unless you have faith in the death of Jesus, you have no life in you'. They are not in the first instance referring to receiving the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper. But the Lord's Supper is saying precisely the same thing in action: we take the bread and wine to say that we accept the death of Christ for ourselves. We express our faith in the death of Christ in this way.

The evangelical and Protestant traditions have often been suspicious of things sacramental, largely because of the magical interpretation and superstitious use of the sacraments in some Catholic circles, though perhaps also in some cases because we have bought into an exclusively 'spiritual' and intellectual notion of Christianity that downplays the body and its senses. Some, such as the Salvation Army, have gone so far as to dispense with the sacraments altogether. Many others play down the visible, physical nature of the sacrament: the important thing is the thought being expressed, not the outward action. But to see the sacraments in this way is to miss out on something important: the God who made us with all our senses has given us visible tangible signs of his love, not just theological statements about it; and he has given us visible, tangible ways of expressing our faith.

In the NT church the way of expressing faith at the time of conversion was not just by saying a prayer in one's heart (nor by putting up a hand in a meeting or walking to the front), but by going forward to profess that faith in the waters of baptism (*cf.* the probable reference to baptism in Rom. 10:10); the way of expressing continuing faith in the death of Christ was not just by meditating or praying, but by taking the bread and wine and eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper. The sacraments are, we have suggested, multi-media parables – speaking to us not just through words (though those are centrally important), but also through touch and sight and taste as well. We miss out on something of their power if we shut our eyes during Communion and ignore the touch and taste; we need to allow Jesus' acted parables to function as they were designed – in all their multi-dimensional power.

Washing the disciples' feet

But to return from the present day to the Last Supper itself. John's gospel does not describe the giving of the bread and the wine at all, but instead tells us the story of the washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus. It was a startling action: it would normally have been a servant's job to wash the dust of the road off the feet of guests at a meal, if you had a servant (though we are told that a master could not require a Jewish slave to do this particularly menial task). It was certainly not right for an honoured teacher and master like Jesus to wash his followers' feet. And Peter's protest is quite appropriate: 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet? . . . You will never wash my feet' (13:6, 8). Jesus' reply to Peter was more surprising: 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me' (v. 8). Why does Jesus take this strong line when Peter is quite properly recognizing Jesus' greatness and the inappropriateness of what is happening?

It could be that Jesus simply wishes to make it very clear that service is the lifestyle that he expects of his followers; thus Jesus goes on to say: 'If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet' (v. 14). But the language that Jesus uses ('You have no share with me', v. 8, and then his comment about the disciples being 'clean', v. 10) and the whole context of the story make it very probable that there is more to the story than Jesus setting a good example. The context of the story is, of course, Passover time; and John in his gospel makes it very clear that the meal and the footwashing took place when Jesus was looking forward to his coming death (see 13:1-2: 'Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and to go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas . . . to betray him.').

Given the context – the startling nature of Jesus' action and his surprising words to Peter, the probability is that the washing of the disciples' feet was another acted parable of Jesus, specifically an acted parable of his death. On the cross Jesus was to demonstrate the extent of his love by 'laying aside his garment' (literally and metaphorically) and undergoing the greatest humiliation possible. In washing the disciples' feet Jesus explains that his death is lowly service for others, that his purpose in dying is to wash them (from their sins, of course) and that they must receive his service – 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me'. The incident is an acted version of Jesus' saying in Mark 10:45: 'The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many'; but how much, much more vivid is his acted parable (to Peter, for one) than the simple statement.

Jesus the great parable-teller did not abandon his parabolic method at the end of his ministry. At the Last Supper he explained his coming death through two startling and movingly acted parables. By taking the bread and wine and giving it to them he spoke of giving himself to us as the food of eternal life. By washing the disciples' feet he spoke of the cross bringing cleansing. In both parables he spoke of the need for us to receive his death – the spiritual food, the spiritual cleansing. The old Communion prayer brilliantly combines the thoughts of the two marvellous parables: 'Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us.'[4]

[1]This terminology is associated with the so-called New Hermeneutic, an approach to biblical interpretation that is questionable in certain respects, for example in its downplaying of propositional statements. It is not true that the parables cannot be explained propositionally; it is true that parables communicate powerfully in a way that non-parabolic statements do not.

[2]Pinchas Lapide in his fascinating book *The Resurrection of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1984), p. 70.

[3]It may well be this thought, so vividly expressed in the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, that contributed to Paul's understanding of the Christian being 'crucified with Christ' and his concept of the church as

the 'body of Christ': the Lord's Supper speaks of Christ's crucified body coming into us (we are speaking not literally, but parabolically), and it is only a short step from this to the thought of the Christian being united to Christ's body and becoming part of it. Notice how 1 Cor. 10:17 follows from 10:16. As husband and wife become one flesh in marriage, so for Paul the Christian in faith and baptism becomes one with Christ, his death and his body, a union expressed and sustained in the Lord's Supper. *Cf.* Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13; 6:15-17; Eph. 5:29-32.

[4]The standard work on the Last Supper in the NT to which I have referred is J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1966). An excellent introduction to the subject is I.H. Marshall, *Last Supper Lord's Supper* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980). In this article I have made some generalized and unsubstantiated comments about parables; for more detail and bibliography see my *The Parables of Jesus: Pictures of Revolution* (London: Hodder & Stoughton/Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1989).

History, theology and the biblical canon: an introduction to basic issues

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It has been claimed that the evangelical approach to the question of the biblical canon was, historically, the weakest link in the evangelical doctrine of Scripture.[1] If this assessment is correct, the reason for this weakness may be twofold. First, the historical questions related to the genesis of the canon of both the OT and the NT are extremely complex. And since the accessible data had been painstakingly collated and evaluated by the turn of the twentieth century,[2] with little new material surfacing during the last eighty years, it is understandable that the historical evidence was regarded as settled.[3]

Second, the theological issues related to the historical development of the canon may appear rather perplexing to biblical scholars and theologians who would not want to conclude that the biblical canon is a creation of the church. Being committed to the *sola scriptura* principle of the Reformation and thus to the subordination of tradition to Scripture, evangelicals possibly resigned themselves to the belief (perhaps more a feeling) that the question of the canon was an enigma which defies precise clarifications. Still, important matters remain and newer issues need to be discussed. In the wake of renewed interest in the canon,[4] evangelical contributions to the debate have increased, at least in quantity.[5]

The term 'canon' is usually defined as 'rule' or 'norm'. The Greek word, which has a broad range of meanings,[6] was applied to the list of books regarded as authoritative for the churches not before the middle of the fourth century AD. The discussion between Westcott and Zahn whether it was the material content of the apostolic writings or whether it was the formal concept of an 'authoritative list' which prompted the use of the word 'canon' has still not been settled. Some scholars assert that before the fourth century the dominant element was not the text but the content conveyed by the text, both in early rabbinic Judaism and the church.[7] This fact is said to explain the freedom with which the Christians until the time of Irenaeus approached the apostolic texts, notably the gospels which were not yet regarded as unchangeable sacred books.[8]

However, there appears to be no evidence which forces us to decide between these two possibilities. One should perhaps be careful not to construe wrong alternatives: it would be entirely natural for people who regarded the teaching contained in particular books as normative for faith and life to consider the text of these books as possessing critical importance. It should not be disputed, however, that the term 'canon' itself is tied up with diverse historical and theological questions. In the following notes we want to highlight the main phases and problems of canon history and indicate some areas of the current debate.

History and the Old Testament canon

The traditional position sees the extant canon of the OT emerge in three stages.[9] (1) The graded 'canonicity' of the three parts of the *tanach* (*TN"K*: Torah, Nebiim, Ketubim, *i.e.* the Law, the Prophets and the Writings) in early[10] and rabbinic Judaism must have had definite historical presuppositions in earlier times.[11] The dominance of the law is often used as an argument for the proposition that the Pentateuch was the first segment of the Hebrew Scriptures to be regarded as authoritative. The collection of the law stood under the injunction of Deuteronomy that one may not add anything to it nor take from it (Dt. 4:2; 13:1).

Some scholars emphasize at this point that the concept of 'canon' is related to the concept of the covenant.[12] As God's covenant with his people adapted the (suzerainty) treaty form of Near Eastern society, the 'canonical' elements of the latter are present in the former: the importance of the written form, the reading in a public assembly of the people, the stipulations for the secure deposit of the law and for future public readings, the evoking of a loyal response and the curses which aimed at preventing violations of the normative texts (*cf.* Ex. 24; Dt. 31).[13] If the assumption is plausible that not only Deuteronomy[14] but also the material of Exodus and Leviticus dates to the Mosaic period, the 'canonical principle' was present in Israel's history from early times onwards.

Such a view of the historical roots of the canonization process depends, of course, on one's evaluation of the literary history of the Pentateuch. If the latter is regarded as a long and varied process which ended only after the exile, the date of canonization of these texts is pushed forward.[15] The critical consensus of the nineteenth century, which is still supported by many critics today, regarded the promulgation of the law (whatever its precise content) under Josiah (*cf.* 2 Ki. 22) and the

promulgation of the Torah at the time of Nehemiah (Ne. 8–10; *cf.* 2 Macc. 2:13) as authoritative decisions of the leaders of the Jewish people delineating the basis of religious life. These 'acts of canonization' occurred, then, obviously at a much later date.[16] However, there is no evidence that the discovery of the book of the law in 2 Kings 22 marked the beginning of a canonical process. Rather, the discovery confirmed the already existing authority of the law.[17] Thus the question regarding the earliest stages of canonical consciousness depends, as many other questions, on one's view of the literary history of the Pentateuch.

(2) The closing of the 'prophetic canon' occurred, as some scholars have recently argued, in the first half of the fifth century BC.[18] The main arguments for this date are the silence regarding events after 500 BC, the absence of Chronicles, and the Jewish tradition that prophecy ceased after Malachi (*cf.* 1 Macc. 4:46; 9:27; 14:41; syrBar. 85:3). Others are not convinced by these arguments; some contend that a collection of prophets was still 'open' in the first century AD. Further, many critics today regard the canonical position of prophetic writings or entire prophetic collections as developing side by side with the literary processes which shaped the law.[19] It is difficult, however, to discount the repeated reference to 'the Law and the Prophets and the others [that followed them]' in the prologue of Sirach or the early cognizance of the canonical order of the prophetic books from Joshua to Nehemiah (Sir. 46:1–49:13) and the reference to the 'twelve prophets' after Ezekiel (Sir. 49:10).[20] The beginning of the second century BC is the *terminus ad quem* for the fixed canonical status of the (former and latter) prophets.[21]

As there is no consensus, and indeed no evangelical consensus concerning the literary history of OT books, it is not surprising that there is no agreement regarding the history of the concept of canonicity or even the presence of individual authoritative books and collections. Even if a consensus regarding the origin and the date of OT books could be reached, the lack of concrete historical data demonstrating their (relative?) authoritative status during the history of Israel makes certainty regarding the early history of the OT canon elusive. However, further work on the literary history of the OT books may confirm various aspects of OT canon history, particularly the *terminus a quo* of 'canon consciousness'. This state of affairs makes the question of the closure of the OT canon all the more important, for both the (later) Jewish community as well as for the early Christian church.

It has recently been suggested that the Hebrew Bible is a unity, being the result of deliberate editorial activity which included compilation and consolidation of the 'Primal History' (Torah and the Former Prophets, *i.e.* Genesis to Kings) in the mid-sixth century, the Latter Prophets in the late sixth or early fifth century, the Writings from the time and the hands of Ezra and Nehemiah, with the book of Daniel being added around 165 BC. According to this view, the Hebrew Bible (with the exception of Daniel) 'was put together and arranged in much the shape that it has today by a small group of scholars toward the end of the fifth century BCE. There is good reason to accept the tradition that the Scribe Ezra (and the Provincial Governor Nehemiah) had much to do with the outcome'.[22] If the basic argument of this suggestion could be substantiated, the critical consensus view that 'no one redacted the Bible as a whole'[23] would have to be abandoned.

(3) The older critical consensus assigned the final stages of the history of the OT canon, the canonization of the Writings, to definitive rabbinic decisions at the so-called Council of Jabneh/Jamnia after the catastrophe of AD 70 towards the end of the first century. The relevant text is the Mishnah tractate mYad 3,5. (i) Heinrich Graetz[24] was the first to postulate such a Jewish synod at Jamnia where the synagogue finally fixed the Hebrew canon. The vast majority of scholars adopted this evaluation of the canonical process. Albert Sundberg speaks of a 'Jamnia canon'.[25] Hartmut Gese emphasizes that there was no fixed OT before the NT and thus no normative revelation.[26] Some regard the closure of the third part of the OT canon as linked with the early-rabbinic confrontation with the *minim* which included the (Jewish) Christians.[27]

The Jamnia hypothesis – and it was never more than that, despite the frequent references to it – has recently come under attack.[28] Main arguments against the traditional assumption are the following: (a) rabbinic discussions concerning some canonical books continued into the second century (and in the case of Esther, even longer); (b) our knowledge of what precisely happened at Jamnia is very limited; (c) the discussion was confined to the question whether Ecclesiastes (and probably Song of Songs) 'make the hands unclean' *(metamme' – im eth ha-yadayim)*, a phrase which implies divine inspiredness and a particular sacred character but not necessarily canonicity;[29] (d) the so-called apocryphal books were not discussed; (e) there is no indication that any book was excluded from the list of normative books; (f) the rabbinic sources speak of a *beth din*, a *yeshivah* or a *beth ha-midrash* at Jamnia rather than of a 'synod'.

(ii) One argument which has been advanced for the assumption that the OT canon was still 'open' in the first century AD is the Qumran evidence which has invigorated the discussion in recent years. The peculiar profile of the Psalms scroll 11QPS with its inclusion of several non-canonical (*i.e.* non-Masoretic) psalms is regarded by some scholars as evidence for an alternative canonical text.[30] Others have argued that the scroll was produced for liturgical usage and does not reflect canonical status.[31]

The longest scroll yet published, the Temple Scroll 11QTS, is evidently conceived as law given to Moses by God and thus claiming divine inspiration (achieved through the literary setting with God addressing Moses in the first person, and by a thoroughgoing rewriting of large passages from the Pentateuch).[32] The first editor, Yigael Yadin, was convinced that the document possessed canonical status in the community.[33] It is disputed, however, whether the text had much practical significance for the Qumran community.[34]

Some have argued that whether the Qumran community had a prophetic corpus with a clearly defined authority or not, the Torah's quality of authority was more eminent than the authority of the prophetic books. The evidence is seen in the application of the *pesher* method to the prophetic books, which is said to be unthinkable for the Torah.[35] However, the authority of the prophetic books in the *pesharim* texts as source of new eschatological truth may be compared with the authority of the Pentateuch in the Temple Scroll as source of new legal truth.[36]

The possibility (whether it is a 'fact' can be ascertained only after all texts and fragments have been published) that the Qumran community did not distinctly quote from (later) non-canonical books[37] may not be conclusive. Non-canonical early Jewish writings such as Jubilees and Enoch were of course found at Qumran and highly esteemed, but their status is uncertain. Some arguments which are derived from the Qumran evidence for proving an 'open canon' are rather simplistic.[38] Nevertheless, it is true to say that the evidence is not conclusive for assuming either a 'closed' or an 'open' canon at Qumran.

(iii) There does seem to be enough evidence to warrant the conclusion that there never was a Jewish 'Alexandrian canon' which included the apocrypha.[39] The stronger arguments which can be adduced are the following. The complete codices of the Septuagint (LXX) which contain the apocrypha appear in the fourth century AD and are all of Christian origin; they do not adhere to the threefold division of the Hebrew canon; and they hardly reflect a unanimous canon (*e.g.* Codex Vaticanus omits Maccabees). Further, the assumption that Hellenistic Judaism was largely independent from Palestinian Judaism is erroneous. As many of the apocryphal writings are translations from Hebrew or Aramaic texts written originally in Palestine, this may indicate that the Alexandrian Jews looked to Palestine for guidance, which in turn makes the theory implausible that they added these texts to the Palestinian canon. It is doubtful whether Alexandrian Jews who shared the view that Scripture is prophetic in nature[40] would include a book in a canon which repeatedly asserts that prophecy had long ceased (1 Macc. 4:46; 9:27; 14:41). While it is not possible to indicate the precise content of the canon for Philo, it may be significant that while he occasionally quotes from Gentile authors he does not once quote from the apocrypha.[41]

(iv) There are indications that the present-day tripartite OT canon was finalized in pre-NT times, perhaps as early as the beginning of the second century BC.[42] The relevant evidence is

round (a) in the NT: note the summary of the Holy Scriptures in the singular *he graphe* and the interchange of the formula 'God says' and 'Scripture says' (*cf.* Rom. 9:11-12,15,17, 25-26); the reference to the three divisions of Scripture in Luke 24:44;[43] the reference to the beginning and the end of authoritative Scripture in the saying in Matthew 23:35/Luke 11:51 about all the righteous blood from the blood of Abel (Gn . 4:1-15) to the blood of Zechariah (2 Chr. 29:20-22, in the last book in the Hebrew canon); (b) in Josephus, who affirms that 'our books, those which are justly accredited, are only two and twenty, and contain the record of all time': five written by Moses, thirteen written by prophets[44] and four other books,[45] adding the remark that 'although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured to add, or to remove, or to alter anything' (*Contra Apionem* 1:37-43);[46] (c) in Philo, who refers to 'the Laws, and the Oracles given by inspiration through the Prophets, and the Psalms, and the other books whereby knowledge and piety are increased and completed' (*De vita contemplativa* 25);[47] (d) in a new Qumran text which refers to 'the Law, the Prophets and David' (4QMMT);[48] (e) the reference to Judas Maccabaeus, who 'gathered together for us all those writings that had been scattered by reason of the war that befell' (2 Macc. 2:14) as 300 years earlier Nehemiah had gathered 'the books about the kings and prophets, and the books of David, and letters of kings about sacred gifts [Ezra]' (2 Macc. 2:13); (f) in the prologue to Sirach, with the thrice-repeated reference to threefold Scripture and the implication that this Scripture existed already at the time of Ben Sira, *i.e.* around 190–175 BC.[49] An important question also is the significance of the rivalries between the different Jewish religious parties for the development of the Hebrew canon.[50] Some argue that the silence of the sources regarding differences of opinion in the question of the canon indicates that the process of canonization had come to a close before the emergence of these parties,[51] *i.e.* around or before the middle of the second century BC. But the very scarcity of specific data in the sources does not seem to allow proven assertions.[52]

(4) There are no indications which force us to conclude that the OT canon was 'fixed' by a formal council or by a specific group claiming authority, although one could assume that the Sanhedrin, or the earlier *gerousia*, played an important role. Evidently somebody had to decide sometime which books were 'holy' and could be kept in the sacred archive of Scriptures in the temple.[53] And we may assume that the acceptance of particular books through the pious of the land was a decisive factor in this process.[54]

To conclude, it is rather likely that the 'canon' of the OT was firmly established before the first century AD. Jesus and the apostles accepted 'the Scripture(s)' as word of God possessing normative weight. The authority of the Hebrew Bible was grounded in the conviction that its content, indeed its very words, were divine revelation (*cf.* the classical texts 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

If this is correct, *i.e.* if Christ and the apostles lived and worshipped with a normative list of authoritative books which they regarded as 'holy' (Rom. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:15; *cf.* Rom. 7:12), we may further conclude that it is by no means impossible that the notion of a new and additional set of normative Scripture for the 'new covenant' on a par with the Scriptures of the 'old covenant' was born already in early apostolic times. It would therefore not be necessary to assume that Christians used the term 'Scripture' *(graphe)* for their own normative tradition only after their final break with the synagogue.[55] Besides, the separation from the synagogue was not always the result of a long process but occurred, at least locally, at the earliest stages of church planting (*cf.* Acts 18:5-7). Theological convictions regarding the new covenant and the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit at and since Pentecost were most likely more significant than consideration for the Jewish synagogues. A first hint of such a 'canonical' development towards a new collection of authoritative books may be seen in 2 Peter 3:16, where Paul's letters are mentioned side by side with 'the other scriptures' *(tas loipas graphas).*[56]

History and the New Testament canon

As regards the canon of the NT, the following phases and factors of development can be outlined.[57] (1) The apostolic Fathers (AD 95–150) did not discuss the question of canonicity and they very rarely refer to books which later came to be included in the NT as 'Scripture'. But they expressed their thoughts more frequently than not through formulations drawn from these writings. We find numerous allusions to NT texts but relatively few direct quotations. However, the books now contained in the NT appear to have possessed an implied authority, with the words of Jesus quite evidently possessing supreme authority.

(2) The standard discussions of the history of the canon during the second, third and fourth centuries[58] focus on the status of books which were not recognized as apostolic by various church leaders in the East and in the West. The complicated state of affairs may be illustrated by the evidence of the large literary production of Origen, the fertile biblical scholar from Alexandria and Caesarea. Origen accepts four gospels and fourteen epistles of Paul as canonical, as well as Acts, 1 Peter, 1 John, Jude and Revelation. He expressed or implied reservations concerning James, 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John, while at the same time he can designate as 'divinely inspired' the Shepherd of Hermas. However, he seemed to have become more cautious in appealing to non-canonical texts. The conclusion of Bruce Metzger: 'The process of canonization represented by Origen proceeded by way of selection, moving from many candidates for inclusion to fewer,'[59] may be correct, but the evidence is not 'hard'.

By the middle of the fourth century the canonical status of the NT books was still not universally agreed upon. In the West, Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude were disputed. In the East, the national Syrian church used the Diatessaron instead of the four gospels, rejected the Epistle to Philemon but accepted a third epistle to the Corinthians, and omitted the four shorter catholic epistles (2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude) as well as Revelation.

(3) Thus, when Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria included a list of the canonical books of the OT and NT in his Thirty-Ninth Festal Epistle of AD 367, excluding the OT apocrypha and naming the twenty-seven books of the present NT, this canon can hardly be regarded as a mere confirmation of a canon which was already agreed upon by 'the church'. His inventory should be seen as what it was: a new list of books accepted as canonical.[60]

The Athanasian canon was accepted by the synods of Rome (382), Hippo Regius (393) and Carthage (397). In most Greek churches the Apocalypse was regarded as canonical from the sixth century. The canon of the Syrian churches was closed by the middle of the fifth century, although without the four shorter catholic epistles and Revelation, which are absent from the Peshitta Syriac version of the Nestorians. Thus, the present NT canon of twenty-seven books surfaces for the first time at the end of the fourth century and is accepted, almost generally, from the end of the sixth century. It should be self-evident that one should take care not to speak of 'the church' having closed 'the canon' at a particular date.

(3) The question regarding the factors which influenced the development of the canon between the first and the fourth centuries is being given different answers. (i) A decisive fact of the genesis of the NT canon was the use of the apostolic writings in the liturgy of the churches. Theodor Zahn deduced from an analysis of the apostolic Fathers that the collection of thirteen epistles of Paul came into existence between AD 80–110 in Corinth or Rome, that the collection of four gospels was put together by the aged apostle John in Ephesus around the same time, and that by that time 1 Peter, 1 John, Revelation and the Shepherd of Hermas were read in the churches. He concludes that the church had a 'New Testament' (albeit not with exactly the same catalogue of books as our present NT) since the end of the first century – not as a dogmatic theory but as a fact of church life.[61]

(ii) As church leaders had to wrestle with the claims of the Gnostic systems propagated in 'gospels', 'acts' or 'apocalypses' which pretended to be apostolic,[62] they were forced to reflect on the question which books conveyed the true teaching of the gospel, *i.e.* what really constituted a true gospel and a genuine apostolic writing. The role of the church's struggle with Gnosticism was regarded by many scholars as the decisive factor in the genesis of the canon.[63] Others regard the influence of Gnosticism as only one of several factors,[64] while some scholars maintain that the canon came into existence by the end of the first century quite independently of Gnostic claims.[65]

(iii) The influence of Marcion, the Christian ship-owner from Pontus who was expelled from the church by AD 144, is equally disputed. Marcion, whose 'Antitheses' have not been preserved, rejected the OT as Christian Scripture and attempted to purify the NT from the apostles' 'misunderstanding' that Jesus was the messiah of the Jewish God, thus recognizing only ten Pauline epistles and the Gospel of Luke, after having removed what he regarded as Judaizing interpolations.[66] Some scholars believe that Marcion's canon forced the church to establish its own canon of Scripture.[67] Adolf von Harnack maintained that the NT canon was the creation of the church fighting against the Gnostic and Marcionite heresies 'fixing' the canon around AD 170 as official-legal norm of the catholic-apostolic church.[68] Other scholars affirm that Marcion merely accelerated a process which had already begun a generation earlier.[69] While Marcion may have been the first actually to draw up a list of canonical books, provoking the church to draw up its own list, he did not thereby create the fundamental idea of canonicity – an idea which had existed since earlier times.[70]

(iv) The significance of Montanism, an enthusiastic movement of Phrygian origin which arose around AD 170, for the development of the canon is generally acknowledged. A few scholars maintain that the movement's claims to the gift of inspiration and prophecy was the determining factor which forced the church to delimit the canon, *i.e.* to close the list of books regarded as apostolic and normative.[71] Others are more cautious,[72] as the Montanist oracles were not seen as possessing equal authority with apostolic Scripture.

(v) Another factor which is sometimes mentioned is the period of persecutions, particularly the Great Persecution under Diocletian between AD 303 and 305.[73] As Christians were willing to die for the possession of their sacred holy books they had to be certain which books were Scripture and which could be handed over to the authorities.

(vi) In view of the scarcity of hard data for the time between the end of the first and the middle of the fourth centuries, and in view of the long process until 'official' canonization, it is wise to conclude with Bruce Metzger that the collection of NT books was, on the historical level, (a) the result of different factors operating 'at different times and in different places', and (b) due to the self-authenticating calibre of the canonical books as 'a clear case of the survival of the fittest'.[74]

Critical theological issues

This conclusion of Bruce Metzger may serve as an adequate explanation of the boundaries of the (OT and) NT canon as they developed in history, but it is hardly a satisfactory rationale for the abiding authority of the books of the biblical canon today. 'The canon' is not simply a list of books which are relevant for special consideration on account of the evidence of tradition, but a concept which implies authority binding the faith and the practice of churches and of individual believers.[75] The following issues are particularly relevant in the discussion of the canon. Again, I can give but sketchy hints regarding the various arguments.

(1) Can the criterion of apostolicity be upheld today? The writer of the Muratorian Fragment excluded the Shepherd of Hermas on the grounds that it is too recent and therefore cannot be counted 'among the prophets, whose number is complete, or among the apostles'. Historians of the canon traditionally refer to apostolicity as one of the major criteria which developed during the second century for ascertaining which books should be regarded as authoritative.[76] In the case of the anonymous NT writings (the four gospels, Acts, Hebrews), the early tradition either assumed apostolic authorship (Jesus' disciples Matthew and John as authors of the first and the fourth gospels; Paul as author of Hebrews) or close association with apostles (the Gospel of Mark and Luke–Acts with the apostles Peter and Paul respectively). Some argue that doubts about the inclusion of certain books whose authorship was unknown or ambiguous emerged during the second century when the attempt was made to limit the concept of apostolicity to direct apostolic authorship.[77]

Of more immediate interest is the question whether the presence of pseudonymous books in Scripture invalidates the concept of the canon as a binding norm for truth. Some scholars assert that the decision of the Church Fathers cannot be binding as the applied criterion of apostolic origin is manifestly wrong[78] – the non-apostolic origin of Ephesians, Colossians, the Pastoral Epistles, 1 and/or 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation and perhaps other NT texts should be regarded as proven. Some critical scholars conclude that the honest thing to do is to abandon the concept of a closed canon of normative writings.[79]

Conservative scholars who accept the critical consensus with respect to pseudonymous books in the canon but who want to remain faithful to a high view of Scripture point to the common practice of the pseudepigraphal device in antiquity and explain 'canonical pseudonymity' specifically in the context of Jewish practice as the actualization of authoritative (Mosaic, or Davidic, or Isaianic, or Pauline, or Petrine) tradition which came from a recognized spokesman for God, a device which was recognized and which therefore did not deceive.[80]

Others are less confident that this is a feasible solution. If it is correct that pseudonymity was practised for a variety of reasons, some of which were unethical and some unobjectionable,[81] it would seem to be necessary to establish with greater care whether 'canonical pseudonymity' would be an unacceptable 'pious fraud' *(pia fraus)* or not. It is not enough to state that 'almost certainly the final readers were not in fact deceived':[82] if there is no certainty, the inclusion of the texts in the canon rests on uncertain grounds as well. It is too facile simply to state that there is not enough evidence to answer the question whether the recipients of the pseudonymous text (if there were any specific recipients in the first place) would have been deceived:[83] if the possibility remains that the recipients or the later church was in fact deceived, one should consider with more seriousness the possibility that the canonical authority of the writing is a fictive authority.

Meade claims that deception on the level of origins was an accepted device and therefore unobjectionable, whereas deception on the level of truth and continuity was condemned as unethical (constituting forgery), and that the biblical authors distinguished between these two levels and did not operate on the second.[84] This subtle and not naturally intelligible distinction appears to be an (apologetic) construct which has no basis in the sources as such, and an investigation of the semantic range of terms for 'deception' in the NT *(apatao ktl.*, the *pseud-* word group) shows that a concept of 'legitimized deception' cannot be demonstrated for the NT.[85] Unfortunately Meade does not discuss the question of the validity of the canon to any satisfactory degree.[86]

Critics who regard Scripture not as divine revelation but as human witness to revelation have no difficulty in retaining pseudonymous writings in the canon: they are a fine example of *sola gratia*. Petr Pokorny asserts, however, that if one regarded the canon as direct revelation from God, one would have to remove them from the canon.[87]

Finally, three further arguments should be noticed. First, the device of pseudonymous writings was not as generally accepted as is often assumed: both in the Greek and in the Roman world there was a marked concern for the authenticity of the classical traditions, with specific criteria such as style, word usage, doctrine and anachronisms being applied in order to prove or disprove authenticity.[88] The interest of the biblical tradition in authentic truth as opposed to deception and usurpative presumption can be seen in texts like Leviticus 10; Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Jeremiah 23:16, 21, 25; Acts 5:1-11; Revelation 22:18-19. Second, if the device of pseudonymity does not intend to deceive it is not necessary: if the recipients of the pseudonymous writings recognize the device for what it is, the intended effect is lost.[89] Third, the discharge of the author of the early Christian novel *Acts of Paul* from his office as presbyter as a result of having written this fictitious piece indicates that it is doubtful indeed if a writing known to be pseudonymous would have been included in the canon.[90]

(2) Can the patristic criterion of orthodoxy still be upheld? A basic prerequisite for canonical status in the early church was conformity to the 'rule of faith' *(regula fidei)* or 'rule of truth' *(regula veritatis)*. If, however, the evidence of the OT and NT proves that neither Israel nor the early church had a clearly defined doctrinal corpus, *i.e.* if one cannot really distinguish between orthodoxy and heresy,[91] if theological diversity is the foremost characteristic and unity to be found but in an irreducible minimum of doctrine,[92] the 'rule of faith' which was

used as a yardstick for canonical validity is a later ecclesiastical device with no basis in the texts themselves.

If the theological diversity of the NT (and the OT) is not complementary but mutually incompatible, and if there was no consciousness of a fundamental tension between orthodox and heretical, the authority of the NT documents becomes a vague and fluid concept – Scripture canonizes the diversity of Christianity, as James Dunn thinks.[93] It is difficult to see how we should not conclude with Ernst Käsemann that in view of this state of affairs the canon 'legitimizes as such more or less all sects and false teaching'.[94] The canon has no longer an objective validity. As a result, the belief that (the canon of) Scripture *is* the word of God becomes impossible.[95]

(3) Can we accept the extant list of OT and NT books as normative canon when various biblical authors rely on the authority of non-canonical texts? It has sometimes been maintained that the fact that NT writers support arguments by appealing to non-biblical texts (*e.g.* Jude 14–15 referring to the Book of Enoch 1:9) extends the boundaries of the canon. In answering this argument we need to realize that quotation does not constitute the canonicity of the quoted text. This is easily demonstrated by the fact that OT writers could cite secular sources, both of Israelite and non-Israelite origin (*e.g.* Nu. 21:14ff.; 21:27ff.; Esther 6:1-2), while nobody assumes that quotation from Persian annals elevates these to canonical status.

(4) Can we accept the Hebrew OT as part of the Christian canon if for most NT authors the version of the Septuagint was the determinative text of 'Scripture'?[96] The import of the LXX for the question of the canon has not been adequately researched and one should therefore be wary of quick solutions. A more thorough discussion of this question would need to focus at least on four points.

First, while the NT writers usually quoted according to the LXX, this does not mean that they regarded the LXX as normative but not the Hebrew Bible. The question which we posed has to be answered in the negative only when it can be demonstrated that in the eyes of the apostles the LXX possessed a higher degree of authority than the Hebrew text. As far as I can see such a demonstration has not been forthcoming.

Second, there are instances where the NT writers quote the LXX in a form which has evidently been 'corrected' on the basis of a careful reading (or remembrance) of the Hebrew text (*e.g.* Rom. 11:35; 1 Cor. 3:19; 2 Cor. 8:15). Even though these cases are relatively rare – and thus cannot be cited in favour of a quick argument for the superior authority of the Hebrew text for the NT authors – they demonstrate that the evidence is complex and that easy answers are not possible.

Third, although the Jews had a high regard for translations of biblical texts – when they can no longer be used they should be hidden (the obligation of *genizah*) and they may be rescued on the Sabbath in case of fire[97] – they still do not 'make the hands unclean'.[98] This indicates that for the later rabbis the authority of a translation was of a lesser kind than the authority of the Hebrew texts.

Fourth, while it is correct to view the Septuagint as the Bible of the Diaspora Jews, it is less evident that the Greek Bible had a high authority status in Palestine. Of course Greek was read and spoken in Judea and Galilee,[99] and Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible were used.[100] As most if not all of the early apostles had their roots in Palestine – including Paul[101] – it needs specific proof that they regarded the Hebrew OT as possessing an authority inferior to the Greek OT.

A related question is the fact that it is not possible, in view of the present state of research into the history of the Hebrew text of the OT, to speak of a 'fixed' or 'official' or 'stabilized' Hebrew text of the Bible. Harry Orlinski argues that it is therefore not possible 'to take at its face value the rabbinic statement that there were three copies of the Torah on deposit in the Temple'.[102] At the same time we should note, however, that it is equally impossible to speak of a stabilized official Greek text of the Hebrew OT.

(5) Must we agree with the argument that the authority of Scripture is dependent upon the authority of the church? Taking its cue from the famous dictum of Augustine that 'ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me catholicae Ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas' [103] ('I will not truly believe the Gospel if the catholic Church does not guarantee its authority for me'), an extreme position inferred the superiority of the church *vis-à-vis* the canon of Scripture. In general, however, the Roman Catholic church defined canonization as an act of respectful deference to the primary authority of Scripture: the Holy Scriptures are canonical *in se* (in themselves) because they are inspired by God, and they are canonical *quoad nos* (with regard to us) because they have been received and accepted by the church.[104]

(6) A related question concerns the OT apocrypha. If those books are to be accepted as canonical which the Christian church regarded as such, and if the so-called OT apocrypha were part of the early Christian canon of Holy Scripture, must we not then accept this particular form of its canon? In other words, as the church had a wider (Alexandrian) canon than the Jewish community, should the church today not follow the church's previous decision and accept the apocrypha, as does the Roman Catholic church? These additional books – Judith, Wisdom of Salomon, Tobias, Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Additions to Esther and Daniel, Prayer of Manasse – would provide an important historical link between the old and the new covenants. And they would be witnesses to the development of doctrines such as the resurrection, angelology and eschatology.[105]

Before we opt for a correction of the (narrower) 'Protestant canon' too quickly we should note, first, that in order to have an unbroken history of tradition it would not suffice to include the apocrypha only: other early Jewish writings such as the Enoch texts, the so-called Psalms of Solomon, various apocalyptic texts and the writings of the Qumran community belong to the Jewish history of tradition as well, and they were never part of any 'canon'. The early Christians read Scripture as a set of writings which they regarded as revealed word from God and not as an ongoing tradition process.

Second, as has been indicated in the first part of the article (3.iii), there is good evidence to support the conclusion that there never was a 'wider' Jewish canon which included the apocrypha. This means, third, that the 'narrow' Hebrew canon constitutes that form of the Scriptures which in all probability Jesus and the apostles used. By accepting the same canon as Judaism the church acknowledges its historical origins and its identification with the people of God united in the divine promise to Abraham.[106]

(7) A similar question pertains to the NT apocrypha. Can we accept a 'closed canon' when the boundaries of the NT canon were determined in the context and as the result of historical processes? Should other texts, such as the (Gnostic) Gospel of Thomas be considered for inclusion in the canon?

If, as we indicated above, the church did not 'create' the canon on account of its own authority but received it, the acceptance of the extant canon is not a matter of subscribing to an ecclesiastical tradition which may well be fallible. Further, we must remind ourselves of the fact that the early church fathers clearly distinguished between the apostolic age and the age of the church. For them this was a qualitative distinction. The most important period of canonical development for the NT was evidently the second century. The church received those writings as normative which it experienced as foundational to its existence: 'This foundation is temporally limited.'[107] This holds true even though it is difficult to give precise dates for the limitation to the present canon or to demonstrate a foundational significance for writings such as 2 or 3 John. The main problem here could be simply the lack of information, however.

If it seems correct not to tie the canonical process proper to Jewish or Christian tradition, further questions ensue.

(8) Is the concept of inspiration as basic category for understanding the canonical nature of Scripture still justifiable today? If the canonical process is regarded as a purely historical question[108] and if we don't hold to the view that it was the community of faith which decreed a set of authoritative books (and subsequently submitted its own authority to the authority of the new collection), the quality of inspiration will be the determining factor in the collection of authoritative books. This position brings us back to the historical issues which we referred to above. On the other hand, if we reckon with divine guidance during the canonical process itself, the inspiredness of the books is at least not the sole 'explanation' for their being in the canon.

It seems that the early Fathers, while agreeing that the authoritative writings of the church were inspired, did not regard inspiration as a criterion for canonicity.[109] They spoke of their own inspiration and of the inspiration of their predecessors and their writings. If by inspiration we understand that operation of the Holy Spirit by which the prophets and the apostles were enabled to utter and to write the word of God,[110] this is no definition which could enable the Fathers to distinguish effectively between inspired and uninspired writings. New personal inspiration of the Spirit would be needed in order to be able to make such a distinction.

Some distinguish between inspired and non-inspired canonical literature: in Tannaitic times all inspired books were regarded as canonical, whereas not all 'canonical' books (*e.g.* Mishnah) are inspired.[111] Here the category of 'non-inspired canonical writings' corresponds with authoritative tradition.

(9) Can we avoid the conclusion that the authority of Scripture is secondary to the authority of the 'rule of faith' which was the basis for the acceptance of the biblical canon as Scripture? It has been argued that the canon *qua* canon cannot be identified with Scripture since the basic marks of canonicity (the *notae canonicitatis*) are controlled by a specific material centre – a 'canon within the canon', the 'rule of faith', or more aptly, 'the gospel'.[112] This argument is problematic for the following reasons.

First, what scholars describe as the normative 'centre of Scripture' depends upon the respective identifications and definitions of the individual scholar.[113] As scholars have not arrived at a critical consensus regarding the unifying centre of Paul's theology, the search for a 'canon within a canon' which has been going on for 200 years has not been successful. The various suggestions sometimes reveal more about the ecclesiastical affiliation or the doctrinal allegiance of the scholar than about the unifying centre of Scripture. The charge of subjectivity has thus repeatedly been levelled against such attempts.[114] Advocates of a 'canon within the canon' admit that there is an important consequence of such a postulate: the material boundaries of what constitutes normative 'Scripture' have to be redefined again and again.[115] Even advocates of a 'canon within the canon' have emphasized that one ought not to make the canon within the canon into the canon.[116]

Second, the search for a 'canon within the canon', which is a relatively new enterprise, destroys the continuity of Christian history, as the early church did not operate with such a construct.[117]

Third, from a tradition-historical point of view the concept of a 'canon within the canon' completely contradicts the nature of the canon as record of God's revelation, being the result of (salvation-) historical processes which unfolded God's truth.[118] The delineation of a 'canon within the canon' detaches traditions from their larger context upon which they are, however, dependent. Thus the result will always be theological onesidedness to a larger or lesser degree.

(10) Can we concur with the appeal to divine sovereignty in the history and in the life of the church as the boundaries and the binding nature of the canon cannot be demonstrated unambiguously from historical analysis?[119] If this were the only argument left after having stated the impossibility of validating empirically a (traditional) canonical model, it would be of the *deus ex machina* type. If, on the other hand, the historical processes as we outlined them above have a reasonable degree of reliability, if it is correct to say that the early church abstained from being its own norm by accepting and upholding a norm outside its own *magisterium*, and if we reckon with God working out his purposes in the world and in the church, appeal to the guidance of the Spirit in the canonical process is not an argument of last resort but the expression of confidence in God who loves the world.

Conclusion

Answers given to the questions related to the canon have consequences for the shape of the hermeneutical and the theological task as well as for the pastoral and the evangelistic efforts of the church. This is not always appreciated enough.

As regards the hermeneutical task, the exegete who regards the 'canon' as a mere historical construct will happily engage in *Sachkritik* in historical and also in theological matters.[120] As with all products of historical processes, so the collection of books which we call 'the canon of Scripture' is the result of human endeavour, and as such is intrinsically fallible and thus open to critique and the need for revision. The exegete who retains the traditional view of the canon as the inspired word of God will attempt to find solutions to historical problems by trying to harmonize discrepancies[121] and by accentuating and researching the fundamental theological unity of Scripture.[122]

As regards the theological task, the scholar or the church leader who regards the concept of the canon as irrelevant has difficulties in establishing authority for faith and practice. If 'inspiration' is but a theological theory as opposed to a process in history supporting and guiding the writing of Scripture and the collection of the canon, the locus of authority shifts away from the text of Scripture, despite all protestations to the contrary. Since historical criticism may destroy the 'theological' value of any particular biblical book, passage or assertion, that book or passage or assertion can readily be omitted when the church considers matters of faith and practice. The new locus of authority is either the history of tradition behind Scripture,[123] various levels of redactional-historical development,[124] the final canonical context,[125] ecclesiastical tradition,[126] the experience of the community of faith,[127] or, more elusive, the hermeneutical enterprise with its never-ending effort to ascertain the material centre of Scripture as gospel.[128] These new loci of authority all depend, in the final analysis, on the subjectivity of the individual or the ecclesiastical-corporate interpreter – on his ability to reconstruct the 'true facts' of tradition history, on his inclination to retain venerated views and habits, on his disposition to realize the working of God or on his talent to relate his method(s) to the text.

As regards the pastoral and the evangelistic tasks, the apparent impossibility to communicate a dialectial assessment of the 'canon' as being historically dubious and yet ecclesiastically still memorable and, somehow, normative have disastrous consequences. If preachers follow the suggestion of those who discard the canon altogether, they will regard the Didache or 1 Clement, or a sermon of Martin Luther or John Wesley, as just as relevant for the church as the Epistle to the Ephesians or 1 Peter.[129] Preachers who do not have the time to wade through extended tradition-historical arguments or follow redaction-critical trajectories presented in commentaries, monographs and essays have to rely on the 'truth' of the exegetical consensus or on the specific theological outlook adopted during their student days. And since 'truth' as objective and therefore normative reality has become a rather problematic philosophical concept, they present the standard credal formulations without inner conviction. Or they look for 'power' in movements which promise to have the key to spiritual effectiveness. Or they look for relevance in social-political[130] or in psychological propositions.[131] The Christian audience is made to feel insecure, and from time to time even non-Christian critics deplore the fact that the church at large has no distinctive message to offer as its representatives and its official pronouncements sound just like the political commentators and the feuilletonists in the media.

If, on the other hand, the prophetic and apostolic canon of Scripture is the revealed word of God and truthful and trustworthy in all that it intends to assert, whether pertaining to faith or to fact,[132] independent of human and indeed ecclesiastical convictions, the church and its members can rest assured that they have a dependable foundation for the proclamation of the gospel.

The lack of precise answers for many specific questions, the undeniable human element in the history of the canon, and the time factor in the process of canonization all show the human side of the Bible. The canon of Scripture is not a book which fell from heaven. The canonical process and our knowledge of it reflect the very nature of Scripture. As Scripture is both a human record of Israel's and the apostles' experience in history and the divinely inspired revelation of God's will, so the canon of Scripture is the outcome of human appreciation and evaluation of foundational documents and at the same time the result of God's sovereign will.

[1]M.J. Sawyer, 'Evangelicals and the Canon of the New Testament', in *Grace Theological Journal* 11 (1990), pp. 29–52; see the similar remarks of Theo Donner, 'Some Thoughts on the History of the New Testament Canon', in *Themelios* 7 (1982), pp. 23–27: 23 n.1. Older evangelical works on the canon include A. Alexander, *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained; or, the Bible Complete without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Tradition* (Philadelphia, 1826, rev. edn. 1851); B.B. Warfield, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Philadelphia, 1892, reprinted in *idem, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, 1948 = 1970), pp. 411–416; L. Gaussen, *The Canon of the Holy Scriptures from the Double Point of View of Science and of Faith* (London, 1862, French original Lausanne, 1860). Newer evangelical studies include H. Ridderbos, *The Authority of the New Testament Scriptures* (Philadelphia, 1963, Dutch original Kampen, 1955); R.L. Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible. An Historical and Exegetical Study* (Grand Rapids, 1957, 9th edn 1976).

[2]The more important monographs include J. Kirchhofer, *Quellensammlung zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons bis auf Hieronymus* (Zürich, 1844), translated and considerably enlarged by A.H. Charteris as *Canonicity. A Collection of Early Testimonies to the Canonical Books of the New Testament* (Edinburgh/London, 1880); B.F. Westcott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament* (London, 1855, 6th edn 1889, reprint Grand Rapids, 1990); T. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1888–92); *idem, Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur* (9 vols., Erlangen, 1881–92); J. Leipoldt, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1907–8, reprint 1974).

[3]It happens only occasionally that traditional evaluations of the evidence are called into question. For example, the usual dating of the Muratorian: Fragment at the end of the second century – the document thus being by far the earliest known list of the NT books – has recently been rejected; *cf.* G.M. Hahnemann, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (Oxford, 1992), confirming the position of A.C. Sundberg, 'Canon Muratori: A Fourth-Century List', *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (173), pp. 1–41. Sundberg's arguments were refuted by E. Ferguson, 'Canon Muratori: Date and Provenance', *Studia Patristica* 18 (1982), pp. 677–683.

[4]*Cf.* particularly H.F. von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (Philadelphia, 1972; German original Tübingen, 1968); E. Käsemann (ed.), *Das Neue Testament als Kanon: Dokumentation und kritische Analyse zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion* (Göttingen, 1970); S.Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of the Hebrew Scripture* (Hamden, 1976); B.S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, 1977); J. Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (The Sprunt Lectures, Oxford, 1983); I. Baldermann *et al.* (eds), *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* Vol. 3: Zum Problem des biblischen Kanon (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1988); H. Hübner, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments Band 1: Prolegomena* (Göttingen, 1990), ch. 1; G.M. Hahneman, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (Oxford, 1992).

[5]*Cf. e.g.* T. Donner, 'Some Thoughts on the History of the New Testament Canon', *Themelios* 7 (1982), pp. 23–27; R.T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, 1986); D.G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition* (WUNT 39, Tübingen, 1986); D.A. Carson, J.D. Woodbridge (eds), *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (Grand Rapids, 1986), notably the study of D.G. Dunbar, 'The Biblical Canon', pp. 299–326; F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, 1988); W. Künneth, 'Kanon', *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 17 (1988), pp. 562–570; G. Maier (ed.), *Der Kanon der Bibel* (Giessen/Wuppertal, 1990); E.E. Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity. Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (WUNT 54, Tübingen, 1991).

[6]It was used to designate 'a straight rod', a 'level', a 'plumbline' or a 'ruler'; metaphorical usages include 'criterion', 'standard' and 'circumscribed [geographical] area'; *cf.* B.M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford/New York, 1987 = 1989), pp. 289ff.

[7]*Cf.* J. Maier, 'Zur Frage des biblischen Kanons im Früjudentum im Licht der Qumranfunde', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 135–146: 137f.

[8]*Cf.* W.-D. Köhler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus* (WUNT 2/24, Tübingen, 1987), for evidence regarding the Gospel of Matthew.

[9]*Cf.* the study of H.E. Ryle, *The Canon of the Old Testament* (2nd edn, London, 1892/1909); R.H. Pfeiffer, 'Canon of the OT', *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1, 1962, pp. 498–520; R.K. Harrison, 'Canon of the OT', *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, 1979, pp. 591–601. Bruce, *Canon*, p. 36, regards the view which reckons with the formation of the OT canon in three stages as hypothetical with no evidence for it whatsoever. For the novel suggestion of David N. Freedman see below, n. 22.

[10]See the prologue of the grandson of Ben Sira, Sir. § 1,3,7.

[11]*Cf.* J. Maier, 'Zur Frage des biblischen Kanons im Früjudentum im Licht der Qumranfunde', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 135–146: 138 with regard to rabbinic judaism.

[12]*Cf.* P.C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT, Grand Rapids, 1976 = 1979), p. 33, referring to R.E. Clements, *God's Chosen People. A Theological Interpretation of the Book of Deuteronomy* (London, 1968), pp. 89–105 (who dates the development of the principle of canonicity in relation to Deuteronomy to the late seventh century); *cf.* further R.E. Clements, 'Covenant and Canon in the Old Testament', in *Creation, Christ and Culture* (FS T.F. Torrance, ed. R.W.A. McKinney, Edinburgh, 1976), pp. 1–12.

[13]Emphasized by M.G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids, 1972), pp. 27–110.

[14]See Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 24–32; see further G.J. Wenham, 'The Date of Deuteronomy: Linch-Pin of Old Testament Criticism', *Themelios* 10.3 (1985), pp. 15–20; 11.1 (1985), pp. 15–18.

[15]At the same time new questions are being raised which are impossible to answer unless one is prepared to speculate, *e.g.* the problem 'to what extent a canonical force was at work in the uniting of the J and E sources of the Pentateuch or how a consciousness of the canon exerted itself in the process': B.S. Childs, *Introduction*, p. 62.

[16]*Cf.* H. Gese, 'Das biblische Schriftverständnis', *Zur biblischen Theologie* (2nd edn, Tübingen, 1983), pp. 9–30: 11, 25 (in *idem, Essays on Biblical Theology*, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981); G. Stemberger, 'Jabne und der Kanon', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 163–174: 164.

[17]Thus B.S. Childs, *Introduction*, p. 63.

[18]*Cf.* S.Z. Leiman, *Canonization, passim.*

[19]*Cf.* J.C.H. Lebram, 'Aspekte der alttestamentlichen Kanonbildung', *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (1968), pp. 173–189.

[20]*Cf.* H. Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter* (WUNT 2/6, Tübingen, 1980), p. 190.

[21]This is usually acknowledged; see Gese, 'Schriftverständnis', p. 11, who assumes the closure of the 'second canon' of the prophetic tradition in the third century.

[22]D.N. Freedman, *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible* (Ann Arbor, 1991), p. vii, *cf.* the conclusion, pp. 98–100.

[23]J. Barr, 'Trends and Prospects in Biblical Theology', *Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (1974), pp. 265–282: 274, quoted approvingly by John Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1987), p. 27.

[24]H. Graetz, *Kohelet oder der salomonische Prediger*, Anhang I: Der alttestamentliche Kanon und sein Abschluss (Leipzig, 1871), pp. 147–173; *cf.* R.T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, 1985), pp. 3, 276; Hübner, 'Vetus Testamentum', p. 149; D.E. Aune, 'On the Origins of the "Council of Yavneh" Myth', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991), pp. 491–493.

[25]A.C. Sundberg, 'The "Old Testament": A Christian Canon', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1968), pp. 143–155: 147.

[26]Gese, *op. cit.*; more recently J. Maier, 'Zur Frage des biblischen Kanons im Früjudentum im Licht der Qumranfunde', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 135–146; H. Hübner, 'Vetus Testamentum und Vetus Testamentum in Novo receptum. Die Frage nach dem Kanon des Alten Testaments aus neutestamentlicher Sicht', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 147–162: 149–153.

[27]H.P. Rüger, 'Das Werden des christlichen Alten Testaments', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 175–189: 181–183; similarly H. Hübner, *Biblische Theologie*, pp. 37–70 *passim.*

[28]*Cf.* J.P. Lewis, 'What Do We Mean By Jabneh?' [1964] *The Canon and Masorah of the Hebrew Bible: An Introductory Reader* (ed. S.Z. Leiman, New York, 1974), pp. 254–261; P. Schäfer, 'Die sogenannte Synode von Jamnia', *Judaica* 31 (1975), pp. 54–64; J. Goldingay, *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation* (Downers Grove, 1981), pp. 139f.; J. Maier, *Jüdische Auseinandersetzungen mit dem Christentum in der Antike* (EdF 177, Darmstadt, 1982), pp. 4–9; Beckwith, *Canon, passim*; see also Stemberger, 'Jabne', *passim*; G. Maier, 'Der Abschluss des jüdischen Kanons und das Lehrhaus von Jabne', *Der Kanon der Bibel* (ed. G. Maier, Giessen/Wuppertal, 1990), pp. 1–24.

[29]*Cf.* Stemberger, 'Jabne', pp. 166–170, 173; differently Hübner, 'Vetus Testamentum', pp. 150f.

[30]*Cf.* J.A. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca, 1967), pp. 10–14.

[31]*Cf.* Leiman, *Canonization*, pp. 154f. with n. 183; P.W. Skehan, 'Qumran and Old Testament Criticism', *Qumrân: Sa piété, sa théologie et son milieu* (ed. M. Delcor, BETL 46, Leuven, 1978), pp. 163–182.

[32]*Cf.* D. Dimant, 'Qumran Sectarian Literature', *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (ed. M.E. Stone, CRINT 2/2, Assen/Philadelphia, 1984), pp. 483–550: 527f.

[33]Y. Yadin, *The Temple Scroll* (Jerusalem, 1983), 1:390–395.

[34]Thus J. Maier, 'Frage', p. 142, following H. Stegemann.

[35]Johann Maier, 'Zur Frage des biblischen Kanons im Früjudentum im Licht der Qumranfunde', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 135–146: 143.

[36]*Cf.* M. Fishbane, 'Use, Authority and Interpretation of Mikra in Qumran', *Mikra. Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (CRINT 2/1, ed. M.J. Mulder, Assen, 1988), pp. 339–377: 351. Quoted by Hübner, *Biblische Theologie*, p. 53 n. 126.

[37]*Cf.* I.H. Eybers, 'Some Light on the Canon of the Qumran Sect' [1962], *The Canon and Masorah of the Hebrew Bible* (ed. S.Z. Leiman, New York, 1974), pp. 23–36: 28–31, followed by Dunbar, 'Canon', p. 311.

[38]*Cf.* H.P. Rüger, 'Das Werden des christlichen Alten Testaments', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 175–189: 179, who concludes from the fact that the book of Esther is missing in Qumran (relying on a publication of J.T. Milik from 1957!) that the third part of the canon is not yet closed. The fact that the book of Esther seems to be missing in Qumran may be accidental, or might be explained by its affinity to the ideals of the Hasmonaeans whom the Qumran community despised, or by its conflict

with the Essene calendar (*cf.* Bruce, *Canon*, p. 39; Beckwith, *Canon*, pp. 288–297).

[39]*Cf.* Beckwith, *Canon*, pp. 382–386; Bruce, *Canon*, pp. 44–45; also G. Maier, 'Abschluss', pp. 7–8.

[40]*Cf.* H. Burkhardt, *Die Inspiration heiliger Schriften bei Philo von Alexandrien* (Giessen, 1988), pp. 145, 152–171 for Philo.

[41]*Cf.* Burkhardt, *Inspiration*, p. 130, referring to C.F. Hornemann, *Observationes ad illustrationem doctrinae de canone Veteris Testamenti ex Philone* (Copenhagen, 1775), pp. 28–33.

[42]*Cf.* Beckwith, *Canon*, pp. 110–180, who builds on Leiman, *Canonization, passim*.

[43]Lk. 24:44 speaks of 'the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms', and it is debatable whether 'psalms' refers to the Psalms themselves or to the 'Writings'; *cf.* I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter, 1978), p. 905. J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Garden City/NY, 1985), p. 1583, is sceptical and prefers to interpret in terms of the psalms. At any rate, a third division of prophetic Scripture would be indicated. It has been suggested that Lk. 24:27 contains a similar reference, but this is difficult syntactically (thus Marshall, p. 897).

[44]Probably linking Judges + Ruth, Jeremiah + Lamentations, Ezra + Nehemiah and including Job, Chronicles and Esther.

[45]*I.e.* Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.

[46]It is a case of *petitio principii* if it is sometimes claimed that when Josephus indicates that this 'canon' of 22 books is not just his private opinion but the universal conviction of the Jews, he is mistaken since there was no 'closed canon' at the time of Josephus (*cf.* R. Meyer, 'Bemerkungen zur Kanontheorie des Josephus', *Josephus–Studien*, FS O. Michel, ed. O. Betz *et al.*, Göttingen (1974), pp. 285–299: 287); thus G. Maier, 'Abschluss', p. 10.

[47]R.T. Beckwith, 'A Modern Theory of the Old Testament Canon', *Vetus Testamentum* 41 (1991), pp. 385–395: 388, points to the significance of the fact that in this description of the Therapeutae, a quasi-Essene group, their writings containing 'inspired interpretation' of the Scriptures are not merged with the three standard sections of the (extant) canon.

[48]*Cf.* Beckwith, 'Theory', p. 386. Incidentally, as both Y. Sussmann, 'The History of the Halakha and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Preliminary Observations on Miqsat Ma'aseh Ha-Torah [4QMMT]', [Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 59 (1989–1990), pp. 11–76, and L.H. Schiffman, *'Miqsat Ma'aseh ha-Torah* and the *Temple Scroll*', *Revue de Qumran* 14 (1990), pp. 435–457, describe the halakhah of this document as Sadducean, the issue of an assumed particular 'Sadducean canon', limited (probably) to the Pentateuch, is affected.

[49]Note the (later) insistence of the Tosefta tractate Yadayim 2,13 that 'Sira and all books which were written from then onwards do not make the hands unclean'.

[50]For this discussion see M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament* (London/New York, 1971); A. Lemaire, *Les écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l'Ancien Testament* (OBO 39, Fribourg/Göttingen, 1981).

[51]Beckwith, *Canon*, p. 406.

[52]Thus J. Maier, 'Frage', pp. 136f.

[53]On the Temple archive, which is attested both by Josephus and by the early rabbinical literature, *cf.* Beckwith, *Canon*, pp. 80–86.

[54]Thus correctly Stemberger, 'Jabne', p. 174, referring to M. Haran, 'Problems of the Canonization of Scripture' [1955–1956], *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture* (ed. S.Z. Leiman, Hamden, 1976), pp. 227–253.

[55]Thus the suggestion of R. Riesner, 'Ansätze zur Kanonbildung innerhalb des Neuen Testaments', *Der Kanon der Bibel* (ed. G. Maier, Giessen/Wuppertal, 1990), pp. 153–165: 157.

[56]*Cf.* R.J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50, Waco, 1983), p. 333, who emphasizes that such a recognition of Paul's letters as inspired, authoritative writings does not imply that the author of 2 Peter knew a NT canon as such.

[57]*Cf.* recently Metzger, *Canon*, pp. 39–247; Bruce, *Canon*, pp. 117–249.

[58]See now the excellent reviews of the evidence by Metzger, *Canon*, pp. 113–247, and Bruce, *Canon*, pp. 158–229.

[59]Metzger, *Canon*, p. 141.

[60]Thus recently U. Swarat, 'Das Werden des neutestamentlichen Kanons', in Maier, *Kanon*, pp. 25–51: 27, 29.

[61]T. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1888–92); *cf.* Swarat, 'Werden', pp. 33, 40f.

[62]For a review of research into Gnosticism see R. van den Broek, 'The Present State of Gnostic Studies', *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983), pp. 41–71. For an edition of Gnostic texts and a general discussion of the major Gnostic systems see B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, NY, 1987). On the relationship between the Nag Hammadi documents and the gospels see C.M. Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition* (Edinburgh, 1986).

[63]Particularly by Adolf von Harnack, *Das Neue Testament um das Jahr 200* (Freiburg, 1889); *cf. idem*, *History of Dogma* (London, 1990, reprint New York, 1961), pp. 38–60.

[64]*E.g.* Metzger, pp. 75–90.

[65]*Cf.* particularly Theodor Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, vol. 1 (Erlangen/Leipzig, 1888); *idem*, *Grundriss der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (Leipzig, 1901); see also *idem*, 'The Canon of the New Testament', *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge 2* (1908), pp. 393–400.

[66]Recently D.S. Williams, 'Reconsidering Marcion's Gospel', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989), pp. 477–496, pointed to the difficulties with regard to the traditional idea that Marcion edited the Gospel of Luke based on theological biases.

[67]First maintained by J.G. Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1804/1912).

[68]A. von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (TU 45, Leipzig, 1921; reprint Darmstadt, 1960), pp. 210–215, and *idem*, *The Origin of the New Testament Canon and the Most Important Consequences of the New Creation* (New York, 1925), pp. 30–35, 57–60, calling Marcion 'the creator of the Christian Bible' (Marcion, p. 151); *cf.* more recently Campenhausen, *Formation*, p. 148: 'The idea and the reality of a Christian Bible were the work of Marcion, and the Church which rejected his work, so far from being ahead of him in this field, from a formal point of view simply followed his example'.

[69]Metzger, *Canon*, p. 99, following R.M. Grant, *The Formation of the New Testament* (London/New York, 1965), p. 126; also Bruce, *Canon*, p. 144, relying on T. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, vol. 1, p. 586.

[70]Johannes Wirsching, *Kirche und Pseudokirche. Konturen der Häresie* (Göttingen, 1990), pp. 79, 92, asserts the priority of the church over against the biblical canon: the church existed before a canon of authoritative Scriptures existed, whereas the canon of Scripture never existed without a church which determined its boundaries; this priority is dissolved in the act of canonization in which the church closed the canon – an act which Wirsching describes as an 'act of repentance'. In other words: the theological priority of the canon must be understood in the historical priority of the church. *Cf.* Hübner, *Biblische Theologie*, pp. 68f.

[71]Particularly emphasized by Campenhausen, *Formation*, pp. 230ff.

[72]For a review of the debate see H. Paulsen, 'Die Bedeutung des Montanismus für die Herausbildung des Kanons', *Vigiliae Christianae* 32 (1978), pp. 19–52.

[73]*Cf.* Metzger, *Canon*, pp. 106–108.

[74]Metzger, *Canon*, p. 286.

[75]*Cf.* Theo Donner, 'Some Thoughts on the History of the New Testament Canon', *Themelios* 7 (1982), pp. 23–27, who emphasizes that the real issue is not one of canonical listing but one of authority.

[76]*Cf.* Metzger, *Canon*, pp. 253f.

[77]Donner, 'Thought', p. 27.

[78]*Cf.* W.G. Kümmel, 'Notwendigkeit und Grenze des neutestamentlichen Kanons' [1964], *Das Neue Testament als Kanon*, pp. 62–97: 92.

[79]Thus with emphasis Martin Rist, 'Pseudepigraphy and the Early Christians', *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (FS A.P. Wikgren, ed. D.E. Aune, Leiden, 1972), pp. 75–91: 82f. Scholars who work with the premise that the traditional concept of the canon of Scripture is irrelevant include Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Vol. 2: History and Literature of Early Christianity (Philadelphia, 1982), and Heikki Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology: A Story and a Programme* (London, 1990).

[80]See notably David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition* (Tübingen, 1987), *passim*, taken up by J.D.G. Dunn, *The Living Word* (London, 1987), pp. 65–85. *Cf.* also J.E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30, Dallas, 1987 = 1991), pp. xxxixf., regarding Daniel; R.J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50, Waco, 1983), p. 161, regarding 2 Peter; A.T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42, Dallas, 1990), pp. lix–lxxiii, regarding Ephesians.

[81]Thus Goldingay, *Daniel*, p. xl. For a general discussion of pseudonymity see further Wolfgang Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum* (Handbuch der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft 1/2, München, 1971).

[82]Dunn, *Living Word*, p. 84.

[83]Thus Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. lxxii.

[84]Meade, *Pseudonymity*, pp. 120f., 197f.

[85]*Cf.* E.J. Schnabel, 'Der biblische Kanon und das Phänomen der Pseudonymität', *Jahrbuch für evangelikale Theologie* 3 (1989), pp. 59–96: 92–95.

[86]Only in an appendix, *cf.* Meade, *Pseudonymity*, pp. 216–218: 'Addendum: Vergegenwärtigung and the Closure of the Canon'.

[87]P. Pokorny, 'Das theologische Problem der neutestamentlichen Epigraphie', *Evangelische Theologie* 44 (1984), pp. 486–496.

[88]*Cf.* Speyer, *Fälschung*, pp. 16, 88–93, 112–128, 243f.; A. Sint, *Pseudonymität im Altertum. Ihre Formen und ihre Gründe* (Innsbruck, 1960), p. 102.

[89]*Cf.* Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles* (Tübingen, 1986), pp. 20–22, who argued for the pseudepigraphical character of the Pastoral Epistles (and can therefore not be dismissed as a conservative apologist).

[90]Thus Bruce, *Canon*, p. 261.

[91]*Cf.* Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (originally published 1934, ET Philadelphia, 1971).

[92]James D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London, 1977, rev. edn 1990), pp. 374–388, particularly p. 376.

[93]Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, pp. 376–378, 386f., relying on E. Käsemann, 'The Canon of the New Testament and the Unity of the Church', *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London, 1964), pp. 48–62, 95–107:103. Dunn quotes twice (*op. cit.*, pp. 122, 376) Käsemann's dictum, contained in a lecture which was held in 1951, that the canon does not constitute the foundation of the unity of the church but, on the contrary, the basis for the multiplicity of the confessions, and deplores the fact that this 'conclusion' 'has not been suffi-

ciently reckoned with' (p. 122). It seems that Dunn has missed Käsemann's explanation of and comment on this thesis 20 years later, when he points out that in the context of the original lecture he was 'tickled' to provoke the audience deliberately while at the same time he indicated that he didn't think it was the 'last word' on the matter; to his amusement everybody pounced upon just this provocative sentence and applauded. Käsemann comments: 'Espièglerie in the theological dialogue at least sets reflection in motion' ('Eulenspiegelei im theologischen Dialog setzt zumindesten die Gedanken in Bewegung': E. Käsemann, 'Kritische Analyse', *Das Neue Testament als Kanon*, pp. 336–398: 356f.). For a critique of this thesis see Hans-Georg Link, 'Der Kanon in ökumenischer Sicht', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 83–96: 94f. For a trenchant critique of Dunn's *Unity and Diversity* see Don A. Carson, 'Unity and Diversity in the New Testament', in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D.A. Carson, J.D. Woodbridge, Grand Rapids, 1983), pp. 65–95 *passim*.

[94]E. Käsemann, 'Zusammenfassung', in *Das Neue Testament als Kanon*, p. 402, quoted (seemingly approvingly) by Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, p. 419 n. 9.

[95]*Cf.* Käsemann, 'Canon', p. 105: 'The canon is not the word of God tout simple. It can only become and be the Word of God so long as we do not seek to imprison God within it', quoted by Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, p. 419 n. 14.

[96]This question is raised by Hans Hübner, 'Vetus Testamentum und Vetus Testamentum in Novo receptum. Die Frage nach dem Kanon des Alten Testaments aus neutestamentlicher Sicht', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 147–162; *idem*, *Biblische Theologie* (Göttingen, 1990), pp. 44–70.

[97]*Cf.* mShab 16, 1; tShabb 13, 2; jShab 16, 1–2, 15b–c; bShab 115a–b; Sof I, 8.

[98]Johann Maier, *Jüdische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Christentum in der Antike* (Darmstadt, 1982), p. 93.

[99]*Cf.* generally G. Mussies, 'Greek in Palestine and the Diaspora', *The Jewish People in the First Century II* (ed. S. Safrai/M. Stern, Assen, 1976), pp. 1040–1064.

[100]*Cf.* the recently published scroll of the Greek Minor Prophets: E. Tov/R.A. Kraft, *The Seiyal Collection* (Vol. 1, DJD 8, Oxford, 1990).

[101]*Cf.* F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Exeter, 1977), pp. 41–52.

[102]*Cf.* H.M. Orlowski, 'The Septuagint and its Hebrew Text', *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (Vol. 2, Cambridge, 1989), pp. 534–562: 561.

[103]Augustine, *Contra Ep. Man.*, cap. 5 (*Migne* PL 42, 176).

[104]*Cf.* H.-J. Kühne, *Schriftautorität und Kirche: Eine kontroverstheologische Studie zur Begründung der Schriftautorität in der neueren katholischen Theologie* (Göttingen, 1980); more recently Traugott Vogel, 'Evangelium – Schrift – Kirche. Eine Problemanzeige zum reformatorischen Schriftprinzip', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 115 (1990), pp. 654–666: 659f.

[105]*Cf.* H. Gese, 'Erwägungen zur Einheit der biblischen Theologie', *Vom Sinai zum Zion: Alttestamentliche Beiträge zur biblischen Theologie* (3rd edn, München, 1990), pp. 11–30; *idem*, 'Tradition and Biblical Theology', in *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament* (ed. D.A. Knight, Philadelphia, 1976), pp. 301–326. Gese argues for the inclusion of the apocrypha in the context of his concern for an (uninterrupted) process of tradition history (*e.g.* 'Einheit', pp. 16f.).

[106]*Cf.* Goldingay, *Approaches*, p. 144.

[107]Dunbar, 'Biblical Canon', p. 358.

[108]As does R.K. Harrison, 'Canon of the OT', in *The International Standard Bible Encylopedia*, Vol. 1, 1979, p. 591, with regard to the OT.

[109]*Cf.* Metzger, *Canon*, pp. 255–257.

[110]*Cf.* Bruce, *Canon*, p. 264; for a discussion of inspiration in the context of the canon see *ibid.*, pp. 263–268, 280–283.

[111]S.Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden, 1976), p. 127.

[112]*Cf.* Gerhard Ebeling, *Die Geschichtlichkeit der Kirche und ihrer Verkündigung als theologisches Problem* (Tübingen, 1954), p. 52; more recently Wolfgang Wiefel, 'Die Autorität der Schrift und die Autorität des Evangeliums', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 115 (1990), pp. 641–654.

[113]See the helpful presentation in Goldingay, *Theological Diversity*, pp. 122–127.

[114]*Cf.* Gerhard Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids, 1978), pp. 164–170; Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon. An Introduction* (Philadelphia, 1984 = 1985), p. 44.

[115]*Cf.* Kümmel, 'Notwendigkeit und Grenze', p. 97. For his own description of the 'centre of the NT' see *idem*, *Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments nach seinen Hauptzeugen* (Göttingen, 1970), pp. 286–295.

[116]I. Lönning, *'Kanon im Kanon': Zum dogmatischen Grundlagenproblem des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (München, 1972), p. 271; *cf.* Goldingay, *Theological Diversity*, p. 129 with n. 123.

[117]K.-H. Ohlig, *Die theologische Begründung des neutestamentlichen Kanons in der alten Kirche* (Düsseldorf, 1972), pp. 12f.

[118]*Cf.* H. Gese, 'Das biblische Schriftverständnis', *Zur biblischen Theologie* (2nd edn, Tübingen, 1983), pp. 9–30: 29.

[119]As does Dunbar, 'The Biblical Canon', pp. 359f.; *cf.* Metzger, *Canon*, p. 284.

[120]*Cf.* Peter Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments. Eine Hermeneutik* (2nd edn, Göttingen, 1986), pp. 246–250.

[121]*Cf.* I.H. Marshall, 'Historical Criticism', *New Testament Interpretation. Essays in Principles and Methods* (ed. I.H. Marshall, Exeter, 1977), pp. 126–138: 132; see also Craig L. Blomberg, 'The Legitimacy and Limits of Harmonization', in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (eds D.A. Carson, J.D. Woodbridge, Grand Rapids, 1986), pp. 139–174.

[122]*Cf.* Don A. Carson, 'Unity and Diversity in the New Testament', in *Scripture and Truth* (eds D.A. Carson, J.D. Woodbridge, Grand Rapids, 1983), pp. 65–95; *cf.* also Ulrich Wilckens, 'Das historisch ausgelegte Neue Testament als Kanon der Heiligen Schrift', in *Wissenschaft und Kirche* (FS E. Lohse, eds K. Aland, S. Meurer, Bielefeld, 1989), pp. 13–28: 27f.

[123]See the approach of Hartmut Gese; *cf.* H. Gese, 'Erwägungen zur Einheit der biblischen Theologie', *Vom Sinai zum Zion* (BevTh 64, 2nd edn, München, 1984), pp. 11–30; and more recently *idem*, 'Hermeneutische Grundsätze der Exegese biblischer Texte', *Standort und Bedeutung der Hermeneutik in der gegenwärtigen Theologie* (eds A.H.J. Gunneweg, H. Schröer, Bonn, 1986), pp. 43–62.

[124]*Cf.* James D.G. Dunn, 'Levels of Canonical Authority' [1982], *The Living Word*, pp. 141–174.

[125]*Cf.* Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, 1977); more recently *idem*, 'Biblische Theologie und christlicher Kanon', *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 3 (1988), pp. 13–28.

[126]Seldom defended theologically but essentially the practice in reality. I don't know of a church which has either revised her creeds regarding the (undifferentiated) authority of Scripture for faith and practice, or which has revised (some would say 'reformed', *cf.* Barr, *Holy Scripture*, p. 74) the canon of Scripture by eliminating 'patently wrong', 'clearly mistaken' or 'disastrous' views and statements. Suggestions like that of Wolfgang Schenk who demands the 'de-canonization' of the Pastoral Epistles as 'Trito-Paulines' (W. Schenk, 'Die Briefe an Timotheus I und II und an Titus (Pastoralbriefe) in der neueren Forschung (1945–1985)', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II/25.4 (1987), pp. 3404–3438: 3428 with note 93) are not being discussed seriously. See further the similarly critical assessment of the canonical process by R.B. Lauren, 'Tradition and Canon', in *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament* (ed. D.A. Knight, Philadelphia, 1977), pp. 261–274, and D.A. Knight, 'Revelation through Tradition', *op. cit.*, pp. 143–180.

[127]*Cf.* Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture. Problems and Proposals* (Philadelphia, 1980), p. 159: 'It is the experience of the community of faith with the Bible which gives the basis for the confession of the authority of that Bible'. Similarly James D.G. Dunn, 'The Authority of Scripture According to Scripture' [1982], *The Living Word*, p. 102: 'The authority of Scripture is . . . a power which grasps the hearer, so that conscience, mind and will cry out, "This is the word of God"'.

[128]*Cf.* Udo Schnelle, 'Sachgemässe Schriftauslegung', *Novum Testamentum* 30 (1988), pp. 115–131.

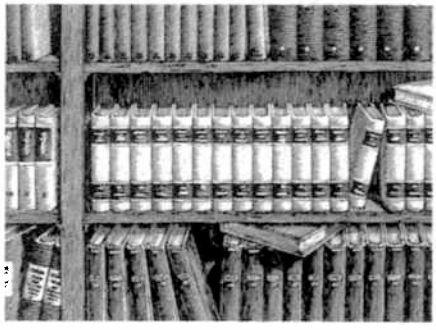
[129]Thus Willi Marxsen, 'Das Problem des neutestamentlichen Kanons aus der Sicht des Exegeten' [1960], *Das Neue Testament als Kanon*, pp. 233–246: 246; and in a similar vein more recently James D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, p. 386.

[130]See N.K. Gottwald (ed.), *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll, 1983), and the numerous studies on liberation theology, contextual theologies and feminist theology.

[131]In Germany most efficiently the now suspended Roman Catholic priest Eugen Drewermann; among his numerous bulky works see particularly *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese* (2 vols, 5th/3rd edn, Olten/Freiburg, 1988/1987). For an incisive critique see G. Lohfink, R. Pesch, *Tiefenpsychologie und keine Exegese. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Eugen Drewermann* (Stuttgart, 1987).

[132]*Cf.* R.T. France, 'Evangelical Disagreements About the Bible', *Churchman* 96 (1982), pp. 226–240: 233.

BOOK



REVIEWS

The Prophecy of Isaiah
Alec Motyer
Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993, 544 pp., hb., £19.99.

Motyer's book provides the fruit of many years of Evangelical research into the book of Isaiah. Motyer boldly challenges the approach which dates parts or all of the book to a period during and after the Exile. He emphasizes the unity of the book. The work can be divided into three parts, each of which presents a future Messianic figure as the king (chs. 1–37), the servant (chs. 38–55), and the anointed conqueror (chs. 56–66). Motyer's reasons for a unity to the book stress the book's style and theology. Stylistically, the unity of the work is suggested by the absence of many specific historical referents in chapters 40–55. For Motyer, these texts are stereotypical descriptions of deportation and of the fall of a city such as Babylon. They would not require any special prophetic insight. Therefore, the argument that these must be exilic texts because no one could have foreseen the events cannot be sustained. The exception to the conventional language, of course, is the mention of Cyrus. However, this must be a fundamental element of the prophecy. It demonstrates God's superiority over all other deities as one who is able to foresee the coming of Cyrus long before the event.

Another argument from style is Motyer's observation that Is. 39 includes a prophetic prediction of Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem. This runs counter to a theme which is traced through the previous chapters, where Jerusalem and Judah are given promises of hope and blessing. For a prophetic text to end with this statement of judgment, with no means of resolving the promised blessing, would be inconsistent with prophetic style. If chapters 40ff. did not exist, Motyer insists that it would have been necessary to invent them. This relationship also allows him to put the division between the first and second parts of the work at the beginning of ch. 38 rather than at ch. 40.

Theologically, chapters 1–39 discuss six major concepts: Israel's God as lord of history, Israel's God as supreme over idols, the promise of a remnant, the reconciliation of God and the sinner, a restored Zion/Jerusalem, and the Davidic Messiah. These are also the emphasises of chapters 40–55. Thus Motyer argues that here is another indication of the unity of the text.

Motyer has provided important evidence for a unity to the work. Those who accept the authorship of most or all of the text as from Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth and early seventh centuries, will be encouraged by his arguments. Indeed, these are useful arguments for constructing a case. However, the case is not entirely made. It is still necessary to answer the questions regarding (1) the distinctive vocabulary and language in Is. 40–55, (2) the issue of religious monotheism and how it could have emerged before the period of Josiah, and (3) the mention of Cyrus. The first two are not insurmountable but are not addressed by Motyer. The third issue will probably remain the watershed between those who accept the possibility of predictive prophecy and those for whom such a phenomenon cannot occur in a naturalistic universe.

The strength of Motyer's work lies in its careful study of the literary forms and of the arguments of the prophet. A prevailing trend in some recent studies to interpret the book's organisation in terms of a chronological sequence of history or of the life of the prophet (*e.g.* Watts and Hayes and Irvine) is rejected in favour of a conceptual structure and unity. Thus chs. 1–5 are not necessarily to be dated prior to ch. 6. Instead, they serve as an introduction to themes and problems which the 'call' of ch. 6 attempts to address. With such an emphasis, the rejection of Ahaz in ch. 7 becomes more than an example of unbelief. It provides the decisive turning point on which hangs the time and circumstances of the coming of Immanuel. Ahaz's refusal to ask for a sign plunged Jerusalem into a century of domination and oppression followed by a complete loss of independence.

Scholars will not find many alternative views in the work. Several recent contributions to discussions of interpretation are conspicuously absent. However, this allows for an already lengthy commentary to carry forward its argument in a concise and direct manner. The work will find a welcome reception among preachers and teachers who seek assistance in understanding the argument of the whole book and the place of each specific text in it.

Richard S. Hess, Glasgow Bible College

The Bible and Postmodern Imagination: Texts under Negotiation
Walter Brueggemann
London: SCM, 1993, 117 pp., np.

This short but significant book, by one of the most stimulating of contemporary biblical theologians, is an invitation to Christians to do their biblical theology in a new way. Many Christians feel doubtful, if not straightforwardly hostile, about some of the wider changes in contemporary culture that are generally labelled as 'postmodern', for so often the changes seem negative and undermining towards long-accepted truths. Brueggemann, by contrast, is positive towards the general trend, for he sees it as an opportunity for evangelical affirmation of the creative possibilities that are offered by God, the scriptural witness to which is too often dulled or silenced. Brueggemann affirms the central importance of imagination and lifestyle for appropriating this new reality, for what we know and how we live are inseparable. As ever, Brueggemann's breadth of reading opens up whole areas of contemporary debate about which most biblical scholars may be poorly informed. There is a freshness and vitality here that must be read to be appreciated.

Despite the obvious value of the book, however, there is much that strikes me as one-sided and insufficiently thought through. The easy rhetoric against 'white, male, Western, colonial hegemony' is more likely to polarize than to persuade. The corresponding dismissal of concern about 'political correctness' as 'almost exclusively a conservative reactionary device to fend off criticism and change' is simply tendentious, given the lack of careful attention to the question of criteria whereby movements and changes can be assessed as better or worse. And although Brueggemann cheerfully asserts that one can no longer tell a 'big story' and must rather tell specific local ones, I doubt that the situation is so simple (and it is odd that Jewish modes of particular and 'irrational' readings of texts are extolled while a Christian concern for catholicity is ignored). It is all very well to try to enable the biblical text to speak in a fresh way 'without too much worry about making it palatable either to religious orthodoxy or to critical rationality'. But the fact that the six texts chosen 'almost at random' by Brueggemann to illustrate his thesis not only 'challenge our commonly assumed world' but also do so in a way congenial to a left-wing socio-political consciousness may make one wonder whether there may not yet be some (undeclared and unscrutinized) big story that is significantly guiding the use of the biblical text.

Nonetheless, despite considerable reservations, the issues that Brueggemann raises are crucial for the future of theology, and must be seriously engaged with. It would be a supreme irony if conservative scholars, after so long resisting the influence of the Enlightenment on biblical studies, should finally have so accepted much of that Enlightenment agenda that when a Christian scholar proposes abandoning that agenda they defend it as though they were defending the faith.

Walter Moberly, University of Durham

Grace in the End. A Study in Deuteronomic Theology Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology
J. Gordon McConville
Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993, 176 pp., Pb., £7.99.

McConville examines the history of Deuteronomic studies and the impact of Deuteronomic theology on the Deuteronomic history (Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings) and the New Testament. He observes the tendency to locate the book either in a north Israelite origin or in a south Jerusalem context. In the former situation, it becomes a prophetic critique against established religion. In the latter case, it is a conservative argument for the centralisation of cult and worship in Jerusalem. McConville argues that the controversy between northern and southern origins for the book dissolves when it is set in a context before the Monarchy. The supposed conflict between law and grace also disappears when the reader understands the priority of God's promises throughout. Although the critique is prophetic in aspects, its polemic against Canaanite religion does not resemble that of the prophets of the Monarchy. It is not a distortion of true worship but a worship of other deities that preoccupies Deuteronomy. McConville accepts the close formal similarities of Deuteronomy with second millennium BC treaties and legal collections. He argues that the

internal arguments do not compel a late date for the work.

McConville examines each of the books of the Deuteronomistic history in the light of recent discussion. For example, Webb and Klein have demonstrated the literary unity of Judges. Judges 18:31 describes the erection of a shrine in competition with the central sanctuary at Shiloh (Jo. 18:1). It symbolises the loosening of Israel's hold on the land, as seen throughout this book. Referring to recent literary studies of the books of Samuel, McConville emphasises the ambiguity of the kingship as something the people demand but do not receive as they had expected, and the role of the 'appendix' (2 Sa. 21–24) to liken the failure of David to that of Saul and to question whether the promise to David (2 Sa. 7) can provide a permanent blessing for Israel. Deuteronomy influences 1 and 2 Kings in its critique of the monarchy (Deut. 17). For McConville, these historical texts play out the drama in deliberate ambiguities, in which kings rebel against the authority of the divine law. Even in figures such as Hezekiah and Josiah, the text anticipates the ultimate failure of their reforms in the prophetic judgments that accompany their reforms. The warnings of Deuteronomy (8:10-20) lead to the exile as a precondition for a secure relationship between God and his people (30:1-10).

McConville observes how God's sovereignty and freedom limit the powers of Israel's kings and priests. Crucial to the election of the people and their covenant relationship with God are the requirements of the law. Yet, their inability to fulfill the demands of the law frustrates the full realisation of the covenant. Thus God's command to 'Circumcise your hearts' (10:16) becomes the promise that he will circumcise the hearts of Israel (30:6).

Finally, McConville applies the work of Deuteronomy to New Testament ethical (slavery and wealth) and theological ('life', covenant, heart response) concerns. The result is a useful summary of recent scholarship on Deuteronomic theology and the Deuteronomic History, as well as an appreciation of the primary theological themes found in these texts.

Richard S. Hess, Glasgow Bible College

Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis
John Van Seters
Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1992, xvi + 367 pp., £29.99.

The world of Pentateuchal criticism is dominated by Germanic scholarship, and Van Seters is one of the very rare American writers to have been taken seriously on the Continent. His *Abraham in History and Tradition* had a marked impact on Westermann's great commentary on Genesis. In particular, Van Seters' view that there is no separate E source in Genesis, but that J is the main author of Genesis, has been taken seriously by many including Westermann.

His earlier book focused on the Abraham story, *i.e.* Genesis 12–26. In this new work he extends his approach to the whole book of Genesis, which he argues was largely composed in the exile as a prologue to the deuteronomic history (Joshua to Judges). There were some small additions by P later.

Conservative readers will warm to the shrewd critique by Van Seters of the more complex theories of some source and redaction critics who find multiple layers of writing within a single paragraph or hang great hypotheses on slight verbal variation within the text, *e.g.* in 28:10-22; 29–30; 37–50. Van Seters does not dispense with the idea of source criticism, but generally favours a simpler, more common-sense approach to the issues. However he is far from embracing the final-form approach, whether it be Childs' canonical criticism or the New Literary Criticism of Alter or Sternberg. Their chief works are conspicuously missing from his bibliography.

His very late date for J (sixth-century BC) is however less palatable to evangelicals as it implies that the stories of Genesis are essentially fictitious. He endeavours to prove this dating of Genesis in two ways, first by showing that Genesis 1–11 have similarities with early Greek historical writing, and second that Genesis's depiction of the promises as unconditional is later than Deuteronomy's conditional covenantal view. The last point, that Genesis's view of the covenantal promises is fundamentally different from Deuteronomy's, is dubious. But even if it were correct, we could not argue on this basis to the dating of the sources. The way ideas develop over time cannot be predicted and used to date texts; rather, when we have dated texts on other grounds, we can use these texts to trace the development of thought.

As far as Genesis 1–11 is concerned, Van Seters' attempt to demonstrate its affinity with Greek historical works is distinctly weak. He tries to enhance his case by classifying Phoenician sources with Greek sources, which is dubious, since they are really part of the Ancient Orient which extended from Egypt to Babylon. But even with this fudging of the evidence Van Seters' case is poor. Genesis's account of origins is much closer to early second-millennium Mesopotamian sources than to late first-millennium Greek ones. These parallels do not show that the author of Genesis borrowed directly from Mesopotamian texts, but they do make it likely that he was writing much earlier than Van Seters suggests (for further discussion see G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (1987), pp. xxxvii–xlv).

Gordon Wenham, Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education

Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation)
Danna Nolan Fewell (ed.)
Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1992, 285 pp., pb.

What is intertextuality? That is a question that until recently would not have been asked by many biblical scholars. Now, however, amidst the great upsurge of literary studies of the Bible, intertextuality is one of the key concepts for many practitioners. This latest collection of essays, all devoted to the theme, is a good opportunity to explore the meaning and implications of the concept.

In most general terms, '"intertextuality" is a covering term for all the possible relations that can be established between texts' (p. 44). This of course includes the familiar historically-oriented activity of tracing deliberate links between texts (citations, allusions, etc.), but it goes way beyond that. The basic assumption is that 'all texts are embedded in a larger web of related texts, bounded only by human culture and language itself' (p. 17), and the corollary of this is that in principle any text may help interpret any other text. The linkage between texts 'occurs without regard to chronology; that is, exchanged information moves backwards and forwards in time. It also occurs without regard to genesis; for example, the text credited as the source of others can and often is transformed through its contact with other, more derivative texts' (p. 77). The abandonment of historically-oriented perspectives is deliberate. 'Such a shift of perspective allows literary critics to rethink literature and literary history in terms of space instead of time, conditions of possibility instead of permanent structures, and "networks" or "webs" instead of chronological lines of influence. This novel perspective, in turn, proves very valuable to the critic who is interested in discussing – unimpeded by questions of historical development and influence – the various elements within one text that derive an extra dash of significance from their allusion to another text' (p. 182).

What is the basis for this essentially revolutionary approach? 'According to Thais Morgan, "the notion of intertextuality emerges from the cross-fertilization among several major European intellectual movements during the 1960s and 1970s, including Russian formalism, structural linguistics, psycho-analysis, Marxism, and deconstruction, at the least." With its roots in the ideological battleground of Paris in the sixties and seventies, intertextuality is no neutral term' (p. 181). Key theoreticians are Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva.

Since the approach implies an endless plurality of interpretations, the obvious question is what is the basis on which one may distinguish between better and worse interpretations. In general terms the potential indeterminacy of any text can only be reduced (or 'contained') by decisions on the part of the reader, and the crucial factor that motivates a reader's decision is ideology. 'It is in this way that intertextuality opens to ideological criticism. If ideology is a strategy of containment, then the interpretive *rules* in biblical studies which . . . legitimize certain intertextual relationships are certainly ideological' (p. 32). Biblical interpretation reflects the interests of the interpreters and is in no sense a neutral, objective activity. As interpreters we are invited 'to reflect on why we make the connections that we do' (p. 20) and relate them to our social and ethical responsibilities.

I have concentrated on expounding the theory of intertextuality because the book presents it so clearly. I conclude with three brief comments. First, if the application of contemporary literary theory to the Bible is to be other than a passing fad of no enduring significance, then it must surely in some way attempt to take seriously the distinctive characteristics of the Bible, which must include its historical and religious dimensions, and its special relationship with Jews and Christians. Secondly, despite the problematic nature of many aspects of intertextuality, it is important to realize that in some respects it is much closer to ancient and medieval biblical interpretation than is conventional modern grammatico-historical exegesis; if links between texts are not historically conditioned and if the controlling ideology is a desire to witness to, and explore the riches of, Jesus Christ in relation to living the life of faith, then you have the hermeneutical key to patristic biblical interpretation. So there are issues at stake that we neglect at our peril. Thirdly, the actual essays in the book are mostly fairly moderate outworkings of the theory; usually interesting, often suggestive; but all too often, to my rather old-fashioned mind, more or less implausible.

R.W.L. Moberly, University of Durham

The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in Light of Modern Research
E. Earle Ellis
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991, 188 pp., $11.99.

This book is a collection of previously published essays by an internationally known evangelical scholar, E. Earle Ellis. The volume contains three lengthy essays and two appendices. They share a common concern for understanding the formation of the OT and its interpretation by the early church. In various ways, Ellis attempts to demonstrate in these essays a point made in the last paragraph of the book: 'The New Testament's use of the Old Testament lies at the heart of its theology. . . . It unfolds a hermeneutical perspective that will deepen one's understanding of the biblical message . . .' (p. 156).

The first essay, 'The Old Testament Canon in the Early Church', explores the historical development of the church's Scripture, first in relationship to the canon of Judaism and then in delineating the rationale by which the church could use, yet distinguish, canonical and non-canonical writings. In the process, Ellis explores the canonical affirmations of a number of ancient sources. From his investigation, Ellis concludes: 'In its conception of the Old Testament the messianic community of Jesus differed from the mainstream of Judaism not in the content of its Bible but in the interpretive key that it used to open the Bible' (p. 36).

It is that interpretive key or hermeneutical process that Ellis takes up in the second half of this essay. Here Ellis challenges the popular and widespread three-stage canonization theory, namely that the Law was 'canonized' around 400 BC, the Prophets *c.*200 BC, and the Hagiographa during the time of Jamnia (*c.*AD 90). Instead, he argues that the community of Jesus had the same OT canon as other groups in first-century Judaism. The difference was a hermeneutical one in which the OT was 'contemporized' for a new situation and in light of what God had done through his Son, Jesus Christ.

The second essay, 'Old Testament Quotations in the New: A Brief History of the Research', provides a valuable survey of how Christian writers have understood the appropriation of the OT by the NT from the early church until the present day. After briefly examining the second to the 19th centuries, Ellis explores the most popular theories of the 20th century regarding the relationship between the NT's use of the OT, and among others, (1) the 'testimony book' and targumic translations, (2) typological exegesis, (3) midrash, and (4) exegesis at Qumran. The footnotes of the essay have been updated to include works published as late as 1990.

In the third chapter, 'Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament Church', Ellis advances his own theory: the NT writers employed a christological exposition of the OT heavily shaped by the exegetical method of Jewish midrash and underpinned by certain presuppositions regarding eschatology, typology, corporate personality, and the notion of Scripture as a hidden Word of God, all inherited from Judaism but given a distinct Christian spin. The two appendices address specific points mentioned in the earlier essays. The first is on 'Jesus and his Bible'; the second is on 'Typological Interpretation – and Its Rivals'.

Like any collection of previously published articles, this book has its weaknesses. It is odd in a book of only three chapters and 157 pages of text to have a total of nearly 20 pages included in two different appendices. Furthermore, a couple of topics are treated extensively in two or more of the essays, creating some unnecessary repetition. This problem is especially acute with the subject of typology, which Ellis treats on pp. 46–49, 61–63, 72–73, 105–109, and in Appendix II, with much redundancy. A similar point could be made with the repeated discussions of 'midrash', though it is unlikely that those who come to this book sceptical of the pervasive presence of explicit and implicit midrash in the NT will leave convinced, despite the repeated references to it.

A more pressing problem with this book is its failure to engage some of the more recent works which have appeared since the articles were first published. To be sure, Ellis refers to most of the recent studies in footnotes (especially in ch. 2), but he does not always take their positions into account in his text. To cite one example, Ellis argues that what set the early Christian community apart from Judaism was neither its canon nor its exegetical method, but rather the christological or messianic perspective with which the early Christians approached the OT. This view sounds very similar to the argument advanced recently by Donald Juel in *Messianic Exegesis* (1988). Students would have profited from a discussion by Ellis of points of similarity and difference between his work and Juel's book.

Still, this is an important book and a helpful introduction to the issues surrounding the early church's appropriation of its inherited Scriptures. Once again, Earle Ellis has proven an able guide through the maze, and once again has placed us all in his debt.

Mikeal C. Parsons, Baylor University, Waco, TX, USA

The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament
Philip W. Comfort
Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992, 200 pp., $11.99.

One of the shortcomings of textual critics is that they have allowed their discipline to be misperceived as dry, dusty and dull. Comfort enthusiastically combats that misperception in this book. Drawing on a lively historical imagination, he successfully conveys the point that there were real people in living churches who, in the face of persecution and even death, faithfully passed on the text of the Scriptures, and to whom the church at large owes an inestimable debt.

The focus of the book is on the earliest surviving papyrus manuscripts of the NT. The author seems to have two goals throughout the book: to tell the story of the earliest MSS and the people and communities behind them (chs. 1–2, 5–7), and to present, on the basis of the early papyri, an alternative methodology to challenge the dominant approach to NT textual criticism (chs. 3–4, 8–10). This is an ambitious and commendable agenda, but in the end, perhaps it is too ambitious for a book of this size. Overall, he is much more successful with the first goal than the second.

With regard to that first goal, Comfort focuses primarily on Egypt, because that is the region for which we have the most evidence. But that is not to say that there is a lot of evidence, and it is on this point that the lively sense of imagination that is the book's strength becomes also one of its weaknesses. While utilizing what evidence there is, too often the reconstruction builds on assumption and assertion rather than on data. An example: the statement is made repeatedly that very accurate early copies are evidence of scribes who copied with 'reverential fidelity' because they knew they were copying a sacred text. This is possible, but there is no evidence to support this romanticized portrait; an accurate copy could also have been produced by a professional pagan scribe with a strong sense of pride in his work who gave not a fig about the content of the document he was copying. An accurate copy tells us something about the skill of a scribe, but nothing about his attitude. In sum, the story of the early text is always interesting, but not always well grounded.

With regard to the second goal, the author is less successful. The issues he raises are important and substantial, but the popular level and brevity of the book severely handicap the discussion of them. For example, in chapter 8 his graphical presentation of textual relationships sometimes involves a substantial revision of current views, but no evidence is given to support his analyses (which in some cases are simply wrong: the analysis of Mark, for example, overlooks the fundamental work of Hurtado on p^{45} and W).

With respect to his text-critical method, note that a key point rests upon an assumption. A major concern behind his 'documentary' approach seems to be the avoidance of the subjectivism he thinks is inherent in the 'eclectic' approach widely followed today, which in his view is characterized by an over-reliance upon internal evidence. In contrast, his documentary approach would put more weight upon the evidence of the best MSS. But that only pushes the problem back one step, because the determination of the 'best' MS(S) is based almost entirely on internal considerations. To attempt to avoid subjectivism at this stage by equating 'best' with 'earliest', as he basically does, will not work either: (1) while age may be an indication of quality, it is no guarantee of it, and (2) his own study 'shows that two manuscripts can exist side by side in the same locality *at the same time and yet contain significantly different texts*' (italics added) – a point which severely relativizes the criterion of age. Thus he does not really escape the perceived problem. Moreover, he is inconsistent in applying his own method; in 1 Cor. 7:40, for example, he is willing to abandon the very earliest witnesses, including p^{46}, in favour of two later ones – largely on the basis of internal considerations! In the end, his preference to weight somewhat differently than others the balance between external and internal evidence should not obscure the fact that in practice Comfort utilizes, like almost all the rest of NT textual critics today, a reasoned eclecticism.

Michael W. Holmes, Bethel College, St Paul, Minnesota

Dictionary of Paul and His Letters
Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid (eds.)
Leicester/Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993, xxix + 1038 pp., £00.00/$34.99.

Paulist Press for many years has had a series on theological issues for the layperson with such titles as *What Are They Saying About* – Creation?, Death?, Dogma?, Grace?, Salvation?, Theological Method?, Similarly, in this dictionary, evangelical scholars who might feel comfortable in the

Tyndale Fellowship or Institute for Biblical Research write on 'What are We Saying About – Paul?' The hidden audience of the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* is the entrenched liberal higher critical fraternity of scholars and, as one writer wrote, their 'scholarly debate in recent decades' (p. 920). Thus, the *Dictionary* is an up-to-date report from a neo-evangelical scholarly perspective, written cautiously so as not to offend more liberal colleagues. On issues such as homosexuality and critical issues on Paul's letters, the authors conclude affirming traditional values, yet often do so apologetically. The remnants of a doctoral degree often find their place in the evasive 'it' without clear antecedent: 'it has been argued', 'it appears' (pp. 214–215). The subtitle which appears on the cover, but not on the title page, well describes the *Dictionary's* intention: 'A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship.'

The over 200 articles cover concepts, cities, letters, and people which appear in Paul's letters. They are classified in categories generally those with some training in Paul's studies would seek: 'fellowship' or 'financial support', not 'tithing', or 'work'; 'sexuality' not 'immorality', 'prostitution', or 'fornication'; 'church order and government', not 'morality; 'God', not 'Trinity'; 'rhetorical criticism', not 'style'. However, the Scripture and subject index should help make the transfer. The article index and list of abbreviations are also very helpful. A bibliography for every article is helpful for the student who wants further study.

The 108 writers include at least eight women scholars and scholars from mainly the United States and Great Britain, but also Australia, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Kenya, Korea, and New Zealand. I did not notice any Hispanic or African names. The articles on women in ministry are generally positive. I would have hoped since Barnabas and Apollos each had an article, Prisca might have had one too. She and her husband did save Paul's life. And Junia had only passing mention in the articles on 'Apostle' and 'Paul and His Co-Workers'.

Generally this is not a book replete with original insights into the Bible. However, several articles were very insightful even in their succinct space. C. Kroeger's article on 'Head' has excellent Graeco-Roman material with a thesis. She gives an overview of Paul's understanding of *kephale*, the classical view of head as source, headship in the household and in the Trinity. She cites many primary references. She concludes by quoting John Chrysostom: 'only a heretic would understand Paul's use of "head" to mean "chief"' or "authority over" ' (p. 377). Twelftree's article on 'Healing, illness' is well-balanced, well categorized and accurate. He differentiates suffering from the fallen world from suffering for preaching the gospel from suffering from sin. P. Beasley-Murray's article on 'Paul as Pastor' is an insightful handling of images. He highlights Paul as parent, mother, and father, and, as well, his work as part of a team of colleagues. F.F. Bruce's 'Paul in Acts and Letters' is a good summary of Bruce's *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free*.

In summary, the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* is a helpful compendium of evangelical thought on critical scholarship on Paul's studies, especially for the seminary trained person.

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Jesus of Nazareth Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology

Joel B. Green & Max Turner (eds.)
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994, xxi + 536 pp., hb, £29.99.

This book is ostensibly a collection of essays in honour of Professor Howard Marshall of Aberdeen University. It focuses on two of Marshall's major research interests: the historical Jesus and the origins of New Testament Christology. The *Festschrift* is split into three parts (i) Jesus, the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, (ii) Jesus, Paul and John and (iii) New Testament Christology: wider issues. The contributors are drawn from Euro-American evangelical scholarship, and most if not all, should be familiar names to undergraduate students of the New Testament.

The collection, while paying due regard to the scholarship of its honouree is distinctive among *Festschriften* in that its essays serve to advance various debates within their respective New Testament fields. This is true even when the reviewer is in disagreement with the conclusions of certain contributors. For example, Schnabel's over-confident connection of Jesus with the Gentile mission, and Riesner's suggestion that the Simeon that James refers to at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-21) is not Simeon Peter but the Simeon of the *Nunc Dimitis* (Luke 2:29-32). Of the essays that should go on to become influential, we would highlight in particular those of Bauckham, Drane and Dunn, although the articles offered by Borgen, Blomberg and Turner could similarly be highlighted. Borgen writes on the significance of the Spirit in connection with the admission of the first non-Jews into the Christian movement. Blomberg tackles the subject of an 'Evangelical Theology of Liberation' and Turner (one of the editors) writes impressively on 'The Spirit of Christ and "Divine" Christology'. Such essays should be influential, not only in terms of advancing scholarship, but helpful to readers of *Themelios* who are coming to terms with wider New Testament issues.

Bauckham's 'Jesus and the Wild Animals (Mk. 1:13). A Christological Image for an Ecological Age' is both incisive and refreshing in that it successfully applies Scripture to a contemporary issue. Good hermeneutical principles are clearly at work as he deals with humanity's responsibilities to the animal world and the environment at large. Clearly as religious studies comes of age as a discipline and grapples with the green issues of today, this essay may well be the place for the evangelical student to begin a response.

Drane in his essay entitled, 'Patterns of Evangelization in Jesus and Paul', deals with the methodology behind the Jesus and Paul debate, while touching the modern church's decade of evangelism in an enlightened manner. Bauckham and Drane thus beautifully represent Marshall's tradition of bridging scholarship and the church.

Dunn's essay, 'The Making of Christology-Evolution or Unfolding?' comes at a critical time in the current debate surrounding the origins of New Testament Christology. In essence the work is a robust and cogent response to Maurice Casey's *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, but it also represents Dunn's refinements of his own position on the development of Christology, since the publication of his major work, *Christology in the Making*. This will prove to be an invaluable response for the undergraduate, as well as the researcher, who is seeking to understand the variety of positions within the current debate concerning Christological origins.

The *Festschrift* could have been improved by a contribution from non-western scholars who have been influenced by Howard Marshall's ministry. Yet as it stands, it is a fitting tribute to someone who has done more than most to consolidate the credibility gained by evangelical scholarship in the UK, while maintaining its links with what gives it life, the work of the local church.

Kevin Ellis, London Bible College

The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text (New International Greek Testament Commentary series)

Paul Ellingworth
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/ Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992, xcviii + 764 pp., $44.99/£29.99.

For many years a regular contributor to the *Biblical Translator* and other journals, Ellingworth has written numerous articles on various NT passages and related discussions. He serves as a translation consultant with the United Bible Societies and holds honorary posts in the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh. He wrote *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (1985) with H. Hatton and *A Translator's Handbook on the Letter to the Hebrews* (1983) with Eugene A. Nida. With a lifelong interest in Hebrews, Ellingworth has studied this epistle and has now published two commentaries in quick succession: a concise commentary on *The Epistle to the Hebrews* in 1991 and his magnum opus *Commentary on Hebrews* in 1992.

Ellingworth's last commentary is in the New International Greek Testament Commentary series and by its nature is a technical work. It is indeed a goldmine of information for any NT scholar who has an interest in this epistle. The list of abbreviations and the bibliography alone, comprising together nearly a hundred pages, are worth the price of the book. The commentary itself includes 650 pages and is followed by almost 30 pages of indexes of subjects, authors and Greek words discussed.

The introduction to the commentary covers more than 80 pages, with extensive discussions on authorship, readers, destination, date, source and background, structure and genre, theology, purpose and text. Although the section on theology covers a broad range of topics, a thorough discussion would have been appreciated on the priesthood of Christ in relation to Melchizedek's priesthood and contrasted with the Levitical priesthood. A discussion on the doctrine of the priesthood in the context of redemptive revelation would enhance 'The Theology of Hebrews' (pp. 63–77).

Ellingworth takes the reader through the Greek text of Hebrews in a word-for-word approach. He examines the text, grammar and interpretation of each individual word. The author copiously notes the views of ancient and modern authors with all their possible nuances in exegesis. He is the first to admit that his commentary is highly technical, pitched to the level of fellow scholars to debate the explanation of the Greek text. Ellingworth readily provides theological arguments throughout his commentary. But he also knows limits, as is evident from one of his remarks: 'The wider theological discussion lies beyond the scope of this commentary' (p. 426).

After looking at the alternatives to the

exegesis of a given passage, Ellingworth is usually cautious and modest in stating his own position. He generally follows John Calvin's prudent advice: 'The best rule of sobriety is, not only in learning to follow wherever God leads, but also when he makes an end of teaching, to cease also from wishing to be wise' (p. 76). Applying this wisdom, Ellingworth customarily presents his view by stating what the author of the epistle seems to say. For instance, when he discusses the meaning of the terms *who* or *some* (3:16), Ellingworth writes, 'In the light of 11:40, the author's hope seems to be rather the ultimate inclusion of God's "resting-place" of faithful members of God's people, of the author's generation together with OT saints' (p. 230).

The epistle has a number of cruxes, among which is the contents of the Holy of Holies (9:4). Does the author of Hebrews point to the altar of incense or the incense-burner? After both listing and discussing the options, Ellingworth chooses one of them and wisely comments: '[The author's] main concern was not with details of furniture (*cf.* v. 5b) but with the separation between the outer and inner areas (v. 8)' (p. 426; and see p. 427). Further, he explains that the location of Aaron's rod was not in the ark of the covenant (9:4) but 'the rod was placed alongside or before the ark' (p. 429).

Perhaps the explanations of some passages should be augmented, for example in respect to the 'loud cries and tears' that Jesus offered in the garden of Gethsemane and from the cross at Calvary (5:7). The few references to these two places that Ellingworth furnishes (pp. 288-9) ought to be fully explained in the light of Jesus' high priestly work and sacrifice. Next, a discussion of the phrases *none of you* and *no one* (3:13; 4:1, 11) should centre on the corporate responsibility of the entire Christian community. And last, commenting on the present tense of the verb *to enter* (9:6), Ellingworth states: 'The present probably does not suggest that the temple was still standing' (p. 433). But does this observation say anything at all about the epistle's date?

This is an excellent commentary for the scholar who knows Greek. The material, however, is too far advanced for the student pursuing initial theological studies. Nevertheless, the content of the book serves as a challenge and stimulus to learn Greek. Students of the Bible who have no knowledge of Greek are urged to spend the time and effort to become acquainted with the original language of the NT. Then they will be able to benefit greatly from the wealth of material Ellingworth has made available in this superb volume.

Simon J. Kistemaker, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi

The First Gospel

Harold Riley

Macon, GA: Mercer, 1992, 130 pp., $25.00.

In recent years Harold Riley has become one of the more prolific advocates of what is called the 'two-Gospel hypothesis'. This hypothesis affirms that Matthew was the first of the synoptic Gospels to be written, that Luke was dependent on Matthew, and Mark on both Matthew and Luke. This study is a continuation of the argument put forward by Riley in *The Order of the Synoptics* (1987; co-authored by J.B. Orchard) and *The Making of Mark* (1989).

Two considerations lie behind Riley's rejection of Matthaean dependence on Mark. These are that Matthew is much nearer than Mark to the conditions of Palestinian life, and that the plan of Matthew's Gospel owes nothing to Mark. Riley assumes that Luke and Mark are dependent on Matthew; however, his awareness of certain problems inherent in this assumption leads him to postulate that Luke and Mark knew an earlier and much shorter form of Matthew. The main concern of the present study is to identify this Proto-Matthew which was utilized by Luke and Mark and to which additions and alterations were made by one or more editors. The 'First Gospel' of the title, therefore, is not so much canonical Matthew as Riley's reconstruction of Proto-Matthew.

Much of the book is taken up with Riley's arguments distinguishing Proto-Matthew from later editorial additions. The Matthaean *Vorlage* he envisions is 'an account very close to the events recorded, and concerned with the immediate impact of Jesus' Mission on the people among whom he moved' (p. 93). Proto-Matthew began at what is now 3:1 and ended at 28:8, *i.e.* from the time of John the Baptist and Jesus' first public appearance to the time when the fact of the resurrection is revealed. Thus, it did not contain the infancy narratives nor the account of the post-resurrection appearance at Galilee. Moreover, this original Gospel was basically a narrative. It did include teaching material, but much less than the final form of Matthew. Included among those elements which Riley regards as additions to Proto-Matthew are the references in Matthew to the nations and, in particular, to the mission to the Gentile world. This interest goes beyond 'the range of concern' in the original document which deals very closely with 'the actual conditions of the earthly life of Jesus in Israel' and is produced for the benefit of 'people with a Jewish background' (p. 45). Though the purpose of the author (the apostle Matthew, according to Riley) was a limited one, his accomplishment was of such value that other authors were inspired to build upon this foundation in order to meet other needs.

In support of his thesis Riley is able to note certain incongruities in the final form of Matthew. For example, the disciples' earlier confession at 14:33 tends to detract from the dramatic moment of Peter's confession at 16:16. Yet, in most cases, his grounds for judging certain narratives and sayings as additions are unacceptable. Material which he deems secondary is regularly disposed of by means of the subjective adjudication that its present context is 'less natural' or 'less appropriate'. One could be excused for thinking that Riley's main criterion when distinguishing Proto-Matthew from later additions is that which best supports his thesis; *i.e.* in the place of sound argument one finds an answer to the question, 'Assuming that Luke and Mark used an early form of Matthew, what would that early form they used look like?'. Circular reasoning is, of course, a common failing in discussions on the synoptic problem. Riley too must be faulted for continually presupposing the very point which must be proven. One further criticism concerns Riley's failure to adequately explain why the original Gospel would have contained no reference to the mission to the Gentiles. As it stands, Riley's Proto-Matthew raises but fails to answer important questions about the aims and intentions of the historical Jesus.

One of the acknowledged strengths of the 'two-Gospel hypothesis' has been its ability to dispense with hypothetical documents such as 'Q' and *'Ur-Markus'*. One must wonder, then, whether Riley, by postulating a Proto-Matthew, has not weakened rather than strengthened the hypothesis. In any event, studies such as this one demonstrate that the synoptic problem has not been solved.

Blaine Charette, Emmanuel College, Franklin Springs, GA

Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development

Hershel Shanks (ed.)

Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992/ London: SPCK, 1993, xxii + 380 pp., £15.

This book represents a good idea (a parallel history of Judaism and Christianity from the first to the seventh centuries CE) realized with reasonable success. Four chapters cover the history of Judaism in the period, one the life of Jesus, three the history of Christianity, and a final chapter surveys the process of mutually exclusive self-definition by the two religions over the whole period. (It is not clear why the title of the book specifies 'rabbinic Judaism', since the chapters on Judaism give due attention to non-rabbinic Judaism, at least up to the third century.)

The chapters have to cover complex and often highly debatable areas of history in a short compass and in a way that is accessible to the general reader. A helpful feature is that the nature of the major primary sources is usually explained, so that the non-expert reader has some sense of the way the authors' critical reconstructions of history relate to the problematic character of the sources. Just occasionally, scholarly disagreements between the contributors themselves surface, as when Harold Attridge asserts the early date of the Muratorian Canon (p. 173) and Dennis Groh the late date (p. 279). Geza Vermes's introduction to the book is really a critical view of the contributions, pointing out the shortcomings of views with which he disagrees.

E.P. Sanders' chapter on Jesus is written with his usual breezy confidence and overly conversational style: most readers of *Themelios* will have read or need to read his fuller accounts elsewhere, but his chapter here could serve as an introduction. Among the earlier chapters, those on first-century Judaism by Louis Feldman and Christianity before 70 by Howard Kee are especially good, and can be read with profit even by those who have read many books on these subjects, since they offer stimulating interpretations of their subject and highlight interesting evidence besides what is standard in textbook accounts. Feldman offers some unfashionable views (the Sadducees were not collaborators but nationalists, the Hellenization of Jewish Palestine was fairly superficial, Judaism was a highly successful missionary religion). It is unfortunate that not only Kee but also the authors of the chapters on Christianity from 70 to 312 (Harold Attridge) and Judaism from 70 to 220 (Lee Levine, Shaye Cohen) pay little attention to the evidence (incomplete though it is) which we have for Palestinian Jewish Christians and their relations with other Jews. They should have formed a significant part of this book's subject. Instead their relegation to marginal status, initiated by both Gentile Christian and rabbinic literature, is here continued.

Most disappointing are the last two chapters. Dennis Groh's account of Christianity from Constantine to the Arab Conquest is disproportionately short. This was the period in which the great trinitarian and christological controversies issued in the classic form of the distinctively Christian version of Jewish monotheism. These doctrinal controversies are therefore of great significance for understanding the relationship of Judaism and Christianity. Groh's treatment of them is marred not only by his fundamental misinterpretation of Arianism, but also

by too brief and unperceptive a discussion. Readers are unlikely to grasp the theological significance of the controversies or the issues, and in fact there is rather little in the book as a whole that recognizes how deeply rooted in Christianity from the beginning were the issues which came to a head in the fourth century. James Charlesworth's final chapter is unfortunately too opinionated to be the overview that is really required to draw the findings of the various chapters together.

There are many excellent illustrations, including the first I have seen of the recently discovered ossuary of Joseph bar Caiaphas, who must be either the high priest Joseph Caiaphas himself or his son.

Richard Bauckham, University of St Andrews, Scotland

First Corinthians: A Faith Community Commentary

Graydon F. Snyder

Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1992, 266 pp., pb.

The subtitle of this work – *A Faith Community Commentary* – describes the author's understanding of both the original purpose of 1 Corinthians as well as its relevance for the modern church. A faith community consists of a group (body) of individuals organized around a common faith commitment to Christ. In a faith community, the community (the whole people of God) is not defined by the individuals, but the individuals by the community. In Corinth, the faith community had become divided by those who placed their own individualized ideology over the unity of the church. Paul sought to convince the Corinthians that the whole body of Christ is more important than the preservation of individual convictions. Graydon F. Snyder offers a readable commentary of 1 Corinthians based on this overall understanding. Moreover, he exposes the relevance of such a reading for the modern church, where individuality is often prized at the expense of community.

This commentary is structured usefully: a brief introduction; outline; commentary (including an introduction to the thematic unit, preview of the argument, explanatory notes, a discussion of the thematic unit in its biblical context and suggestions for its use in the modern church); and, finally, essays on key concepts in 1 Corinthians. A less useful bibliography (too limited) and topical index conclude the commentary.

Introductory issues are touched upon briefly. Snyder's knowledge of cultural and archaeological sources is invaluable not only here but throughout the work. But the most important issue treated in the introduction is the composition of 1 and 2 Corinthians. According to Snyder, Paul first wrote 1 Corinthians 7–16 (a response to a letter from Corinth), then 1 Corinthians 1–6 (a response to news from Chloe's people), then 2 Corinthians 10–13 (an angry letter resulting from his second visit to Corinth), and finally 2 Corinthians 1:1–6:13 and 7:2–9:15 comprise his final, yet joyful, letter. This understanding determines the structure of the commentary. 1 Corinthians 1–6 is treated separately from 1 Corinthians 7–16 as a distinct piece of correspondence. However, no explanation is given as to why both were later combined into one letter, nor does Snyder state whether the epistolary framework was part of the original letters (and which one) or whether it was added later. In these first six chapters (the second of Paul's two letters), Paul must diffuse a potentially fatal problem at Corinth. Four groups claim unique possession of true Christianity, three naming themselves after Christian leaders (Peter, Paul and Apollos), the fourth claiming to follow only Christ (the Christ house church). The Christ house church, whom Snyder unfortunately labels 'gnostics', is the main culprit of the Corinthian divisiveness. In chapters 1–4 Paul introduces the problem of divisive groups (1:10-17), contrasts them with the foolishness of the cross (1:18–2:5), the mind of Christ (2:6-16), the true function of leadership (3:1-23), and the need to be fools for Christ (4:1-21). In chapters 5–6, Paul presents two case studies at Corinth (5:1-13, the spiritual arrogance of the Christ house church; 6:1-11, the failure of some to leave behind the old age exemplified in their judicial practices) to bolster his argument in 1 Corinthians 1–4. He concludes with the metaphor of the body of Christ as an exhortation to unity.

The second major section of Snyder's commentary deals with 1 Corinthians 7–16, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. The structure of this letter is organized around questions brought to Paul from Chloe's ambassadors. These questions are signalled by the phrase *peri de* (concerning the matter of . . .) and are fourfold (7:1, persons already married; 7:26, single persons and marriage; 8:1, 4, meat offered to idols; and 12:1, spiritual gifts). Two other questions are addressed at the close of the letter: 16:1 (concerning the collection for Jerusalem) and 16:12 (concerning Apollos). According to Snyder, Paul deals with almost all of these questions, despite their disparity, by appealing to the overriding value of the faith community (*i.e.* the body of Christ).

This commentary is commendable in view of its continual treatment of individual passages in light of the surrounding argument. In addition, Paul's theology and personal history are used (albeit cautiously) to understand the letter. For example, Paul's apocalyptic theology is used to explain Paul's appeal to the old, the new, and the not-yet history of Christians. Indeed, Snyder argues that many of the Corinthians' problems (*e.g.* denial of a resurrected body) arose from a misunderstanding of Paul's apocalypticism. Finally, Snyder may be commended for demonstrating the relevance of Paul for the modern church, especially urban churches where communities can be dissolved in the rush of humanity. Snyder is unabashedly critical not only of Paul's era, but of ours.

Certain criticisms, nevertheless, may be mentioned. Despite Snyder's attempt to produce a reading of 1 Corinthians based on his own faith community (the Radical Reformation churches), this reviewer was frequently annoyed by the failure to present other interpretations of the text – something he might call the 'academic exegesis of Western Christianity'. In addition, Snyder's assumptions regarding critical NT problems are frequently stated as if there were no alternatives (*e.g.* Pauline authorship of every NT letter bearing his name; historical reliability of Acts; combined letters; justification by faith as the central theme of Paul; the corporate personality of Judaism). Whether it be Black Theology, feminist interpretation or the ambiguous 'Western exegesis', all faith communities are responsible to dialogue with one another and present all alternative readings to their followers. The failure to do so may simply result in faith communities ignorant of the legitimate concerns of other faith communities. This criticism is not directed at Snyder's overall interpretation of 1 Corinthians, which is often quite convincing, but at his failure to inform the general reader (for whom this book is most applicable) of other legitimate readings of the text.

Jeffrey T. Reed, University of Sheffield

I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence

Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger

Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992, 253 pp., $12.95 pb.

The discussion of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in relationship to the place of women in ministry continues unabated. Richard Kroeger (a retired pastor) and Catherine Kroeger (founder and President of Christians for Biblical Equality) have produced a fascinating and important contribution to that discussion. Their book is a welcome and strong defence of the 'egalitarian' position that is committed to both men and women sharing the full range of Christian ministry. The book, summing up and going beyond previous articles the Kroegers have published, is a major attempt to show that 1 Timothy 2:11-15, properly understood, is not a scriptural warrant for any prohibition of women in the true ministry of the Gospel.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, 'Approaching the Text in Its Context', is a helpful introduction to exegetical and hermeneutical method, aimed at the conservative evangelical reader, as well as an introduction to the Pastoral Epistles and the situation and occasion of 1 Timothy in particular. This part, in essence, gives an overview of the entire argument of the book. Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is given to Paul and at least one other (anonymous) person, suggesting that these letters were completed in the first century, but after Paul's death. It is argued, correctly I believe, that the purpose of the Pastorals was to oppose heresy, not to establish ecclesiastical norms of governance. It is further argued that 1 Timothy is directed against a gnostic or proto-gnostic heresy that gave to women an inordinate and inappropriate place in religious leadership. This is set in the context of understanding Ephesus '. . . as a bastion of feminine supremacy in religion' (p. 54), primarily related to the Ephesian Artemis (Diana) cult.

Part II, 'The Prohibition (1 Tim. 2:12)', features a lengthy study of the relatively rare Greek verb *authentein*. The Kroegers conclude that the fundamental meaning of the term relates to the concept of origination, authorship or source of something. Thus, they would render 1 Timothy 2:12-13 as follows: 'I do not permit a woman to teach nor to represent herself as originator of man but she is to be in conformity [with the Scriptures]. . . . For Adam was created first, then Eve' (p. 103). This is understood, then, in the cultural-religious pagan and gnostic contexts of the feminine as originator, against which 1 Timothy argues from the Jewish tradition represented in Genesis.

Part III, 'The Prohibition's Rationale (1 Tim. 2:13-15)', argues that 1 Timothy 2:13-14 is a refutation of the heresy that presented women, and especially Eve in this gnostic or proto-gnostic context, as the originators. 1 Timothy 2:15 is understood as an affirmation of childbearing over against gnostic denials of procreation.

The Kroegers have argued with thoroughness and widespread documentation a consistent and important interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15. They have done this primarily for and with sensitivity to a conservative evangelical audience. Their study also, although dealing with many complex and difficult issues, is presented in a readable, popular style (with many of the technicalities reserved for the appendices). I warmly commend their book for careful

study and strongly support their conclusion that 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is not a prohibition of women's participation in any way in the ministry of the true gospel. The Kroegers are to be heartily commended for their hermeneutical sensitivities and their use of the data of the cultural-religious environments for the interpretation of the NT. I affirm strongly the fundamental position that the Pauline text is an argument against abuse within the church that arises from and is nourished by the heretical teachings which the Pastoral Epistles oppose. They are clearly, in my judgment, correct in understanding 1 Timothy 2:15 as a statement against the heretics and as an affirmation of the legitimacy and appropriateness of childbearing for women within the church in the first-century cultural setting.

There are questions, of course, that can be raised concerning such a wide-ranging and thorough study of a relatively brief text. There is a lack of sufficient engagement with the work of other scholars who have also addressed this text and its issues. For example, the discussion of Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle*, receives only one brief mention. The landmark 1988 study (in *New Testament Studies*) of Leland Wilshire on *authentein* is not used at all in the long discussion of that verb.

The construction of the nature of the heresy in Ephesus against which 1–2 Timothy are written is worthy of study and reflection, but it is not convincing. The evidence amassed comes from such a variety of sources, places and times that it is doubtful that the constructs of pagan cults focused on women or that the gnostic/proto-gnostic teachings can be accepted as clearly established patterns of religion in late first-century Ephesus.

I have written in support of the view that the prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is directed against women deceived by the heresy opposed in 1–2 Timothy (see especially 1 Tim. 4:3; 5:11-16; 2 Tim. 3:1-9). However, the evidence for identifying the heresy opposed in 1–2 Timothy with the construct of the Kroegers is not actually very clear. It may be presumptive to argue that 1 Timothy 2:13-14 is a refutation against an exalted gnostic/proto-gnostic view of Eve. Other alternatives are not sufficiently considered in the book. Further, although the discussion of *authentein* is fascinating, the evidence presented by Wilshire that the verb refers to violent action is much more convincing.

In summary, the Kroegers have produced an important contribution to the ongoing study of a difficult text. Their affirmation of the ministry of women is important, and they have shown that it is possible to interpret responsibly 1 Timothy 2:11-15 as other than a prohibition against women's participation in ministry. All of their data and arguments are intriguing and worthy of consideration; some of the pivotal points of their own construction of the occasion and context and the Pauline response are to be questioned.

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Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration, and Interpretation
Donald G. Bloesch
Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press/ Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994, pp. 384, $24.95/£9.99.

Donald Bloesch, a long-time outstanding theologian in the United States, is due thanks for presenting his position on an often murky topic: the relationship between the Bible and the Word of God or revelation. As the reader will soon see, I disagree with Bloesch in a rather significant way. But I am still thankful that he wrote this book so that his position may bring about progress in the task of theology. The book is written so that the theology student will understand his basic position, but nuanced so that it contributes at the cutting edge of bibliology.

Bloesch concentrates on advancing the Word of God as synonymous with revelation but distinct from the Bible. The Bible ranks high for Blesch in life and theology. Therefore the Bible remains the only and necessary source for revelation through the Holy Spirit. The Bible is (1) a witness to the revelation given to those who wrote the Bible, (2) a record of revelation that occurred around them, and (3) a medium or channel for revelation that gives us understanding today. Although the Bible is necessary for Christian living, it is not the living Word of God for us. For epistemological and theological reasons, the latter comes only as the Spirit communicates to us the truth and power of the cross of Christ.

Unfortunately, Bloesch applies both 'Word of God' and 'revelation' also to the Bible at different times. I wish that he meant such an application. But he is merely affirming the text as the source through which the message of revelation comes. The message of the Bible and the message of the Word of God are not necessarily the same. They correspond, but only in the way that the sign and the thing signified correspond.

Bloesch's position falters under the weight of hermeneutics. The best hermeneutical tool he offers is a relationship of a person to the Holy Spirit. While I agree that the Spirit is important in hermeneutics, I do not agree with Bloesch that there is no revelation without someone to receive it. (He offers an explicit analogy to the idealist's 'A tree falling in the woods makes no sounds without someone to hear it.')

Bloesch's point is not that there is no meaning in the text. His point is that the meaning of the text may not be the meaning of revelation. Critical tools are useful, but only the Spirit can provide the ultimate meaning. The ultimate, or objective, meaning resides in the Spirit and is only accessible through application of the cross to one who believes. To distinguish the meaning of the text versus the meaning of revelation, he calls one the historical meaning which includes both authorial intention and the way in which the text was received in the community of faith. He calls the other meaning the revelational or spiritual or pneumatic meaning that the text assumes when the Spirit acts on the text in bringing home its significance to people of faith. That is the Word of God. That is revelation. Critical tools are useful for accessing authorial intention, but that does not access revelation. Even though Bloesch affirms that he is not a postmodernist I have to think that his hermeneutics lie dangerously close to reader-response criticism, 'whatever the Spirit is telling you must be the meaning of revelation'. I am afraid that this implication of Bloesch's position places it on precarious sand.

The final difficulty with which I will deal is that Bloesch offers a skewed critique of 'rationalistic evangelicalism'. Bloesch outlines three approaches to Scripture: his own, where the Bible is the divinely prepared channel of divine revelation; the liberal view, where the Bible merely provides insights into universal experience; and the rationalistic evangelical view, which 'virtually equates Scripture with divine revelation' (p. 18). He claims an affinity to the rationalistic evangelical view, but distinguishes his view because he imagines that the former contains all sorts of hideous hermeneutical monsters such as ignoring genre concerns (using the same rules to interpret metaphors, narratives, and teaching – all literalistic), ignoring human misconceptions reproduced by the scriptural author, disallowing the Spirit a role in interpretaton, *etc.* Perhaps Bloesch is unwilling to admit it, but there are plenty of authors that affirm the Bible as revelation *and* practice responsible hermeneutics.

Bloesch nuances his position more carefully than this review can represent, and addresses more topics than this review can include (truth, inerrancy, epistemology, myth, and Rudolf Bultmann). When it came to his basic position, and Bloesch spoke highly of the Bible as the Word of God (and it happened often), I was in hearty agreement and thought this a viable position. When Bloesch distinguished the Bible from the Word of God (which also happened often) I had to disagree because of the implications for hermeneutics.

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Engaging with God – a Biblical Theology of Worship
David Peterson
Leicester: Apollos, 1992, 317 pp., £18.95.

How good it is to find a book on the theology of worship based on sound exegesis and a wide-ranging response to scholarship of all traditions. Peterson is one of those rare scholars who has the ability to inform the mind and feed the spirit.

Peterson's thesis in *Engaging with God* is 'that the worship of the living and true God is essentially *an engagement with him on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible*' (p. 20). Concerned that there are too many how-to-do-it books on worship, he sets out to reflect on worship as a total biblical idea. On that journey, he comments significantly and scripturally on commonly held notions of worship: ecstasy (p. 22), intimacy (p. 79), escapism (p. 122), sacramentalism and liturgy (pp. 120–128), formality (p. 160), receptivity (p. 249). Nearly 300 pages of reasoning and exposition are only just sufficient to take us on an enthralling journey through the OT and NT.

Peterson's section on the OT is brief. It would be good if he could expand it at a later date, especially in view of his comment on p. 102: 'Genuine discipleship can be fostered only by a continuing focus on the character of Jesus, his promises and commands and his achievements for us. . . . Christians need to know and understand the Old Testament. We need to be shown how Jesus fulfils the hopes of the Old Testament writers and replaces all the provisions for engaging with God that was laid upon Israel.' Thirty-one pages take us through the OT! More is needed! But that lack is partly made up for by an excellent chapter containing three word studies, linking the OT and NT: *proskynein, latreuein* and *sebomai.*

The remaining chapters are a veritable feast. Peterson looks at the Gospels from two standpoints (chs. 3–4). Matthew and John are linked because of their united stress on God's presence and God's glory, connected intimately into the Mosaic covenant and Jewish messianic expectations, now 'fully and finally experienced in Jesus Christ' (p. 101). The worship of Jesus 'as a model worshipper' is explored, as is his attitude to the Mosaic law. His fulfilment of all that was Jewish climaxes in his establishing of 'the new covenant in my blood', and here is clear scriptural teaching on a subject often 'obscured in liturgical and non-liturgical traditions' (p. 130).

A significant study of Acts points us away from the dangers of an over-simplistic learning from the practice of the early church. Stephen's teaching is seen to be pivotal, as he helps the readers see that the Temple, which was for those early Christians both a place of prayer and rejection (p. 139), has no permanence or finality. This is found alone in the resurrected and glorified Son of Man.

The feast intensifies in richness as Peterson moves on to the latter half of the NT. Paul's contribution to teaching on biblical worship centres on the proclamation of the gospel (Rom. 15:16), a Christian lifestyle (1 Thes. 1:9-10) and a sacrificial obedience (Rom. 12:1-2). The section on Romans 12, foundational to Paul's theology of worship, is particularly helpful.

Peterson has a clear expertise with Hebrews. Chapter 8 is a masterly overview and exposition of the epistle. 'Hebrews presents the most complete and fully integrated theology of worship in the New Testament' (p. 228). His thorough handling of this epistle underlines many of the points he emphasizes elsewhere in the book. Revelation (apart from the dangers of false religion) lifts us into worship in heavenly realms: the praise of God the creator and Christ the redeemer, praise for the outworking of God's purposes and the fulfilment of OT hopes and promises.

The epilogue suggests (tongue in cheek?) that Peterson has found a church where all this teaching is understood and practised. Strange that he does not identify it! But here is clear teaching and godly aims for all involved in leading churches and worship today.

Ten chapters, each summarized succinctly, ample footnotes at the end of each chapter, and three indices (biblical references, subjects, modern authors) will all cost you £18.95: a high price indeed. But well worth it, even if you have to forgo other books to buy this one.

Robert J. Shimwell, Wirral

The Doctrine of God
Gerald Bray
Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993, 281 pp., £14.99.

The Doctrine of God by Gerald Bray is an appropriate volume to introduce a new series, *Contours of Christian Theology*, which will cover the main themes of theology from an evangelical perspective, but not as a substitute for existing textbooks and reference manuals. If this volume (which is written by the series editor) is any guide, *Contours* will be more explanatory and provide insights into the conceptual framework and context of the doctrines covered.

The opening chapter, 'Our knowledge of God', is in fact a short history of the development of Christian theology, with an emphasis on its philosophical foundations. Although it is in harmony with the general approach in the rest of the book, as the introduction this chapter requires careful reading. It could form the basis of a separate volume in itself which would make a worthwhile addition to the series.

For the purposes of this book, the doctrine of God has been restricted to 'his personal, trinitarian subsistence', leaving matters related to his nature, including 'all aspects of his being in relation to things outside himself', such as proofs for his existence, creation, providence and predestination, to other volumes in the series (p. 9). But even so, the division is imperfect, with discussion of several of these topics being integral to the theme of this book.

The major content is found in four chapters dealing with the nature of God, the Trinity, and the persons of God. In a book that is committed so strongly to recovering a fully trinitarian doctrine of God, it is inevitable that Christology should also be discussed, but, given the importance of the topic in today's Christian world, it is strange that the person and work of the Spirit is not given a more critical place in the argument.

The overall treatment is broadly historical in form with full attention paid to philosophical developments. Biblical material is woven into the exposition, sometimes in discrete sections, but readers will often need to turn to other sources for detailed and comprehensive chapter and verse references.

The author's main concern is to stress how important it is for our knowledge of God to distinguish the essence of God from the persons of God, and to show that the biblical, trinitarian doctrine of God which is distinctive of Christian theology could only appear when 'the concept of person was detached from its place as one of the attributes of God, and made into a principle in its own right' (p. 155). Much of the book is an exposition of the consequences of this distinction, and how this process can be seen at work in different types of theology (including some of the most obscure, such as the *filioque* controversy and the doctrine of co-inherence or perichoresis), appearing at its clearest and most important form in the work of the Reformers (pp. 199ff.).

The final chapter, devoted to 'Constructing an evangelical theology for today', is most intriguing in a book of this kind. The evangelical perspective is clear throughout the entire work, with the biblical teaching always being taken as a matter of fact authority, and a clear, often strongly worded, identification made of the distinction between the biblical evangelical position and the views of other traditions.

But in the climax of his argument, Bray works out from the evangelical insistence on a personal appropriation of the divine revelation of God in Christ and calls for a theology that accepts the historical Scriptures as a theological unity, challenges the modern world in the light of Scripture and is thoroughly theocentric. In the process, he engages in an insightful discussion of time and its relation to revelation, eternity and transcendence, and emphasizes the need for a fully personal and trinitarian formulation of the doctrine of God.

Overall, *The Doctrine of God* is a mature and well-rounded presentation, although occasionally the argument is highly compressed with copious references for further reading supplied in the notes and bibliography. It is noticeable that although this is intended as a contemporary work, the author has focused comparatively more attention on earlier periods, and has referred only briefly to pressing issues of today such as feminist theology and the charismatic movement (process theology excepted). Gender exclusive language has also been used (p. 226).

The Doctrine of God would serve well as a suitable text for advanced students, opening up for them in an interesting and comprehensive way the conceptual world and inner dynamics of Christian theology. With its suggestive observations about revelation and personal knowledge of God, it also proposes an approach to a distinctive element of evangelical theology which should be considered seriously.

David Parker, Brisbane, Australia

Whose Promised Land?
Colin Chapman
Lion, 1983 (updated 1992), 286 pp., £5.99, pb.

Colin Chapman's updated, scholarly and highly readable book *Whose Promised Land?* is essential reading for all students of the Israel/Arab conflict and how it relates to the Bible. It is packed with facts, biblical interpretation, and moving insights into the mind and heart of Jews and Arabs alike. He shows a real Christian concern for both peoples. So I am very sorry to have to disagree profoundly with his main conclusions.

Deuteronomy tells us that the principles by which God will punish and forgive Israel will be dramatically demonstrated by scattering them from, and eventually regathering them to, the land. Over and over again these principles are reiterated in the Hebrew prophets, who speak of a final restoration to the land at the end of the age when Israel will find itself at the centre of world hostility. Finally, it will be reconciled to its Lord who will save it from its enemies and bring blessing to all the world.

Do these principles and prophecies relate to the ingathering of the Jews to the promised land that we have witnessed this century? What does the NT have to teach us? Is the Jewish state so guilty of oppressing the Arabs that Christians should not support it? These are the main questions which Colin Chapman ably addresses.

In his first section he very helpfully traces the history of the land from Abraham to the present day. However, at a crucial point in modern history he tells us only one side of the story. In 1967, after Israel defeated the attacking Arab armies and took what we now call the occupied territories, the Security Council instructed Israel to give back the territories. Chapman tells us that Israel disobeyed this. He does not tell us that the Security Council also told the Arab States to live at peace with Israel, and the Arab Summit's response to Israel's offer to return most of the territories was: 'No negotiation, no peace and no recognition of Israel'!

In his second very useful section, through a brilliant juxtaposition of quotations from Jews, Arabs and others he portrays the deep conflicting ideals and claims of Jews and Arabs so that the reader gets into the core of both sides of the conflict. We are taken into the heart of anti-Semitism, Zionism, and Arab nationalism.

The third section deals with the significance of the land in the OT and the NT, rightly showing that the NT sees the coming of Jesus as fulfilling Israel's destiny. However, Chapman does not properly deal with the very important question that exercised the mind of Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, namely: granted the OT prophecies re Israel are fulfilled in Jesus and his church, does this mean that they have lost their literal application for Israel? Chapman seems to think they have. However, later in the book his exposition of Romans 11 shows that he does understand Paul's point that it is precisely because the Gentile church owes its salvation to the Jewish rejection of Jesus (and this was God's eternal purpose) that God has not forgotten his promise to them. But he cannot see the significance of the land. Just because Paul doesn't explicitly refer to the land, he concludes that Paul's assertion about God's ancient promises about his purposes for Israel cannot include the land. Chapman fails to see that just as man and nature are bound together in God's purposes of redemption, so Chosen People and Promised Land must also be bound together in God's intentions. The idea that one can break off God's covenant purposes for Israel from their relationship to the land is in my

view biblically and theologically impossible.

Chapman believes that the literal scattering and regathering were completely fulfilled in the Babylonian exile and return. He is aware that Christian Zionists use Luke 21:20-24 to show that the scattering and regathering prophecies are not yet completely fulfilled. His attempt to counter this is unconvincing. The fact that Jesus says that what is about to happen is in 'fulfilment of all that has been written' and will not be forever surely means that the Babylonian exile and return can only have been a foretaste of that great exile and return that would happen after Israel had rejected Jesus, for this would be the true 'fulfilment of all that has been written'.

Section 4, entitled 'Is There A Word from the Lord?', is another very well put together series of quotations from Jews and Arabs giving both sides to the political conflict juxtaposed with calls to righteousness from the Hebrew prophets. There is a very great deal one can learn from this section. He skilfully puts his magnifying glass to Israel and the occupied territories where of course the Palestinian Arabs are the underdogs, so one should not be surprised that, although he attempts to see both sides, he is clearly more sympathetic to the Palestinians.

However, he fails to give adequate attention to the larger context of the conflict. At the moment of Israel's birth, the Arab states waged war against her, and, to the present day, most remain in a formal state of war with her (Israel is the size of Wales). The Palestinian refugee problem was the result of Arab–Jewish fighting caused by these wars waged by the Arab states against Israel. The PLO claim is that Palestinians belong to the one Arab nation that covers the huge and wealthy 20 or so states of the Middle East. It, then, can hardly be tiny Israel's fault that the Palestinians have no homeland. Arab nationalism is at least showing itself able to come to terms with Israel's existence but the Koran teaches that Jews will be in permanent dispersion as a punishment from Allah. Therefore Islamic fundamentalism can never accept Israel's existence. Thus the context has been a tiny nation struggling for its survival in the face of overwhelming external odds and trying to cope with an internal uprising of people who have always supported its enemies. Even though Israel, before God, may be guilty of seriously hurting Palestinian Arabs, can we think of another nation that would behave any better given only a fraction of the danger which Israel faces? It is these very large and crucial facts that Chapman doesn't adequately face and this is my main criticism of the political conclusions of the book.

I conclude by recommending this book as an excellent source for understanding the Israel–Palestinian problem. Many of its pages make moving reading indeed. In spite of my deep disagreement with Colin Chapman I personally benefited greatly from reading it. All sides of the argument must take this book very seriously.

Howard Taylor, Glasgow Bible College

Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After

Adrian Hastings (ed.)
London: SPCK/New York: OUP, 1991, xvii + 473 pp., £20, hb.

Those wishing better to understand the Roman Catholic Church will not turn away disappointed from this volume. As the title suggests, the focus of the book lies with the Second Vatican Council. The longest chapter, of over 100 pages, surveys the documents produced by the Council. There is discussion not just of the contents but of the history behind each document and also, interestingly, the history of its implementation (or otherwise). Most of the rest of the book is also focused on the Council, with two more long chapters on 'Aspects of Church Life Since the Council' and 'The Effect of the Council on World Catholicism'. While the three chapters mentioned are each 70 or more pages long, they are divided into a large number of shorter sections, each with their individual authors. If the sections were counted as chapters, there would be 62 in all. Thus the book consists of a large number of brief and generally readable sections, lending itself well to being dipped into or used as a reference volume.

There are no less than 40 individual authors, a number of these being well-known figures like Peter Hebblethwaite, Rosemary Radford Ruether and the editor. The range of authors and the contents of the book represent worldwide Catholicism, but with a particular emphasis on the English-speaking West – which is presumably where the great majority of its readers will be found. The authors come from a wide range of countries, but 80 per cent of them are English-speaking Westerners. A similar perspective is seen in the sections on World Catholicism. There are individual sections on Africa (written by an African resident in the UK), Latin America, India and Sri Lanka and The Philippines. But Great Britain & Ireland and Australia & New Zealand also each receive individual sections, which are among the longest. This allocation is generous, given that North America, Eastern Europe and Western Europe each receive only one section.

More serious than the weight given to different regions is the ideological perspective of the picture presented. Once upon a time the Roman Catholic Church appeared to be a monolithic structure which claimed never to change. As the book itself chronicles, the Second Vatican Council changed all that and itself became the object of rival and conflicting interpretations. These are succinctly described in the first chapter. Some wanted to pull back from what the Council had achieved, others wanted to stay put and consolidate, yet others wanted to press on further. There is little doubt which group most of the authors fall into. Throughout the book the word 'conservative' (whether politically, theologically or ethically) is a 'boo word'.

The picture presented in this volume is erudite, scholarly and well informed. But it is in the main a picture of the Roman Catholic Church viewed from a Western and liberal perspective. Many illustrations could be given, but one will suffice. In the chapter on the present pope a Polish writer is cited for the 'surprising (for foreigners) point that after more than ten years away from home, Pope John Paul has become less Polish and much more "western" in his thinking'. The author goes on to concede this, but then adds that 'John Paul still has a long way to go' (p. 455). What is implicit throughout most of the volume, here becomes explicit – trends within the Roman Catholic Church today are being assessed from a modern Western liberal perspective.

Throughout the book there is an underlying enthusiasm for Vatican II and the reforms that followed it. There is no shortage of criticism of the Roman Catholic Church and its leaders, but this is almost without exception criticism of them for being too 'conservative', too timid in embracing reform. Yet there is a surprising failure to ask critical questions about the process of reform itself. A rare (apparent?) exception is found in the following sentence: 'It is an apparent paradox in Australasian Catholic life that Vatican II was initially received with euphoria, and yet was followed by what seemed to be catastrophic decline – church attendances shrank, as did the proportion of Catholic children attending church schools; fewer were recruited to the priesthood and religious life; and existing members left to an unprecedented degree' (pp. 334f.). A very brief chapter is devoted to 'The Conservative Reaction', but neither there nor elsewhere is this reaction looked upon as other than an obstacle to progress.

Read with an awareness of its slant, this is a valuable resource for an understanding of modern Catholicism. I spotted only three minor errors and at £20 for a large hardback it is excellent value.

Tony Lane, London Bible College

Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response

Francis A. Sullivan, S.J.
New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1992, 224 pp., £12.99/$12.95, pb.

This book is a study of the Latin *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ('no salvation outside the church') and, therefore, of the Roman Catholic understanding of the doctrine of salvation. Throughout, 'the Church' refers to the Roman Catholic Church, though several Protestant scholars are briefly mentioned: Luther, Calvin, Barth and Hick.

In 1973 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued *Mysterium Ecclesiae* in which a declaration was made which sought to explain why there have been changes in the way the Church's teaching has been presented. For the first time an official document of the Catholic Church recognized the 'historical conditioning' affecting the way the faith has been expressed, acknowledging the fact that at an earlier date a dogmatic truth might be expressed incompletely or imperfectly, only later receiving fuller and more perfect expression. How the Church knows when a dogmatic truth is complete and no longer in a state of process Sullivan, sadly, does not answer.

The problem the Catholic Church has is simple: how can Catholicism claim to be consistent with its own traditions when, having taught for so many centuries that there was no salvation outside itself, Vatican II could then speak so optimistically about salvation not only for other Christians, but for Jews and those of other religions or none? Sullivan's stated purpose (p. 2) is to try to account for these widely divergent (and to many irreconcilable) views. This 'evolution' through which Catholic thinking has gone is the focus of this work's 11 chapters. In fact, Sullivan's book is itself a product of this development, for at one point he even entertains the possibility that the judgment of guilt passed against heretics, schismatics, pagans and Jews was not a correct one or one that would be shared today (p. 27).

During the first three centuries 'no salvation outside the church' was used exclusively as a warning to Christian heretics or schismatics. For as long as Christianity was a forbidden and persecuted religion this phrase was never addressed to the pagan world, but from the fourth century the Fathers began to address this dogma towards pagans and Jews as well as heretics, defending this by asserting that the gospel had been preached everywhere so there was no excuse for rejecting it. For a thousand years this remained the standard expression of the doctrine, the historical factors conditioning this belief being the

geographical and psychological horizons of medieval Christians which were not shattered until Columbus discovered America.

Vatican II posited an order or 'hierarchy' of truths, which recognized the primary importance of the truth that God wills the salvation of everyone. The necessity of such means of salvation as baptism and membership in the church it therefore relegated as secondary and subordinate to this primary truth. Sullivan argues that this position is consistent with Catholic teaching down the centuries, but though he has a certain amount of success in explaining the various positions which have been held, the present reviewer was, in the end, left largely unconvinced.

For those working on the ecumenical movement or inter-faith dialogue this book is both illuminating of the Catholic position and highly thought-provoking. Amongst the authors Sullivan discusses are many well-known figures (*e.g.* the Fathers, Aquinas, Newman, Kung and Rahner), but also many lesser-known figures (*e.g.* Prosper of Aquitaine, Fulgentius of Ruspe and Henri de Lubac), as well as the major Councils and decrees. The result is a wide-ranging discussion of the subject.

The radical differences between Catholicism and evangelicalism quickly become evident in Sullivan's discussion of many key doctrines: soteriology – especially the nature of grace and faith (whether implicit or explicit), the issues of culpability, predestination and free will; ecclesiology – particularly evident in the idea that both 'church' and 'Christian' refer to Catholicism, and the belief of some scholars that people could be unknowingly a member of the Catholic Church; and revelation – most interesting being the idea that it is possible for those of other religions to be saved without a knowledge of Christ. Also interesting is how some Catholic writers could talk of '*Christian* heretics and schismatics': an interesting juxtaposition of adjectives!

For some this book will lead into uncharted waters, for others it will provide much food for thought as they navigate their way through the possibility of salvation for those who belong to other religions or none, but have never had opportunity to respond to the gospel call, either because they have never heard or because of the ineffectiveness of the presentation they have heard. Sullivan's own conclusion (p. 12) is that God has assigned a necessary role to the church in the accomplishment of his plan of salvation for humanity. He then states his belief that what has really changed is not so much what Christians have believed about the necessity of being in the church for salvation, as the judgment which they have made about those who were outside.

Anthony R. Cross, Zion Baptist Church, Cambridge, and Keele University, England

Introduction to Biblical Interpretation
William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard Jr.
Dallas, TX: Word, 1993, xxiii + 518 pp.

How should one read and understand the Scriptures? This has always been the basic question for all Christian thought, life and communication, whether on the part of the individual believer or the church corporately. And this is the question that has arisen, particularly of late, to top priority in the theological agenda of the day.

Conservative evangelical Christians have always wanted to know the author's intent in any particular portion of Scripture. So they have been interested in hermeneutics, which is the technical term for the science and art of understanding what is written. In large measure, this has meant in the past (1) understanding the historical circumstances of both the author and his addressees, (2) being conscious of the differing purposes and functions of the various literary forms an author uses, (3) analyzing the morphology of his words and the syntax of his sentences, and (4) comparing what he says in the portion being studied with what is said elsewhere in Scripture, giving particular attention to instances where our author has written one or more other comparable portions or where other writers have written on the same or a similar matter. Such a hermeneutic is usually called 'grammatical-historical exegesis', and is laudatory as far as it goes. But other issues have arisen today in the area of biblical interpretation that take us far beyond such a seemingly rather straight-forward grammatical-historical exegesis and a simple intra-biblical hermeneutic. And they are legitimate issues, which cry out for serious consideration, judicious evaluation and intelligent application – particularly by those involved in the formal study of Scripture and Christian theology.

There are all sorts of hermeneutical works on the market today that either deal in detail with particular issues or assume an extensive background in one or more of the biblical, theological and/or philosophical disciplines. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation,* however, is different in that it seeks (i) to map out the terrain for the serious student who is just beginning a religious studies programme or graduate work in biblical studies, and (2) to offer positive guidelines to such a student for the working out of an evangelical hermeneutic in the study of Scripture. In so doing, it defines a number of important terms, reviews various interpretive approaches and methods, clarifies issues that are often quite complex, sets out a number of significant rubrics for the understanding of materials in both the Old and New Testaments, identifies and deals judiciously with various literary genre found in the two testaments, and offers a great deal of sound hermeneutical advice for the serious student who is just beginning his or her formal theological study.

I am particularly impressed by the authors' treatments of such matters as ancient Jewish methods of interpretation, the New Testament's use of the Old, levels of meaning in a given text, redaction criticism, canonical criticism, the parables of Jesus, rhetorical conventions within the Pauline letters, early confessional materials used by the New Testament writers, and the development of teaching both within and between the testaments, as well as throughout Paul's letters. The discussions on each of these matters can be said, of course, to be only introductory and elemental. But that is the purpose of the book, and it does its job well. For though its discussions of these matters are, indeed, introductory and elemental, they evidence a breadth of coverage, a depth of understanding, a soundness of judgment, and a clarity of thought and expression that makes what is written both true to the subject being considered and extremely helpful for the reader. And while my own interests are chiefly in its New Testament presentations, I've noted these qualities to be true as well of the book's Old Testament treatments.

Every writing has its intended audience. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* avowedly has in view the conservative evangelical student. I could have wished that the book dealt more adequately with some matters that such a student will face in a non-evangelical context, as, for example, form criticism, structuralism, deconstruction, social description, narrative criticism, liberation theology, feminism, and the so-called third hermeneutic – each of which, to varying degrees, has some merit and needs to be carefully evaluated by evangelicals. As well, I felt somewhat unhappy with the repeated use of the adjective 'biblical' in the title biblical theology as having reference only to content (*i.e.*, 'the theology that the Bible itself shows as opposed to that of philosophers or systematic theologians'), and not principally to method. Nonetheless, most of these matters are touched upon to some extent in either the text or an appendix, with bibliographic footnotes alerting the reader to some of the better sources for further study on the subject. In fact, it needs to be noted here, as well, that a real strength of the book are the bibliographies that appear in the footnotes and at the back in classified and annotated form. Likewise, if not already alluded to earlier, its clarity of presentation and expression make the book easy and enjoyable to read.

In sum, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* is an important hermeneutics text for the conservative evangelical student who is beginning theology or religious studies, but it can also be profitably read by theological students at whatever level in their formal training. It should be a required text in all evangelical seminaries and theological colleges. As well, it should be studied carefully by evangelical theology students in non-evangelical contexts. It hardly provides all that is to be known about any of the subjects it treats. But it will not lead the earnest seeker astray, and it will provide a great deal of sound, thoughtful and helpful advice to one engaged in the academic study of Scripture.

Richard N. Longenecker, McMaster Divinity College, Ontario

BOOK NOTES

The Dead Sea Scrolls Today

James C. VanderKam

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: SPCK, 1994, xiii + 210 pp., £12.99.

News reports make wildly erroneous claims about the recently translated or as yet untranslated Dead Sea Scrolls – they are alleged to undermine the very foundations of Christianity. Sensationalizing 'scholarship' can at times prove only a little less misleading – R. Eisenmann's claim that a fragment speaks of a 'pierced Messiah' or B Thiering's musings that the key people of Qumran are 'code words' for New Testament characters! Where can one get an up-to-date, accurate introduction? This is the book.

VanderKam is professor of Hebrew Scriptures in Notre Dame and member of the international team of translators and editors of the remaining scroll fragments. In this concise survey, he puts layperson and scholar alike in touch with the history and current state of DSS research. He begins by describing the discoveries of the manuscripts – biblical, apocryphal and pseudepigraphical, and sectarian (*i.e.*, the literature unique to the Qumran community). He ably defends the still standard conclusion that the Jews who lived in this group were Essenes, though noting the problems with and alternatives to this hypothesis. He traces the history of the more than 200-year lifespan of the sect and synthesizes its theological and ritual perspectives.

Particularly helpful major sections, usually unparalleled in previous books of this genre, detail the impact of the scrolls on Old and New Testament studies – textual criticism, questions of the canon, Jewish origins of Christianity, and the like. Each chapter concludes with well-selected bibliographies for further research. Always fair, judicious, and representing the mainstream of scholarship, this book will immediately take its place as the most reliable introduction to the *statis questionis* of DSS research.

Joy Through the Night

Aída Besançon Spencer and William D. Spencer

Downers Grove: IVP, 1994, 252 pp., $11.99.

The subtitle of this book accurately describes its contents: 'Biblical Resources for Suffering People'. This is a work easily read in its main contours by thoughtful laypersons but with enough exegetical and philosophical 'meat' scattered throughout to keep the theological student satisfied as well. The Spencers are a wife-husband team. Both teach at Gordon-Conwell Seminary outside Boston; she, full-time, and he as an adjunct. William is also a local pastor.

'Four foundational biblical categories that explain suffering' comprise the outline of the book: 'a world of pain, punishment for sin, advancing God's reign and mystery' (p. 19). Underneath these major headings appears an excellent combination of Scriptural exposition, principles for coping and helping others, and specific applications. All of the illustrations come from the Spencers' own friends and family, and some of them are quite gripping – and personal. More so than some other books of its kind, this one is best read as a prophylactic – in advance of crises – but can surely bring much encouragement and hope in their midst. A strong theology of prayer and the possibilities (but not guarantees) of praying in faith permeates the volume.

Craig Blomberg

A Song of Power and the Power of Song. Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy. Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 3

Duane L. Christensen ed.

Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1993, xiv + 428 pp., Hb, $32.50.

Christensen has collected an assortment of previously published essays that address important questions in the interpretation of Deuteronomy. The discussion includes topics on the themes and composition of the book as a whole, as well as specific chapters. Following an introduction to the study of Deuteronomy, the editor selects a wide range of studies: Weinfeld, Lohfink, Nicholson and Greenberg appear, as well as Craigie, Polzin and Wenham. The collection includes two articles translated for the first time into English. Like the previous volumes in this series, the book is essential reading for students and their teachers who undertake serious study of Deuteronomy.

Judgment and Promise. An Interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah

J.G. McConville

Leicester: Apollos; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1993, 208 pp., pb, £12.95.

Jeremiah. An Archaeological Companion

Philip J. King

Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993, xxiii + 204 pp., hb, $27.00.

McConville argues that the tendency to see Jeremiah as the product of Deuteronomists (=DtH) distorts the prophet's message and overlooks the theologically similar Hosea and Deuteronomy. Jeremiah demonstrates that Judah's dynasty has failed and that (unlike DtH) the nation's only hope for a covenant with God lies beyond the exile. The book progressively transforms Jeremiah into a prophet of salvation. The key themes of repentance and restoration resemble those of Hosea. McConville also challenges assumptions about the priority of the LXX over the MT. If McConville provides a new synthesis of the book of Jeremiah, King does the same for the world of the prophet. King repeatedly quotes the text of Jeremiah as his starting point for developing many details of the history, political geography, administration, religion and agriculture. Especially important discussions of Edom, the personal names found on seals, and the cultic context of burials incorporate the recent literary and archaeological evidence and transform our understanding of Jeremiah. These two volumes provides useful starting points for understanding Jeremiah's literary and cultural contexts.

Solving the Mysteries of the Dead Sea Scrolls. New Light on the Bible

Edward M. Cook

Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994, 191 pp., Pb, £6.99.

Here is a readable and informative introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls. The first half of the book traces the story of the discovery of the scrolls and their subsequent publication through the controversies of the past few years. The book's second half discusses some of the major scholarly and sensational issues surrounding the interpretation of the scrolls. The 'suffering messiah' text and the presence of a fragment of the gospel of Mark at Qumran are two examples. Cook has written an accurate and fair guide to the field for the beginner.

Faith, Tradition, and History. Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context

A.R. Millard, J.K. Hoffmeier and D.W. Baker (eds). Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994, xiv + 354 pp., hb, $34.50.

This important collection of studies by seventeen ancient Near Eastern and biblical scholars represents an Evangelical assessment of the historical issues confronting the Old Testament. The papers date from a 1990 conference and they anticipate some of the more recent directions of research. General questions of ideology in Ancient Near Eastern texts (Millard, Baker, Averbeck, McMahon and Niehaus) stand along side the study of specific biblical texts in the light of contemporary omens (Walton), annals and chronicles (Arnold, Wolf and Hoffmeier), and kings lists (Chavalas). Examination of the literary forms and structure of texts from Judges (Younger and Block) and Samuel (Gordon and Long) complement studies surveying the fields of Old Testament historiography and theology (Yamauchi and Martens).

The Word *Hesed* in the Hebrew Bible. JSOT Supplement 157

Gordon R. Clark

Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993, 286 pp., hb, £40.00/$70.00.

Clark attempts a new approach to the study of this important theological term. Applying techniques of structural linguistics, including syntagms, collocations and parallels, he argues for *hesed* as closely related to action rendered by one party to another who is in need. This is done in the context of a deep commitment. God exhibits it to Israel but not to others. However, the word can be used of commitments between Israelites and non-Israelites. God's *hesed* remains available to Israel even after the nation has rebelled. Unlike divine *hesed*, that between humans assumes a reciprocity of commitment. When *'em et* 'reliability' is added, the resulting expression emphasises faithfulness.

Richard S. Hess

SELECTED BOOKS RECIEVED

R.J. Edlin
The Cause of Christian Education, Northport AL: Vision, 1994.

H. Finzen
Observe, Interpret, Apply: How to Study the Bible Inductively, Wheaton: Victor, 1994.

T.F. Guenther
Rahner and Metz: Trancendental Theology as Political Theology, Lanham: UPA, 1994.

P.K. Nelson
Leadership and Discipleship: A Study of Luke 22:24-30, Atlanta, Scholars, 1994.

W.W. Wiersbe
Be Myself: Memoirs of a Bridgebuilder, Wheaton: Victor, 1994.

D.T. Williams
The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, Nashville: Broadman, 1994.

BOOK REVIEWS

'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone'
(Ephesians 2:20)