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Editorial: Theological Byways?

Theological byways?

I am sure some of our readers, struggling to survive through the rigours of a theological syllabus and looking to *Themelios* to help them in the struggle, will take one look at the contents of this issue and snort in disgust: nearly half the space frittered away on a very long article about, of all things, Islam! You are always complaining, Mr Editor, that you are short of space—is it any wonder, if you cannot make better use of it than that?

Now an editor's life has its problems, especially when articles turn out to be twice as long as was expected. I could have been ruthless, and demanded a complete rewrite in half the space. But I didn't, and when you read the article I hope you will see why. I almost wish it had been longer (though I wouldn't have dared to tell the author so!).

You have had a good staple diet in the last two issues—patriarchs, apocalyptic, christology, justification, Reformation; all good grist to the academic mill. Now relax, and do a bit of thinking about the real world for a change. Go on, spoil yourself.

And you may be surprised to find that the subject is not as remote as you thought. After all, Islam is one of the most potent religious and political forces in the world today, and even the insular western world can hardly remain unaware of its challenge. By its very existence and its nature, Islam poses questions which Christians cannot go on ignoring without writing off a substantial portion of humanity. For those who live in countries where Islam is not only powerfully entrenched but as vigorously engaged in a crusade for political domination as is Marxism itself, the questions are pressing. Too often such questions are answered by traditional formulae and long-ingrained attitudes. But the evangelical Christian is committed to 'thinking biblically', and this can be an uncomfortable as well as an exhilarating experience. It may well lead him into conflict with established traditions.

So as you read Colin Chapman's article, be prepared to get involved, and 'think biblically' for yourself about a subject which vitally affects millions of Christians. In the process, you may find that some accepted ideas about Judaism, and indeed Christianity itself, will be challenged. So much the better, if it makes us all think things out for ourselves.

Colin would not claim, I know, to have provided all the answers. But he has provided some of the questions, questions which have a practical application to Christian mission and involvement in the world far beyond the limits of Islam, and questions about which we all need to 'think biblically' for our own situations.

Bruce Chilton's article takes us to a more familiar scene for most theological students, the search for the historical Jesus, and the evaluation of redaction criticism. But again your first impression will probably be that we have wandered into a byway, when you see that the article consists largely of a technical study of just one verse! So please read his

introduction before you get stuck into the detailed exegesis, and you will see that this one verse is deliberately chosen and carefully worked out as an *example*; it shows in practice how a careful comparative study of the synoptic versions of a key saying, with due attention to the viewpoint and aims of each evangelist, can help us also in establishing the authenticity of a saying which is widely regarded as a later Christian addition to the teaching of Jesus.

So in different ways these two articles illustrate an important aspect of theological study (as indeed of any intellectual pursuit): study of one specific area (Islam; Mark 9:1) can throw up principles of more general application, and so can not only start us asking far-reaching questions in general terms, but also suggest new ways of approaching the specific problems which engage our academic and existential concern. It is the ability to draw out such wider implications responsibly which can often separate the theological sheep from the more shortsighted goats. The true theologian is the one who sees the wood as well as the trees.

Dick France

Thinking biblically about Islam

Colin J Chapman

In the light of increasing interest in Islam worldwide, particularly since the World of Islam festival in Britain in 1976, we are glad to have this thoughtful assessment of the Christian response to Islam by Colin Chapman, who is a CMS missionary seconded to the IFES as Regional Secretary for Islamic Lands, based in Beirut. He was previously in Egypt for five years, on the staff of the Anglican cathedral, and teaching at the Coptic Evangelical Seminary in Cairo. He is known to many as the author of Christianity on Trial.

It is one thing to study Islam in the ivory tower of a western university or seminary, but quite another thing to live as a Christian in an Islamic society. So where should we look to find a reliable and objective guide for our thinking about Islam?

The western scholar may think he can view Islam more objectively because he is not influenced by his own existential situation. But the Christian in the Islamic world questions the value of studying 'ideal Islam', especially when it seems to bear so little resemblance to the actual Islam that he sees in the society around him. He wonders why it is that the Christian Islamist often makes a better case for Islam than Muslim apologists themselves.

If scholarship by itself makes little impression on the ordinary Christian in the Islamic world, could it be that we need to look to our own Scriptures to find a way of coming to terms with Islam? If our own thinking about Islam is deeply coloured by historical, political and sociological factors (whether we live in the east or the west), should we not be able to find in the Bible a more objective reference point which will challenge our prejudices and help us to think in a more deeply Christian way about Islam?

The attempt to 'think biblically' may turn out to be a new discipline which cannot be taught by text-books and cannot be included under any one of the basic disciplines of traditional theological study. It will mean very much more than collecting proof-texts. We shall rather need to draw on all the resources of biblical scholarship at our disposal to help us to understand the text in its proper historical context and then to draw legitimate parallels with Islam.

Our most natural starting-point is to ask how the Bible can help us to *relate to Muslims* (section A), since relating to people is more important than mastering any number of ideas. In the context of these relationships we will find ourselves being forced to *re-examine our own attitudes* (section B). The next step will then be to *look for biblical models* (section C), in order to attempt to draw some kind of theological map. And only then, when we have learnt to walk as far as we can along the same road with the Muslim, will we have the right—and the understanding—to point to *the parting of the ways* (section D).

A. Relating to Muslims

If Jesus knew how to meet people as people, his example has much to teach us about all our relationships. But when we consider the extensive debt which Islam owes to Judaism, a study of Jesus' relations with his fellow Jews may have special relevance to the way we should seek to relate to Muslims.

1. Listening and sharing

Luke gives us a vivid description of Jesus in the temple at the age of twelve, where his parents found him 'sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers' (Lk. 2: 46f. rsv). This kind of sharing was possible only because Jesus was *sitting among them* and *listening* in order to know how they thought and felt. He had begun to learn the art of *asking questions*, not to trip up and embarrass, but to draw others out into a real meeting of minds. He had the *understanding* which enabled him to grasp the real issues and discern the things that really matter. When he offered *answers*, it was in response to questions that were understood and expressed.

What is it that makes it so difficult, if not impossible, for Christians to enjoy this kind of relationship with thoughtful and sincere Muslims? The liberal atmosphere in a western university makes it easy for a Christian to attend meetings of an Islamic Society. And the Islamic scholar is doing his utmost to interpret Islam at its best, not

at its worst. The Christian in the Islamic world, however, finds it much harder, since he is conditioned by centuries of history to feel that the Christian minority to which he belongs is at best tolerated, and at worst despised and oppressed, by the Muslim majority.

Could it be, however, that *both* groups have something to learn from this picture of Jesus among the Jewish teachers? Some of us may need to learn how to resist the ghetto mentality which makes us defensive and fearful, and instead take some practical steps to enable us to 'sit among' Muslims and listen to them. Others of us may have to lay aside the intellectual detachment of the scholar who is more concerned with ideas than with people, and ensure that there is a real meeting of minds with individuals and groups.

As members of the body of Christ, we need each other. Because of the limitations of our own situation and our own prejudices, we need the continuing challenge and corrective from *all* who are relating to Muslims—whether in Karachi, Cairo, Kano or Cambridge—to enable us to enter into the mind of the Muslim.

2. *Controversy*

The Gospel of Mark introduces us to controversy at the very beginning of chapter 2, and all the synoptic Gospels indicate the main subjects of discussion between Jesus and his fellow Jews—the interpretation of the law; the authority of tradition; marriage and divorce; fasting; attitudes to political powers; Jesus' life-style and his claims about himself. Generally it was the scribes and Pharisees who challenged Jesus; but on several occasions it was he who took the initiative. Whatever the issue in each case, it is important to grasp what precisely the issue was, and what the different attitudes were, since these same issues have been subjects of controversy between Christians and Muslims throughout the centuries.

The Gospel of John, however, introduces us to a deeper kind of dialogue, and in the New English Bible one of the major sections in the middle of the Gospel (7: 1—10: 39) is given the significant title 'The Great Controversy'. It deals basically with the one question: 'Who are you?' (8: 25). We find a distinct progression in the claims that Jesus makes for himself on different occasions: 'What I teach is not my own teaching, but it comes from God, who sent me' (7: 16). 'I have not come on my own authority' (7:28). 'The Father who sent me is with me . . . If you knew me, you would know my Father also' (8: 16, 19). 'I am telling you the truth . . . Before Abraham was born, "I am"'

(8: 58). 'The Father is in me and . . . I am in the Father' (10: 38). (Biblical quotations throughout the article are from TEV unless otherwise indicated.)

All the way through, opinions about Jesus are divided: ' "He is a good man," some people said. "No," others said, "he is misleading the people" . . . the Jewish authorities . . . said, "How does this man know so much when he has never had any training?" ' (7: 10-15). 'Again there was a division among the people because of these words. Many of them were saying, "He has a demon! He is mad! Why do you listen to him?" But others were saying, "A man with a demon could not talk like this! How could a demon give sight to blind people?" ' (10: 19-21). The response of some, however, becomes more and more critical and hostile: 'You have a demon in you!' (7: 20). 'Now you are testifying on your own behalf; what you say proves nothing' (8: 13). Towards the end they sum up their rejection in these words: 'We do not want to stone you because of any good deeds, but because of your blasphemy! You are only a man, but you are trying to make yourself God!' (10: 33).

At a time when the word 'dialogue' has come to be associated with one particular approach to other religions, perhaps we need to make a double plea: on the one hand that those who believe they are practising 'dialogue' with people of other faiths stop to ask themselves whether it is leading them in anything like the same direction as we see in this dialogue between Jesus and the Jews: and on the other hand, that those who think simply in terms of 'evangelism' ask themselves if their proclamation of the gospel allows for this kind of meeting of minds.

If the synoptic gospels, therefore, can guide us in our approach to many of the particular areas of disagreement between Christians and Muslims, the Gospel of John reminds us that ultimately all our discussion with Muslims must centre on the one question: Who is Jesus, son of Mary? What is the real relationship between the prophet Jesus and the God who sent him? Even if we know how to deal with every individual question, it may take a lifetime to learn how to speak with Muslims in anything like the terms of John's Gospel. This kind of controversy is not for beginners!

3. *Rejection*

There had been genuine dialogue, and it had only sharpened all the vital issues. If many could not understand what Jesus was saying, it was not because he had failed to communicate. 'Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to listen to my message' (Jn. 8: 43).

Towards the end of the debate in chapter 10, we are told: 'Once again, the Jews picked up stones to stone him' (verse 31); and at the end, 'This provoked them to one more attempt to seize him' (verse 39). It is only a short step from this to the final accusation by the High Priest when Jesus is on trial before the Sanhedrin: 'We don't need any more witnesses! You heard his blasphemy . . .' (Mk. 14: 61-64).

This same pattern of *sharing, controversy* and *rejection* is repeated in the life of the early church. In the early chapters of Acts the believers are becoming an identifiable community, but are still within the fold of Judaism. 'All the believers continued together in close fellowship. . . . Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes . . . praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people' (Acts 2: 44-46). It was not long, however, before the proclamation of the resurrection brought the apostles into controversy with the Jewish authorities, and the response to Stephen's defence indicates how intensely they felt the challenge to their whole system: 'With a loud cry the members of the Council covered their ears with their hands. Then they all rushed at him at once, threw him out of the city, and stoned him.' (Acts 7: 57f.)

For most of the New Testament period, however, there was no final separation between the Jewish disciples of Jesus and the religion of Judaism. Thus, in spite of repeated rejection in city after city, Paul continued to have a strong sense of the priority of the Jews, believing that the gospel is 'God's power to save all who believe, first the Jews and also the Gentiles' (Rom. 1: 16). As soon as he reached Rome as a prisoner, he lost no time in meeting with the leaders of the Jewish community (Acts 28: 16-31), and his attitude right to the end was always positive, open and hopeful.

The letter to the Hebrews reflects a situation in which Jewish Christian believers are in danger of losing their identity and being drawn back into Judaism. While the writer does not ask them to reject everything in their Jewish past, he is realistic in reminding them that they may have to tread the same path as the one who 'died outside the city'. This means that there must be a willingness to 'go to him outside the camp and share his shame' (Heb. 13: 12f.).

Christians *outside* the Islamic world may not find it too hard to have an attitude of openness and hopefulness in their relations with Muslims. But when Christians who have grown up *within* the Islamic world find it very much more difficult, it is because the course of events over many centuries

has hardened the feeling of mutual rejection—of rejection *by* Islam and rejection *of* Islam. Where feelings and attitudes are hardened on *our* side, we need to be able to think ourselves into the minds of the first Jewish Christians. For if we can draw a distinction between the essence of the Old Testament faith on the one hand, and on the other the religion of Judaism as it had developed by the first century, can we not draw a similar distinction between the original monotheistic vision of Muhammad, and the developed system of doctrine and traditions which we know today as Islam? When Paul came face to face with Jesus, he was seeing through and beyond the distortions and perversions of contemporary Judaism to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Could we not say similarly that the converted Muslim is simply seeing through and beyond his Islamic traditions to the One God whom he has sought to worship all along? If there must be rejection, it should not be *we* who do the rejecting. If there must be repudiation, it should not come from *our* side.

B. Getting our attitudes straight

It is a humbling experience to realize that many of the barriers to the communication of the gospel to the Muslim are not so much in *his* mind as in *ours*. This experience may lead to an acute sense of our weaknesses and limitations. We may even feel inclined to give up all that we have been trying to do, believing that if we are no better than anyone else, we have little or nothing to share with others.

But if the Word of God can wound, it can also heal. There are several passages in the Bible which not only diagnose these unhealthy attitudes, but also point to the way of healing.

1. Abraham was less than honest with Abimelech over Sarah, his wife. He also suffered from a subtle pride which made him feel that no-one apart from himself and his family had any real fear of God: 'I thought that there would be no one here who fears God. . . .' Abraham had to learn in a painful way that some people outside the covenant did have a real reverence for God, and were able to hear and respond to his word (Gn. 20: 1-18).

2. Jonah took some time to learn that God wanted and needed to use him to convey his message of judgment and mercy. But even after he had surrendered himself to be used in this way, there were other deep-seated attitudes which had to be dealt with. God had to say to him in effect, 'You have been faithful in condemning all that was wrong in Nineveh. But have you secretly enjoyed it all? Do you really care for these people whom you are denouncing for their sin? Do you really

want them to turn to me in repentance and faith?' (Jon. 4: 1–11).

3. If Jesus tells us not to pass judgment on other people (Mt. 7: 1–5), does this include passing judgment on people of other faiths? There is a difference between making judgments *about* people, and sitting in judgment *over* them, as if we are in the position of the judge. We certainly need to think critically about Islam, but if we criticize the Muslim, his civilization and his beliefs, we may simply be inviting him to do the same to us and to our Christian beliefs.

4. Peter had to allow the Holy Spirit to expose and root out some pernicious prejudices, both religious and racial, before he, as a Jew, could share the Good News with a Godfearing man of a different nationality. If we as Christians suffer from a feeling of superiority that makes us look down on people of other faiths and other races as if they are inferior, we need the same kind of upheaval to humble us and enable us to say with Peter: 'I now realize that it is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. Whoever worships him and does what is right is acceptable to him, no matter what race he belongs to' (Acts 10: 1–48).

5. 'Because of you, the name of God is dishonoured among the Gentiles' (Rom. 2: 24, NEB). If Paul could adapt some words from Isaiah 52: 5 and apply them to the Jews of his day, we may perhaps be justified in adapting the words again and applying them to the history of the Christian church in the world of Islam: 'Because of you Christians, the name of Christ is dishonoured among Muslims.' The problem goes back long before the Crusades, since Muhammad and the Arabs of his day formed their ideas of Christianity largely from the Byzantine Empire. Here was a 'Christian' state which impressed its neighbours most of all by its imperialism and its ruthless suppression of 'heretics'. We have to live with a similar problem today in that the Muslim has seen something of the same imperialism in the 'Christian' west; its image also becomes more materialistic and atheistic every day, and its policies are determined largely by economic self-interest. We will certainly want to challenge the Muslim's interpretation of how this situation has come about. But we cannot always evade the criticism by taking refuge in the distinction between 'nominal Christianity' and 'real Christianity'—a distinction which the Muslim finds it hard, if not impossible, to grasp. We therefore need the humility to be able to say with the psalmist, 'We have sinned as our ancestors did' (Ps. 106: 6). Our very confession bears witness to the fact that we are willing to be judged by the teaching and example

of Jesus, and that we see him as the one whom God has chosen to judge the world—whether 'Christian' or 'Muslim'.

6. 'Being all things to all men' (1 Cor. 9: 19–23) is not too hard when it simply means getting alongside young people in a youth club. But could a Christian with the same spirit as the apostle Paul ever say: 'To the Muslims I became a Muslim in order to win Muslims'? Christians who are safely entrenched in their own Christian sub-culture are far too quick to cry 'Compromise!' whenever they see a bolder spirit launching out to break through cultural and religious barriers in order to sit where the Muslim sits. If the bolder spirits need from fellow Christians that warm fellowship and trust which will prevent them from losing their biblical bearings, we all need to be reminded that the Bible is more like a compass to guide us on the open sea than a rope to keep us safely moored in the harbour. Our belief in the incarnation ought to help us to believe that while identification inevitably lays itself open to misunderstandings, it doesn't always mean compromise.

7. Any one who has ever had a genuine conversation with a Muslim will know how easy it is to be drawn into argument and controversy. Sometimes it is the Muslim who asks questions or raises objections; but often it is we ourselves who are provocative and spark off the argument. Whenever we see the warning signals in ourselves, we need to be reminded of Paul's words addressed to Timothy, the young enthusiastic Christian worker: 'Keep away from foolish and ignorant arguments; you know that they end up in quarrels. The Lord's servant must not quarrel. He must be kind towards all, a good and patient teacher, who is gentle as he corrects his opponents, for it may be that God will give them the opportunity to repent and come to know the truth' (2 Tim. 2: 23–26).

8. 'Do for others what you want them to do for you.' (Mt. 7: 12.)

C. Finding biblical models

One of the difficulties in making theological judgments about Islam is that we are always left with the hard task of relating generalizations to all that we know of Islam and Muslims. The more sweeping the generalizations, the less convincing they sound; and the more they concentrate on the 'Ideal Islam' of the Qur'an, the less relevant they seem to the Islam of the man in the street.

It may be that we will get further if, before trying to relate Islam to a complete system of Christian theology, we attempt something more modest—namely, to discover biblical models to

help us first of all to come to terms with the life and teaching of the man Muhammad, and then to know how to approach people whose understanding of God is different from ours.

1. 'False prophets' and 'the Antichrist'

Many of us would probably turn instinctively to Matthew 24: 23–27, believing that it provides the only truly biblical category for understanding Muhammad: 'False Messiahs and false prophets will appear.' Alternatively, we may turn to 1 John 2: 22, 23: 'Who is the liar? It is anyone who says that Jesus is not the Messiah. Such a person is the Enemy of Christ—he rejects both the Father and the Son. For whoever rejects the Son also rejects the Father; whoever accepts the Son has the Father also.'

There is a certain danger, however, in thinking that this is the beginning and end of thinking biblically about Islam. If we bind ourselves exclusively to these categories, we may find it impossible to enter sympathetically into the mind of the Muslim. We will find it hard to appreciate the development of Muhammad's teaching; and we may fail to understand the true context and the real intention of Muhammad's denial of the divinity of Jesus.

Muhammad's public ministry did not begin with a rejection of Christian beliefs. It began with a passionate rejection of the idolatry of Mecca and a recall to the worship of the one Creator God. Muhammad must have been in contact with individual Christians and groups of Christians at many stages of his life. But it was only at a later stage in his public ministry, when he came in contact with Christians at Medina and elsewhere, that he felt compelled to extend his denunciation of idolatry to include Christian beliefs about Jesus as the Son of God. There are good reasons for believing that Muhammad did not really understand the Christian claim that Jesus was the Son of God. He may have rejected what he thought was a Christian belief because it seemed to be as crude as the polytheistic beliefs of the Meccans. We do not know how Muhammad *would have* responded if he had had first-hand knowledge of the gospel, and had understood how the Christian faith can be *both* monotheistic *and* trinitarian at the same time. But if what he rejected as blasphemous was at best a distortion, and at worst a travesty of Christian beliefs, are we really justified in thinking of Muhammad *simply* as a post-Christian heretic? Could it be that we are influenced too much by our historical sense which tells us that since Muhammad lived centuries after Jesus, he must be considered

purely and simply as a false prophet who rejected and denied the New Testament gospel about Jesus?

2. Gideon

The picture of Muhammad which emerges from the earliest Meccan suras of the Qur'an and from the earliest traditions is of a man who combined a crusade against idolatry with an attempt to bring unity among the tribes around Mecca and further afield in the Arabian peninsula. When we remember the thoroughly degenerate state of Arabian religion at the time of Muhammad, as well as the continuous conflict between different tribes, we cannot but feel genuine amazement and admiration for all that he achieved in his lifetime in both these areas.

This picture bears a striking resemblance to the picture of Gideon in Judges. Here too is a man who combined a crusade against idolatry ('Tear down your father's altar to Baal', 6: 25ff.) with political and military action for his people ('Rescue Israel from the Midianites', 6: 14). If Muhammad's ministry began with something like the fervour and righteous zeal of Gideon's ministry, something certainly went wrong at a later stage. It is only right to remember that something also went wrong later in Gideon's life: 'Gideon made an idol from the gold and put it in his home town, Ophrah. All the Israelites abandoned God and went there to worship the idol. It was a trap for Gideon and his family' (8: 22–28).

Is it too dangerous to draw this kind of parallel between Muhammad and Gideon? It must be emphasized that we are talking of similarity and not identity. Moreover, while we can see how Gideon fits into the total plan of biblical history from Abraham to Jesus, we cannot fit Muhammad into the same scheme. But if there is any parallel at all, it should help us at the very least to feel more sympathy for the vision with which Muhammad began his ministry—the vision of the Arabian tribes united as one people, and united in the worship of the one true God.

3. Judaism and Islam

From his early contacts with Jews, particularly with the Jewish community in Medina after the Hijrah in AD 622, Muhammad must have absorbed something of the spirit and ritual of Jewish worship, as well as many stories from the Old Testament and later rabbinic legends. This background should help us to understand not only the most obvious similarities between the doctrines of Judaism and Islam (e.g. their understanding of the oneness of God), but also some of the deeper similarities between the spirit of the two religions (e.g. their

understanding of the role of the law). It should therefore make it easier for us to put ourselves into the shoes of the Muslim and to see Jesus as the Muslim sees him.

It requires a certain effort and discipline, however, to read the Gospels in this way. We naturally tend to think of the disciples as Christian believers right from the start instead of seeing them as devout, orthodox Jews. But what if we take off our 'Christian spectacles' and try to see Jesus against the background of Old Testament assumptions and several centuries of Jewish traditions? We then begin to realize that the Muslim reacts to Christian claims about Jesus (if he has not misunderstood them) in the same way as the High Priest reacted to Jesus' claims about himself: 'You heard his blasphemy' (Mk. 14: 63, 64). It is the same instinct, the same jealous concern for the oneness of God, that makes it unthinkable that a mere man could be associated with God in anything other than a creature-Creator relationship. We begin to see also that there is an understandable logic behind Peter's objection to the idea that the Messiah must suffer and die: how *could* God let his representative on earth be humiliated so deeply before men? Surely God must vindicate his servants the prophets in the eyes of men?

This parallel between Judaism and Islam needs to be qualified at three points. In the first place, we need to recognize that Muhammad was too much of a creative genius to be described as one who simply 'borrowed' from Jewish sources. Everything that he absorbed was stamped with the imprint of his own creative mind, as we see in the distinctive thrust that is given to the story of Joseph (Sura 12).

Secondly, some of Muhammad's teaching was influenced, if not actually determined, by the *negative* response he received from the Jews in Medina. His early openness soon turned to bitter hostility when he finally realized that he had no chance of winning them over as a community. Thus, for example, having earlier prayed with his face to Jerusalem as the Jews did, he now began to pray facing Mecca. Again, there had been nothing in the Old Testament or in rabbinic tradition which linked Abraham with Mecca; but Muhammad now claimed that Abraham and Ishmael had been associated with the building of the Ka'ba in Mecca. He claimed that Abraham was a Muslim, and in the words of Alfred Guillaume, 'thus at a stroke the primitive and apostolic character of Islam was established'. Any attempt, therefore, to draw a parallel between Judaism and Islam must take into account this tortuous love-hate relationship between Muhammad and the Jews, which has coloured

relations between Muslims (particularly the Arabs) and Jews ever since, not least in the twentieth century.

Thirdly, in spite of all the similarities between the two religions, the Jewish people had special privileges because of their special place in God's plan of salvation: 'They are God's people; he made his covenants with them and gave them the Law; they have the true worship; they have received God's promises; they are descended from the famous Hebrew ancestors: and Christ, as a human being, belongs to their race.' (Rom. 9: 4, 5.) This was Paul's understanding of the privileges of the Jewish people simply by virtue of being descended from Abraham through the line of Isaac, and can only be applied to the Muslim in the sense that the covenant promises of God are now open to all who turn to Jesus, as Peter says on the day of Pentecost; 'God's promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away—all whom the Lord our God calls to himself' (Acts 2: 39).

If, however, these qualifications are not serious enough to make us abandon the attempt to see Islam in the light of New Testament Judaism, this approach may help us to come to terms with the bewildering variety of Christian responses to Islam. Is it a religion inspired totally by the devil, or a 'valid' religion which offers valuable insights for all? Is it a Christian heresy like Jehovah's Witnesses, or can it sometimes be a genuine preparation for the gospel?

We find similar problems in the responses to Judaism in the pages of the New Testament. Paul's verdict about the Jews in his letter to the Thessalonians (written about AD 50/51) sounds very harsh: 'The Jews . . . killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and persecuted us. How displeasing they are to God! How hostile they are to everyone! They even tried to stop us from preaching to the Gentiles the message that would bring them salvation. In this way they have completed the full total of the sins they have always committed. And now God's anger has at last come down on them!' (1 Thes. 2: 14-16). In his letter to the Romans, however, (written in AD 57) he reveals how he actually prays for his fellow Jews: 'I am speaking the truth; I belong to Christ and I do not lie. My conscience, ruled by the Holy Spirit, also assures me that I am not lying when I say how great is my sorrow, how endless the pain in my heart for my people, my own flesh and blood! For their sake I could wish that I myself were under God's curse and separated from Christ' (Rom. 9: 1-3).

In his travels in Asia Minor he made it a matter of policy to go first to the synagogue in every city,

believing that those who knew the Old Testament scriptures would be the first to respond to the Good News about Jesus. When we come to the book of Revelation (written some thirty years after Paul's death), however, the risen Lord's description of one particular synagogue in Asia Minor paints it in a very different light: 'I will make those of Satan's synagogue, who claim to be Jews but are lying frauds, come and fall down at your feet; and they shall know that you are my beloved people' (Rev. 3: 9 NEB).

If we are completely confused by this ambivalence, we need to go back to the words of Jesus himself and ask how it was that he could say to one Jew, 'You are not far from the Kingdom of God' (Mk. 12: 34), but on another occasion to a group of Jews, 'You are of your father the devil' (Jn. 8: 44 RSV). Part of the answer needs to be that there is a difference between 'Judaism' and 'Jews'—between the body of beliefs and traditions, and the people who hold them with varying degrees of conviction. We also need to be suspicious of sweeping generalizations and simple categories, whether they spring from an attitude that is excessively generous or excessively negative.

If we base our understanding of Judaism only on the scribes and the Pharisees described in the New Testament, we may be incapable of recognizing a Nicodemus who has grown up in the same tradition but is reaching out for something more (Jn. 3: 1–13). If we think that all our Muslim friends are as dogmatic as Caiaphas (Mk. 14: 63, 64), we will fail to recognize others who are as open, but cautious, as Gamaliel (Acts 5: 33–39). If we think that all Muslims are in the same category as the members of the synagogue of Philadelphia (Rev. 3: 9) we can hardly fail to rebuff any leader like Jairus who comes with his deep personal need and a faith that reaches out to Jesus (Mk. 5: 22ff.). If the practice of Islam can make some Muslims as self-confident as the Pharisee (Lk. 18: 11ff.), can it not sometimes lead others to the point where God can say to them, as he did to the God-fearing proselyte Cornelius, 'God is pleased with your prayers and works of charity, and is ready to answer you. And now send some men to Joppa for a certain man whose full name is Simon Peter . . .' (Acts 10: 4ff.).

4. Paul and the Athenians

It is hard to resist the feeling that while God's *will* is revealed to the Muslim in the Qur'an, God *himself* is hardly knowable in any personal sense. Man is called upon to obey God and to submit to him; he can also know something about the character of God in the many different 'names' of

God. But he is not invited to *know* the God whom he worships. It was no doubt this missing element in man's relationship with God which contributed to the movement of Islamic mysticism (Sufism). For if Islamic orthodoxy lacked any sense of a personal relationship with God, it was inevitable that some should seek to go beyond the traditional formulations and seek for a more personal and mystical union with God.

This sense of the unknowable God in orthodox Islam suggests a certain parallel with the beliefs of the Greeks whom Paul addressed at the Areopagus. 'I see that in every way you Athenians are very religious. For as I walked through your city and looked at the places where you worship, I found an altar on which is written, 'To an Unknown God'. That which you worship, then, even though you do not know it, is what I now proclaim to you . . .' (Acts 17: 16–34). We may need to do some careful study to find out as much as we can about Athenian religious beliefs. If we find that they were closer to those of African traditional religion than to orthodox Islam, they may still be relevant for our discussion, since there is frequently a gap between the popular Islam of the man in the street and the fully-developed theology of the scholars. But however close the parallel between the two situations may be, the significant thing about Paul's general approach is that he spends little time attacking false or inadequate concepts of God. He establishes as much common ground as possible, and then moves on to proclaim that God has acted and revealed himself through 'a man he has chosen'.

It is understandable that Christians should feel obliged to raise the question of whether the Muslim has any 'real' knowledge of God. But we have to admit that we are far better at making critical and negative judgments *about* other religions than sharing the gospel in a positive way *with* people of other religions. In the light of Paul's approach in this address, one cannot help wondering how helpful it is to ask this kind of question. If Paul could use the same word for 'God' as the Greeks used, however inadequate and misleading it might be, there is no reason why the Christian should hesitate to use the same word for 'God' that the Muslim uses, whether it is in Arabic, Persian, Urdu or any other language. If Paul could recognize that the Athenians had been seeking to worship God in the only way they had known, who are we to spend our time, either among ourselves or in conversation with the Muslim, calling into question all that he has come to believe about God? The positive approach in Paul's address should rather challenge us to find ways of speaking about Jesus which are

truly God-centred and which are related to what he already believes about God.

D. The parting of the ways

If some Christians concentrate on all the differences between Christianity and Islam, others tend to emphasize the common ground without getting to grips with the areas of disagreement. If our biblical models have any value, can they help us to maintain a proper balance between these two extremes?

The picture behind our heading suggests that for some of the journey Christians and Muslims can walk the same road, moving in the same direction. We then come to a fork in the road, and find ourselves going in different directions. This parting of the ways is not so much over smaller questions of doctrine and practice like fasting, pilgrimage and the status of women, but rather over basic assumptions which, though often unspoken, determine our thinking on all the individual issues on which we differ. Where then are these forks in the road, and what do the signposts tell us?

1. *Questioning the revelation*

It is not only secular man who asks the awkward question, 'How can we know if this is a genuine revelation from God?' We find in the Qur'an that Muhammad is constantly being faced with exactly the same challenge. Sometimes the demand comes from those who are described as 'hypocrites', *i.e.* people who are moved by purely human or political considerations and have little concern for the content of Muhammad's message. At other times, we must assume that the question arises from an honest desire to know the truth. Muhammad usually answers by disclaiming any ability to work miracles, and points to the quality of the revelation itself as evidence of its divine origin. He also warns about the final judgment of all who refuse to accept the revelation. His answer, therefore, has an authoritarian flavour which makes it different from the answers given to the same question in several books of the Bible.

Abraham, for example, asks about the promise that the land will be given to him: 'Sovereign Lord, how can I know that it will be mine?' (Gn. 15: 8). Moses expects that the Israelites in Egypt will not immediately accept his claim that God has met him in the desert: 'But suppose the Israelites do not believe me and will not listen to what I say?' (Ex. 4: 1). Thomas is not satisfied with the claim of the other disciples that they have seen the risen Jesus, and wants to be able to see for himself: 'Unless I

see . . . I will not believe' (Jn. 20: 25). In each of these cases the person is given tangible evidence to answer his question, because there is a genuine willingness to be convinced. But miracles are not always produced to order, for when Jesus is asked by the Pharisees for an instant miracle to support his claims, he refuses the request, knowing that it springs from the scepticism of a closed mind (Mk. 8: 11, 12).

How then does God answer our questions about his revelation? The Qur'an and the Bible give similar answers to those who ask in a defiant spirit, having already made up their minds that this cannot be a true revelation. But for the person who asks with a really open mind and a willingness to be convinced, the signposts point in different directions.

2. *God and the vindication of his prophets*

If the writings of heretical Christian sects in the first centuries give some indication of the possible historical source of Muhammad's belief that Jesus did not die on the cross, they do not explain *why* it was that Muhammad accepted this particular interpretation of what happened. The Quranic text simply states: 'They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them . . . they slew him not for certain, but Allah took him up unto Himself.' (Sura 4: 157, 158.) If we try to probe behind this proof-text, the logic of the denial of the crucifixion would seem to be that God cannot allow his representative on earth to be humiliated in this way; he must surely intervene to save him from such a terrible fate and vindicate him in the eyes of men.

It is probably this same instinct which explains Peter's reaction of horror when he first heard that Jesus would be rejected and suffer an ignominious death. No doubt Peter was thinking also about his own safety; but there must have been more to it than this. He was no doubt putting into words thoughts which had already occurred to Jesus himself. So when Jesus reacted so strongly to Peter's protest, it wasn't because the idea was completely ridiculous. His answer probably came out of deep prolonged wrestling with an idea that had occurred to him on more than one occasion and held a strong attraction for him.

It may first have been part of the temptation to stage a miraculous rescue operation after falling from the pinnacle of the temple (Lk. 4: 9-11). When towards the end of his ministry he became aware of the plot to kill him, he shared his dilemma with the disciples: 'Now my heart is troubled—and what shall I say? Shall I say "Father, do not let this

hour come upon me? . . .” (Jn. 12: 27). Soon afterwards, when he was in the garden of Gethsemane, he rebuked Peter for his attempt to defend him with the words: ‘Don’t you know that I could call on my Father for help, and at once he would send me more than twelve armies of angels?’ (Mt. 26: 53). Even in his last hours on the cross, he must have felt the temptation as he heard the crowd shouting: ‘Save yourself if you are God’s Son! Come down from the cross! . . . If he comes down from the cross now, we will believe in him! He trusts in God and claims to be God’s Son. Well, then, let us see if God wants to save him now!’ (Mt. 27: 39–43).

God *did* vindicate Jesus—but not in the way that men would have wanted or expected. If Jesus had been miraculously delivered from death on the cross, the spectacle would no doubt have made many believe in him. But God’s way of thinking demanded that *before* being vindicated, Jesus must be identified with men right up to the very end—even in death: ‘It was only right that God should make Jesus perfect through suffering, in order to bring many sons to share his glory. . . . Since the children, as he calls them, are people of flesh and blood, Jesus himself became like them and shared their human nature. He did this so that through his death he might destroy the Devil, who has the power over death, and in this way set free those who were slaves all their lives because of their fear of death’ (Heb. 2: 10–14, 15).

The Muslim cannot deny that many of the Jews *wanted* and *intended* to have Jesus crucified, or that Jesus himself was *willing* to be crucified. The difference lies in our thinking about the way in which God would be expected to act on behalf of his servant and prophet. The Muslim says that God must vindicate Jesus by saving him from this ultimate humiliation; the Christian says that God must allow Jesus to suffer the worst that men can do to him, and vindicate him only on the other side of death.

3. *Sin and law*

How are we to diagnose the problem of man’s disobedience to the law of God? If we as Christians trace the problem back to the fall of Adam and the inherent sinfulness of human nature, the Muslim believes that we take an unnecessarily serious and pessimistic view of the human condition. He doesn’t see Adam’s sin as a ‘fall’ affecting the whole human race, but rather believes that every person starts life with a clean sheet, completely innocent before God. Man needs the law of God, as revealed

in the Qur’an, and when he breaks it, needs to turn to God in repentance and faith to ask for forgiveness. The Muslim therefore sees divine law and divine forgiveness as being sufficient remedy for man’s disobedience.

The Christian who understands anything of the moral conflict described by Paul in Romans 7 feels bound to say that the Muslim’s diagnosis is too optimistic, and doesn’t make sense of the facts of our moral experience. Instead of solving the problem of human disobedience, the law seems only to intensify it, by showing that our problem is not simply individual ‘sins’, but rather our ‘sin’—our sinful human nature which is constantly dragging us down. This doesn’t mean that there is anything wrong with the law; it merely means that it was never intended to provide the final solution. Its purpose was rather to expose the problem in its true light: ‘The law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy, right, and good. But does this mean that what is good caused my death? By no means! It was sin that did it; by using what is good, sin brought death to me, in order that its true nature as sin might be revealed. And so, by means of the commandment sin is shown to be even more terribly sinful’ (Rom. 7: 12, 13). The more intense the conflict between our desire to obey God’s law and the downward pull of our human nature, the more we find ourselves agreeing with Paul’s final analysis of the problem: ‘This, then, is my condition: on my own I can serve God’s law only with my mind, while my human nature serves the law of sin’ (Rom. 7: 25).

If we have been accustomed to use this chapter only as fuel for the debate about sanctification, we need to see its special relevance for understanding one of the basic differences between Christianity and Islam—a difference which has far-reaching consequences in many areas. When we put ourselves under the law of God, what do we find? Do we find ourselves nearer to the confidence and optimism of the man who said to Jesus ‘Ever since I was young, I have obeyed all these commandments’ (Mk. 10: 20)? Or do we find ourselves echoing Paul’s cry of desperation ‘What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death?’ (Rom. 7: 24).

4. *Forgiveness, atonement and obedience*

Our study of the atonement is bound to introduce us to the exegesis of passages like Mark 10: 45, Romans 3: 21–26 and 1 John 2: 2, and to the debate about the different theories of the atonement. But our textbooks don’t always help us when

we find ourselves face to face with the Muslim. We take it for granted that some kind of atonement is needed, and spend our time trying to explain the rationale of that atonement. The Muslim, however, is not interested in challenging any particular theory of the atonement; he cannot see the need for *any* atonement.

If the law of God can be obeyed by all who genuinely desire to live by it and if any disobedience to the law is simply seen as individual 'sins', it is natural to believe that these sins can be forgiven simply by a 'word' from God. Provided we are sincere in our repentance and trust in God's mercy and compassion, he can forgive us, so to speak, by divine decree. There is no need for any sacrifice to atone for our sins.

But if we leave aside the meaning of sacrifices, what does forgiveness mean in our own experience? Do we not find that forgiveness *costs* something? The greater the wrong that is done to me, and the deeper the wound, the more it costs me to forgive and to bear the wrong and the injury without hitting back. If God is the lawgiver, there must surely be some problem as to how he can *both* uphold his own laws *and* at the same time forgive those who break them. If God is also the personal Creator who has made man in his own image, would we not expect his way of forgiving to have more in common with forgiveness between people as we know it than with the pardon extended by an all-powerful ruler to his subjects at little or no cost to himself?

Even after the disciples had met the risen Jesus, they were still slow to understand the meaning of his death. Jesus therefore had to explain *why* he had to die: "'O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken! *Was it not necessary* that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?'" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself' (Lk. 24: 26, 27 rsv). The scriptures said that this is how it must be. But why did it have to be this way? This is a legitimate question which demands some kind of answer. The Old Testament proof-texts will not by themselves help us to meet the challenge of the Muslim unless they enable us to grasp something of the divine logic which demands that forgiveness can only be proclaimed to men in the name of one who suffered and died.

The New Testament understanding of the atonement, however, is even more comprehensive than this, since it also introduces us to the Holy Spirit, who is given to enable us to live up to the righteous demands of the law: 'What the law could not do,

because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending his own Son, who came with a nature like man's sinful nature, to do away with sin. God did this so that the righteous demands of the Law might be fully satisfied in us who live according to the Spirit, and not according to human nature' (Rom. 8: 3, 4).

If, therefore, the Christian understanding of the divine remedy covers every dimension of the human problem and involves the work of the whole Trinity, our ability to enjoy this remedy depends on our willingness to accept the Christian diagnosis of our need, and our willingness to try to grasp the divine logic which demanded that it could only be met in this way.

5. *Idolatry and oneness*

Why have we left this question till the end? Isn't the Trinity one of the first and most obvious stumbling blocks for the Muslim? This may be so—but it is also one of the hardest to discuss, and the most likely to take us away from the road and back to the trenches.

If we have listened to the Muslim long enough to understand the passionate protest against idolatry that is implied in the words 'There is no god but God' and 'God is greater!' we may remember that our own scriptures sound the same call in many different ways. There is the uncompromising demand of the law: 'I am the Lord your God. . . . Worship no God but me. Do not make for yourselves images of anything in heaven or on earth or in the water under the earth. Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am the Lord your God and I tolerate no rivals' (Ex. 20: 4, 5). The prophets speak with the same voice: 'I alone am the Lord your God. No other god may share my glory; I will not let idols share my praise' (Is. 42: 8). We find that Jesus himself reaffirmed the Old Testament command to worship God alone: 'The scripture says, "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!"' (Mt. 4: 10). And the apostle John ends his first letter with the urgent plea, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols' (1 Jn. 5: 21 rsv). If we agree in our denunciation of idolatry, how much further can we go before finding ourselves entangled in misunderstanding and disagreement? It should not take us long to realize that we are not the first to have passed this way. If the disciples were orthodox Jews who recited daily 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord . . .' (Dt. 6: 4 rsv), did they not start with the very same assumption as the Muslim about the oneness of God? Yet now they are constantly being

forced to say about Jesus 'What manner of man is this that . . .?' (Mk. 4: 41 AV). It took Peter some time before he could say 'You are the Messiah' (Mk. 8: 29); and it was only at the end of three years and after the resurrection that Thomas could say 'My Lord and my God' (Jn. 20: 28). Because we have the advantage (or disadvantage?) of many centuries of Christian theology and devotion behind us, it is hard for us to realize how much of a revolution had to go on in the disciples' minds before they could see Jesus as anything more than 'a man sent from God'. It was a gradual process, with each of the disciples moving at his own speed in making the necessary mental adjustments to enable him to reconcile all that Jesus was saying and doing with the basic conviction that God is one.

In approaching the Gospels in this way, we are not asking the Muslim to accept them from the start as inspired scripture; we are simply asking him to read them as a record of what Jesus said and did. If he cannot even read them with this kind of open mind, we are forced back to consider the question of truth with which we began.

For what do we do when we find our most fundamental assumptions being challenged? One response is to hold on to those assumptions so firmly that we refuse to accept any kind of re-interpretation. Thus anything in the Gospels which challenges or conflicts with our present understanding of the oneness of God must be wrong and must be rejected. The other possible response is to be willing to revise our basic assumptions and even to reject them, if we find they make it impossible to account for *all* the new evidence which confronts us. If, therefore, we find in the Gospels that Jesus himself reaffirmed the Old Testament command to worship the one true God, and at the same time said and did things which challenge our interpretation of what God is like, our search for truth should make us look for the simplest theory which can hold together *all* the different data. Instead of abandoning our belief that God is one, we will have to go through the painful (and probably slow) process of redefining what that oneness means. If in the end we can still declare 'the Lord our God is one Lord' and at the same time say to Jesus 'My Lord and my God', we will not be guilty of misusing words any more than we are when we say that a man and a woman can become 'one flesh' in marriage. We have not rejected our basic assumption about the oneness of God; we have only redefined it or reinterpreted it in the light of all that we have seen and heard.

Which then is the attitude that is more likely to lead us to the truth about God and about Jesus?

Which is more likely to give us a theology of unity: the concept of oneness which is purely mathematical and therefore discounts any evidence about Jesus, son of Mary, which challenges it in any way? Or the concept of oneness which safeguards the uniqueness and sovereign majesty of the one true God, but is great enough and flexible enough to account for all the evidence of what Jesus said and did?

6. *The things that are Caesar's*

In the early years of Muhammad's ministry in Mecca, he had a limited number of followers, and was despised and rejected by the majority of his own people. It has been said that during this period he must have had something like a 'Gethsemane experience'. He must have realized that the whole Islamic movement could easily be suppressed by persecution. What was he to do? Was he to be patient and trust that God would vindicate him in his own time and in his own way? Or would he be cowardly and irresponsible if he were to take such an enormous risk with the final revelation from God? The answer to his dilemma seemed to come through the overtures of the delegation from Medina who invited him to take over the leadership of their city, and so bring to an end the feuds between its different groups. Muhammad must have seen that this invitation offered him the possibility of establishing as a political leader the kind of society which he had until now been calling for simply as a prophet.

In the Old Testament there were certain safeguards to prevent the king from assuming absolute power. Thus, the book of Deuteronomy speaks of any future kings not as lawgivers, but as those who submit to the law that has already been revealed to Moses: 'When he becomes king, he is to have a copy of the book of God's laws and teachings made from the original copy kept by the levitical priests. He is to keep this book near him and read from it all his life, so that he will learn to honour the Lord and to obey faithfully everything that is commanded in it' (Dt. 17: 18-19). Moreover, God frequently raised up prophets who spoke with an independent voice, condemning disobedience to the revealed law, and at times calling for particular policies and actions. Nathan, for example, had to challenge the great king David and condemn him for adultery and murder (2 Sa. 11: 1-12: 15), while Jeremiah had the unwelcome task of telling king Zedekiah to surrender to the Babylonian invaders (Je. 27: 12f.).

In Islam, however, the one who begins simply as

a prophet soon assumes in addition the role of the 'king'; for after the Hijrah, there can no longer be any distinctions between 'the things that are Caesar's' and 'the things that are God's'. If God's kingdom is to be established on earth, the things that are God's must coincide with the things that are Caesar's. The law of God must be embodied in a particular kind of society; it must be commended and enforced by some executive power and not left to the conscience of the individual or entrusted to a minority group.

The difference between these two ways of thinking is also evident in the confrontation between Jesus and Pilate. When Jesus is asked what he has done, he replies, 'My kingdom does not belong to this world; if my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. No, my kingdom does not belong here!' (Jn. 18: 36). Muhammad would not have accepted this distinction between the different kinds of kingdom; and once he had concluded that the kingdom he was concerned about *did* belong to this world, it was an inevitable corollary that his followers would fight to protect him and to extend his authority.

Perhaps it is this factor—the attitude to political power—which more than any other makes Islam different from Judaism (and Christianity) in the New Testament. Although the first Jewish Christians were tolerated by the Roman authorities as a sect within Judaism (the followers of 'the Way'), they frequently found themselves up against the power of the synagogue and the Sanhedrin. From the early 60s, however, the Roman authorities became more and more intolerant towards them, and as the emperors increased their powers and made bolder claims for themselves, Christians found themselves a persecuted minority. Thus, whereas Paul in the 50s and early 60s had been able to enjoy some of the privileges of being a Roman citizen and could appeal to Caesar for protection against the plots of the Jews, by the time we come to the apostle John in the 90s, Rome has become more like a totalitarian state. It is therefore symbolized as 'the Beast', whose ways are so totally opposed to those of 'the Lamb'; and only those who bear the mark of the Beast and consent to all that it stands for can live as full members of society.

In many parts of the Islamic world today Christians enjoy as much freedom as the Jews did at the time of Jesus. Christianity is just as much a 'tolerated religion' as Judaism (and therefore Christianity) were in the first thirty years or so of the church's life. Where Islam has found it pos-

sible to allow for the existence of Christian minorities in its midst, it sees them as distinct communities with their own religion. Words like 'freedom' and 'toleration', however, need some qualification, since the Muslim mind cannot allow for the possibility of any member of its own community accepting a different faith. The idea of a Muslim becoming a Christian is as unthinkable as a man cutting himself off from his own family and his own society, and calls not simply for sorrow and regret but for strict sanctions.

If some of us are *dishonest* in not recognizing the considerable measure of freedom that Christians enjoy in many Islamic countries, others seem to be *blind* to the limitations and pressures under which Christians have to live in others. If at times they are guilty of perpetuating a ghetto mentality for which *they themselves* are largely responsible, there are other situations in which the Christian has good reason to feel that he is up against the combined powers of the 'synagogue', the 'Sanhedrin' and 'Caesar'. Whenever there is such an alliance between the society and the state, the Muslim is simply working out the logic of Muhammad's own thinking about the things that are Caesar's and the things that are God's. In this situation the Christian needs to sit with the apostle John and hear the voice in heaven which gives us a different understanding of the way by which God establishes his kingdom on earth: 'Now God's salvation has come! Now God has shown his power as King! Now his Messiah has shown his authority! For the one who stood before our God and accused our brothers day and night has been thrown out of heaven. Our brothers won the victory over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the truth which they proclaimed; and they were willing to give up their lives and die. And so be glad, you heavens, and all you that live there!' (Rev. 12: 10–12).

Is there any common denominator in our discussion of these six issues? The parallel we have drawn between Islam and New Testament Judaism would suggest that where there has to be a parting of the ways between the Christian and the Muslim, it is because we are faced ultimately with a choice between two ways of thinking which cannot be reconciled. Jesus' rebuke to Peter over the question of his suffering and death may therefore be relevant in all the other areas as well: 'You think as men think, not as God thinks' (Mk. 8: 33, NFB).

The apostle Paul saw the issues in similar terms when he wrote about his fellow Jews: 'I can assure you that they are deeply devoted to God; but their devotion is not based on true knowledge. They have not known the way in which God puts people right

with himself, and instead they have tried to set up their own way; and so they did not submit themselves to God's way of putting people right' (Rom. 10: 2f.). But lest we allow these insights to feed our pride and complacency, we do well also to overhear how the apostle *prays* for his fellow Jews, and ask

ourselves if there is any reason why we should not pray in the same terms for our Muslim brothers: 'How I wish with all my heart that my own people might be saved! How I pray to God for them!' (Rom. 10: 1).

An evangelical and critical approach to the sayings of Jesus

Bruce D Chilton

Dr Chilton, who lectures in the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Sheffield, England, here questions the widespread scepticism as to the historicity of the Gospels' account of Jesus, and goes on to show how the method of redaction criticism (commonly distrusted by evangelical students) can in fact be used to demonstrate the authenticity of a controversial saying. It is essentially an essay in method, and as such will prove of value even to those who may disagree with some of the exegetical conclusions.

1. The approach

At the close of his Manson Memorial Lecture (12 November 1976), Professor Étienne Trocmé referred to New Testament scholars as 'tired sceptics'; his not altogether lighthearted remark is especially pertinent to students of the life of Jesus. The simple fact of that life stands at the heart of our faith, and for that matter at the heart of a sceptic's questioning. For this reason, the more recent phases of the postwar quest for the historical Jesus have been dissatisfying from both points of view. While it is true that faith is more than the assimilation of data, there is a danger that, with our attention riveted too exclusively on what the evangelists thought of Jesus (redaction criticism)¹ and on what we are to make of him (hermeneutics),² we will fail to inquire diligently into the facts about Jesus. An evangelical approach would resist this trend, and I wish to suggest that the critical means are available to reverse it.

¹ See, e.g., N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969).

² See, e.g., E. Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1964).

Contrary to a very sloppy brand of popular thinking, there is better attestation for the life of Jesus than could be expected for that of an ancient figure. Besides notices in Jewish and Roman sources, and post-apostolic references to Jesus,³ we have the canonical Gospels. These four documents, unique against the background of contemporary literature and peculiar for the excellence and volume of their manuscript evidence,⁴ record impressions of Jesus in the mind of the first-century church. The author of each Gospel has preserved the memories of those who went before him, framing them into a coherent account.⁵ It is into this wonderfully rich material that the New Testament critic primarily delves in order to collect data about Jesus. When he deals with these documents he is, from the outset, closer to the object of his inquiry than the investigator who looks for Socrates in the Platonic dialogues, for Pericles in the 'Funeral Oration' of Thucydides, or for Caesar in Plutarch's *Lives*: the New Testament is more fully attested textually and is informed by many more witnesses than any of the last mentioned sources.

None of the documents which make up the New Testament, however, would pass as 'history' in the modern sense; Edward Gibbon and Leopold von Ranke were not about at the time to write it. Since the Enlightenment, we have expected historians to write of a complex of events 'as it actually happened' (to use the latter's famous

³ See F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974).

⁴ See B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: OUP, 1968).

⁵ Luke 1: 1-4 and John 21: 24 constitute evidence for this process.

phrase).⁶ A writer of the stamp of Thucydides, while he felt constrained to preserve the purport of what people said, would admit that he framed his characters' speeches in accordance with what he understood of their circumstances.⁷ We cannot say that the evangelists shared either of these programmes, because the literary peculiarity of the Gospels prevents us from categorizing them within a genre whose historiography can be typed. Before we can assess the historicity of the Gospels, we must confer with the texts in order to determine the purpose for which they were written.

The author of the fourth Gospel is quite explicit about this: 'these are written that you may believe . . .' (Jn. 20: 31). His colleagues would no doubt have agreed. It is not the primary intent of the evangelists to record data in a modern historical sense. They wish to put us in touch with God as he now is. To be sure, this God is revealed in past events whose epicentre is Jesus, but each of our writers orders the recollections of witnesses to bring out their essential (that is to say their divine) meaning. It is reasonable to allow that the witnesses themselves, consciously and unconsciously, would have articulated their testimony in terms of what they believed or came to believe. The Gospels, then, are historically grounded considerations of the significance of Jesus in the mind of faith.

Statements such as the last are sometimes taken to mean (both by radicals and conservatives) that the Gospels are not 'objective', *viz.*, not worthy of critical investigation. On two counts, this evaluation is invalid. First, historical 'objectivity' is, as suggested above, a modern standard which it is anachronistic to apply to ancient documents. Secondly, historians of any period would read very little indeed and would form odd impressions of their subjects if they attended only to what they thought was not tendentious. Human perception and communication take place on the basis of agreed (although not necessarily expressed) premises and standards; in this sense they are subjective. Objectivity in historical thought is achieved, not by searching for the nonexistent impartial observer and settling for nothing less, but by taking a writer's premises and standards into account when reading his work. Put in the abstract, this may appear a daunting task, yet it is not very far from what an intelligent reader does when he reads a newspaper. Every writer has an axe to grind: if one knows what sort of cutting edge he aims to

achieve, one is in a better position to infer how he has milled his material than if he hides behind an assumed 'objectivity'.

It is, then, theoretically possible to construct a critically sound impression of Jesus. How may this be achieved?⁸

As every theological student knows, particular attention has been paid in this century to the sayings of Jesus as distinct from narrative about Jesus. The logia excite such concern because it is held *a priori* that those who contributed to the formation of the New Testament would have taken care to preserve Jesus' diction, while they would have chronicled his actions in their own idioms. This supposition finds support in the rabbinic injunction, repeated in Talmud and Midrash, 'A man must speak in the words of his master'.⁹ It is eminently reasonable to focus on Jesus' words in the quest for the most reliable data about him.

Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God have borne the brunt of logia analysis.¹⁰ This also is in order, because the evangelists themselves present kingdom material to summarize the gist of Jesus' preaching (Mt. 4: 17, 23; 9: 35; Mk. 1: 15; Lk. 4: 43; 8: 1).¹¹ How then should we evaluate dominical kingdom logia?

A form-critical investigator decides what the simplest, oral form of a given saying would have been and eliminates additional material as secondary incursions. The use of this method is problematic. The Gospels are continuous documents in their present shape, so that they can be subdivided into various sorts of units only hypothetically. Moreover, folklore studies generally contradict the view that oral tradition circulates in discrete pericopae, and such an understanding is foundational to the form-critical exercise.¹² When a 'form' is isolated, the critic is then to decide where

⁸ For historical surveys of the attempt to answer this question, see, *e.g.*, A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: A. and C. Black, 1910 and 1963); G. Lundström, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963); Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1963 and 1966).

⁹ Cited by J. Bowker, *The Targums and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 1969) p. 49.

¹⁰ In addition to the books cited in n. 8, see, *e.g.*, R. Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom* (New York: Herder, 1963); Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967); G. E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom* (London: SCM, 1976).

¹¹ It is one of the remarkable features of John's Gospel that it does not have a notice of this sort.

¹² See T. Boman, *Die Jesus Überlieferung im Lichte der neueren Volkskunde* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1967); *cf.* M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (Cambridge: Clarke, 1971); R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972).

⁶ In his preface to *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker* (1824).

⁷ *The Peloponnesian War* I. xxii. 1.

it was produced, and the temptation must be great to dismiss uncongenial matter as 'secondary'. In this regard, it should be mentioned that the Bultmann school's insistence that little historical data can be gleaned from the Gospels fits in suspiciously well with its master's theological assertion that faith in Christ should not be grounded in mere history.¹³ In a word, form criticism involves too much unsupported hypothesis to serve as a reliable tool for the student of Jesus' life.

Since the end of the Second World War, redaction criticism has gained a firm hold in biblical criticism generally. In Gospel study, redaction critics have been concerned to delineate the theology of the evangelists.¹⁴ They do so with the understanding that the Gospel writers were less akin to novelists or modern historians, whose every word betrays their intention, than they are to editors (or redactors), whose work is manifest in the way in which they collect material. In order to determine the extent of a given evangelist's work, redaction critics have undertaken to study his vocabulary, syntax and thematic proclivities to distinguish what is characteristic of him (or is redactional) from what must stem from the material available to him (or is traditional).¹⁵ This procedure is rather new as a systematic method, and it will be some time before criteria are fully agreed for judging whether or not a given word, phrase or pattern is characteristic of an editor.

Nonetheless, the method points us in the direction of a most important step forward in logia criticism. Redaction criticism, by showing up the work of the evangelist, permits us to infer what was prior to the evangelist. My own investigation convinces me that traditional dominical kingdom logia contain diction also preserved in the Aramaic Targums.¹⁶ This use of redaction criticism, which

¹³ See H. Anderson, 'The Shift away from the Historical Jesus' in *Jesus and Christian Origins*, pp. 16-55 (New York: OUP, 1964).

¹⁴ The classic works in this field are: G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, H.-J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM, 1963); H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke* (London: Faber, 1969); W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (New York: Abingdon, 1969).

¹⁵ This method has been championed by Heinz Schürmann in many books and articles. His work has consistently demonstrated the historical value of the Gospels, and has made it abundantly clear that modern redaction criticism is not a mere extension of form criticism (cf. Perrin in the work cited in n. 1.). It is to be regretted that Professor Schürmann's contributions have not been published in English.

¹⁶ *God in Strength: Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom* (Cambridge PhD thesis, 1976). The following discussion is based on the fifth 'Exegesis' of the thesis. Specialists in the field will find more detail there than I present here,

we may call tradition criticism, is based upon the actual texts of the Gospels, and is therefore less hypothetical than a form-critical approach. Once the method comes to maturity and is applied consistently, it can be expected to yield a critically reliable picture of Jesus.

Such a picture will not be attained easily, as the test case we are about to consider will show. Its achievement requires researchers who are willing to compare the diction, syntax and theme of a given saying with the verbal structures of the Gospel within which it appears. The work is exacting, even tedious, but it is work on the basis of empirical data leading to a functionally objective result. It is not so much a job for tired sceptics as for those who find refreshment in bearing the light burden of critical discipleship.

2. A test case

The above discussion suggests that, given our understanding of how the Gospels have come down to us and of the present capability of New Testament investigation, it is appropriate to analyse dominical kingdom logia using what I have called tradition criticism. Practically speaking, how is this proposal supposed to work?

Mark 9:1 is a suitable candidate for a trial analysis because its authenticity as a Jesus saying has been denied form-critically and its meaning remains problematic.¹⁷ Any approach which claims to be evangelical and critical must be able both to reply to the denial of authenticity and also to illuminate the question of interpretation. The reader of the next few pages will find, I hope, that the proposed method establishes the substantive authenticity and meaning of this dominical saying. (Although I provide translations of the passages which will concern us, you will find the argument easier to follow if you have a synopsis close to hand.)

a. The priority of the Markan version

Since W. R. Farmer's brilliant critique of the intellectual descent of the two source hypothesis,¹⁸ no serious student of the Gospels can merely assume Markan priority to Matthew and Luke. In the present instance, however, it is evident that Mark preserves the most primitive wording of the

since the present effort is designed more to acquaint the student with my method than to run through all of the relevant evidence.

¹⁷ H. Anderson's *Mark* commentary (New Century, 1976), pp. 220-222, provides a good introduction to the discussion of this verse. All commentaries will be cited by Gospel, series (where applicable) and date only.

¹⁸ *The Synoptic Problem* (London: Macmillan, 1964).

logion, which Matthew and Luke interpret so as to bring out its meaning as they understand it, as follows:

'Amen I say to you that there are some of those here standing, some who will not taste death until they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom' (Mt. 16: 28).

Matthew has no introduction to his form of the saying corresponding to Mark's 'and he was saying to them'. His version is therefore most closely linked to the Son of man saying which precedes it.¹⁹ This correlates precisely with the fact that Matthew 16: 28 refers to 'the Son of man coming in his kingdom' rather than to the kingdom of God (so Luke and Mark). Following W. C. Allen, most commentators have agreed that Matthew has shaped the logion according to his own conception (developed out of such material as the uniquely Matthean 10: 23).²⁰ A significant voice of dissent was that of Theodore Zahn, who insisted that the Matthew Son of man reference was primitive, and that Mark and Luke expunged it in face of the delay in the parousia.²¹ The construction 'some of those here standing' (*tines tōn hōde hestōtōn*) tells against Zahn's position, since it is far smoother than Mark's 'some here of those standing' (*tines hōde tōn hestēkotōn*) and for that reason should be taken as a secondary improvement.²² We conclude, then, that Matthew has worded 16: 28 to suit his own eschatology.

'But I say to you truly, there are some of those there standing who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God' (Lk. 9: 27).

Luke proceeds analogously at 9: 27. His 'but' or 'and' (*de*) also relates the logion to the preceding Son of man saying, but his use of the phrase 'those there standing' (*autou*, in the less awkward position instead of *hōde*)²³ makes us think of a less imminent

encounter between the Son of man and the 'some' than that predicted in the Matthean parallel. Since Luke saw this saying from an eschatological perspective, he found 'having come in power' (Mk. 9: 1) unsuitable, especially because 'power' for him was a present force for witness given by God or Jesus.²⁴ It was therefore as natural for him to drop this phrase as it was to write 'truly' for 'amen' (cf. 12: 44; 21: 3 and parallels) and the definite article (*hoi*) for 'some who' (*hōtines*, which, as Luke felt, is redundant after *tines* in the versions of Matthew and Mark).

We are now left to treat the Markan form of the logion with the assurance that it is the most primitive form extant, the version presupposed by Matthew and Luke. En route, we have discovered the importance of redaction-critical technique for investigating the relationship between the synoptic Gospels. More to the present purpose, we have seen that Matthew and Luke introduced wording into the logion which we recognize as their own because it corresponds to features of their editorial policy manifest elsewhere in their respective works. Neither Gospel writer has fabricated the saying, but each has interpreted it. It is even possible that they knew the logion in its pre-Markan form and have shaped it accordingly, but we can only evaluate this possibility after we have isolated the pre-Markan tradition. To do this, we will continue to search for linguistic traces of redaction, this time in Mark 9: 1.

b. The Markan redaction

'And he was saying to them, Amen I say to you that there are some here of those standing, some who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God having come in power' (Mk. 9: 1).

Many authors have commented on the similarity of Mark 9: 1 to 13: 30.²⁵ They are structurally

¹⁹ Lk. 4: 14; 5: 17; 9: 1; 24: 49; Acts 1: 8; 6: 8; 10: 38; Schürmann, *Lukus* (Herder, 1969), pp. 550-552; cf. E. E. Ellis, *Luke* (New Century, 1974), p. 141. For the eschatological meaning of this verse in Luke's work, see S. Wilson, *The Gentiles and Gentile Missions in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1973), pp. 69, 70, 83.

²⁰ A. Cadoux, *The Sources of the Second Gospel* (London: Clarke, n.d.), p. 177; A. Vögtle, 'Exegetische Erwägungen über das Wissen und Selbstbewusstsein Jesu' in J. Metz (ed.), *Gott in Welt* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), pp. 642f.; J. Lambrecht, *Die Redaktion der Markus-Apokalypse* (Rome: Bibelinstitut, 1967), pp. 203f.; Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 199-201; R. Pesch, *Naherwartung* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1968), pp. 187f.; Perrin, 'The Composition of Mark 9: 1', *Novum Testamentum* 11 (1969), pp. 68f.; V. Hasler, *Amen* (Zürich: Gotthelf, 1969), p. 158; A. Ambrozic, *The Hidden Kingdom* (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1972), pp. 203f.

¹⁹ W. C. Allen, *Matthew* (ICC, 1912), p. 183.

²⁰ A. H. McNeile, *Matthew* (1915), p. 248; T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge: CUP, 1931), pp. 118 n. 1, 213, 220 n. 2; J. A. T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming* (London: SCM, 1957), pp. 53f.; J. Schmid, *Matthäus* (Regensburger Neues Testament, 1959), p. 94; E. Haenchen, 'Die Komposition von Mk. 8: 27-9: 1 und Par.' *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963), p. 103; R. Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium* (München: Kaiser, 1966), p. 155; W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (Anchor, 1971), p. 201; D. Hill, *Matthew* (New Century, 1972), p. 266; E. Schweizer, *Matthew* (1976), p. 347.

²¹ *Matthew* (1903), p. 552, and *Luke* (1913), p. 382.

²² The oddity of the Markan placement is demonstrated by the fact that it is altered in most manuscripts of Mark. Later scribes found Mark's order unacceptable, and so did Matthew.

²³ For this meaning of *autou*, see Acts 21: 4 and the variant readings at 15: 34; 18: 19; cf. Gn. 22: 5 LXX.

identical, each having the 'amen' locution, a solemn negation (*ou mē*) with the subjunctive, and a word for 'until'. On the basis of their common form, it has been argued that one derives from the other. Jan Lambrecht has held to the priority of 9: 1, and Norman Perrin to that of 13: 30.²⁶ To accept either reconstruction, one would have to be convinced that Mark felt free to hang his own words on dominical syntax. We can only be so convinced if the language of our logion proves on analysis to be redactional; there is no form-critical short-cut around weighing linguistic traits. If the wording of 9: 1 were substantively Markan, we would agree with Perrin (whose conclusion, unlike Lambrecht's, directly impinges on our understanding of this logion) that it is a supplementary development within the Gospel tradition.

In the event, analysis quickly makes it plain that Mark's contribution to 9: 1 is not substantive, but is of the same, interpretative order as that of Matthew and Luke. He introduces 'and he was saying to them', 'that', 'some', 'here' and 'having come'. We will now consider the evidence upon which this deduction is based, and see how these words reveal Mark's understanding of the saying.

Kai elegen autois ('and he was saying to them') is commonly found in the second Gospel as a bridge to connect the saying which follows it to the material which precedes it (*cf.* 2: 27; 4: 2, 11, 21, 24; 6: 4, 10; 7: 9, 14; 8: 21).²⁷ Hence Werner Kelber describes 8: 38 as achieving 'the transition from discipleship to eschatology' and 9: 1 as positing the reward of this eschatologically motivated discipleship.²⁸ Since the Fathers, it has been maintained that 9: 1 points forward to the transfiguration, and F. J. Schierse actually refers to it as 'eine Art Überschrift zu Verklärungsepi- kope'.²⁹ This judgment is confirmed when we see instances of the use of *kai elegen autois* to introduce logia which are followed by narrative sentences (4: 2; 6: 4; 7: 14), and in one case even a full narrative sequence (2: 27), directly pertinent to the sayings in question. The dual connection of 9: 1 in Mark's mind to the Son of man saying which precedes and the transfiguration which follows is therefore established.

²⁶ Lambrecht's argument is more complete than Perrin's, which is refuted by Ambrozic (all three cited in previous note).

²⁷ See, e.g., J. Wellhausen, *Mark* (1903), p. 74; V. Taylor, *Mark* (1966), p. 384; Ambrozic (cited in n. 25), p. 204.

²⁸ *The Kingdom in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), pp. 71, 72.

²⁹ See Taylor (cited in n. 27), p. 385; W. L. Lane, *Mark* (NICNT, 1974), pp. 313, 314; Schierse, 'Historische Kritik und theologische Exegese', *Scholastik* 29 (1954), pp. 528f.

Mark seems to have found it odd to place the solemn negation *ou mē* on the heels of the obviously affirmative 'amen I say to you'. In four of the five occurrences of 'amen' with *ou mē* in his Gospel, 'that' (*hoti*) separates the two (9: 1, 41; 13: 30; 14: 25). *Hoti* does not appear at 10: 15, where a full clause keeps the two expressions at a distance. The practice of Matthew and Luke is not so consistent,³⁰ so it appears that the ambiguity of juxtaposing affirmation and firm negation was felt more keenly by Mark than by his colleagues, and that his use of *hoti* recitative is correspondingly more frequent. It is probable that Mark has inserted the conjunction here. 'Some' (*tines*) is another instance in which the frequency of the usage's appearance in the second Gospel suggests that its pedigree is redactional.³¹ Its presence here handsomely corresponds to Mark's placement of the saying, since it may be construed to refer back to those who will see the parousia,³² and forward to the select three who will see the transfiguration.³³

'Here' (*hōde*) has been placed in such an odd position that not only Matthew (and, using his own term, Luke), but most manuscripts of Mark shift it so as to fall between the participle 'standing' and its definite article.³⁴ Mark 11: 5 (*cf.* also 15: 35) shows that even our redactor would have preferred the normal arrangement. It appears that 'those standing' was a set phrase which Mark felt was not to be broken up; 'here' could only be added in an unusual and awkward manner. For all its oddity, 'here' acquires significance as a Markan connecting link to the transfiguration when it is echoed in Peter's declaration at 9: 5, and Matthew's repetition of *hōde* in 17: 4 shows that he fully appreciated this connection.

'Having come' is Mark's final contribution to the understanding of this logion. To some extent, it may be held to associate itself with the use of the verb 'to come' in the previous verse,³⁵ but due weight should be given to its perfect tense here, which does not correspond to the usage in 8: 38. At 7: 29, 30 the perfect is used twice, once in the

³⁰ While the Matthean parallels to 9: 1 and 13: 30 preserve *hoti*, neither Mt. 10: 42 (= Mk. 9: 41) nor 26: 29 (= Mk. 14: 25) do so. Lk. preserves it in this situation at 21: 32 (= Mk. 13: 30), but not, in most manuscripts, at 9: 27 (and *cf.* 22: 16-18). Neither Mt. 18: 3 nor Lk. 18: 7 have *hoti* (so Mk. 10: 15).

³¹ So Ambrozic, pp. 33, 34, 207.

³² G. Bornkamm, 'Die Verzögerung der Parusie' in W. Schmauck (ed.), *In Memoriam Ernst Lohmeyer* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches, 1951), pp. 117, 118.

³³ C. E. B. Cranfield, *Mark* (Cambridge Greek, 1966), pp. 287f.

³⁴ As the more difficult reading, the clumsy order is to be preferred. It is supported by B and perhaps D*.

³⁵ See F. Neiryneck, *Duality in Mark* (Louvain: Leuven University, 1972), p. 79.

indicative and once as a participle, to emphasize that what Jesus says in fact occurs. The Matthean parallel does not use this device, so that we may proceed on the hypothesis that this is a Markan locution, and look for a partner for the participle (*elēluthuan*) in 9: 1. We in fact find the indicative (*elēluthen*) used in Mark 9: 13, where Jesus insists that Elijah *has* come. Again, Matthew did not use the locution (Luke has an equivalent neither to Mk. 7: 29, 30 nor to Mk. 9: 13); 'having come' seems to be a product of Markan style whose correlate is 'has come' in 9: 13 more than 'should come' in 8: 38. Mark has so interpreted 9: 1 that it can be considered fulfilled by the Jesus saying after the transfiguration: Elijah having come is the seal of the kingdom having come. This is why Mark gives priority to Elijah in 9: 4 (*cf.* the more straightforward order of the parallels and Mk. 9: 5). For him, our saying is confirmed by what happened on the mount to Peter, James and John.

c. *The origin and meaning of the saying*

When we remove the Markan redactional elements from our saying, we are left with the following logion:

'Amen I say to you, there are those standing,
some who will not taste death
until they see the kingdom of God in power.

It is now our task to show that these words are traditional (*i.e.*, non-Markan), and to determine the origin of this tradition. In the following paragraphs, we will see that Mark treats this wording in a way which suggests that he knew it from a prior source, and that its complexion is Semitic, sometimes specifically Aramaic. Finally, it will emerge that, once the saying is seen in this context, the vexed question of what Jesus meant when he said it is answered.

The studies of Victor Hasler and Klaus Berger have brought the brief epoch to an end during which it was possible to seize on 'amen' as a hallmark of *ipsissima vox Jesu*. Joachim Jeremias had argued that it was such an indicator, although it should not be ignored that he listed it as one among several.³⁶ But, in a book published in 1969, Hasler showed that the synoptic evangelists exercised discretion in placing the 'amen' phrase, and Berger followed this by suggesting that the term itself has a prehistory in Greek-speaking Jewish Christianity (see the expression *ē mēn* in the

Septuagint).³⁷ Of course this does not mean that Jesus never used this or an equivalent phrase, but it does mean that the presence of 'amen' can no longer be considered a sufficient indication that the saying which follows it is dominical.

In the present instance, the fact that Mark placed *hoi* between the introductory formula and *ou mē* suggests that it did not suit his taste to have the two elements in proximity, and therefore that he inserted neither of them. *Ou mē* itself always occurs in logia in the second Gospel (9: 1, 41; 10: 15; 13: 2, 19, 30, (31); 14: 25, 31),³⁸ and represents the Semitic emphatic negation (*l'* instead of 'l').

Similarly, the awkward Markan addition of *hōde* suggests that 'those standing' is an independent, traditional idiom which Mark thought it better not to interrupt. This suggestion gains force when we see the phrase surfacing in other books of the New Testament (Mt. 26: 73; Jn. 3: 29; Acts 22: 25).³⁹ F. C. Burkitt explained its presence in our literature by pointing out that it is known in Syriac and Aramaic (*hlym dqymyn*) in the sense of 'the bystanders'.⁴⁰ The fact that the phrase was current in Aramaic reinforces an observation which John A. T. Robinson made without reference to this philological detail: the saying envisages a group referred to in the third person (with the participle) which is distinct from those who are addressed in the second person.⁴¹ Who is in this group? We have already seen that Mark identifies them (using *tines* and *hōde*) with the few who are present at the transfiguration, but this is a redactional identification. Without the Markan vocabulary, the question remains open, especially because we know that 'those standing' is not an empty description, but a fairly fixed expression. Is there a traditional identification for this group?

When it is said that 'those standing' are 'some who will not taste death', such a traditional identification does emerge. The fact that Markan 'some' (*tines*) is redundant when placed in proximity to 'some who' (*hoitines*) indicates that the latter is pre-Markan. The construction 'not taste death' is a *hapax legomenon* in the synoptics, but it is known from other sources of dominical logia and from rabbinic literature.⁴² To apply this Semitic

³⁷ Hasler (cited in n. 25); Berger, *Die Amen-Worte Jesu* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), and 'Zur Geschichte der Einleitungsformel "Amen, ich sage euch"' *ZNW* 63 (1972), pp. 45-75.

³⁸ Neiryneck (cited in n. 35), p. 88.

³⁹ As H. B. Swete, *Mark* (1908), p. 186, saw.

⁴⁰ *Evangelion Da-Mepharreshe* II (Cambridge: CUP, 1904), p. 283.

⁴¹ (Cited in n. 20), pp. 90, 91.

⁴² See John 8: 52 and the Gospel of Thomas logia 1, 18, 19, 85 (111); K. Beyer, *Semitische Syntax im Neuen*

³⁶ 'Kennzeichen der ipsissima vox Jesu' in J. Schmid (ed.), *Synoptische Studien* (München: Zink, 1953), pp. 86-93.

idiom (in which taste is used to mean 'experience') to someone is the equivalent of calling him immortal. It is not said of men generally, indeed Adam was understood to have been 'preordained to taste the taste of death'.⁴³ The rabbis thought that immortality belongs, as readers of the Old Testament might guess, to such as the angels, Enoch and Elijah, and in addition to such as Moses, Jeremiah and Ezra.⁴⁴ The likes of these figures, who had been 'taken up', were expected to return with the Messiah (4 Ezra 6: 26) and are known as 'those who have not tasted death'.⁴⁵

Could Jesus have had such figures in mind? Mark's understanding that a subset of the disciples is in view may owe something to John 8: 51, 52, where it is explicitly promised, 'If anyone keep my word, he will not taste death'.⁴⁶ But our logion does not in fact promise immortality in this way; rather it refers to ones, distinct from those addressed, who will not taste death. There is a world of difference between promising immortality and referring to an immortal group, and our logion does the latter. As it happens, we find in the transfiguration two figures (Moses and Elijah) of whom Jewish tradition could say that they did not taste death. That is: Mark placed this saying before the transfiguration precisely because Jesus is speaking of figures similar to those which appear in that pericope. Matthew and Luke also understood this, which is why the former repeats 'here' in 17: 4 and the latter adds the detail that Moses and Elijah were *standing* in 9: 32. The evangelists were not arbitrary redactors; we can see that their interpretations are grounded in the traditional meaning of this logion in which Jesus referred to deathless figures.

Before we move on to the last words of our saying, we must ask: why did Jesus refer to an immortal group? We find an answer in the so-called pseudo-Jonathan Targum to Deuteronomy 32: 1. There, Moses swears 'by witnesses which do not taste death'. Using a similar Aramaic idiom, in tandem with a construction (*ou mē* with

'until') which can carry asseverative force,⁴⁷ Jesus calls the deathless figures to witness that what he says is true, just as he assures us elsewhere (Mt. 8: 11, 12; Mk. 12: 27 and parallels) that God's concern for us is as sure as his continuing relationship with the patriarchs. Jesus can call those like Moses and Elijah as witnesses because his God is the God of the living.

The use of 'until' (*heōs an*) does not mean that 'the ones standing' are expected to die after they see the kingdom; this is part of a Semitic construction (*l'* with *d*) which serves as an emphatic negation whose temporal aspect is not to be pressed.⁴⁸ At Genesis 28: 15, for example, God says to Jacob, 'I will not (Hebrew *l'*; Greek *ou mē*) leave you until (Hebrew *d*; Greek *heōs*) I have done that of which I have spoken to you'. The point is obviously not that God will desert Jacob after he performs his promise, but that he will really do what he says. By analogy, Mark 9: 1 does not predict the death of those to whom reference is made, but affirms that they will definitely see the kingdom. In this it is similar to John 8: 51, 52 and unlike Luke 2: 26 (which has 'before' instead of 'until'). Mark only uses *heōs an* in logia (6: 10; 9: 1) and in an Old Testament citation (12: 36), so that it should not be considered a redactional turn of phrase.⁴⁹

The crux of the logion is what those who will not taste death experience (*i.e.* 'see', as at Jn. 3: 3, a Semitic construction used by Jesus in reference to the kingdom): they will participate in 'the kingdom of God in power'. The prepositional phrase *en dynamei* is unusual in the second Gospel.⁵⁰ At 14: 62, 'power' is a periphrasis for God, and the 'with much power' of 13: 26 suggests the accompanying spectacle of the Son of man's coming, not the actual means of the kingdom's manifestation. Since Bernhard Weiss, scholars have associated Mark's diction here with Paul's *en dynamei* usage,⁵¹ and 1 Corinthians 4: 20 is especially striking in the present connection: 'not in word is the kingdom of God but in power'. Paul apparently knew something of the saying which Mark reproduces more fully, so it would be perverse not to assign it to a primitive stock of dominical logia.

⁴⁷ Such force can be seen in Mt. 5: 18, 26; 10: 23; 23: 39; 24: 21, 34; 26: 29; Mk. 13: 19; 14: 25; Lk. 12: 59; 13: 35; 21: 32; 22: 16, 18; Jn. 13: 38. See also Jn. 4: 14; 8: 51, 52; 10: 28; 11: 26; 13: 8; 1 Cor. 8: 13.

⁴⁸ Beyer (cited in n. 42), p. 132f. n. 1.

⁴⁹ Perrin, 'Composition' (cited in n. 25), p. 69, attempted to draw a conclusion on the basis of the mere frequency of *heōs* without considering the sort of material in which it is used.

⁵⁰ Cf. Perrin, *Rediscovering* (cited in n. 25), p. 19 n. 4.

⁵¹ See E. Klostermann, *Mark* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, 1936), p. 85.

Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1968), pp. 132f.

⁴³ Genesis Rabbah 9.6.

⁴⁴ See the helpful note in R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha II* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), pp. 576f. Josephus (*Ant.* IV.326) thought that Moses enjoyed a status similar to that of Elijah and Enoch (*cf.* IX.28b).

⁴⁵ The Syriac reads 'ylyn dnmwt' *l' temw*, the Latin *qui mortem non gustaverunt*.

⁴⁶ See Berger, *Die Amen-Wörter* (cited in n. 37), pp. 64f. As Barnabas Lindars points out in his commentary on *John* (New Century, 1972) pp. 332, 333, the Markan passage is probably a source of the Johannine passage.

Finally, we have at our disposal an Aramaic source which similarly associates the kingdom with the phrase 'in power'. In the Targum to Isaiah (40: 9) we find the injunction, 'say to the cities of the house of Judah, the kingdom of your God is revealed'. The following clause reads, 'Behold the Lord God in power (*btqwv*) is revealed'. Now extant Targums generally date from a late stage in rabbinic development, but they contain elements from much earlier periods.⁵³ The coherence of the Targum to Isaiah 40: 9, 10 with Mark 9: 1 may be taken to date the former in the first century and to imply that it provides an example of the sort of language Jesus used. It is also significant that the 'kingdom' in the Targum is not an elaborately conceived regime, but a rendering of the Hebrew 'your God'. Jesus here assures us in an idiom known to us from the Targum that the kingdom, understood as God's revelation on behalf of his people, is a reality. He was as certain of this as he was that the patriarchs, Moses and Elijah, live in the sight of God.

d. Conclusions

Having worked through the wording of Mark, a few general comments from me are in order. First, I am well aware that it is not a common practice to subject a verse to such a 'microscope' (as Professor C. F. D. Moule has dubbed my method), but neither is it a common result of twentieth-century criticism to show that the evangelists substantively transmit a dominical saying. To be sure, we have seen that they do so in a way which accords with their respective redactional habits, but our conclusion has been emphatic: this saying of Jesus was indeed interpreted, but none but he invented it.

Now a word about my exegesis of what Jesus meant by this logion. It is common practice to take 'those standing' to refer to the disciples, or to a group of disciples. Taking the saying in this way ignores the fact that those addressed are syntactically distinguished from those to whom reference is made, and it rides roughshod over the Semitic constructions ('not taste death', *l'—'d*) which may indicate that immortal witnesses are in view (as in

the targum cited to Deuteronomy 32: 1). The most unsatisfactory feature of the usual exegesis is that it turns the kingdom of God into a cipher, something it never is in the teaching of Jesus;⁵³ if you refer this saying to the disciples, you must look for some esoteric indication of what they are to 'see' in their lifetimes, and you have only the kingdom phrase to find it in. This situation has occasioned the identification of the kingdom with, e.g., the transfiguration, the resurrection, the ascension, Pentecost, the spread of the gospel, the parousia.⁵⁴ My interpretation begins by taking details of syntax and grammatical form seriously, and ends by asserting that the 'kingdom in power' is no apocalyptic crossword puzzle, but, as Paul knew very well (1 Cor. 4: 20), a forthright reference to God's strength, whose efficacy Jesus avers to his followers by immortal witnesses.

Last but far from least: our microscope has shown what amazing documents the synoptic Gospels are. They actually preserve traces of Aramaic kingdom locutions best ascribed to Jesus himself. They do not preserve as a museum preserves, with each specimen in its proper bottle; they weave dominical traditions together with their own language, their own experience, and the result is a durable tapestry, historical patterns highlighted with theological coloration. They stand as a challenge to us to weave the Jesus pattern, the kingdom in power which he proclaimed, into our own experience. Notice too how vital these documents are. We approached them asking empirical questions about their language; they answered these questions, and in the process revealed the authenticity and meaning of a central Jesus saying. It was not necessary to *assume* that they are the word of God, they prove themselves as such under open inquiry. This is as it should be: the authority of the Bible is not merely a human assumption; if it were it would be useless. No—biblical authority is inherent in the canonical documents' attempt to transmit a divine *datum*. A primary evangelical and critical task is, not to peddle our assumptions, but to encourage the sort of open, detailed inquiry which will vindicate them.

⁵³ Bowker (cited in n. 9) provides a good introduction to this material. In particular, P. Churgin, *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New Haven: Yale University, 1927), has seen in the Isaiah Targum exegetical elements stemming from the period from before the destruction of the Temple (p. 23) to the Sassanid persecution (p. 28).

⁵³ A point made recently by Perrin in *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom* (cited in n. 10), p. 196.

⁵⁴ For competent catalogues of such interpretations, see Cranfield (cited in n. 33), pp. 286-288 and A. Plummer, *Luke* (ICC, 1922), p. 249.

James Barr on 'fundamentalism'— a review article

David F Wright

Many reviews of this book have already been written, some fiercely critical. This careful assessment by one of our Associate Editors, which was first printed in the Church Leaders in Student Situations Broadsheet last November, not only picks out some of the book's weaknesses, but also draws out some valid and important lessons for contemporary evangelicalism.

It is surely remarkable that a prominent biblical scholar who has taught in Scotland, the USA and England should have to embark on a programme of research in order to write about one of the major currents of Christian life in Britain, conservative evangelicalism. Such is the ignorance of the movement that prevails in other sectors of the church and theology. The reasons for this fact are no doubt complex, but this much is obvious, that Barr will have had no difficulty finding out about his subject, for his analysis is largely based on literature freely available in the bookshops. His work is to be welcomed as a serious attempt to correct a major defect in the internal ecumenism of British Christianity. It may at least be hoped that as a consequence conservative evangelicals will find themselves better understood by other Christians.

As a pioneer Barr perhaps deserves special consideration from a reviewer. It must nevertheless be pointed out that his research displays grave limitations. His familiarity with the works of leading evangelical scholars like John Stott, F. F. Bruce, Earle Ellis, Ralph Martin, G. W. Bromiley and Howard Marshall is severely restricted and rarely up-to-date. By ignoring G. C. Berkouwer altogether, Barr manages to extend Van Til's almost total rejection of Karl Barth to evangelicals in general (p. 220). He never mentions Tyndale House and its library or the Tyndale Fellowship or Latimer House, and he appears to be unacquainted with evangelical periodicals. The National Assemblies of Evangelicals in Britain in recent years, the National Evangelical Anglican Congress at Keele in 1967 and the Lausanne Congress of 1974 seem to lie beyond Barr's ken, so that he remains unaware of important developments in evangelical thought, including the element of self-criticism he

failed to find in Britain (pp. 222, 353). On one point, evangelical attitudes to evolution, the dated quality of Barr's work has left him ignorant of a recent anti-evolutionist reaction (p. 92).

It would have been helpful if Barr had identified the other critical observers of conservative evangelicalism he refers to from time to time, and also been more open about his own fundamentalist past which he hints at once or twice. One can understand but not condone his disingenuousness about his earlier involvement with a variety of Christianity he now patently detests. A quarter of a century ago he was president of the Christian Union at Edinburgh University. This may be thought to give him a peculiar authority to write on this subject, but its significance is probably to be found more in the old-fashioned flavour of some of his material and in the fact that he directs his fire chiefly against the British IVF (now UCCF) and IVP publications. Augustine of Hippo spent most of his twenties in the ranks of Manichaeism, which after his catholic conversion he proceeded to assail with both the insight and the vehemence of an ex-Manichaean. Barr is no Augustine, but the parallel may still hold.

Some explanation is certainly needed why a book which sets out to analyse and understand (p. 9) becomes a hatchet job. Like a child with the pile of wooden bricks on the cover, Barr is bent on demolishing evangelicalism. A sympathetic reviewer in *The Scotsman* called him 'ruthless', and so he is. It will be no surprise if the book embitters relations between different kinds of Christians. Time and again I found my own taste soured by the harsh caricatures, exaggerations and even scurrilities of Barr's arguments (e.g. pp. 98, 99, 101, 120, 164, 172, 247). The tone is set on the very first page which selects three negative features (biblical inerrancy, hostility to modern theology and biblical criticism, rejection of non-evangelicals as not true Christians) as 'the most pronounced characteristics' of conservative evangelicalism.

One of the most perceptive contributions to the 1955-1956 debate on fundamentalism was entitled *The Many Fundamentalisms* (by Cyril Bowles, then Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, and now Bishop of Derby). Barr shows some of the symp-

toms of the fundamentalism of the biblical critic. This may explain why he conceives of evangelicalism chiefly as anti-criticism (pp. 208, 344), and why he endeavours to contrast Reformation and evangelical theologies on the wholly tautological grounds that 'theology in the pre-critical period was not animated by the anti-critical animus and passion of modern conservative theology' (p. 174). While poking fun at the extravagances of conservative scholars, he shows little awareness of the follies and excesses of liberal criticism. I cannot forget the day when a lecturer at Cambridge tried to convince us that Matthew was so obsessed with Old Testament proof texts that he actually believed Jesus rode into Jerusalem on *both* a donkey *and* a donkey's colt *at the same time* (Mt. 21:1-8)! Barr would have helped evangelicals to come to terms with biblical criticism, as indeed very many have done, if he had directed some of his fire against those practitioners who have brought it into so much discredit.

But then Barr's book as a whole seems so ill-suited to educate conservative Christians that it is doubtful whether it was written with them in mind at all. He expects an unfavourable reception from evangelical readers, and is really intent on addressing to outsiders a dissuasive from 'fundamentalism'. He is not at all sure that conservative evangelicals should be tolerated in the churches (pp. 343-344). Such a posture is nothing new, although it may not be entirely accidental that it coincides with other signs of renewed pressure against evangelicals.

Barr's critical-fundamentalist cast of mind is probably linked to his antipathy to theology and often theologians (as distinct from biblical and historical scholarship and scholars) which is well-known from some of his earlier writings. 'Biblical theology' and neo-orthodoxy come under attack again here, sometimes when Barr is overtly attacking only conservatives. His own theological convictions remain unclear, except that they are subservient to the currents of liberal criticism (pp. 185, 186). The chapter on 'Fundamentalism and Theology' is the most lamentable in the book. Exaggerations abound (e.g. 'In fundamentalism all relations with non-conservative theology are purely polemical', p. 163), even absurdities ('If you ask what is the reason why one should be a conservative evangelical, rather than some other sort of Christian, the answer will very likely be: because of sin', p. 177), while his attempt to show that the line of continuity from Luther and Calvin runs down to, let us say, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, rather than to evangelicalism is myopic. Barr is clearly not at home in historical theology; he discounts an Atha-

nasian christology (p. 171), and twice misconstrues the Westminster Confession (pp. 261ff., 294). Above all, Barr's distaste for theology may be responsible for his fastening on the formally negative, technical concept of inerrancy as the most significant feature of the evangelical view of Scripture. In reality, the divine authority of the Bible, which is a positive theological principle, is of far greater importance.

One of Barr's tactics is the age-old policy of divide and conquer. He arrays against conservative evangelicalism not only modern theology (undefined—Barth or Tillich?) but also the Reformation, the Westminster Confession and in important respects the Princeton theology of the Hodges and Warfield. More interestingly he finds popular evangelicalism less objectionable than scholarly evangelicalism. It is almost as if he is afraid of the increasing prominence of evangelicals in professional biblical circles. He is anxious to assure his readers that biblical criticism is not on the wane (pp. 132-133), which is undoubtedly true. But it remains a half-truth unless one adds that a growing number of biblical critics remain 'fundamentalists', which Barr cannot stomach. For Barr a conservative evangelical has no business engaging in biblical criticism unless he allows the latter to overthrow his evangelicalism. He is in fact a very difficult man to please. When evangelicals learn from others, they are hanging on their coat-tails (p. 232), when they quote non-evangelical writers, it implies no lessening of hostility towards them (p. 233). When evangelicals are politically and socially conservative, it is the fault of their conservative evangelicalism, but when they are more to the left, their socialism has nothing to do with their evangelical faith (p. 108).

It is partly the limitations of Barr's research which have led him seriously to underestimate the diversity of British evangelicalism (e.g. he has missed the Reformed evangelical's pursuit of a Christian society, p. 100). At the same time on a host of issues he is unaware of the strong winds of change blowing through the movement. But the neat, static quality of the picture he paints is also integral to his campaign of isolation and demolition. If he encounters a writer or a viewpoint which does not fit in with his schematic presentation, he discounts them as 'not really conservative' (p. 233).

A number of Barr's criticisms fail to take into account the minority-outsider position that evangelicalism has had to occupy until relatively recent times. This helps to explain, for example, why evangelicals have often excluded non-evangelicals from their platforms. Things are changing here

too, now that evangelicals do not always have to fight for the right to be heard. But when Barr alleges that it is 'fundamentalist policy' to reject non-conservative arguments unheard, the boot is really on the other foot, at any rate in the world of biblical and theological study. A brief perusal of the bookshelves of conservatives and non-conservatives would rapidly have robbed Barr of this complaint.

In fact I repeatedly felt that Barr's arguments could be stood completely on their head. He accuses evangelicalism of being parasitic on non-evangelical Christianity, whereas in reality the ranks of ecclesiastical and theological leaders in Britain would be much thinner without those won to the Christian faith by evangelicals and later wooed to more respectable brands of Christianity. When Barr discovers a kind of evangelical anti-clericalism echoing 'the typical secularistic reaction of irreligious man' (p. 101), I am less convinced than I was by John Robinson's earlier highlighting of a strong clericalist streak among evangelicals in the major churches.

The general flavour and gross simplifications of the book are regrettable for the further supremely important reason that they may hinder evangelicals from taking to heart its *many* valid criticisms of evangelicalism. Some of these merit special mention.

1. Evangelicals generally lack a satisfactory understanding of doctrinal development. As a consequence, theology is rarely seen as a constructive and creative task (p. 223), and the most overtly developed Christian doctrine, that of the Trinity, enjoys little more than formal recognition in much evangelicalism (pp. 176-177). As so often, however, Barr spoils a sound point by blatant misrepresentation (the traditional faith of the church and the Fathers count so little for evangelicals that on these grounds they would just as readily be unitarians as Trinitarians—p. 177), which he has earlier directly contradicted ('true fundamentalism' has no role for theology other than the conservation and reiteration of tradition—p. 162).

2. One of our most urgent unfinished tasks is the elaboration of a satisfactory doctrine of Scripture for an era of biblical criticism. The development of critical, *i.e.* literary and historical, study of the Bible constitutes one of the great divides in Christian history; there can be no turning the clock back. We cannot afford to rest on Warfield's laurels, but must meet the challenges of today. In particular, we have to work out what it means to be faithful *at one and the same time both* to the doctrinal

approach to Scripture as the Word of God *and* to the historical treatment of Scripture as the words of men. It is at this point that Barr's strictures are most acute and accurate—and it is a crucially central point.

3. We must be careful not to appear to usurp the divine prerogative in our use of terms like 'a Christian'. Unnecessary offence has clearly been given by statements like 'He is not a Christian', when what is meant is 'He is not an evangelical (Christian)'. The former may have its place in an evangelistic context, but not in the setting of differences among professing Christians. God alone knows those who are his.

4. We must dare to be more self-critical of false structures of thought and practice within our own ranks. Barr's target here is dispensationalism, whose prevalence I feel he considerably exaggerates, partly because his evidence is out-of-date, and whose appeal and significance he surrounds with considerable speculation. Nevertheless he carries conviction in claiming that we have been soft on such internal evangelical excesses.

5. Evangelicals' economic, political and social attitudes have often been unthinkingly conformist and complacent. Barr is again woefully behind the times (the Shaftesbury Project, for instance, is unmentioned) and blind to the increasing diversity of evangelical viewpoints. Yet we do well to heed his comments.

6. Barr repeatedly claims to have detected a rationalistic streak in evangelical writings. Some of his examples suggest that a lack of confidence in accepting the miraculous has fostered a rationalizing outlook at times. But big questions arise here, for example, of the relation between historical evidence and acts of God, which Barr is in no position to settle. His argument in the chapter on 'Miracles and the Supernatural' is open to objection at several points. There is no necessary inconsistency, as Barr assumes, seeking to divide (J. N. D. Anderson and G. E. Ladd) and conquer, between an apologetic appeal to the evidence for the resurrection and the recognition that the raising of Jesus from the dead is an act of God *sui generis*. And it is frankly incredible, at least for those of us who know and read liberal biblical critics, that their beliefs about miracles or the supernatural do not influence their historico-literary study of the Bible (p. 236). It simply begs the whole issue (or sells the pass) to assert that 'even where miracles and supernatural events are related, the historical and literary questions can be and should be treated as a matter of normal human relations' (p. 237).

Barr has produced a book of remarkable in-

genuity and industry which is liable to mislead many of its readers. Very few indeed outside the ranks of evangelicals will be sufficiently well-read to assess his accuracy. Indeed, 'Barr' is likely to become a substitute for first-hand familiarity with conservative evangelicalism and to be quoted authoritatively in the judgments of the ignorant.

In so far as he hoped to teach evangelicals a better way, he has only himself to blame if he misses the mark. We owe it to ourselves, if not to him, to see that he does not.

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