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JUN 28 1988

# themelios

April/May 1988

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An international journal for theological students  
75p

Vol. 13

No. 3

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Vol. 13 No. 3

An international journal for theological students, expounding and defending the historic Christian faith. It is published three times a year jointly by the British Theological Students Fellowship, a constituent part of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. It seeks to address itself to questions being faced by theological students in their studies and to help readers to think out a clear biblical faith.

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Leicester LE1 7GP

North America and Canada orders may  
be sent

c/o IFES Link, 6400 Schroeder Road,  
PO Box 7895, Madison, WI 53707-7895, USA

## Subscription rates

(including postage)

British Isles £3.40

Subscribers in the Republic of Ireland please pay in sterling. (Payments can be made to our National Giro Account Number 5038316, marked for *Themelios*.)

Elsewhere (surface mail, including bank charges) for orders through the appropriate address shown above

1 year	£3.40	US \$9.00
2 years	£6.80	US \$17.00
3 years	£10.20	US \$25.00

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## Back Numbers

Each issue of *Themelios* can only contain a few articles; but there is a wealth of useful material in back issues. Information about the contents and availability of back issues may be obtained from TSF, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP, England.

ISSN 0307-8388

# Editorial: The End is Near. In what sense?

In the gospels Jesus announces that 'the kingdom of God has come near' (e.g. Mk. 1:15); in the book of Revelation the heavenly Jesus promises 'I am coming soon' (Rev. 22:20). From beginning to end the NT is marked by a sense of urgent expectation, a sense that the countdown for eternity is under way and that it will not be long before 'the last trumpet call' (as Paul puts it, 1 Thes. 4:16), before 'we have lift-off' (as today's space scientists might put it, compare 1 Thes. 4:16!).

This feature of the NT is something that has worried ordinary Christians and scholars alike. It looks uncomfortably as though Jesus and the NT writers were wrong. In Jesus' teaching there is not just a general sense of urgency, but specific statements about things happening in a generation; for example in Mark 9:1 Jesus says, 'Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God having come with power' (compare also Mt. 10:23; Mk. 13:30 and parallel passages). Elsewhere in the NT the most striking evidence is in the teaching of Paul, for example in 1 Corinthians 7 where he appears to advocate celibacy on the grounds that the time before the end is short (7:29), and especially in 1 and 2 Thessalonians where excitement about the end seems very high. In 1 Thessalonians 4 the Thessalonian Christians are described as grieving over lost loved ones, and it seems that their grief was because they had not reckoned with believers dying before the Lord's return. This expectation of a near end is something that they presumably learned from Paul, even if they misunderstood exactly what he meant (for Paul's teaching see 1 Thes. 1:10; 4:15; *etc.*).

What are we, who live in 1988, to make of these first-century expectations? A very widely held view is that we should recognize that Jesus and the first Christians were mistaken. Many scholars take this view, and argue that the church of NT times had to come to terms with the 'delay of the parousia' and with the fact that its initial hopes and expectations were not fulfilled. They see this adjustment of perspective as something that is very important for an understanding of the NT, both for the understanding of particular texts such as John 21:20-23 and 2 Peter 3, but also more broadly; for example, they see the shift of perspective reflected in Luke's writings as a whole, since he (supposedly) thinks in terms of Jesus' history and the church's history rather than in terms of a near end, and also in John's Gospel with its emphasis on eternal life now in the Spirit rather than on eternal life in the future at the Lord's return.

As for the theological difficulty for Christians of admitting that Jesus and his first followers were mistaken, this is seen as unavoidable. In our understanding of incarnation we must allow for the fact that Jesus' humanity was such that he erred over the chronology of the end (as did many of his prophetic predecessors). Jesus himself admitted his ignorance of the future (Mk. 13:32). He was a real man of his times, and the divine word was expressed in and through human and

culturally conditioned forms. Compare also Jesus' strange, but culturally explicable, use of the OT.

This view is held by reputable and sincere scholars, but has been questioned and contested by others. First, on the theological issue: although it is important to take Jesus' humanity seriously, it is not easy to reconcile anything like the traditional Christian understanding of Jesus with the view that he was a mistaken Jewish visionary. His supposedly erroneous views are expressed emphatically, not incidentally — note the 'truly, I say to you' in Mark 9:1, Matthew 10:23 and Mark 13:30; and, although he did not claim omniscience (Mk. 13:32), he did claim divine authority for his teaching (Mk. 13:31; Jn. 17:8; *etc.*). To question the truth of this claim and the reliability of Jesus as teacher is to question something very basic for Christian faith. The simple questions, 'If he was wrong here, why should we trust him elsewhere?' and, 'How can we distinguish the divine truth of his teaching from the human error?' are difficult to answer.

But the view is also contested exegetically: many scholars deny that the early church was gripped with eschatological excitement and consider that worry about 'the delay of the parousia' is more a problem to modern scholars than it was to the early church. The particular texts which seem to speak of a near end can be otherwise explained: for example, Mark 9:1 with its reference to 'some standing here' seeing the kingdom of God has been taken by good scholars to refer either to the transfiguration, or to the resurrection, or to the destruction of Jerusalem; Paul's concern about the coming crisis in 1 Corinthians 7 could refer to some particular local crisis in Corinth. It is also pointed out that, although texts such as these may be taken to suggest a near end, other texts point in a different direction: Jesus speaks in his parables of the master going away on a long journey (Mt. 24:25); he tells his disciples that they will have to endure patiently, and that there is a missionary task to all the nations to be fulfilled (e.g. Mk. 13:10-13); he gives ethical instructions, for example about marriage and divorce, which presuppose a period of ongoing life in this age before the end. This evidence is often left out of account and/or ascribed to the church rather than to Jesus; but it is not obvious that this is justified, and we must beware of ignoring evidence that happens not to fit our hypothesis very easily.

As for the general sense of urgency which seems to pervade the New Testament, this is variously explained: for example, one view is that some of the promises of a near end were conditional (e.g. conditional on the preaching of the gospel) and that the conditions were not fulfilled. Another view is that the 'urgency' of the NT is to be understood as metaphorical and existential rather than as literal and chronological: in other words, the NT's eschatological language is designed not to give information about the timing of the end, but to stress the importance of coming to terms with the demanding message of Jesus.

### A recent book

An interesting book which enters this whole area of debate and which has many useful things to say is Dale Allison's *The End of the Ages has come. An early interpretation of the passion and resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1985, 194 pp, \$19.95). This is a reasonably popular version of the doctoral thesis of one of America's most significant younger scholars.

Allison sides firmly with those who believe that Jesus and the early church understood his ministry 'eschatologically', in other words as bringing the end of the old age and the beginning of the new age of the kingdom. And he rejects the metaphorical/existential interpretations of the eschatological language.

Allison argues his case in particular in connection with Jesus' death and resurrection. He observes that there was a widespread expectation among the Jews of Jesus' time that there would be a great tribulation at the end of the present age and that this would usher in the new age of resurrection. He claims that Jesus' death and resurrection were understood in this context. John's gospel is quite explicit in speaking of Jesus' death as the 'judgment' of this world (something eschatological, see 12:31); but the thought is implicit also elsewhere in the NT. Allison sees it, for example, in the Markan description of the crucifixion: he notes, among other things, the darkness at midday, linking it with Amos 8:9-10, and the rending of the veil, being a sign of judgment on the temple; he notes too the numerous echoes in the gospel passion narratives of the eschatological prophecies of Zechariah 9-14. He refers to the mysterious story in Matthew 27:51-54 about the saints being raised after Jesus' death: Jesus' death brings the general resurrection. He notes the Pauline idea of the sufferings of Christ needing to be completed before the end (e.g. Col. 1:24) and his description of the risen Christ as the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20). This and other evidence shows that Jesus' death and resurrection were seen as end-time events.

Allison argues that this understanding of Jesus' death and resurrection goes back to Jesus himself; but he believes that Jesus (in line with normal Jewish expectation) thought in terms of corporate suffering – for himself and his community – and of general resurrection. In fact only he himself died and rose. In the light of what actually happened, the church had to reexpress Jesus' expectation, and came to see Jesus' own resurrection as an anticipation of a still future general resurrection.

Allison ends up then admitting that Jesus and the early church were mistaken. Jesus was mistaken in that he did not anticipate his own resurrection as distinct from the general resurrection of God's people; he expected the general resurrection and the final breaking in of the kingdom imminently. Jesus' followers were mistaken in that they continued to anticipate a near end.

How is Allison's book to be assessed? It has many good ingredients, and its main thesis about the eschatological significance of Jesus' death and resurrection is helpful and probably correct. In going to the cross Jesus underwent the sufferings and judgment of the end-time, and in his resurrection he experienced the end-time conquest of death. He is also probably correct to say that Jesus' understanding of his ministry had a strong corporate dimension: he associates Jesus' use of the expression 'Son of man' with the 'one like a

son of man' in Daniel 7 who represents the people of God. However, he oversimplifies when he concludes from these points that Jesus must have seen his own sufferings and resurrection as part and parcel of the general tribulation and the general resurrection of the last days. This does not necessarily follow from the evidence: there is a considerable amount of evidence suggesting that Jesus saw his own eschatological role as *vicarious* (i.e. on behalf of others) and as *anticipatory*; so an alternative, and we suggest, more satisfactory explanation is that Jesus saw his own sufferings and resurrection as an experience of eschatological judgment and vindication which he underwent for the sake of others in anticipation of the general judgment and resurrection. Perhaps even more accurately we should speak of Jesus' experience anticipating and also inaugurating the end-time events. So what he does and experiences his followers do and experience after him and with him, whether it is manifesting the kingdom in power or sharing his sufferings.

The evidence that Jesus saw his ministry as *vicarious* is considerable. Take Mark 10:45, for example. It is probably true that 'Son of man' is an expression with corporate overtones; but Jesus often uses the expression to describe his ministry to others and not simply to express his identity with others. Mark 10:45 illustrates the point: 'The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many'. Here we have the expression 'Son of man' probably combined with the idea of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 (another OT idea with corporate overtones); and the thought here is that Jesus' death is not simply part of the shared tribulations of the people of God, but is something undergone by Jesus personally on behalf of the people of God. Jesus' death is eschatological judgment, but it is judgment taken by Jesus for the people – an idea with a strong OT background not only in the Isaianic servant passages, but also in Zechariah.

The idea of Jesus' death and resurrection *anticipating* the final judgment and resurrection fits in with the present and future tenses of Jesus' kingdom teaching elsewhere in the gospel tradition. Allison writes about the tension in the gospels between the presence and future of the kingdom as follows: 'The seeming contradiction between the presence of the kingdom of God and its futurity is dissolved when one realizes that Jewish thinking could envision the final events – the judgment of evil and the arrival of the kingdom of God – as extending over time, and as a process or series of events that could involve the present. When Jesus announces that the kingdom of God has come and is coming, this means that the last act has begun but has not yet reached its climax; the last things have come and will come. Already, in the person and activity of Jesus, the kingdom of God is present. Even though the consummation remains outstanding, in him eschatological promises are being fulfilled. The kingdom of God is conceived as "a total event . . . composed of several significant parts which together make up that whole" – and several of the episodes that constitute that total event have already transpired' (Allison, pp. 105,106, including a quotation from Robert Berkey). Allison here recognizes that Jesus understood the kingdom to have come in his ministry in a partial way, but he does not see that it makes very good sense to put Jesus' teaching on his death and resurrection into this context and to see them as key events in the process of the kingdom's coming, but as distinct chronologically from the consummation of everything.

A general weakness with Allison's book, as with many other treatments of Jesus' eschatology, is that it underestimates the complexity of Jesus' future expectation, offering too simple an explanation of it. The ingredients that we need to reckon with include: (a) his predictions of his own death and resurrection; (b) his teaching about his 'going away' (in the synoptic parables and in John's gospel); (c) his teaching about his coming on the clouds of heaven and about the day of final judgment (e.g. Mk. 13:24-27); (d) his warnings about judgment to come on Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, this being something that is to come in a generation and is apparently distinct from final judgment (e.g. Mt. 23:36-39; Mk. 13:14-20); (e) his sayings about Christian living and the mission of the church, including mission to Gentiles; (f) his acknowledgment of his ignorance about the time of the end (Mk. 13:32; Acts 1:7); (g) his promise of the coming and work of the Holy Spirit (e.g. in Jn. 14-16).

It is common for scholars faced with such a variety of evidence to oversimplify it, either by denying that some of the strands go back to Jesus, and/or by putting different ingredients together, which are certainly connected but which should probably be distinguished from each other. So Allison too simply lumps Jesus' predictions of his death and resurrection with the final judgment. Others oversimplify in other ways: for example, Marcus Borg, whose book was discussed in the last edition of *Themelios*, plays down ideas of general resurrection and the like, arguing that the sayings about the final coming of the Son of man are simply pictorial descriptions of the historical judgment of Jerusalem. Such views oversimplify the richness of Jesus' eschatological teaching. Can we suggest a better analysis?

#### Towards a solution

We suggest that such an analysis would probably be on the following lines:

1. We should agree with Allison and many other NT scholars that Jesus and his followers did believe that *the last days had come with Jesus*. Jesus' own announcement of the kingdom was not the proclamation of God's eternal rule or presence, but was an announcement that God's promises in the OT for his people's salvation were now being fulfilled in and through his ministry (e.g. Mt. 13:16-17; ch. 11). God's planned intervention had come; this was very exciting good news.

2. However, Allison is right to say that Jesus envisaged *the coming of the kingdom as a process extending over time*. We are reminded of Jesus' seed parables which picture the kingdom as something small and growing. Jesus may well have told these kingdom parables to those of his followers who were hoping for an immediate consummation. Another NT picture is that of a military campaign — a campaign against Satan which Jesus began and which will one day be

completely won (cf. Mk. 3:22-27; 1 Cor. 15:24-26). During the time of growth and campaign Jesus seeks to win people over to his side; he invites them to join his campaign and to identify with God's chosen people. The people of God are not now defined by race, but by faith in the Messiah of God, Jesus himself, the representative Son of man.

3. The coming of the kingdom is not simply a continuous process but, as Allison correctly argues, it is a process comprising a *series of events*. The process is inaugurated in Jesus' ministry and Jesus points in his ministry to signs of God's intervention and restoration of his people (cf. Mt. 11:2-5). But the decisive event in the process, both for Jesus and for the authors of the NT, is, remarkably, the crucifixion: this is the supreme battle with Satan (see the struggle of Gethsemane and Jn. 12:31); it is the new Exodus event bringing liberation to the people of God and the new covenant (see the passover context of the Last Supper); it is the sacrificial judgment-bearing death of the Servant of God (e.g. Mk. 10:45). The coming of the kingdom involves the fulfilment of OT prophecies, and the cross is just such a fulfilment.

Although the cross marks the turning point in the kingdom campaign, there are more events to follow: the resurrection is the defeat of death and an anticipation and guarantee of the eschatological resurrection. The giving of the Holy Spirit is a further eschatological sign, part of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 and fulfilment of Joel 3:1ff. Negatively, Jerusalem and the Jewish nation are judged for their rejection of the Messiah, but positively the Gentiles are brought in (again in fulfilment of prophecy). The end of the process after the evangelization of all nations will be the return of the Lord: then final judgment will take place, Christ's victory will be won, and God's glorious purposes for his world will be fulfilled.

It may be helpful to picture this understanding of NT eschatology as in the diagram at the foot of the page.

4. It is Jesus who establishes God's rule and conquers Satan — in his ministry (e.g. his exorcisms, cf. Mt. 12:28), through his death and resurrection, and (looking to the future) in his coming again. But the kingdom is not Jesus doing various things on his own; it is *Jesus doing things for others and then with others*. Jesus announces the good news of the kingdom to others; he invites people to share in the life of the kingdom and to join the kingdom campaign ('follow me') — with all its joys and sorrows. Jesus is the promised Messiah of the people of God, the representative Son of man, whose mission is to gather around him the eschatological people of God, to bring them into fellowship with God as his children, and to fulfil God's purposes (so often proclaimed in the OT) of bringing not just Jews but all nations into his people.

So Jesus' followers were not just spectators of the eschatological process. They experienced both the fulfilment of God's promises to send a Saviour and Messiah and the fulfil-

#### The kingdom's coming

Jesus' coming → his death → resurrection → Pentecost → Jerusalem judged → Gentile mission → Jesus' return

THE NEW AGE OF GOD'S KINGDOM, OF HEALING, UNITY, LIFE

THE OLD AGE OF SATAN, SIN, DEATH

(For this diagram compare G. E. Ladd's *Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 68,69.)

ment of God's promises to restore his people. They were both recipients of God's longed-for salvation (e.g. 'this is my body which is given for you'). Compare 1 Peter 2:21-25 for the idea of Christ suffering 'for you'), and also participants in the eschatological life and mission of Jesus, including his sufferings (e.g. 'let him take up his cross and follow me'). Compare 1 Peter 4:12-19 for the idea of Christ's followers sharing in his sufferings and eschatological tribulation.) Despite their misconceptions, the disciples were not wrong to be excited over their own privileged position in the new people of God and in the eschatological process (cf. Mt. 13:16-17; 19:28).

5. If this more or less was Jesus' understanding of the coming of the kingdom (and that of his followers), we can appreciate very well the sense of urgency and excitement among the disciples as they approached Jerusalem (e.g. Lk. 19:11; 24:21): they knew that something decisively important to do with the coming of the kingdom was going to take place there, but they did not (of course) understand it as Jesus himself did. We can also appreciate the eschatological excitement of the early church: they were aware that God had intervened in Jesus to establish his rule: they could see that rule in process of coming in the series of dramatic events connected with Jesus, culminating in his resurrection and in Pentecost, and they were naturally and rightly looking forward eagerly to the completion of the process. Looking back, as we do, over nearly 2,000 years, we inevitably have a different perspective: the campaign has gone on a very long time. But they had no means of knowing that (any more than we know now how much longer it will be until the end): they were aware that the eschatological drama was well advanced, and urgent and excited expectancy was (and remains) right and proper. In terms of the divine timetable of the end, the end is near and has been near since the coming of Jesus.

6. Did Jesus and his followers make mistaken predictions about a near end? Certainly Jesus expected decisive eschatological events to happen within the lifetime of his contemporaries. But if, as we have argued (points 2 and 3 above), Jesus' expectation was that the kingdom would come as a process comprising a series of events, it is quite possible that what he definitely expected soon was not the end itself, but only some of its stages. Allison dismisses this interpretation much too quickly, and takes the texts in question (Mk. 9:1; Mt. 10:23; Mk. 13:30) as of the end. But it is unlikely that the evangelists all took this view, and there is no need to attribute the view to Jesus.

In his valuable and readable new book on *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (IVP, 1987) Craig Blomberg comments as follows on the texts in question: 'None of the verses cited above should be taken to mean that Jesus mistakenly believed that he would return to earth in the first century. In fact, each has several alternative interpretations that are more likely. Perhaps the best are that in Mark 9:1 Jesus was referring to his subsequent transfiguration as an important foreshadowing of his final coming "in power", that in Mark 13:30 the "all things" do not include his return but only the signs leading up to his return, and that in Matthew 10:23 he is predicting the continually incomplete mission of preaching to all the Jews' (pp. 33,34). An alternative interpretation of Matthew 10:23 is to understand it as speaking of the judgment of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem (compare the similar wording in Mt. 23:33-36). But Blomberg

is right to query the view that Jesus made incorrect predictions.

Jesus in fact made it clear that he did not know the time of the end: thus in Mark 13:32 he says: 'But of that day and hour knows no one, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father' (cf. Acts 1:7). Allison takes this saying as an assertion on Jesus' part that he did not know the precise moment within the generation when the end would come (rather than as a more comprehensive statement of ignorance about the time of the end); but this interpretation is probably an example of his tendency to oversimplify: in Mark 13 (and the parallel chapters) two aspects of the future are discussed: the judgment of the Jews (vv. 14-20) and the final judgment (vv. 21-27), and, whereas Mark 13:30 speaks of the judgment of the Jews as coming in a generation, 13:32 speaks of something different (notice the 'but'): it speaks of 'that day' — in other words of the day of final judgment and consummation. These texts in Mark 13 are not isolated: elsewhere in Jesus' teaching, and also in Paul's, there is warning of imminent judgment on the Jews, but also an emphasis on the unpredictability of the end, which will come like a thief (e.g. Mt. 23:33-36; 24:42-46; 1 Thes. 2:16; 5:1ff.).

### Conclusion

Where does all this leave us today? Allison does not appear to consider that we can continue to believe in the nearness of the end in the way Jesus and his contemporaries did. However, if the analysis proposed above is correct, there is nothing in the teaching of Jesus or his followers about the last days having broken in with Jesus and the end being near that we cannot embrace (even though our chronological perspective is longer: but this does not make any practical difference). Indeed, it is arguable that one of the things which the church today needs most is a good dose of the excitement, urgency and hope that the first Christians had because they understood the eschatological significance of Jesus and looked forward to his coming soon. The NT itself makes it clear that we must beware of distracting and ill-founded speculation about the end and in particular about the time of the end. Such speculation has often brought the whole notion of eschatology into disrepute. However we must not abandon eschatology because of the excesses of some interpreters (any more than we must abandon our faith in the power and reality of the Holy Spirit because of some charismatic excesses). The NT offers sober hope, not encouragement for eschatological guess-work. Such hope is good news, and news that people need to hear, in a dangerous and drifting world: It is also a powerful incentive to sacrificial Christian living in a selfish and materialistic world. Jesus is making all things new, and calls us to share in his liberating mission to the world. His promise is, 'I am coming soon'; may we respond by our lives and our words, 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus' (Rev. 22:20).

### Editorial changes

It is a time of change for *Themelios* editors and committee. David Wright of New College, Edinburgh, is stepping down as editor in church history, having served in that capacity since the founding of *Themelios* in its present form (in 1975) and having contributed an immense amount to the journal. Paul Woodbridge is also leaving the editorial team, having been appointed to the staff of Oak Hill College in London; as British TSF Secretary he has carried much of the administrative burden of *Themelios* for a good many years. Our sincere thanks go to both of them, as indeed to all who help in the editing and production of *Themelios*.

# An evangelical approach to 'Theological Criticism'

I Howard Marshall

*It is fashionable to emphasize the diversity of ideas within Scripture, and it is commonly held that Scripture contains theological contradictions. We are grateful to Professor Marshall of Aberdeen University for this article, in which he examines some of the evidence and offers an evangelical response.*

The Germans are intensely systematic in the way in which they discuss and criticize the Bible, and it is not surprising that the names of many critical processes are originally German, such as 'form criticism' (*Formgeschichte*) or 'redaction criticism' (*Redaktionsgeschichte*). These critical processes are often carried out systematically one by one in study of a given text. Thus the major German commentary on Mark by R. Pesch divides up its treatment of each paragraph into five clearly distinguished sections: 1. literary information and translation; 2. genre-criticism and form-criticism; 3. verse-by-verse comments; 4. tradition criticism and comments on the quality of the tradition; 5. redaction criticism, with a view to discerning the author's intention in the section.<sup>1</sup>

In the present paper I do not want to explore directly these various types of approach to the text. Instead I want to consider another type of approach which can be carried on alongside these other approaches and which curiously does not figure in the textbooks of biblical criticism. Like many of the others it has a German name, whether or not the process itself is of German origin, and there is no one generally accepted English equivalent.

## Two examples of the method

Let me begin with two areas where the process has been applied. First, we look at Acts. In his commentary on Acts 5:1-11, the story of Ananias and Sapphira, J. Roloff concludes his remarks by saying that this story reflects an experience of the early church with which it was particularly difficult to come to terms because the church thought of itself as the community of salvation directed by the Spirit; the problem was that among its members there were some who had entered it only in a nominal kind of way and for the sake of the status it gave them, but who were not ready for a total, inward surrender of themselves. Then he continues:

This conclusion does not in any way reduce the sharpness of the theological problem. There are two points especially which give rise to critical reflections. 1. Here we hear a rigourism which is scarcely reconcilable with the spirit of Jesus and which therefore found no followers in the further development of church discipline. Even where church discipline cannot be avoided, it must not forget the love that seeks for the lost over against the concern for the church which must be protected (Mt. 18:10-17). It must preserve a place for repentance, reconciliation and redemption (this is true even of 1 Cor. 5:3ff.). 2. With the implicit claim that the church can and must be the community of salvation, perfect and free from sin, here in this world, the church's situation of tension in this present world is overlooked. Here Paul (1 Cor.

10:13) and Matthew had the clearer theological vision: in its present existence the church cannot anticipate the perfect salvation-community of the End. It must continue to live with sin and hypocrisy and leave the separation of the 'tares' from the 'wheat' to the future judgment of God (Mt. 13:37-43).<sup>2</sup>

Here is a good example of a place where a commentator listens to the theological message of a text and says: compared with other biblical statements, it is unacceptable and wrong. Within the Bible there are different statements, and some of them cannot be accepted.

We may consider the implications of this approach for Acts by glancing at an essay by another German scholar, G. Harbsmeier, in his discussion of 'Our Preaching in the Mirror of Acts'.<sup>3</sup> He begins from P. Vielhauer's statement that the Lucan Paul differs from the real Paul in the manner and content of his proclamation, although Luke himself was not aware of this. The difference between the two in fact amounts to contradiction.<sup>4</sup> Harbsmeier claims that this conclusion is reached by use of the historical-critical method and is convincing. But, he asks, 'should this scientific conclusion also be valid theologically?' and he replies, 'Yes, it should.' No dogmatic presupposition about the unity of Scripture can be used to deny that such divergences exist. The historical-critical method is simply the appropriate way of listening to history. To deny the historical-critical method would be to deny the Reformation itself and would lead to the clericalizing of the Bible and knowledge generally.

The significant point here is that Harbsmeier is concerned with our preaching. He holds that the church's preaching (he is thinking primarily but not exclusively of the Lutheranism of his day) tends to be strongly influenced by the Lucan Paul. There is a standing centrifugal tendency in the church from Paul to Luke. Catholicism, he says somewhat ironically, is thoroughly 'scriptural' in basing itself on Acts — as 'scriptural' as the letter of James is (according to Luther). But even Reformed preaching goes back to Luke rather than Paul. Paul is interpreted by means of Luke. Against this tendency Harbsmeier wants us to get back to the real Paul instead of the distorted Lucan Paul.

In short, alleges Harbsmeier, not all biblical proclamation proclaims Christ in the same way. We cannot assume that because a passage is part of Scripture therefore it truly proclaims Christ. Even in the case of Scripture Luther's tag is true: *simul justus et peccator!* We must beware of making the Scripture a paper pope. Rather we must follow the principle *was Christum treibt*, which is admittedly not a historical-critical principle but is the most critical 'spiritual' principle.

For a second, and briefer, example I turn to the Pastoral Epistles. In a German book on the concept of ordination in the Pastoral Epistles by H. von Lips the word in question is actually used:

The concrete result is, however, harder to grasp because it depends on our answer to the question as to what relevance we assign to the Pastorals as NT writings. It does not seem appropriate either simply to take over their understanding of ordination as normative or to reject it totally on the grounds of a theological *Sachkritik*. To take over the understanding of ordination in the Pastorals as *the* biblical basis and legitimization for present-day ordination would mean overlooking the fact that this is only the witness and the conception of *one* part of the NT. To reject this understanding in a broad way would constitute a verdict on their value which ignores the historical context of this understanding of ordination. It seems most appropriate to regard the understanding of ordination in the Pastorals as a model formed in specific historical circumstances; that means that it is not *eo ipso* binding for today, but it is to be taken seriously as a model that must be tested for its validity for today.<sup>5</sup>

Here we have the same kind of problem. What is the validity of a specific piece of biblical teaching for today? And here we have a specific use of the term *Sachkritik* in a way which lets us see that it is concerned with the validity of biblical teaching.

### The name and definition of the method

I shall continue to refer to the method by this German name, but it will be helpful to note that the possible English equivalents for it include 'content criticism', 'theological criticism', 'critical interpretation', 'material criticism'<sup>6</sup> and 'critical study of the content'.<sup>7</sup>

It will not surprise you in the least that among the heroes of our tale, or, if you prefer it, the villains of the piece, we must mention R. Bultmann. Here is a comment on his *Theology of the New Testament* by Markus Barth, who asks how a conscientious exegete can develop a systematic exposition of Paul's theology that contradicts part of the source material:

[He can do so] only when he feels himself called to *Sachkritik* on Paul, 'just as Luther used it, for example, on the Epistle of James'. The victims of Bultmann's *Sachkritik* include some Pauline statements on the Holy Spirit, the resurrection, the second Adam, original sin, knowledge. Naturally the hostile crumbs swept to one side by *Sachkritik* include the statements about creation, predestination and the incarnation of Jesus Christ which Bultmann has demythologized. In any case Bultmann is convinced that he is putting the 'real intention' of Paul over against the actual words of the text. . . . When Bultmann attributes the use of juridical, mythological, cosmological, mystical and idealistic concepts to a 'superstitious understanding of God, the world and mankind', he expresses as clearly and simply as possible the criteria for his *Sachkritik*.<sup>8</sup>

Now we must be clear as to what is going on here. It is not quite the same as the attitude expressed in the words: 'I want to be free to disagree with Paul.' In that wish there is expressed a contrast between what Paul said and what I think, and if we disagree, so much the worse for Paul. That is a question of Paul's authority over against my own authority. We'll come back to that in a moment. Rather what has been expressed is a contrast between one part of Scripture and another which stands in contradiction to it, or between what a writer actually says and what he really means. According to Tom Wright, we find an example of this in the procedure adopted by proponents of universalism.

The proponents of universalism admit very readily that their doctrine conflicts with much biblical teaching. What they are attempting, however, is *Sachkritik*, the criticism (and rejection) of one part of Scripture on the basis of another.<sup>9</sup>

That is to say, critics observe or search for places where there are doctrinal contradictions in Scripture and then have to decide which passage they are to follow in preference to the other.

### Clarifying the definition

Let us now clarify this with a series of comments:

1. It is *primarily theological contradictions* that are at issue. Factual contradictions on historical, geographical and similar matters are not the problem here, except insofar as they form part of the theological differences. If Paul tells us that he visited Jerusalem only twice and Acts says that he visited it three times, that is a factual contradiction and it is to be sorted out by historical and literary investigation. If, however, John dates the crucifixion on the day when the passover lambs were slaughtered, that could be an indication of a theological understanding of the death of Jesus which was not shared by the other Evangelists and which might stand in tension or contradiction to their understanding.

2. The contradictions may be between two statements in Scripture or *between what a writer actually says and what may be presumed to be his real intention*. Thus, if Paul in one place requires women to be silent in church, it could be argued, as it has been, that here he had a temporary lapse into Jewish, rabbinic ways of thinking, from which he had been largely set free, and that his 'real' theology is to be found in passages which emphasize the equality of men and women in Christ. This shows that the 'real intention' of a writer is not to be understood simply in terms of 'He said x, but he meant y,' but rather 'Although in some places he says x, the main line of his thinking was y.'

It is in fact this problem of the 'real intention' which is basically the issue. The only discussion of the problem in English known to me is that by Robert Morgan who offers this definition: *Sachkritik* 'refers to the interpreter's criticism of the formulation of the text in the light of what (he thinks) the subjectmatter (*Sache*) to be; criticism of what is said by what is meant'.<sup>10</sup>

This may be the point to mention that some critics would argue that if not even a biblical writer is capable of writing with utter consistency and always getting to the root of the matter, still less can a group of writers do so. When Karl Barth wrote his commentary on Romans he said that the commentator must get beyond the actual words of the text to what he called 'the inner dialectic of the matter'. This was questioned by Bultmann who said that it is 'an impossible assumption that the "inner dialectic of the matter" must be adequately expressed everywhere in the Letter to the Romans', and who maintained 'that no man — not even Paul — always speaks with the central point in mind', and therefore held that criticism of what Paul had to say about the 'central point' is 'inseparable from exegesis and actual history in general'.<sup>11</sup>

3. The theological contradictions may be found in three sorts of area:

a. First, they may be found *between earlier and later writings*. There are obvious questions about the relation between teaching in the OT and teaching in the NT. Some early Christians wanted to argue that Gentile believers should keep the law of Moses, but the decision which carried



the day was that these laws were not applicable to Gentiles and that it was not even necessary for Jews to keep them: Jesus, for example, declared all foods 'clean'.

b. Second, they may be found *within the writing(s) of one author*. Bultmann was doing this in the case of Paul. A further example can be found in Paul's understanding of the law. It is clear that the relation of the law to the gospel is something of central importance to Paul, and that he is quite clear that one is not saved by the works of the law. But is all that Paul says about the law consistent with that central affirmation? Not all critics would agree that it is. Some would say that there is a clear development in his thinking; others more unkindly say that Paul is just inconsistent.

Similarly, there can be comparison of *different more or less contemporary writers* within a group such as the NT canon to see who gets it right. We saw how Roloff compared the theology of Acts with that of Jesus and Paul and opted for the latter. Thus the question may be about the contradiction between a passage in an individual writer and the 'real intention' of the NT as a whole. Such a procedure assumes that there is some kind of 'centre' or some norm by which the writings can be assessed. It is here that we often speak of a 'canon within the canon'. This phrase can be understood in two ways. First, it may provide a criterion for rejecting what is thought to be inconsistent or on a lower level. Second, it may provide a basis for interpretation and for assigning writings to their proper functions in relation to the total purpose. One may reject James because it appears to be inconsistent with Romans or one may say that it has a different, a lesser, but nonetheless a legitimate and necessary function alongside Romans.

c. Third, there is the assessment of *what the NT says over against the interpreter's own understanding of the progress of revelation*. A critic might argue that the Bible itself points us forward to certain lines of development in doctrine. For example, although the Bible itself is not a pacifist book, its understanding of Christian love might be thought to lead to an attitude of total non-violence. If so, we would have to judge that certain statements in the Bible fall short of that ideal. In other words, the Christian faith and practice to which the Bible points has been more fully revealed now than it was then, or perhaps we should say that the full implications of the biblical revelation now stand out more clearly, and, measured by that standard, certain parts of the Bible must be judged inadequate or out of date in their teaching.

4. The result of such analysis is inevitably to force a judgment as to *which texts are to be taken as expressing the real intention of a writer or the main thrust of the Scripture and how they are to be interpreted*. This raises the question as to how one determines the 'real intention' or the preferable text. At least two criteria would seem to operate:

a. One is the attempt to *determine the central or controlling line of thought* in a given writer, and to assess all that he says in the light of this central, basic line of thinking. Thus, if Paul's central line of thought is justification by faith, we shall play down the importance of what he says on judgment by works or regard it as inconsistent with this main line and drop it from our theology.

But how do we determine what is the 'real intention'? Thus to go back to the example of Paul on women, it could be argued (1) that both Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 express the real intention of Paul, namely that within the equality of men and women in Christ the woman must nevertheless be subject and keep quiet in church, rather than (2) that one text expresses the real intention and the other is a temporary aberration, or again (3) that, although Paul expresses both thoughts, the direction of his thinking, or the trajectory which he was following, leads to an unqualified statement of the equality of women to speak and minister alongside men.

b. The other criterion would seem to be *the personal judgment of the critic*. Now in a sense this is inescapable; even the most determined fundamentalist must still decide what it is that Scripture says, and his own prejudices may well affect his interpretation. Thus one cannot help wondering whether fundamentalist defenders of slavery or apartheid who find something in Scripture that we can discover only with the utmost difficulty are not interpreting it consciously or unconsciously in the light of their own beliefs.

5. In his essay from which I quoted a moment ago, Tom Wright goes on to say: 'We leave aside the implications of this [procedure of the universalists] for a doctrine of scripture itself.' But we cannot leave this question aside here. It is obvious that the kind of approach which I have been outlining stands in tension, if not in contradiction, with the popular conservative evangelical understanding of the authority of Scripture which regards all of Scripture as authoritative. This paper is an attempt to discuss the significance of *Sachkritik* from a conservative evangelical point of view. We have therefore to engage in a dialectical process, that is to say a kind of dialogue in which we examine the significance of *Sachkritik* for our doctrine of Scripture and the significance of the doctrine of Scripture for *Sachkritik*. It could be that there are lessons to be learned on both sides.

### Evangelical presuppositions

Let us start our further examination by looking at our presuppositions.<sup>12</sup> There are two important characteristics of the conservative doctrine of Scripture which are relevant here:

1. When we speak of the supreme authority of Scripture, we speak of *the authority of Scripture taken as a whole* rather than of isolated texts within it. This means that we assume that Scripture as a whole is harmonious in its teaching, and therefore we can take its total message as our guide. But although this approach may appear to put all Scripture on the same level of truthfulness and authority, in fact it has an important implication, namely that isolated texts taken on their own may convey a message which is at variance with that of Scripture as a whole. In other words, the meaning of Scripture is the meaning of Scripture as a whole, or of wholes within it, rather than the meaning of the smallest parts.

2. Hence the complement of this principle is that *individual texts must be understood and interpreted in their context*. This is an obvious and universally accepted principle for the interpretation of a verse within a paragraph, a paragraph within a chapter, and so on. But it is also an essential principle with

regard to seeing texts in the context of the Bible as a whole. Thus, to take the obvious example, the OT laws in the Pentateuch are seen by the Christian in the context of the NT teaching about the place of the law in the light of Christ, and therefore the laws about the offering of animal sacrifices are recognized to be no longer valid.

It may thus appear that we do in fact practise something that looks like a kind of *Sachkritik* in that we assess the validity of texts in their context, and that context is both local and global. Take, for example, the letter of James. If we were asked to name a writing that expresses the heart of the gospel, I do not think that it would be a likely candidate for the honour. Its function is to correct misunderstandings of the gospel as regards ethics and to furnish ethical teaching for Christians; it presupposes the gospel, but it does not proclaim it. Teaching about the person and work of Jesus is implicit rather than explicit. Therefore, James occupies a less central position than, say, the gospels or Romans. Implicitly we assess James as falling into a particular place in the total NT revelation. We would insist that if we take the teaching of James in isolation we shall get a one-sided understanding of the Christian message; it is not that what James says is untrue in any way, but rather that it must be understood in the context of teaching that is found elsewhere in the NT.

It may seem, then, that what we are already doing is *Sachkritik*. But advocates of the method use various phrases which suggest that it rests on presuppositions which we do not share. Consider the various phrases that have already appeared in the expositions which I offered of the method — ‘the implications for a doctrine of scripture itself’, ‘once it is agreed that the biblical tradition itself is not revelation’, and so on. Morgan comments that if the aim of theological interpretation is to correlate the theologian’s understanding of the faith with what he finds in the tradition, and if it is agreed that *the biblical tradition is not itself revelation* [my italics], then the method is a proper one and indeed a necessary one in *theological method* ‘where theology is understood as the interpretation of the tradition anew in every age, in the light of contemporary experience which includes rationality’.<sup>13</sup>

Is, then, the method possible only on the assumption that the biblical tradition is not in itself revelation, in the sense that I can point to a copy of the Bible and say without equivocation, ‘That book is the Word of God?’ — and, make no mistake, that is what the evangelical doctrine of Scripture implies. If so, we face two questions. First, we have to make a critical assessment of *Sachkritik*, examining both its methods and its presuppositions. Second, we have to ask whether there is an acceptable form of *Sachkritik* which is in harmony with our understanding of Scripture.

### Two obvious weaknesses of the method

First of all, it can be argued that there are in fact weaknesses in the method as it is practised.

1. The first is that *it is inconsistent in its attitude to the Bible*. The question that arises is whether and in what sense the tradition is revelation. Here Morgan offers some interesting comments. He contrasts the method with Marcionitism and Liberalism which both rejected parts of the tradition out of hand. *Sachkritik*, he says, ‘allows the tradition to remain

intact; it “gets round” obstinate pieces of tradition by re-interpretation, instead of removing them.’ He then compares the theologian to a chess player, playing with the pieces of tradition and attempting to persuade an opponent of the superior cogency of his own position by marshalling the traditions appropriately. To do so he may have to sacrifice some pieces. But two features emerge. First, after the game, all the pieces are put back on the board for the next game; the canon remains intact from theological generation to generation. Second, one can only tell as the game proceeds which pieces may need to be sacrificed.<sup>14</sup> The really interesting point here is the insistence that each time the game is finished all the pieces must be put back on the board; that is to say, some players recognize the existence of the canon and remain tied to it — although of course there are NT scholars who are not so bound. There is, therefore, a recognition, at least by some scholars, that in some sense the NT is a locus of revelation and possesses authority of some kind. It is not surprising, then, that F. Bovon explicitly accuses Harbsmeier of inconsistency in that despite his attack on Luke-Acts he does not reject it from the canon.<sup>15</sup>

Second, there is *the problem of subjectivity*, to which Morgan has again drawn attention. The problem is determining the criterion for judgment, which is supposed to be the revelation itself, namely the Christ who is heard and apprehended in faith. But here the method becomes subjective and circular since the exegete ‘comes to what is meant only through what is said and yet measures what is said by what is meant’.<sup>16</sup> Bultmann, however, claims to avoid subjectivity in that he finds ‘what is meant’ through a historical discipline rather than a theological discipline; for him *Sachkritik* is a necessary part of the historical interpretation of the NT. In other words, he is asking not just what Paul means for us today, what we can take from him for our theology, but what was Paul’s own ‘real’ theology. Morgan becomes critical at this point, and accuses Bultmann of sometimes using a key to open the doors of NT interpretation and sometimes a crowbar. He remains sceptical that Bultmann has been able to identify theological and historical method and argues that the element of subjectivity remains. It is very easy for the critic to set up an artificial criterion for the central message of Scripture. Yet Morgan still finds that on occasion his method is justified, particularly where a NT writer seems to contradict himself. The admitted risks must be taken if critical scholarship is to be possible.<sup>17</sup>

Here again Harbsmeier is open to criticism, and once again the criticism comes from outside the evangelical camp. F. Bovon attacks him on two levels. First, he attacks what is in effect the method which is being applied. Harbsmeier claims that he is criticizing Luke in the light of the *Christus praesens*, that is to say from how he sees Jesus Christ as the centre of our faith. But Bovon argues that, despite his disclaimers, his attack really arises more from the *theologus praesens* than from the *Christus praesens*. In other words, Harbsmeier doesn’t like Luke.

Second, according to Bovon the centre of Luke’s message, the revelation of Christ as Saviour, is completely neglected by Harbsmeier in favour of themes which Luke considered secondary or which he was not even able to treat as such. That is to say, the method followed by Harbsmeier has the effect of causing him to have a kind of tunnel vision in which he sees

only certain parts of Luke's theology; the result is that he both misses out on what is central and also misjudges the parts which he does see because he does not see them in their proper context.<sup>18</sup>

Numerous exegetes would agree with Bovon at this point. In particular, I refer to W. G. Kümmel, in his essay on 'Current Theological Accusations Against Luke'.<sup>19</sup> For Kümmel the decisive question is whether Luke saw the history of Jesus as an eschatological event — and he argues that he did. This is essentially the same point as Bovon was making. But this is not the end of the matter. Kümmel says:

If we are neither willing to give up the concept of the canon nor able to deny the presence of fundamental contradictions in the New Testament, then we must necessarily face the question as to the central message of the New Testament, by which the statements of the individual writings are to be assessed.

Working by this principle, Kümmel is prepared to defend Luke as being in harmony with the central message of the NT, as it is found in the agreement of Jesus, Paul and John. He says:

By further developing the basic theological viewpoints which had been handed down to him, Luke attempts to solve for his own time the problems at the close of the period of earliest Christianity, and in that he remains, in the main lines of his theology, in agreement with the central proclamation of the New Testament.

Nevertheless, he continues:

That of course does not rule out the possibility that legitimate criticisms may be levelled against the Lucan theology or that individual passages, such as for example the Areopagus address, may contradict the main tenor of his proclamation. But that is no less true for every other form of New Testament theology. Even Luke does not offer the total and the perfect theology of the New Testament; he must be heard in connection with the other witnesses to New Testament theology and be criticized and augmented from them.<sup>20</sup>

Two points emerge here. The first is that Kümmel admits the possibility of serious doctrinal contradictions in the NT, but also that he believes that when one applies *Sachkritik* to the specific case of Luke and Paul Luke can be shown to be on the side of the angels. Kümmel, in other words, carries out a harmonizing act and thereby demonstrates that in principle harmonization is a legitimate procedure. The second point is that he admits that Luke, like any other NT writer, is not always on the same level and that he does contain statements which cannot be reconciled with his 'real intention' or the 'real intention' of the NT as a whole. It is here that the evangelical differs from him.

### The problem of development

If we adopt an evangelical attitude to the Bible, we shall agree that there are differences between earlier and later writers, but that our principle of harmony suggests that these are differences in harmonious development rather than irreconcilable contradictions. Hence the equivalent of *Sachkritik* for us is placing biblical teaching in its proper place on the developmental plan. Clearly this means that some parts of Scripture are superseded by others or are not to be taken literally.

There is the fact that some parts of the OT are no longer directly applicable within the NT church. I have already mentioned the OT sacrificial system. Its literal application is

no longer required, and this is grounded in NT teaching which teaches that since Christ has offered the perfect sacrifice, the animal sacrifices are now obsolete. Here is clear example of later teaching superseding earlier teaching. Yet the earlier teaching is not totally rejected. It is now interpreted, as the writer to the Hebrews sees it, as being shadow of the good things to come, as being a kind of prophetic pointer or symbol to the spiritual reality. Broadly this is true, but it must be admitted that much of the minut detail in Leviticus, which once provided the practical guide to Jewish religion, is now obsolete and cannot be used as a basis for practical, biblical exposition in the way in which we might expound a passage from the NT.

The same will apply within the NT itself to those passages where Jesus addresses his disciples in terms of their continuing practice of the OT cult (Mt. 5:23f; 6:16-18). We learn to distinguish between teaching which is specific (a) to particular audience at a particular time (e.g. specific instructions by prophets) and (b) to a particular people in particular context (e.g. members of the Jewish cult). But in both cases we recognize that behind the instructions there will be principles which can be reapplied.

We also note that some teaching has a limited horizon. For example, in the OT there are some fairly horrific examples of genocide and of racial discrimination. In most, if not all cases, the horizon of the command or the narrative is the idolatry and immorality of the peoples concerned, and the danger of their corrupting the people and polluting the land. In NT teaching, Christians are commanded to love their neighbours and their enemies and to seek to lead them to faith in God, and it is explicitly denied that if people refuse to accept the faith the disciples of Jesus should call down fire upon them, as Elijah did in OT times (Lk. 9:54f.). We can say that the principle behind the OT stories is a valid one within its horizon, namely that God's people should seek to avoid being corrupted by idolatrous and immoral people, but that the method followed, namely the annihilation of the tempters, is no longer valid when we see things within the horizon of the command to love one's enemies and to seek to lead the Lord's opponents to a knowledge of the truth. Consequently, we do not reject the OT material out of hand as being primitive and now superseded by later material, but we do recognize that we are to listen to it in a different way from the original hearers of, say, the Deuteronomic law. On the long tradition of interpretation sees the Christian counterpart to the enemies of Israel in the evil principalities and power against which Christians must fight with all their might.

But in coming to this conclusion we are engaging in a type of evaluation akin to *Sachkritik* in that we had to formulate some principle by which we judged that the OT teaching was no longer literally applicable. Similarly, in the case of the teaching of Jesus about how to offer sacrifices, it is not too difficult to formulate the principle that, since he had to give his teaching in terms of the system then obtaining, and since the NT teaches that this system no longer applies to Christians, we must modify this teaching for a new situation.

### The problem of diversity

A second possibility that arises is that in certain places we shall find diversity in biblical teaching. We cannot simply adopt one view and ignore the others. Nor may it be possible

to combine different views to form one total picture. Does such diversity at times amount to contradiction, or can we legitimately speak of *complementarity which gives rise to a deeper and fuller understanding of truth?*

We began our discussion by citing two examples of this problem, Acts and the Pastorals. Let us go back over the problems.

With regard to Acts there were two specific problems: (a) the general relation of Acts to Paul, and (b) the sub-Christian implications of Acts 5:1-11.

In the case of (a) the problem is to be settled by exegesis: is it the case that Acts really does give a different theological understanding from that of Paul and one which is theologically inferior? We have already commented on this problem, and we saw that Bovon and Kümmel claim that Harbsmeier's case is not established exegetically.

(b) In the case of Acts 5:1-11 it is unacceptable to say that Luke is merely reporting historically what happened, and that this is not necessarily therefore an example to be followed by later Christians. The difficulties are that Peter is presented as an exemplary leader, and that what Luke is actually depicting is how God acted — or, if you prefer it, how the early church and Luke himself interpreted two actual deaths as divine judgment that left no place for repentance. Was Luke right to think that God could act like that? We can certainly say, as Roloff in effect says, that when discipline is applied in the church we must take into account all the evidence, or see it in the light of the central message, and this will mean that discipline will be exercised with a view to restoring the sinner.

But these points do not get to the heart of the matter, which is basically whether the picture of God here and of the way in which the church should act is inconsistent with the gospel. Liberals argue that it is. Conservatives tend on the whole to accept it and to see no contradiction.

A better approach is to say that *the horizon of the narrative is limited*; its purpose is solely to emphasize the heinousness of sin and the serious character of divine judgment. The narrative is concerned simply to stress these things: the question of an opportunity for repentance is not raised here, although it is taught elsewhere and must be taken into account in the church today. This is essentially the same approach as we took with regard to the stern judgments on idolatry and sin in the OT. The practical result is that we retain the passage as one which emphasizes the heinousness of sin and the reality of divine judgment upon it, but that we insist that the passage must not be taken on its own as a guide to the church's action today: we shall insist that it was God who acted in judgment by striking down Ananias, and not Peter, and that elsewhere in the NT the need to practise discipline in such a way as to give the sinner the chance of repentance is inculcated. This solution may not be universally acceptable. It will be objected that it still leaves a picture of a God who strikes down the sinner without giving him opportunity for repentance, and that it raises the question whether we believe that God may still act in this way with erring members of the church. Part of the answer to this charge may well be that judgment is more central to the biblical message than many Christians are prepared to allow.

But again we have exercised a kind of *Sachkritik* in that we have felt that there are grounds for placing this passage in a

broader scriptural context which affects its application to the church and to sinners today. The problem is whether we go along with the verdict of Roloff that the rigourism displayed here is not compatible with the spirit of Jesus and that therefore the passage is in effect marred by spiritual blindness. Rather, we have argued that the Bible does testify to the way in which wilful sin stands under divine judgment, and that this fact must be held alongside the biblical teaching on forgiveness. If it is objected that this presentation of divine judgment is unacceptable, then we must ask the critic whether he has correctly identified the 'real intention' of the Bible or is measuring the message of the Bible by his own subjective criterion of judgment.

We can deal more quickly with the problem of the Pastorals. Here the question is the validity of the kind of church order presented there when compared with teaching elsewhere in the NT. Lips was right to say that we do not reject this teaching outright on grounds of *Sachkritik*; indeed it would be hard to find grounds for doing so. He is also right to say that we do not simply take it over as it stands. For the fact is that there are several types of church order and organization in the NT, and we seem to be forbidden in principle from claiming that any one form is the final and definitive one. Nor can the different systems be harmonized into one. What we can do is to ask in each case what were the principles, the situation and the motives that led to the specific type of order, and then seek whatever order will retain the principles but be appropriate for our situation.

This again is *Sachkritik* in that it goes beneath the surface teaching to ask what is the real underlying concern in a particular area of teaching. It does not reject the authority of the teaching; but it does recognize that *the particular form in which the principles appear is situation-bound*, and that we must examine the different types of church order in the NT in order to see what principles come to expression in them.

### **The problem of unacceptable teaching**

So we come, finally, to the problem of *biblical teaching which appears to be out of date or untrue for the church today*, and the question of what God is saying to us today from Scripture arises. Are we free to dismiss some aspects of what Scripture says? I take the familiar example of one specific aspect of the church order in the Pastorals, namely the refusal to allow women to teach. How do we tackle that for today? My own understanding of it is that this is a local, situation-bound restriction. But I say this on the grounds (a) that what seems to me to be a central part of the concern of the NT, namely the principle expressed in Galatians 3:28, overrules it, and (b) that we do actually see women fully engaged in ministry in the NT itself. In other words, there is a contradiction within the NT message itself if this passage is judged to be normative for all time, including NT times.

Now this means that a passage which on other grounds seems to be out of date for today is regarded as no longer literally binding not simply because it is unacceptable but because *when placed in the context of the NT itself it is seen to be local rather than universal*. There may well be situations today when it ought to be taken literally, but these will be the exception. Again, we shall not treat the passage as Scripture if we do not ask what principles of universal validity lie behind it and led the author to express himself for his local situation in

the way he did. But we do not reject the literal teaching of the passage simply because we do not like it. Rather we have to see whether our uneasiness about it arises out of our fundamental loyalty to the message of the NT.

I have used the example of a passage which I do not believe applies universally today because it is of local application in the NT. But now let me mention a different example. If the world today tolerates homosexual practices and refuses to regard them as sinful, then we do not go along with this attitude, unless we can be convinced that the biblical attitude to homosexual acts is local and situation-bound, or perhaps even culture-bound. We are not at liberty to judge the teaching of Scripture by the standards of the contemporary world, but on the contrary we have to recognize that *the Bible must be free to speak its prophetic and critical word to the practices and beliefs of our world.*

However, there may be another criterion of judgment. Is it proper for us to assess biblical teaching not so much by the central concern of the Bible itself as by a theological position which, while developed from the Bible, claims to have reached a point beyond it, so that now we understand the central message itself better than the biblical writers did? To be sure, there are many cases where we have to go beyond biblical teaching expressed in a specific cultural setting, for example in recognizing that slavery, while accepted in the NT, is fundamentally at variance with the biblical understanding of man. But it is another thing to question the doctrinal and ethical principles which lie behind the situation- and culture-bound teaching of the NT and to assert that we can criticize and reject these on the basis of a position which is more 'advanced' than that of the biblical writers.

Barth saw the danger of 'a method which is all too likely to do violence to a historical text in making it correspond to the interpreter's own view'. It sounds suspiciously like the *Christus praesens* of some of the scholars we have been discussing, and the suggestion is that the Bible contributes to revealing Christ, but is only *one* contributor out of many. But there is not only the risk, alluded to earlier, that the scholar may easily confuse the *theologus praesens* for the *Christus praesens*. There is also the more fundamental objection which says that the *Christus praesens* must be identical with the biblical Christ, and that it is the biblical Christ who is and remains our authority. It is the Word of God, Christ himself, revealed in the Scripture, who is the final authority, and the claim of evangelical religion is that *Scripture is a harmonious revelation of this Christ*. The assumption may be wrong, but this is our faith, and this is where we stand.

### Conclusion

The evangelical doctrine of Scripture sets firm limits to the practice of *Sachkritik* by showing that it is possible to

distinguish between its presuppositions and methods. We must admit the existence of the problems that led to the development of *Sachkritik*, and the need to find solutions to them, but we shall do so by a method that looks for the underlying harmony and truth of the Word of God in Scripture, that recognizes the need for human interpretation of Scripture, but that insists that at the end of the day it is God's Word that judges us and not we that judge God's Word. It is unfortunate that the English equivalents of the term may convey this false impression that the reader can stand as critic over the theology of the Bible, and a less tendentious name for the process would be helpful. At the end of the day what we have to do is to compare Scripture with Scripture, to discover what is the message of a given passage when seen within the total context of the biblical revelation. Perhaps a more positive term like 'theological evaluation' comes nearer to the intention of the method.

<sup>1</sup> R. Pesch, *Das Markus-evangelium* (Freiburg, 1976), I, p. 68f.

<sup>2</sup> J. Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1981), p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> G. Harbsmeier, 'Unsere Predigt im Spiegel der Apostelgeschichte', *Evangelische Theologie* 10, 1950-51, pp. 352-368.

<sup>4</sup> P. Vielhauer, 'On the "Paulinism" of Acts', in L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn, *Studies in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia, 1966), pp. 33-50.

<sup>5</sup> H. von Lips, *Glaube - Gemeinde - Amt* (Göttingen, 1979), p. 284.

<sup>6</sup> Used by the translator of R. Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding* (London, 1961), p. 71f.

<sup>7</sup> R. Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology* (London, 1973), p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> M. Barth, 'Die Methode von Bultmann's "Theologie des Neuen Testaments"', *Theologische Zeitschrift* 11, 1955, pp. 1-27, cited from p. 15; references are to R. Bultmann, *Theology of the NT* (London, 1952), I, pp. 181, 198, 251f., 295, 300, 334; II, p. 238.

<sup>9</sup> N. T. Wright, 'Towards a biblical view of universalism', *Themelios* Jan. 1979, pp. 54-58, cited from p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> R. Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, p. 42; see also E. Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (London, 1975), p. 71.

<sup>11</sup> Cited from W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems* (London, 1973), p. 369.

<sup>12</sup> For a fuller discussion of the standpoint of this essay see I. Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982).

<sup>13</sup> R. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> R. Morgan, *op. cit.*, pp. 43f.

<sup>15</sup> F. Bovon, *Luc le Théologien* (Neuchâtel/Paris, 1978), pp. 24f.

<sup>16</sup> R. Bultmann, cited by R. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> R. Morgan, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-52.

<sup>18</sup> F. Bovon, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> W. G. Kümmel, 'Lukas in der Anklage der heutigen Theologie' *ZNW* 63, 1972, pp. 149-165; = 'Current Theological Accusations against Luke', *Andover Newton Quarterly* 16, 1975, pp. 131-145.

<sup>20</sup> W. G. Kümmel, *op. cit.*, pp. 142f.

<sup>21</sup> Yet it cannot be denied that the method has its attractions. *Third Way* 10:12, Dec. 1987, p. 27, carries this quotation from Mark Twain *Pudd'nhead Wilson*: 'Adam was but human - this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the apple's sake, he wanted it only because it was forbidden. The mistake was in not forbidding the serpent; then he would have eaten the serpent.'

# Outline for ethics: a response to Oliver O'Donovan

Stephen N Williams

*We welcome this article by the Professor of Theology at the United Theological College in Aberystwyth in Wales, in which he describes and responds to an important new book on ethics.*

## A. Resurrection and Moral Order

Most of us probably insist that theology and ethics should go together. One has to do with reflection that is barren without action; the other has to do with action that is aimless without reflection. Yet if we compare the phrases 'evangelical theology' and 'evangelical ethics', the first sounds a lot more familiar than the second, though 'evangelical social ethics' is coming increasingly into popular currency.<sup>1</sup> Recently, however, a work has appeared titled *Resurrection and Moral Order* and subtitled *An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* which has had very high acclaim and even been tipped for classical status.<sup>2</sup> Its author (Professor Oliver O'Donovan) commands our gratitude and its substance commands our attention. So we will look in this article at some of the central theses of the book. Yet we need to be critical as well as appreciative.

Two preliminary warnings are in order. (1) This work is an outline *for* not an outline *of* evangelical ethics. If it were an outline *of* evangelical ethics, we might expect to find a treatment of such standard themes as government, labour and marriage. But we do not get this. This outline *for* ethics sets out for us the theological shape our thinking must take as we approach *anything* in ethics. Theological principles, not ethical particulars, are the focus. (2) What we have is an *outline* not an *introduction*. That is, the author is not introducing beginners to the field but giving a survey of the field to those digging away in it. Karl Barth admitted that one might get the gist of his thought in the massive *Church Dogmatics* by skipping the small print! The same might be possible with this work, yet I suspect it would be hard for those without some background in moral theology and philosophy. Let us set out its concerns in six main theses.

### 1. Christian realism

It was Walter Lippmann back in 1929 who spread talk of 'scientific humanism' — a project designed to encourage science and morality to shrug off the shackles of religion.<sup>3</sup> What has befallen science and morality in a culture progressively dispensing with religion, as it seems? In practice, very often, people have ended up by imposing on the world a coherent structure for life and thought, but such a structure does not objectively inhere *in* the world — our science and morality do not conform to the way the world *really* is. Perhaps the natural order cannot be known to us and perhaps there is no objective moral order. Professor O'Donovan wants to combat this latter view. 'Realism' can mean a lot of different things, but here it means belief that the structures within which God has placed us, within which we think and act, including the structure of our being as humans, are *given* and *objective*; through the gospel we get an intellectual grip on

reality. And what O'Donovan does for realism in the moral order may be compared with Professor Thomas Torrance's parallel enterprise with regard to the natural, scientific order.<sup>4</sup>

### 2. Christ's resurrection

'We shall argue for the theological proposition that Christian ethics depends upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (p. 13).<sup>5</sup> Why? Because resurrection 'tells us of God's vindication of his creation and so of our created life' (*ibid.*). Resurrection is God's affirmation of humanity for it reverses Adam's decision to die; it affirms the order in which mankind is placed at the same time for it points creation to its fulfilment in the eschaton. The resurrection announces the origin and destiny of the world as a God-given unity; the eschatological destiny will do more than just restore the created order, but it will not abolish it either. Resurrection is a transforming power. We are not adrift in this world (for the humanity created by God is vindicated in history) nor lost in the next (for the humanity vindicated in history is destined for full redemption). Creation shares the fate of mankind. On this axis of God's creative and redemptive activity we are solidly established in our humanity within an objective realm.

### 3. The will submitted to the understanding

What will this mean for Christian ethics? Over the centuries there have been different ways of looking at morality. But often schemes of thinking have not been hooked up to the objective reality which should be forming our thinking. Creation-resurrection-eschaton gives us the objective framework for moral endeavour. But how does that help us as we confront actual moral issues, as opposed to just theoretically contemplating ethics?<sup>6</sup> Moral issues as we face them can frighten us in one of two ways. Either they seem completely novel (witness the field of embryology and ethics) or they seem incorrigibly perplexing (witness our efforts at times to figure out the obligations of friendship). Now O'Donovan is constantly anxious to avoid an easy route through given moral perplexities. But he insists that they confront us within a divinely given order. Morality is not some chaotic cross-country course where we finally abandon the attempt to make objective sense of things. The combination of things that turn up in a certain issue, as we try to weigh them up, may seem daunting. But we must persist in the attempt to gain objective moral understanding.

For what is the alternative? An alternative often taken by us in our particular dilemmas and taken by many ethical theorists, past and present: voluntarism. Like 'realism', this is a word with varied meanings. Supposing, however, we think of our actions as generated by our understanding or intellect, on the one hand, and by our will on the other. When we get sceptical in principle or in practice about moral objectivity, we tend to emphasize the will — we impose on our deeds the stamp of our will, not the stamp of an objective under-

standing. That is an important aspect of 'voluntarism'. It is consistently the target of O'Donovan's attack, though he is typically fair and sensitive to its claims.

#### 4. *The understanding submitted to Christ*

Having given such weight to understanding, have we now succumbed to something called 'rationalism', which accords the human mind powers of tremendous scope in grasping the world and our place and work within it? Not really. The reason we emphasize understanding is that there is an objective something to understand — an *ontological* basis for morality (ontology pertains to that which *is*). When we ask about the *source* of our understanding, we are coming round to the *epistemological* question (epistemology pertains to that which we know or believe). And here O'Donovan emphasizes not human reason without Christ but divine revelation in Christ. The gospel is our source and the author's engagement with this question explicitly invites comparison with the work of Tom Torrance. What we know we know from, in and through Jesus Christ and through the Spirit. The Spirit conforms us to that reality vindicated in Christ.<sup>8</sup> If the will must be shaped by understanding it is only as the understanding is shaped by the gospel of Christ.

#### 5. *Free in Christ*

Now that we have talked of an objective order encompassing us, an objective Word directed to us, and a Spirit poised to empower us, are we on course for a life of moral freedom? The author devotes much space to the question of freedom in the second part of the book: its first part dealt with objective reality; its second deals with subjective reality. In the context of the last two centuries of moral philosophy, discussion of freedom is important, and I digress here for a moment from O'Donovan's particular discussion. The concept of freedom has fallen on hard times in much recent philosophy, particularly the area known as philosophy of mind, which has close links with moral philosophy.<sup>9</sup> But it is not relevant to pursue here this largely secular debate about the relation of freedom and determinism. On the other hand, the notion that to be a moral agent entails either freedom or autonomy (which is not quite the same) has played a particularly important part in moral thought since at least Immanuel Kant at the end of the eighteenth century. Kant himself could associate freedom and moral agency with belief in God. But his whole way of throwing weight on the moral agent induced some later thinkers to follow a path to a different conclusion.<sup>10</sup> Not only could it be concluded that you can account for moral agency without reference to God, but you could even think that God, or rather the idea of God, actually threatens moral agency. For does not the spring of morality reside in our freedom, and does not the presence of a God presiding over the moral order guarantee that what he has to say now becomes the law of our action, so destroying our freedom?<sup>11</sup>

O'Donovan's thesis at this point is fairly straightforward. Human freedom is freedom to be human, not to be something else; it is thus freedom to indwell an order that cannot threaten it, for it is in this very context that we are human at all. Nor is the Spirit's agency a threat to freedom; on the contrary, only through God the Spirit is a free response possible. Freedom is real, but its reality is established by the Spirit. This general theme is developed by the author in relation to authority, especially the authority of Christ, and in

relation to the church thought of not as an authority, primarily, within which we enquire about our freedom but as itself an agent summoned to freedom.

#### 6. *Love: the bond of deeds and character*

We are confronted by a moral order which has many features and strive for a variety of moral virtues in order to live within it. What unifies our outward deeds and inward character? The answer is love. This is what shapes the moral life. There is ultimately no tension between the requirements of love of God and neighbour for the simple reason that there is an order whose author is God, whose inhabitants are alike in their kind (equal in humanity) and one in destiny (we are meant for God). So our outward activity can be unified. But there is a disposition or (not quite the same) character to be formed in an integrated way too and this again is the domain of love. Love does not flourish in splendidly romantic isolation, destined to flower for a season in this world with no further consequences. The ultimate reward of love is the fulfilment of life in eternity and transformation beyond the world when by justifying grace the fragments of the life of love are gathered together in intelligible unity. So the incentive to love which the author provides is no mere incentive to persevere but also to lay hold of what is eternal, its majestic order framing time and destined to redeem it.

#### B. *Towards a response*

While in what follows I wish to question certain aspects of this analysis, it is appropriate to mention first three major strengths of the book. First, our outline completely veils the fact that O'Donovan's work is executed with an extraordinary fecundity in a whole range of disciplines: biblical exegesis, historical assessment, philosophical analysis. Taste and see. One accumulates enormous debts to the author on a host of issues in the course of the book and although some of the discussions seem at first sight to take on a life of their own in the second and final parts of the book, independent of the main thesis, this is not really so. Cue phrases like 'created order' or 'moral realities', for example, should keep us alert to that. Secondly, it is pervaded by that spirit which dignifies all intellectual endeavour, the spirit that communicates a sense of the greatness of God and majesty of his ways. To keep up the comparison, be it remembered that when Torrance prefaced *Theological Science* he wrote: 'If I may be allowed to speak personally for a moment, I find the presence and being of God bearing upon my experience and thought so powerfully that I cannot but be convinced of His overwhelming reality and rationality' (p. ix). Whatever our response to his work, this sense is certainly communicated consistently in the whole of it and so it is in this one by O'Donovan.

Kierkegaard, in a piece to which O'Donovan refers, closes a chapter with the words: 'The reward of the good man is to be allowed to worship in truth'.<sup>12</sup> When we remember that *latreia* in Romans 12:1 can appear as 'service' as well as 'worship' in an English rendering then we get a hint of the ethos of this work. But last and not least, the substantial contention that man and creation form an interlocking order affirmed by God in the gospel, open to our participation in the Spirit, leading to the formation of life by love is surely correct in its principle. If we now focus on difficulties it must be framed by these considerations. I shall focus on two, the

first with seemingly small beginnings, the second compounding an implicit difficulty suggested by the first.

1. *Difficulties with 'transformation' of natural structures in 1 Peter and the NT*

The great key texts and theological principles taken by the author to establish the connection between resurrection and ethics are understandably Pauline ones. But much interest attaches to two significant references to the first Petrine epistle in Part One of the work. The first follows the announcement that resurrection is theologically central for ethics since it 'tells us of God's vindication of his creation, and so of our created life. Just so does 1 Peter, the most consistently theological New Testament treatise on ethics, begin by proclaiming the reality of the new life upon which the very possibility of ethics depends: "By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1:3)' (p. 13). The second brings to its conclusion the claim that 'Christian ethics, like the resurrection, looks both backwards and forwards, to the origin and to the end of the created order. It respects the natural structures of life in the world, while looking forward to their transformation' (p. 58). This is instanced in 1 Peter which opens with a declaration of hope and moves on to such things as ethics of government, labour and marriage. O'Donovan avers that 'a hope which envisages the transformation of existing natural structures cannot consistently attack or repudiate those structures', though the institutions need redemption. I start with this second claim and move on to the first.

It is surely wrong to say that Peter's letter exemplifies a hope which envisages the transformation of natural structures, and the consequences of this for O'Donovan's thesis are by no means trivial. We need here to pause over two words: 'hope' and 'transformation'. 'Hope' (*elpis*) is a word thoroughly at home in this epistle; it crops up in some form five times.<sup>13</sup> It has been taken to designate the orientation of Christian life in contrast to Pauline 'faith' and the epistle has been said to show 'more compellingly than almost any other New Testament writing what strong moral stimulus hope gives'.<sup>14</sup> Now *elpis* can be used in the NT in the sense typical of our ordinary discourse, where it expresses a wish which may or may not be fulfilled; so Paul, not knowing his destination, hoped to visit Timothy (1 Tim. 3:14) and Felix, not knowing his man, hoped that Paul would offer him a bribe (Acts 24:26). But this is not the triumphant hope announced in 1 Peter — this is what we may term 'hope' in a distinctively theological sense, member of the triumvirate 'faith, hope and love', whose object is what is promised or sure, not just possible, and which summons us to a correspondingly confident disposition.<sup>15</sup> The question is then whether that kind of hope encompasses the transformation of natural structures or redemption of institutions.

So what of 'transformation'? O'Donovan introduces this idea when he is concerned with divine redemption for the *whole* of creation. Creation as a whole must fulfil a God-given purpose. Romans 8 is the *locus classicus* but of course not the only *locus* of this teaching. And 'this fulfilment is what is implied when we speak of the "transformation" of the created order' (p. 55). '... We must understand "creation" not merely as the raw material out of which the world as we know it is composed, but as the order and coherence in which it is

composed' (p. 31). 'Creation is the given totality of order which forms the presupposition of historical existence. "Created order" is that which neither the terrors of chance nor the ingenuity of art can overthrow' (p. 61). The ramifications of this are central in the book, of course, and the relation of creation to eschatological transformation is explored in particular in chapter 3. Now the natural structures of life in this world are explicitly part of that created order that will be transformed — that is why these comments on 1 Peter are integrated into the conclusion of this portion of the author's exposition. And later we have a more specific allusion to the transformation of marriage (p. 70f.), one of the three specific institutions discussed in Peter's epistle.

However, there is surely no sign that this epistle exhibits any hope for the transformation of natural structures. It is true that Christian hope, embedded in the heart and governing behaviour, *may*, with faith and love, issue in conduct that *could* transform these structures.<sup>16</sup> But neither hope nor resurrection carries implications of eschatological transformation. 'Transformation' for O'Donovan stands as the alternative to, e.g. abolition. Supposing one asked on the basis of this epistle whether natural structures or institutions were destined for eschatological transformation or eschatological abolition. Even after investigating the Jewish background of the epistle to find out whether Petrine hope is really as otherworldly as it sounds, it would appear difficult to establish a definite answer. The fact is that nothing at all in Petrine ethics hangs on whether natural institutions are to be abolished or transformed and nothing in its resurrection hope shapes its ethics with even implicit reference to that matter. But let us enquire more generally about abolition and transformation and thus work our way out of a narrow concentration on this epistle.

With particular vim in the seventeenth century Lutherans and Calvinists contested the relation of the world to come to the world that is: are we to think of discontinuity or of continuity? The impact of that question has sometimes been deemed important for its ethical consequences, not only in conservative but apparently outside those circles.<sup>17</sup> 'Continuists' have even got down to the nitty-gritty of *what* may continue.<sup>18</sup> Now the debate, if entered on its own terms, forces one to think about what it means to take creation as a *whole*, a *totality*, in its eschatological destiny. O'Donovan is clearly right that Scripture does so speak. What Scripture does not tell us, however, is what such wholeness entails. For its purposes it does not need to. But when this is linked up with discussions of ethics, including those pertaining to natural institutions, one is forced to enquire in more detail.

O'Donovan consistently refers to the eschatological destiny of humanity or of mankind, treating humanity as a *whole*, and yet he appears to reject universal salvation. So the 'humanity' to whom a glorious destiny is promised is not one with the sum total of all individuals. On the meaning of redemption for non-human creation he professes agnosticism, but obviously when one considers botanical or zoological natural *history*, again sum total can scarcely be in mind. 'Natural structures' or 'institutions' are not the same as people or biological organisms. What could it mean to say they are destined for transformation by virtue of their participation in a larger whole? One thinks of legal structures, generically a feature of political society as God would have it in this world, vital for the promotion of justice, itself a central



biblical theme. It is only at a stratospheric level of generalization that one could insist that we must term what happens to them transformation rather than abolition. And one then wonders what mileage is to be got out of insisting on the transformation of Petrine natural structures, though one should perhaps take them one by one. The point is this: the claim that there is a wholeness to creation, destined for transformation, is manifestly compatible with the claim that ordered features of our natural structures — indeed, the structures themselves — will simply disappear. But O'Donovan's motive for retaining 'transformation' language then becomes the highly generalized one of preserving whatever Scripture means us to preserve when speaking of *fulfilment* in the eschaton. However — and it is to this point I am leading — we are summoned to live lives on this earth and order our ethical life on it in relation to a host of things that may simply, like heaven and earth, 'pass away'.<sup>19</sup> How, then, does a conviction that there is a *whole* to be redeemed affect our ethics within structures or institutions of which we may as well surmise that they will be abolished, as transformed, if we allow the language of redemption to apply to them at all?

Is this a semantic quibble? Not, it would seem, for O'Donovan. If we refuse to speak of the transformation of natural structures we lapse into gnosticism, by his account. Does, then, insistence on transformation actually affect the shape of the moral life? However we answer that question, it has interesting consequences for the way we respond to the thesis of the book. Careful attention to the two closing chapters of the book, where the relation of love to transformation comes in for consideration, seems to show that what one holds about structures or institutions makes little difference here. That is, one might love in the way and for the end commendably outlined here, while merrily plumping for the abolition of structures in the way indicated and taking the line that what the NT says about the fulfilling transformation of the *whole* actually has little obvious bearing on our attitudes to natural institutions.<sup>20</sup> If this is so, the relation of the kind of outline of ethics proffered in this book to concrete ethics is put into question. But if, indeed, we must say that the shape of moral life *is* affected by an insistence on transformation that embraces institutions, then Christian ethics is surely hostage to what will turn out to be a rather detailed discussion of eschatology that surely does not merit a role of such influence on ethics. In sum, then, it is not clear that Peter or the NT generally<sup>21</sup> envisages the transformation of natural structures; not clear that it matters; not clear how transformation of a whole bears on this.

While accusations of unclarity can often be rather cheap, I think it is fair to raise the question here simply because it brings in the relation of the principles outlined in this book for ethics to the actual ethical convictions we struggle for within natural structures. And in a very different way, this question arises too from the second point I wish to make, the one that takes us back to O'Donovan's first and general reference to 1 Peter. To this, then, we now turn.

## 2. Crucifixion-resurrection instead of creation-resurrection

It will be recalled that the author described 1 Peter as the most consistently theological NT treatise of ethics. The epistle is marked by an emphasis on suffering. Not everything talked about as 'suffering' is of the same kind, but various sufferings

are connected. In one sense, suffering is a contingency: it regards ethical conduct in natural structures — only in the sphere of labour (of the three singled out by O'Donovan)<sup>22</sup> is suffering explicitly mentioned. But it is also true that in Christian life the path to glory is through suffering essentially not contingently. And that life is shaped by the life of another who took such a path: the resurrection of Christ was the resurrection of the one who trod it and is viewed in Peter's epistle in closest connection with the cross (1:3-21; 3:18-22). O'Donovan from the start makes clear that cross and resurrection cannot be detached from each other more than from the incarnation or life of Christ for purposes of ethics. Still, both the explicit and the underlying connection of the resurrection with ethics in Peter's letter compels a different set of reflections from those offered by O'Donovan because however one comes at it, the integration of hope and suffering, born of life under the risen Lordship of one crucified, is starkly central. *The* meaning of the resurrection here for ethics is as much to do with bearing the cross as with vindicating creation. Now what do we imply by this?

In contemporary theology, Moltmann has been especially conspicuous in pursuing a path of reflection which makes cross and resurrection, set in an eschatological context foundational for Christian ethics.<sup>23</sup> The most consistent ethical point of all his work is the call to alignment with the disadvantaged and oppressed.<sup>24</sup> Resurrection cannot undergird ethics except in systematic connection with the cross as well as eschaton and Moltmann seeks to base this on Paul more than on any NT author. Now one might agree or disagree with Moltmann theologically. But resurrection seems to shape Christian ethics differently (though not *necessarily* incompatibly at all) in Peter, Moltmann and O'Donovan. And this prompts me to ask more closely (and far too summarily, I am afraid) about O'Donovan's broad endeavour in this work.

In this work, is the author answering the question: what does the resurrection mean for Christian ethics? Or is it rather: out of what does Christian ethics spring? If the former it is open to the rejoinder that the *meaning* of the resurrection for Christian ethics lies as much in its connection with the cross in a suffering church and a suffering world, as it does in its connection with the vindication of created order. But he is really answering the second question, in which case there is a preconceived idea of what kind of thing Christian ethics is. But the *importance* of the link between resurrection and created order is one established by the particular perspective with which one approaches the discipline. Resurrection does vindicate it, it may be, and Christian ethics may be shaped by this. But is there something explicit or implicit in biblical theology and ethics that must make the vindication of creation something of *primary* importance to ethics or make the vindication of creation the *primary* ethical import of the resurrection? If one asks: what kind of ethics spring from the gospel? we could answer: one that bids us take up our cross and carry it as we mortify the flesh in the power of the resurrection. That the resurrection should enable us to do so in a world of suffering could then constitute our defence of it as a starting-point. But the outline for such an ethics would look very different.

We are edging here towards the concerns of liberation theologians. One need not take up a position with regard to

them to anticipate the shape of their response to such a work as this.<sup>26</sup> The moral agent O'Donovan has in mind scarcely needs to be told that he is man rather than swine (p. 87); the moral agent of concern to the liberationists frequently does.<sup>27</sup> The social context of the issues treated in detail by O'Donovan has made it academically and institutionally possible to relax with the body while reflecting on a particular set of issues with the mind; the social context in which liberationists may reflect is one where grinding poverty and oppression constitute the objective context indwelt by the body and the mind will be appositely engaged. My point is not to endorse a trendy contextualization in sham empathy with those whose lot one does not share; nor, more important, to depict the author as a bourgeois man mulling over bourgeois issues! That would be culpably unjustified trivialization at almost any level. But one might in a different context agree on the theology of the resurrection; agree even to make it pivotal for ethics, but end off with a very different outline for ethics with equal claim to biblical rootage and theological seriousness but geared to cross and suffering.<sup>28</sup> To ask whether or not this amounts to a criticism of O'Donovan's work is not necessarily interesting. The point is that this is an outline for evangelical ethics from a certain perspective and in a certain context. If, in the light of my foregoing comments, it purports to be more than this, then we must simply say that the contention has not been proven.

In conjunction with the first point of comment, I have drifted here in the direction of questioning the relation of Professor O'Donovan's outline to concrete moral realities. Doubtless one could have a crack at an alternative outline; but anyone who tries it shortly after reading this book would have to possess the heart of a gazelle in the hide of a rhinoceros.<sup>29</sup> Or one might argue for a greater fluidity and variability for the theological principles informing the shape of ethical reflection than the author allows, despite his concession to that possibility. But one had better not try anything unless one takes to heart and to life the truth expounded in O'Donovan's volume . . . and that will take most of us a long enough while.

<sup>1</sup> The journal 'Transformation', launched in 1984, is billed as 'an international dialogue on evangelical social ethics'.

<sup>2</sup> IVP, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> *A Preface to Morals* (Allen & Unwin).

<sup>4</sup> See the vast quantity of his literature especially from *Theological Science* (OUP, 1969) onwards.

<sup>5</sup> Page references to O'Donovan's work will be given in the text.

<sup>6</sup> I use 'ethical' and 'moral' in the way used by the author, but in some circles a sharp distinction is drawn between the 'religious' and the 'ethical/moral'. On the advisability or otherwise of this I do not comment here.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 4. Much light is cast on the nest of issues concerning reason and revelation if one studies the impact of Anselm on Barth, helpfully introduced by Torrance himself in *Karl Barth: an introduction to his early theology, 1910-1931* (SCM, 1962).

<sup>8</sup> O'Donovan does not really pursue, however, what Torrance calls the 'epistemological relevance of the Spirit'; see his essay of that title in T. F. Torrance, *God and rationality* (London, 1971).

<sup>9</sup> See Peter Smith and O. R. Jones, *The Philosophy of Mind: an introduction* (CUP, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> I am not concerned here with the strict historical question of Kant's own impact. In general, it is important to understand the whole eighteenth century climate in which Kant worked, including what went on in the French and English Enlightenments. Additionally, we must bear in mind that ideas about morality are not simply born of other people's ideas about morality; an intellectual

standpoint can be the product of emotional and economic factors, not just intellectual ones.

<sup>11</sup> One might note here the radical theology of Don Cupitt, whose latest work, *The Long-Legged Fly* (SCM, 1987) still exhibits utter hostility to O'Donovan's type of approach; in philosophy, note the position advocated by James Rachels, whose views are swiftly summarized by Brian Davies, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of religion* (OUP, 1982).

<sup>12</sup> These words are not cited by O'Donovan but are found in *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing* (Harper, 1956), p. 67.

<sup>13</sup> 1:3, 13, 21; 3:15 and indeed 3:5.

<sup>14</sup> See J. Piper, *Hope as the Motivation of Love in 1 Peter: 1 Peter 3:9-12 in New Testament Studies* (1980), 26.2, pp. 212-231; less useful is E. Cothenot's article in the next volume, *Le Réalisme de l'Espérance Chrétienne selon 1 Pierre* (1981), pp. 564-571. The quotation is from R. Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* (Burns & Oates, 1965), p. 368. It is noteworthy, but scarcely surprising, that contemporary theologies of hope which enquire about the moral stimulus of hope, largely eschew this epistle!

<sup>15</sup> Other distinctions could exercise us if we wanted to elaborate on hope in the NT, including the one where hope can stand for the object of our expectation or where it can stand for the disposition of the person. Indeed, this could be pursued in the context of 1 Pet. itself; see Piper, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> I leave aside here the whole question of hermeneutics as we ponder the contemporary application of Petrine counsels of submission. With reference to submission it is worth noting in the context of O'Donovan's thesis Goppelt's comment on *hypotagēte*: 'In the New Testament, however, the accent did not fall on the prefix but on the root *taxis* (order) or *tassesthai* (to order itself or oneself)', L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 2 (Eerdmans, 1982), p. 168. However, I am not just assimilating Goppelt's use of 'order' here to O'Donovan's broader use.

<sup>17</sup> In conservative circles note, e.g., John Stott (ed.), *Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Paternoster, 1982), p. 41f., and the papers from that conference published by Bruce Nicholls (ed.), *In Word and Deed* (Paternoster, 1985). But note too Jurgen Moltmann's reference to Gerhard in *God in Creation* (SCM, 1985), pp. 93, 335; though see the perspective on Moltmann adopted by Douglas Schuurmann, *Creation, Eschaton and Ethics: an analysis of theology and ethics in Jurgen Moltmann in Calvin Theological Journal* (1987), 22:1. I am grateful to Dr Nigel Biggar for bringing Schuurmann's essay to my attention.

<sup>18</sup> Just to cite the debate referred to in note 17 above, note Peter Kuzmic's essay, *History and Eschatology: Evangelical Views in Nicholls, op. cit.*, p. 152, where he is himself drawing on others. Abraham Kuyper and two of his four successors in the Free University of Amsterdam (Bovinck and Berkouwer) have been broadly influential here.

<sup>19</sup> I do not mean to press this synoptic text (Mt. 24:35 and parallels) into the service of any particular eschatology here.

<sup>20</sup> Actually, I wish only to make a more modest claim, namely that O'Donovan does not show us in this book what bearing it has. In fact, however, perhaps what one holds about natural structures *does* affect the shape of moral life on the terms of the book; I suspect that the way to decide this would be to weigh what O'Donovan says about love and intelligibility against the implications of a remark made by Emil Brunner in his discussion of eschatology: 'Whoever lives in the power of love asks no question about meaning because he possesses truth and puts it into effect' (*Eternal Hope*, Lutterworth, 1954, p. 85). But I shall not pursue this!

<sup>21</sup> Of course, I have not touched on the rest of the NT and in fact it is as much Rev. 21:24-26 as anything Paul said that has occupied here some recent discussions. Without arguing the case, I just record my conviction here that the same would have to be said of the rest of the NT as may be said of 1 Pet.

<sup>22</sup> Sometimes the church is lined up for discussion alongside these three (D. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Macmillan, 1965, pp. 207ff.), and so note 1 Pet. 3:8-12; however, it is precisely related to 3:14.

<sup>23</sup> Moltmann is not an ethicist. Much in Bonhoeffer's *Ethics*, however, is suited to fruitful comparison with O'Donovan's work. In this connection, note the supreme fittingness with which Bonhoeffer's life concluded: the texts he read for the Sunday preceding his Monday execution were Is. 53:5 and 1 Pet. 1:3! (E.

Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Collins, 1970, p. 829.)

<sup>24</sup> For Moltmann, see now R. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Marshall Pickering, 1987).

<sup>25</sup> Of course, it may be complained that Moltmann's theology is ethically pretty vacuous; J. Gustafson, *Theology and Ethics* (University of Chicago, 1981, pp. 43ff). But the rights or wrongs of this contention do not affect the present point.

<sup>26</sup> Not all liberation theologians should be bracketed together, of course, even the Latin American ones whose form of theology I have primarily in mind here.

<sup>27</sup> 'The Reformers . . . could proclaim bluntly "all have sinned" and never ask how incoherent, absurd or irrelevant that might sound to beings that view themselves as one more pig at the trough. . . .', T. Hanks, *The Evangelical Witness to the Poor and Oppressed* (*TSF Bulletin*, September-October 1986), p. 13. But Hanks is not criticizing the Reformers and in any case I am not adjudicating his argument. He

ends his sentence, moreover, with considerations that bring him somewhat closer to O'Donovan's concerns.

<sup>28</sup> Again, the implication is not that the ethics of liberative theology is essentially cross/resurrection ethics. It is at the least misleading, for instance, when this is claimed for Hugo Assmann *Practical Theology of Liberation* which appeared early in the 'movement'. See the editorial remark in E. Hoskyns and N. Davey, *Crucifixion-Resurrection: the pattern of the theology and ethics of the New Testament* (SPCK, 1981), p. 366.

<sup>29</sup> Buddhism is more systematically oriented to what is often translated 'suffering' (*dukkha*) than any other world religion, it would seem, and hence one muses a bit when one learns that it could be said of its early adherents that they had the hearts of gazelles, i.e. a light heartedness which for the rest of us would just be a highly suspicious condition. The rhinoceros, as we know, will storm just about an citadel when the mood is on him.

## 'Seek the welfare of the city': social ethics according to 1 Peter

Bruce Winter

*We warmly welcome the new Warden of Tyndale House in Cambridge as a contributor to Themelios. In his article the Rev. Bruce Winter, who comes from Australia and who taught for some years in Singapore, addresses the continuingly important issue of the Christian's role in society through a careful study of 1 Peter in its historical context.*

In Jeremiah 29:7 the Jews in exile in Babylon were exhorted to settle, marry and 'seek the welfare of the city' to which the Lord had carried them. They were to do this for 70 years and after that their homegoing to the Promised Land was guaranteed (Je. 29:4-14).

Likewise, 1 Peter 1:1 sees the Christians far removed from their ultimate homeland. Yet they too are assured that they will reach their promised destination (1:4-9). They are aptly called 'elect sojourners of the Dispersion'.<sup>1</sup> All these are appropriate terms to describe them in their present temporary earthly situation as the pilgrim people of God.<sup>2</sup>

How should the Christians in 1 Peter spend their days on earth? It is clear that as spiritual 'sojourners' and 'alien residents' they should withdraw from sin (2:11). They were not called upon to withdraw from society. They too should seek its welfare. In fact, from 2:12ff. they were shown how they should spend their days in their city by seeking the blessing of its inhabitants.

The second-century epistle to Diognetus succinctly meditates on the present activity and future hope of the Christian in language obviously dependent on 1 Peter 1:1 and 2:11ff.

They find themselves in the flesh,  
but do not live according to the flesh.  
They reside in their respective countries,  
but only as aliens, *paroikoi*,  
they take part in everything as citizens, *politai*,  
and put up with everything as foreigners, *zenoi*.  
Every foreign land is their home  
and every home a foreign land.<sup>3</sup>

### I. The socially insecure

The ethical injunctions of 2:12ff. to relate positively to their city and its inhabitants are unexpected in view of the social insecure situation of these elect sojourners. There was discrimination against Christians, 'with sporadic outbursts of local suspicion, resentment, and hostility'.<sup>4</sup>

It was rumour-mongering which could result in public disorder, *stasis*, or litigation by an accuser against Christian before magistrates or governors. Other examples of *stasis* are to be found in Acts 19:16ff.; 16:19; 17:6; 18:12; 24:1. There were testings and trials in 1 Peter (1:6; 4:12) and allegation against Christians (2:15). Why then should they seek the welfare of a city whose inhabitants created such tension and uncertainty for them?

### II. The spiritually secure

The social ethics of 1 Peter are even more intriguing in the light of the emphasis of the opening major section of 1 Peter 'The true grace of God' in which the Christian stand (mentioned in 5:12) has been the theme of the letter. 'Ever home (is) a foreign land', to cite again Diognetus, because of the unseen but certain inheritance reserved in heaven for God's people. There would be no unclaimed inheritance because they were being kept by the power of God to enjoy it (1:4-5). It was indeed the work of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit which secured such a salvation for the Christians (1:2-12).

This future hope and confidence was meant to occupy the horizon of Christians. They were commanded to fix their gaze on the future grace which was to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:13ff.). They were called upon to live a holy life in the light of personal accountability to the impartial Father who one day will scrutinize 'every man's works' (1:13-17).

If the Christians were to fix their hope perfectly on the coming grace to be revealed at the final revelation of Jesus

Christ and the accompanying assessment of their life, then how could the welfare of their present secular city possibly matter to them?

### III. The three-fold call

There were three reasons given why the transient Christian should be concerned for the welfare of the hostile and ungrateful city. They are to be found in 1 Peter in the very calling of God's people — a theme elucidated in three places with the verb 'to call'. They were called upon 'to declare', 'to follow' and 'to bless'.

There was the fundamental purpose of the elect race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the formerly stateless group who were now the people of God. Their calling was to declare the virtues or characteristics of the One who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light (2:9-10). The following verses indicate how this was to be done in terms of a compelling Christian lifestyle seen from their good works (2:11 ff.). J. H. Elliott notes that 'this was manifested through a positive witness to all men'.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, in the face of unjust treatment the Christian household servant was also called to follow the example of the patiently suffering Messiah. 'For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps' (2:21). They were to follow the calling of *imitatio Christi*.

Thirdly, discrimination might well reach flash-point in the wider society. The whole church was exhorted not to repay evil with evil, or abuse with abuse, but the exact opposite. They were to bestow the blessing of doing good 'because you were called for this very purpose that you should inherit a blessing' (3:9). God's calling demanded that they relate to others in the way he had related to them with his great blessings in Christ. The apt quotation from Psalm 34:12-16 in the following verses lays out what the blessed and blessing life was. It was 'doing good', not 'evil', it was 'seeking peace', not 'speaking evil'.

Here was the similar calling to God's exiled people in Jeremiah 29:7 to seek the welfare of the present city in which they dwelt, and to pray for its peace. Just as in the OT man was called upon to bless his fellow man, so too the Christians were called upon to do the same to others in their secular cities.<sup>6</sup>

### IV. Before a watching world

It was intended that their good works should be observed (*epopteuō* — 2:11-12).<sup>7</sup> They were commanded as sojourners and temporary residents to abstain from carnal conduct in order to present an attractive lifestyle (*anastrophē kalē* — 2:11). This Christian existence consisted not only of personal moral values, but also high-profile good works. The observation of these good works would not only be an eloquent defence against ill-founded allegations against Christians as evil doers, but also be the means by which critics became converts who glorified God 'in the day of visitation'.<sup>8</sup> Their light was so to shine before men that they would see their good works and glorify their Father in heaven.

There were four areas of life where they were called upon to engage in this high-profile activity before the watching non-Christian world of their day. These were (a) in-civic life,

(b) in the households as Christian servants, (c) in the marriage of a Christian to a non-Christian, and (d) in the flash-point situations where the Christian community appears to have been singled out for discriminatory treatment.

It is interesting to note that despite the complexity and far from ideal life situations of the Christians addressed in 1 Peter, there were no extenuating circumstances which exempted them from seeking the blessing of the city. In the face of difficulties they were simply to commit themselves to a faithful Creator by 'doing good' (4:19).

#### (a) In civic life

The Christian citizen's duties were not simply discharged by obedience to ordinances. The dual function of rulers is epitomized as punishing the law breakers and praising those who did good in the public arena (2:14).<sup>9</sup> The latter referred to the important duty of the official recognition of a public benefactor.<sup>10</sup> The cities of Anatolia and the other regions of the East had long been supported by public benefactors who saved the community from famine, deflated prices of essential commodities in time of scarcity, paid for the installation of water supplies, enhanced the life of the city with fountains, widened roads, erected theatres and public buildings, and provided for child allowances.<sup>11</sup> This method of providing for the needs of the city, which was well established in Greek times, was certainly continued during the early centuries of the Roman empire.<sup>12</sup>

In 2:14-15 Christians of substance were called upon to continue to observe it. Being a benefactor was declared to be 'the will of God' and public recognition by rulers the means of silencing the rumours of ill-informed men.

There was an established procedure by which the particular gift of a benefactor was recognized with the erection of an inscription commemorating the event, and by the public praising with words of commendation, by being crowned with a crown of gold, and by being allocated a permanent seat of honour in the theatre.<sup>13</sup> The term 'benefactor' bestowed status in society.<sup>14</sup> The public declaration that a Christian man was 'good and noble' (*kalos kai agathos*) would have recognized his benefaction and also silenced the ignorant charge of a malicious accuser that he was a doer of public evil and not good.<sup>15</sup>

#### (b) In the daily round

The slave was called upon to 'do good' in his household, the essential social unit in the city, regardless of the response of his master. The text recognizes that there were two types of master, and the far from ideal was to be given the due recognition of his authority role (2:18).

Seneca, in his dialogue 'On Anger', records the harsh actions which resulted from the emotional outbursts of ill-tempered masters.

Why do I have to punish my slave with a whipping or imprisonment if he gives me a cheeky answer or disrespectful look or mutters something which I cannot quite hear? . . . we send some wretched little slave off to the prison house. Why on earth are we so anxious to have them flogged immediately, to have their legs broken on the spot?<sup>16</sup>

The call was to continue to do good, even if one suffered harsh and undeserved treatment from an unreasonable and irrational master. To respond this way was to follow in the footsteps of the patient suffering of the Messiah (vv. 20-21). He committed himself to the One who judges justly and proceeded in his role as Messiah to bear our own sins in his body on the tree (vv. 23-24). The Christian servant was to follow in those blessed footsteps and in 4:19 likewise commits his soul to a faithful Creator by doing good.

### (c) *In the difficult marriage*

The far from easy situation of a Christian wife married to a non-Christian husband was to be dealt with by means of personal piety, and not by preaching to her spouse (3:1-7). There was also the call to 'do good' and not to be intimidated by any threats obviously connected with the wife's Christian profession (v. 6).

The complexity of this issue is perhaps best explained by a few lines from the traditional *encomium* delivered at the nuptial bed of the young couple who were friends of the first-century AD writer, Plutarch.

The gods are the first and most important friends. Therefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all strange and outlandish superstitions.<sup>17</sup>

There must have been substantial pressure brought to bear upon a woman to renounce her Christian faith and submit herself to her husband by worshipping his gods. Here, as in the previous situation, the Christian is called upon to 'do good' even in the face of such difficult circumstances.

### (d) *In the flash-point situations*

Finally, there was the message to the Christian community which might be under threat (3:8-16). They were reminded that they must bestow on others what had been bestowed on them, *viz.* a blessing (v. 9ff.). That blessing was not only the absence of malicious speech and evil actions, but also 'the doing of good' and 'the pursuit of peace' (v. 11). The use of this citation from Psalm 34:14 reflects the same theological and ethical framework of Jeremiah 29:7 where the exiles are to seek the welfare of the city and to pray for its peace.

The call is to be zealous for the good (deed, *to agathon*), to be able to give a ready answer for the Christian hope when asked by fellow inhabitants, and to accompany this with the witness of a good lifestyle (*agathē anastrophē*, vv. 13-16). Having Christians suffer for doing good is better than having them suffer for doing evil (v. 17).

## V. Ethics and eschatology

The teaching about seeking the welfare of the city and its peace by the pilgrim people of God in 1 Peter holds together two crucial doctrines, eschatology and social ethics.

There is no sense in which the eschatology of 1 Peter provided the Anatolian Christians with the excuse to abstract themselves from society. Social ethics were clearly assumed as the norm for Christians in 1 Peter. What this general epistle dealt with was the difficulty of fulfilling that responsibility in the unsettled circumstances in which the churches found themselves. This was done within the crucial framework of their future hope.

Underlying the important place given to social ethics within eschatology is the biblical doctrine of the goodness of God. He showers his providential care upon a rebellious and ungrateful world which he knows is passing away. His children can do no other. He does good, because good needs to be done. So must his pilgrim church.

In 1 Peter the good works of Christians were clearly orientated towards the needs of others in the temporal cities in which they lived. Social ethics are thus discussed within the call to a singular focus on the Christian's eschatological hope. The epistle to Diognetus notes that this is 'a wonderful and confessedly strange characteristic of the constitution of the heavenly citizenship'.

This 'constitution' needs to be grasped afresh today in the discussion of social ethics. To stand in 'the true grace of God' demands a deep commitment to social ethics within the framework of a living eschatological hope. The latter without the former is a distortion of the true Christian framework. The latter enables the Christian to place his own agenda second to the needs of others. The former without the latter may not be a reflection of heavenly mindedness but of earthly mindedness. There is more than one reason for passing by on the other side opportunities to do good.

1 Peter shows how it is possible to be truly heavenly minded and of real earthly use to the welfare of the city.

<sup>1</sup> V. P. Furnish, 'Elect Sojourners in Christ: An Approach to the Theology of 1 Peter', *Perkins School of Theology Journal*, Vol. 28 (1975), pp. 1-11, and D. E. Hiebert, 'Designation of the Readers of 1 Peter 1:1-2', *Bibliotheca Sacra* (1980), pp. 65-67, both show that this phrase introduces a theological and not a sociological perception of the recipients.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Elliott suggests the terms describe their legal status as two types of non-citizen in the cities of the Jewish Dispersion in Asia Minor. *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter. Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia, 1981), pp. 24-49, esp. p. 47. It however *parepidemioi* = visiting strangers and *paroikoi* = resident aliens, why is the former greeted only in the opening of the letter and the latter group ignored until both words occur together in 2:11? See also J. W. Prior, 'First Peter and the New Covenant', *Reformers Theological Review*, Vol. XLV, No. 2 (1986), p. 45 for his arguments against Elliott's position. The terms appear together in the LXX in Gn. 23:3 - Abraham sought a burying place for Sarah because he was technically a stranger and a sojourner in the land, but in Ps. 39:12 the writer acknowledged that before God he was a spiritual stranger and sojourner on earth as were his fathers.

<sup>3</sup> The Epistle to Diognetus, V:4-5, 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> J. H. Elliott, 'Peter, its situation and strategy: A Discussion with David Balch', *Perspectives on 1 Peter*, NABPR Special Studies Series No. 9, ed. C. H. Talbert (Macon, Georgia), 1986, p. 62. The word 'discrimination' has been used advisedly and not 'persecution' because there is no clear evidence in 1 Pet. that the imperial persecutions of the force of Nero's localized one in Rome or Domitian's or the later one of Diocletian were being suffered in 1 Pet. See also E. G. Selwyn, 'The Persecutions in 1 Peter', *NTS* Vol. 1 (1950), p. 44 for the same view and his comments in *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London, 1947), p. 55 that the trials were spasmodic, 'a matter of incidents rather than policy, at once ubiquitous and incalculable'.

<sup>5</sup> J. H. Elliott, *The Elect and the Holy. An Exegetical Examination of 1 Peter 2:4-10 and the Phrase basileion hierateuma*, *Nov.T. Sup.* 12 (Leiden, 1966), pp. 184-5, on the outward orientation to the world of the Christian as the meaning of 2:5:9. *contra* D. L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code of 1 Peter*, *SBL Mono 26* (Chico, 1981), pp. 133-6 for an unconvincing attempt to refute Elliott's argument.

<sup>6</sup> See C. W. Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK 'To Bless' in the Old Testament*, *SBL Dissertation Series No. 95* (Atlanta, 1987), ch. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *contra* 'Plainly their security as groups was felt to depend to a large extent on their activities escaping public attention', E. A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of Early Christian Groups in the First Century* (London, 1960), p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> The day of visitation has been taken to relate to personal salvation. *cf.* Lk. 1:68 where God visits and redeems his people and 19:44 where Jerusalem did not know the day of its visitation, *i.e.* salvation, and as a consequence suffered desolation. J. Ramsay Michaels, 'Eschatology in 1 Peter II:17', *NTS* (1966/7), p. 397 says it refers to the 'salvation of the heathen'; *contra* W. C. van Unnik, 'The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter', *NTS*, Vol. 1 (1954), pp. 104-5 where he argues from 1 Enoch that it refers to the day of doom and desolation.

<sup>9</sup> For the literary evidence of this dual function of government see W. C. van Unnik, 'Lob und Strafe durch die Obrigkeit Hellenistisches zu Röm. 13:3-4', *Jesus und Paulus, Festschrift für Georg Kümmel zum 70 Geburtstag* (Göttingen, 1975), pp. 336-340.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of this point and the epigraphic evidence to support it see the author's 'The Public Praising of Christian

Benefactors, Romans 13:3-4 and 1 Peter 2:14-15', forthcoming *JSNT* (1988).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> C. P. Jones, 'Benefactions', *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1978), ch. 12.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Public Praising of Christian Benefactors', *loc. cit.*, for the evidence.

<sup>14</sup> A. R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (London, 1968), p. 36: 'the very title . . . did not simply state a fact but conferred a status'.

<sup>15</sup> For evidence of this public declaration see 'The Public Praising . . .', *loc. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Seneca, *Dialogue 5 'On Anger'*, 3.24,32.

<sup>17</sup> Plutarch, *Advice to Bride and Groom, Moralia 140D*, cited A. L. Balch, *op. cit.*, p. 85. See K. O. Wicker, 'A Comparative Study of the Household Codes and Plutarch's Conjugal Precepts', *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honor of J. L. McKenzie*, ed. J. W. Flanagan and A. W. Robinson (Claremont, 1975), pp. 141-153.

## Survey of recent journals

Two years have passed since our editors last looked through the journals and drew our attention to selected articles (vol. 11, pp. 93-98). In this survey they bring us up to date.

### Abbreviations

AfRH	Archive for Reformation History
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
ChHist	Church History
Conc	Concilium
EQ	Evangelical Quarterly
ExpT	Expository Times
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
KTR	King's Theological Review
NTS	New Testament Studies
NovT	Novum Testamentum
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
TynB	Tyndale Bulletin
VE	Vox Evangelica
VT	Vetus Testamentum
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

### Old Testament

One of the most striking features to emerge from OT articles over the last couple of years is the insularity of contemporary OT studies. Very few articles appear in periodicals not specifically concerned with OT or biblical studies, and the agenda for which the articles are written is set almost entirely by the OT specialists. There appear to be very few exceptions to this phenomenon, though the areas of liberation theology and sexual ethics, especially abortion, were noted. It seems appropriate, therefore, to begin with R. E. Clements' question, *viz.*, 'Whither OT theology?' (*KTR* 8/2 (1985), pp. 33-37). Clements' chief contention is that OT theology should be a kind of standard-bearer for OT studies in the wider arena of theological enquiry. A genuine opportunity exists at the moment to revive the original role of OT theology as a 'bridge discipline', even though the nature of the bridge and that of OT theology itself have changed over the last century. Whereas in the nineteenth century OT theology really represented an attempt to combine the new critical insights with a more traditional religious view of the Bible, in our own generation the OT finds itself in the midst of a theological debate where much more fundamental questions are being asked. Far from marginalizing OT scholarship,

however, these contemporary issues show how and where the OT can make a distinctive and positive contribution. Specific examples of these questions include the relationship between Christianity and other faiths, the origin of the Christian concepts of church and community, or how one should respond to fears of death and demons. Clements' most significant argument, however, is not that the OT has a real role to play in the modern world. Rather, it is that the OT is handled most productively when it is used theologically. In practice, evangelical scholarship has too often allowed itself to be diverted from this priority.

An important area often neglected by OT specialists and which rarely features in undergraduate OT courses is that of the relationship between OT and NT. In the light of this serious omission, students will be grateful for a couple of crumbs from the scholars' table, especially as both are by evangelical writers. Firstly, R. N. Longenecker ('Who is the prophet talking about?', *Themelios* 13/1 (1987), pp. 4-8) helpfully summarizes four main types of OT exegesis found in first-century AD Judaism, each of which he believes can be found in the NT. Then, in answer to the perplexing question as to how far a modern Christian should be expected to adopt the same exegetical procedures, he argues that the distinction between the normative and descriptive use of the Bible is valid in this area as well as others. In other words, many of the NT's exegetical uses of the OT are themselves contextualized and we should not aim to copy them in a slavish manner. Clearly this thesis will not convince all, but it does offer a potential solution to a long-standing problem, and it is to be hoped that it can be developed in greater detail. On a similar subject, M. J. Evans ('The OT as Christian Scripture', *VE* 16 (1986), pp. 25-32) argues that in certain cases it is important to allow the NT to affect our interpretation of the OT. Again, the issue is controversial, and this brief article is not able to do much more than give the outlines of an argument. But the questions discussed by Longenecker and Evans are fundamental ones, and evangelicals as a whole need to devote themselves more seriously to hermeneutical matters. The whole area is of great relevance to the whole church, and this reviewer is still convinced that 'it would be no exaggeration to understand the hermeneutical problem of the Old Testament as the problem of Christian theology' (Gunnweg).

A quite different area with a lively discussion about basic questions is that of Israelite history. It is focused, particularly in North America, on the volume by J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes, *A history of ancient Israel and Judah*, though the works of Ramsey and Soggin also come to mind. The debate has recently been reported and developed in a series of contributions brought together by P. R. Davies and D. M. Gunn (*JSOT* 39 (1987), pp. 3-63). Possible future

directions for the subject are clearly signposted, and the current turmoil is well illustrated by the surprising claim (by B. O. Long) that Miller and Hayes' work is based on a 'fundamentalist premise', despite Miller's view of the OT's historical outlook as 'incredible' and 'unbelievable'. Although Miller and Hayes are less radical than some in their confidence that genuine history can be deduced from the OT, their outlook can hardly be described as conservative when compared, for example, with Bright's textbook. In fact, this debate does not include a genuine conservative contribution, perhaps because at least one of the editors (P. R. Davies) believes that the genre we have been accustomed to call 'biblical history' has reached the end of the road. Instead, he and others are looking for a 'paradigm shift' in the subject's next stage of development (or fashion?). An example of what we should expect from this new change of direction is found in an article by K. W. Whitelam, 'Recreating the History of Israel' (*JSOT* 35 (1986), pp. 34-70). In Whitelam's view, biblical historians should replace their emphasis on written sources and on unique events and individuals in favour of a concern with the regular and recurrent patterns of human life. In practice, for ancient Israel, this means a preference for the so-called 'new archaeology' or social archaeology and the pursuit of historical demography. There will be a greater emphasis on multidisciplinary studies, and a 'blurring of the lines of demarcation' between history, archaeology, and the social sciences. Although it is right to acknowledge that important issues are being raised here, J. H. Hayes reminds us correctly that 'the biblical text is still our fundamental source for reconstructing Israelite history'. Most contributors to the symposium do acknowledge this with varying degrees of reluctance, but the question of whether one can handle the OT as a historical source remains a crucial area of debate. Much confusion, however, still abounds, as for instance in the contrast between Miller's statement that OT history is 'unbelievable' and 'incredible' and Hayes' claim about the same sources that 'we are not prone to be overly skeptical'. In contrast, the voice of those who have a genuine confidence in the OT's historicity is currently quite muted, and there is need for a fresh statement of the results and methods of historical and archaeological work in the last few decades. Too much may have been claimed in the past, but the evidence is still worth hearing.

The editorial shape of the Psalter has been the subject of several recent articles, more than one by G. H. Wilson. In particular, he has revived old questions about the superscriptions to the Psalms, arguing that those in Books 1-3 are author-designations used editorially as a means of grouping individual psalms ('Evidence of editorial divisions in the Hebrew Psalter', *VT* 34 (1984), pp. 337-352). The untitled psalms in Books 1-3, on the other hand, seem to be linked with their immediate predecessor, and their position may indicate an early and deliberate intention to preserve alternative traditions of combination or division (e.g. Pss. 9-10, 32-33). The relationship of untitled Psalms in Books 4-5 is probably to be explained in other ways. This is due partly to the much greater number of such psalms there, and evidence indicating the original independence of the untitled compositions ('The use of "untitled" psalms in the Hebrew Psalter', *ZAW* 97 (1985), pp. 404-413). The most interesting of Wilson's articles, however, argues that royal psalms (Pss. 2, 72, 89) stand at the main divisions of Books 1-3 ('The use of Royal Psalms at the "seams" of the Hebrew Psalter', *JSOT* 35 (1986), pp. 85-94). A developing theology of the Davidic covenant can also be seen in these royal psalms. The positive hopes of Psalms 2 and 72, representing Books 1-2, contrast strikingly with the perplexity about the monarchy in Psalm 89. It may be, therefore, that Books 1-2 form a pre-exilic collection and that Book 3, represented by Psalm 89 (and Ps. 74 (?), which mentions only divine kingship), have arisen from the experience of exile. When these conclusions are compared with the views of J. L. Mays, some very interesting features emerge. Although Mays is working from the very different perspective of the Torah psalms (1, 19, 119) and arguing that the Psalter has been organized around the theme of 'the instruction of the Lord', he too believes that kingship is a central theme in the Psalter ('The place of the Torah-Psalms in the Psalter', *JBL* 106 (1987), pp. 3-12). He draws his conclusion from the close association between Torah and kingship, which emerges out of the combination of adjacent psalms (1-2, 18-19, 118-119), though for Mays the kingship is divine and the interpretation definitely eschatological. Nevertheless, the overlap in the two

approaches is significant, not least because the arguments are based on a combination of redactional arrangement and theological content rather than the usually more dominant interests of the form critics.

One of the most useful recent series of articles for students must surely be those that have appeared under the title, 'Which is the best commentary?' Four have been published to date, on Genesis (*Exp*: 97/6 (1986), pp. 163-167), Job (97/12 (1986), pp. 356-360), Jeremiah (98/6 (1987), pp. 171-175), and Exodus (98/12 (1987), pp. 359-362), and each article manages to include a good range of currently available works which reflect the interests of the preacher and layman as well as the scholar. The chief value lies in the fair and perceptive description of each commentary. Evangelical works are mentioned naturally (apart from Thompson on Jeremiah, surprisingly unavailable to the writer) with little trace of paternalism, and apart from the preference for Carroll on Jeremiah (which may say more about the weakness of the alternatives), there are not too many surprises in the final choices (it is always fascinating to compare one's own estimate in such instances). Of the four OT books, it is apparent that Job is currently served by far the best by the commentators.

Finally, attention must be drawn to two contributions which, for very different reasons, might provide more positive signs of future directions for evangelical OT scholarship. The first is by a well known evangelical scholar, J. G. McConville, who has challenged the prevailing view that Ezra-Nehemiah were pro-Persian and pre-occupied with establishing a non-eschatological theocratic society ('Ezra-Nehemiah and the fulfilment of prophecy', *VT* 36 (1986), pp. 204-224). By comparing several prophetic texts with the Ezra Memoir in Ezra 7-9 in particular, he has argued that Ezra-Nehemiah were very much concerned with the partial fulfilment of prophecy in their own day and the reality of a future hope. He also proposes that these two books may not be so exclusivist and anti-Samaritan as is usually thought, and that neither Ezra nor Nehemiah were successful in dealing with mixed marriages. On the contrary, the fact that both books end with only a partial resolution of the mixed marriage problem may be quite deliberate. Clearly, a number of fundamental issues are touched on here, and if this kind of interpretation becomes more widely accepted, there will have to be a significant reassessment of our understanding of this fifth-century BC reformation.

The second work deals with a subject from which evangelicals in the West have generally stood nervously apart, viz. liberation theology. *Exodus — a lasting paradigm* is the title of a symposium (*Conc* 189, Feb. 1987) which contains articles from a series of biblical, historical, and contemporary perspectives on exodus theology. Those that struck the eye deal with the development of exodus themes in Revelation, the significance of the exodus for various movements in Christian history such as the Pilgrim Fathers, and the exodus as paradigm in black theology. The reason for including this symposium here is found in none of these positive values, however, and neither is this an attempt to expose the well-known weaknesses of the liberation theologians' selective approach to the biblical text. It is the collection of all this material into one place that this reviewer found so helpful with the result that one's awareness of the impact of this biblical boom on the church and theology as a whole was greatly expanded. In other words, the integration of exegesis with other theological disciplines is not only important but effective.

This survey therefore ends where it began, with a plea for OT scholarship not to stand aside from the wider stream of theological teaching and practice. Evangelicals have less excuse than most for not taking seriously the implications of the incarnation as a model for a biblical research and teaching. Christ's example above all should inspire us not to duck the challenge of grappling with these wide issues in the context of our OT studies. Who knows, we might even discover how relevant the OT really is!

*Martin Selman*

#### **New Testament**

Paul's letter to the Galatians has been very much in the spotlight over the past two years in the journals, as different scholars have tried to clarify Paul's teaching on the law. No less than three articles have

looked at Paul's description of the law as our 'custodian' or 'tutor' (Gal. 3:24), trying to explain it in its social context. Norman H. Young in his *Paidagogos: the Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor* (NovT 29 (1987), pp. 150-176) helpfully surveys the extra-biblical evidence about the role of the *paidagogos*: he was a slave whose task was to be with the child under his care, to protect him, to keep him in order and to inculcate good behaviour. Young argues that Paul, in comparing the law to this guardian figure, has in mind the negative restrictive aspects of his role, rather than the more positive protective aspects. David J. Lull in "The Law was our Pedagogue": A Study in Galatians 3:19-25' (*JBL* 105 (1986), pp. 481-498) thinks that Paul had a more positive intention: the law had a positive (though temporary) function in curbing the desires and deeds of the flesh. Linda L. Belleville, in her interesting article "Under Law": Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3:21-4, 11' (*JSNT* 26 (1986), pp. 53-78), speaks of the law holding us in an 'authorized custody', which was necessary because of sin: the law 'makes clear to us our obligation, supervises our conduct, and rebukes and punishes our wrongdoing'. Neither Lull nor Belleville go back to the old idea of the law as a tutor educating us for faith, but they rightly question the tendency to over-emphasize the negative function of the law in Paul's thought. Belleville is also bold enough to question the widely held view that the Greek word *stoicheia* found in Galatians 4:3 and Colossians 2:8 means 'elemental spirits' and to revive the view that the word means basic or elementary rules.

Other articles discussing Galatians include Richard Hays' 'Christology and Ethics in Galatians: The Law of Christ' (*CBQ* 49 (1987), pp. 268-290) in which he argues that Jesus' own faith and self-giving are paradigmatic in Paul's ethics. Sam K. Williams' 'Again *Pistis Christou*' (*CBQ* 49 (1987), pp. 431-447) agrees with Hays that the genitival phrase *pistis Christou* should be translated 'Jesus' faith' not 'faith in Jesus'. John Barclay in his salutary article 'Mirror-Reading a polemical letter: Galatians as a test-case' (*JSNT* 31 (1987), pp. 73-93) discusses and illustrates the problems involved in reconstructing the heresies and problems faced by Paul and others.

Paul's other letters are, of course, not neglected in the journals. A notable article is Klyne Snodgrass's 'The Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul' (*NTS* 32 (1986), pp. 72-93). Scholars have regularly been perplexed about how to reconcile Paul's statements in this chapter about judgment being according to works (e.g. vv. 6-8) with his teaching elsewhere in Romans about justification by faith, some seeing the ideas as not really Pauline, others suggesting that Paul is here speaking only of how non-Christians are judged. Snodgrass argues that Paul really does believe that all will be judged according to their obedience, and that this is not contrary to his teaching on grace: 'I think we have to conclude that Paul took the judgment texts seriously and expected that by God's grace, on the basis of the death and resurrection of Christ, salvation is to "the doers", those responding in godly obedience.' In the same issue of *NTS*, pp. 122-135, Douglas Moo looks at 'Israel and Paul in Romans 7:7-12' and argues that the fatal coming of the law being referred to (e.g. v. 9) is the giving of the Mosaic law on Sinai. Still on Romans we note Nico Fryer's 'The Meaning and Translation of *Hilasterion* in Romans 3:25' in *EQ* 59 (1987), pp. 99-116, in which he defends the view that 'the Apostle alludes primarily to the kapporet (i.e. mercy seat) and the Day of Atonement'; also C. E. B. Cranfield's 'The Pastor's Opportunities VIII. Preaching on Romans' in *ExpT* 99/2 (Nov. 1987), pp. 36-40.

Philippians 2:6-11 is a very important NT passage, and a number of scholars recently have argued that it does not speak of the pre-existent Christ emptying himself of his divine glory, but rather of the second Adam identifying with sinful humanity. This interpretation allows scholars such as Professor James Dunn to argue that the ideas of Jesus' divine pre-existence and of the incarnation were not arrived at until relatively late in the first century, whereas, if the ideas are present in Philippians 2, this takes them back very early, especially if Philippians 2:6-11 is a pre-Pauline hymn. The Adamic interpretation is challenged by C. A. Wanamaker in *NTS* 33 (1987), pp. 179-193, in his 'Philippians 2:6-11: Son of God or Adamic Christology?'. He argues plausibly that 'The passage is not to be understood as an expression of Paul's Adamic Christology. Rather . . . as a text which presupposes and alludes to his belief that Christ was the Son of God. . . . Those wishing to deny that Philippians 2:6 refers to Christ's

pre-existence are in all probability incorrect.' L. D. Hirst in *NTS* 32 (1986), pp. 225-246, 'Re-enter the pre-existent Christ in Philippians 2:5-11?' wants to keep the Adamic allusion, but also the idea of divine pre-existence.

Before leaving Paul we note A. J. M. Wedderburn's 'The Soteriology of the Mysteries and Pauline Baptismal Theology' in *NovT* 29 (1987), pp. 53-72, in which he looks for parallels to the Pauline idea of the believer sharing in Christ's sufferings and death in the Greek mystery religions. He finds very little that is parallel, and sees the Jewish understanding of the Passover as a much more promising background to the Pauline ideas. Alan Padgett pursues the question of Paul's teaching on women in *EQ* 58 (1986), pp. 121-132 (discussing 1 Cor. and the views of Elizabeth Fiorenza), *EQ* 59 (1987), pp. 39-52 (discussing submission in Tit. 2), and *Interpretation* 41 (1987), pp. 19-31 (discussing 1 Tim. 2).

On the gospels we note two contributions by Dale C. Allison, both responses to significant books. In *JSNT* 29 (1987), pp. 57-78, he writes on 'Jesus and the Covenant: a response to E. P. Sanders', and questions among other things Sanders' view that Jesus did not stress repentance when he called sinners. Allison believes that Jesus did call for repentance, and he argues that Jesus' offence in the eyes of the Jewish authorities was not so much his inclusiveness – the fact that he welcomed sinners – as his exclusiveness – the fact that he demanded that all Israelites, sinners and others alike, should accept him as God's eschatological representative. In *ExpT* 98 (1987), pp. 203-204, 'Jesus and Moses (Mt. 5:1-2)', Allison briefly responds to T. Donaldson's valuable book *Jesus on the Mountain*, arguing that the thought of Jesus as the new Moses (on the new Mount Sinai) is more important than Donaldson recognized. The whole of *Interpretation* 41/2 (April 1987) is devoted to study of the Sermon on the Mount with articles by among others R. A. Guelich and J. D. Kingsbury. In *ExpT* 98/8 (May 87), pp. 231-234, John R. Levison writes on 'Responsible Initiative in Matthew 5:21-48', showing that the higher righteousness that Jesus looked for was broad in its scope and deep in its radical demands.

Two short Markan studies of interest are Wendy J. Cotter's 'For it was not the season for figs' in *CBQ* 48 (1986), pp. 62-66, in which she explains that the phrase in question, Mark 11:13d, is an informational afterthought which goes not with the immediately preceding clause, but with 11:13b, explaining the tentative nature of Jesus' inspection of the fig-tree: leaves would normally indicate the presence of fruit, but it was not the season. For a similar *gar* clause she compares Mark 16:4b. Stephen Motyer's article in *NTS* 33 (1987), pp. 155-157, is entitled 'The Rending of the Veil: a Markan Pentecost?', and compares the divine rending of the heavens in Mark 1:10 and the accompanying declaration of Jesus' divine Sonship with the rending of the temple veil in 15:38 and the accompanying confession by the centurion of Jesus' Sonship.

Lukan studies include Loveday Alexander's 'Luke's Preface in the context of Greek preface writing' in *NovT* 28 (1986), pp. 48-74: she argues that Luke's prologue is in the tradition of Greek scientific writing. A. J. Kerr in *ExpT* 98/3 (Dec. 1986), pp. 68-71, writes on 'Zacchaeus' Decision to Make Fourfold Restitution', and suggests that Zacchaeus may have had in mind the Roman penalty (of fourfold restitution) for cases where tax collectors could be shown to have brought a false accusation against clients.

Johannine studies include G. R. Beasley-Murray on 'John 3:3, 5: Baptism, Spirit and the Kingdom' in *ExpT* 97/6 (March 1986), pp. 167-170, in which he argues that the 'water' of John 3:5 is baptismal; but, if anyone is tempted to exaggerate John's sacramentalism, he explains that 'faith's confession, the gift of Christ, the work of the Spirit and Christian baptism form one complex event'. *ExpT* also has an article in its 'Keeping up with recent studies' series by Stephen Smalley on John's gospel (vol. 97/4, Jan. 1986, pp. 102-108).

What else should be mentioned? It is invidious to choose. But we might note Raymond Brown's survey of 'Gospel Infancy Narrative Research from 1976-86' in *CBQ* 48 (1986), pp. 468-483 (on Mt.), pp. 660-680 (on Lk.), in which among other things he responds to critics of his magnum opus *Birth of the Messiah*. Francis Agnew's 'The origin of the NT Apostle-Concept: a review of research', *JBL* 105/1 (1986), pp. 75-96, suggests that scholars are looking again for a



Jewish/OT background to apostleship, apostles being 'commissioned agents sent to act in the name of others/another'. The book of Revelation is the topic of all the articles in *Interpretation* 40/3 (July 1986). The *TynB* vol. 37 (1986) includes articles by Ralph Martin on 'The Setting of 2 Corinthians' (pp. 3-19), by John Maile on 'The Ascension in Luke-Acts' (pp. 29-59), and by Oliver O'Donovan on 'The Political Thought of the Book of Revelation' (pp. 61-94). Last but not least, the former editor of *Themelios*, Dick France, writes on 'Liberation in the NT' in *EQ* 58/1 (1986), pp. 3-23.

David Wenham

### Church history

Nineteenth-century British nonconformity is the subject of two statistically-based analyses by K. D. Brown. In 'An Unsettled Ministry? . . .', *ChHist* 56 (1987), pp. 204-223, he highlights its remarkable ministerial mobility. Even among Baptists and Congregationalists, only about 10% of ministers stayed more than ten years in one charge. The causes of ministerial leakage are also surveyed; major ones were the ministry's physical demands and issues of finance and power. In *JEH* 38 (1987), pp. 236-253, Brown looks at 'College Principals - a Cause of Nonconformist Decay?'. If the evidence does not allow a firm 'yes', too many principals had inadequate contact with the secular world (e.g. in upbringing), very brief ministerial experience and little involvement in extra-collegiate affairs, such as learned societies and pressure groups. There is a lesson here for someone! Apparently a high number of principals came from the 'Celtic fringes'.

There is a fascinating survey of the different correlations made between 'Ethics, Evolution and Biblical Criticism in the Thought of Benjamin Jowett and John William Colenso' by P. Hinchliff, *ibid.* 37 (1986), pp. 91-110. In interpreting revivals D. Luker urges the importance of factors internal to the churches and of what contemporaries understood by revival ('Revivalism in Theory and Practice: the Case of Cornish Methodism', *ibid.*, pp. 603-619). In 'The Roots and Fruits of Brazilian Pentecostalism' (*VE* 17 (1987), pp. 67-94) J. P. Medcraft points up the significance of its freedom from expatriate control from an early stage, theological development as the domain of Christian people in the absence of theological colleges, and similar issues.

Among an excellent crop of Reformation studies brief mention must suffice for Tony Lane's 'Guide to Recent Calvin Literature' (*ibid.*, pp. 35-47), W. J. Bouwsma's 'The Quest for the Historical Calvin' (*ARH* 77 (1986), pp. 47-57; if Calvin is now 'surprisingly dead', he can be brought back to life by . . . being put back into the sixteenth century!), and C. J. Burchill's study of Zacharias Ursinus, the unsung main author of the much-sung Heidelberg Catechism (*JEH* 37 (1986), pp. 565-583). The tendency to take Erasmus more seriously as a theologian is maintained by J. D. Tracy's 'Two

Erasmuses; Two Luthers: Erasmus' Strategy in Defense of *De Libero Arbitrio*', in *AJRH* 78 (1987), pp. 37-60. While Luther was right to identify two competing strands in Erasmus (roughly, Augustinian and Pelagian), Erasmus was shrewd enough to discern changes in Luther's developing beliefs.

Studies that help us to see the Reformation whole are always needed. One such is J. M. Headley's 'The Reformation as Crisis in the Understanding of Tradition' (*ibid.*, pp. 5-23). Pride of place goes to articles on the English and Scottish movements. In 'The Early Expansion of Protestantism in England 1520-1558' (*ibid.*, pp. 187-222) by A. G. Dickens, we have a weighty response to recent minimizing estimates by scholars such as C. Haigh and J. Scarisbrick. Refusing to be squeezed into a choice between Reformation 'from above' (act of state) and 'from below' (grass-roots conversions and convictions), and carefully plotting regional differentials, Dickens endorses G. R. Elton's verdict that by 1553 England was nearer to being a Protestant country than anything else. The heartland of the Reformation was much more extensive than merely London and Kent. The Scots Confession has been more admired than historically evaluated in recent years. W. I. P. Hazlett fills a glaring gap with 'The Scots Confession 1560: Context, Complexion and Critique' (*ibid.*, pp. 287-320). Not least interesting is his determination that it falls short of Calvin (subdued doctrine of single predestination), goes beyond Calvin (discipline as a third mark of the church; 'an unhatched Covenant theology'), contradicts Calvin (duty of resistance to Catholic rulers) and distorts Calvin (regeneration at the expense of justification; justification of the justified at the expense of justification of the sinner).

'From Augustine to Gregory the Great: an Evaluation of the Doctrine of Purgatory', by R. R. Atwell (*JEH* 38 (1987), pp. 173-186), finds that Gregory fatally forged together two ideas kept separate by Augustine - the efficacy of prayers for the dead, and the possibility of post-mortem purification. This was made possible by Gregory's adoption of the essentially pagan notion of the access enjoyed by the dead to the world of the living. Athanasius' authorship of the *Life of Antony* has never been easy to accept. According to T. D. Barnes ('Angel of Light or Mystic Initiate? The Problem of the *Life of Antony*', *JTS* 37 (1986), pp. 353-368), recent studies have established that the Syriac is closest to the lost Coptic original. The Greek is 'an Alexandrian refurbishment more attuned to the spiritual yearnings of an urban Mediterranean culture' and not by Athanasius. Last, and surely least, may I be allowed to mention my own article, 'The Origins of Infant Baptism - Child Believers' Baptism?' (*SJT* 40 (1987), pp. 1-23), which argues that much of the early evidence suggests that quite young infants were probably baptized as believers in the earliest centuries.

David Wright

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## Book Reviews

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W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, vol. I (chs. 1-25) (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), cxxii + 658 pp., £24.95.

The ICC series, begun towards the end of the last century, was never completed. Amendments are now being made, with volumes commissioned on biblical books never before treated in the series, as well as replacements for some of the older contributions. The aim of the series is to 'bring together all the relevant aids to exegesis, linguistic and textual, no less than archaeological, historical, literary and theological'. The undertaking is therefore massive, and students who have used ICC commentaries will be familiar with the thoroughness and detail which characterizes them in general.

The present commentary is the first to appear in this series on Jeremiah. It has the thoroughness which the series leads the reader to expect, and is therefore welcome even in the rash of recent writing on Jeremiah.

The author regards his treatment of the ancient versions of the OT as one of the main contributions of his work, and this is soon readily apparent. The first section of the Introduction jumps right into the complex textual questions surrounding the book. It is well known that one of the sharpest critical problems of Jeremiah is the difference in length between the Hebrew and Greek texts, the latter being approximately one eighth shorter than the former, much the most significant divergence between the two kinds of text in the OT. The questions as to which came first, whether the relationship is a simple matter of expansion in one direction or contraction in another, and how the tracing of that relationship might affect the understanding of the authorship of the book, are notoriously difficult. McKane's general position is that the LXX rests on a shorter original Hebrew text than the Masoretic. He is not offering anything new in this, though in his many individual judgments he is independent.

In opening with the textual questions, the author is clearing the way for his general method. From the postulate of growth between LXX and MT, which can be argued for on specific textual grounds (though it is still only one possible account of the differences in the two texts), McKane, again in company with other writers on Jeremiah, hypothesizes more general growth in the book, spanning a long period of time, but grounded only on rather more subjective

literary-critical arguments. The nature of the relationship between what can be regarded as early deposit, emanating from Jeremiah's actual ministry, and later accretion, becomes one of the major concerns of the commentary.

In this he is, of course, in line with a century of scholarship on Jeremiah. The debate has largely moved on from the heavily literary hypothesis of Mowinckel which held the field for much of the present century. McKane interacts with the important, more recent contributions of W. Thiel and H. Weippert, the former arguing for extensive deuteronomistic influence in the form of the present book, the latter, in contrast, that Jeremiah was himself responsible for virtually all of it. The discussion turns centrally on the relationship between the parts identified as poetry and those identified as prose. His judgments about both are salutary: on the one hand that Thiel has imposed a system on his interpretation of the text, by which he can always demonstrate that a passage is deuteronomistic; and on the other, that any claim to have discovered the *ipsissima verba* of Jeremiah on the basis of lexical similarities between poetry and prose will always claim too much. His protest against the solution of the critical problems of the book by some grand system is important.

His own approach is to take on the question of the relationship between early and late material microscopically, *i.e.* in the context of short sections of text. He posits a 'rolling corpus', meaning that an early, small corpus of Jeremianic sayings was gradually expanded as individual sayings 'triggered' or 'generated' new ones, by means of catchwords or typical ideas, in ever new situations (after the time of Jeremiah himself). Generally, poetic statements generated prose ones, but poetry could also generate poetry, and prose prose. The procedure is therefore much more flexible than the older attempt of Mowinckel to identify whole documents by characteristic style and phraseology. It is not exempt, however, from the subjectivity that attended the old literary-critical methodology, and at times seems not very distant from it. The fact that a prose saying stands adjacent to a poetic saying with which it has features in common does not force McKane's conclusion that it has been 'triggered' in some situation remote from Jeremiah's own ministry. The extent to which Jeremiah ordered his own sayings is an imponderable in Jeremiah criticism, and the origin of most of the book with him remains defensible, despite McKane's neglect of the possibility.

There is nevertheless a certain freshness about the book. The Introduction has the air of a man reflecting critically on his own work, and there is an attractive modesty about his conclusions. I have major reservations about his understanding of the Word of God, pp. xviii-cxix, which excludes any idea that God has spoken in the words of the book of Jeremiah. As a tool for students it is very 'Advanced level'. It suffers, furthermore, from the fact that the commentary itself is not divided according to modes of interpretation (textual, exegetical, theological). This makes it less easy to use than, say, the Hermeneia of Word commentaries, though they are heavyweight too, and indeed I think that attention to theology has suffered as a result.

**Gordon McConville**, Trinity College, Bristol.

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**P. A. Verhoef**, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), xxv + 364 pp., £18.00/\$21.95.

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Pieter Verhoef, Professor of Old Testament, Emeritus, of the University of Stellenbosch, has provided an addition to *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* that can only enhance the reputation of the series.

Whilst writing from an evangelical position, Verhoef interacts with the views of a wide range of scholars. This makes the commentary thorough and detailed. It also provides the reader with a good overview of the state of scholarship regarding the two books and an excellent source of references to follow up points of detail. However, although the detailed discussions make the commentaries demanding reading at times, they are not so detailed and technical as to be daunting for the preacher in distinction to the student.

There is a thorough introduction to each book. This discusses the usual topics such as authorship, unity, historical setting, style and text. Here there is an interesting, but not totally convincing, defence

of the view that Malachi prophesied in the period between Nehemiah's two terms as Governor in Jerusalem, *i.e.* shortly after 433 BC. The introduction includes a structural analysis. This lays an important basis for the commentary on the book, because an innovation in these commentaries is the use of structural analysis as an exegetical tool. Verhoef says in the introduction to *Malachi*, '... we have applied a modest structural analysis to the book of Malachi. It concerns mainly the division of the book into pericopes, the analysis of sentences (prose), stichoi (poetry), and discourses, and a consideration of various literary devices' (p. 171). He recognizes that 'Structural analysis as an exegetical method is in dispute', but 'deems it one of several methods to establish the meaning of a passage. It concentrates attention upon salient points in the exegesis, and is in itself a significant antidote for deliberately dismembering a literary unit' (p. 25). In fact Verhoef uses his analysis to refute, for example, attempts to disentangle and rearrange different strands in Hag. 1:1-11. Structural analysis such as Verhoef uses is at its strongest when it rests on literary devices (*e.g.* word-plays, parallelisms, chiasmus) as indications of the intended structure. Its danger is that the commentator may impose a structure on the work. In his 'modest' approach Verhoef seems, in this reviewer's opinion, to have avoided this danger.

Like all the commentaries in this series, the two in this work have as their starting point translations provided by the commentator. The footnotes to these contain valuable discussions of variants in the ancient witnesses and more recent suggested emendations of the Masoretic Text. Where relevant, these are dealt with in more detail in the commentary. On the whole Verhoef concludes that 'the majority of proposed alterations to the text are really unnecessary' (p. 18).

A valuable feature of the commentaries is the author's attempt 'to stress the relevance of the prophet's message in terms of continuity and discontinuity for the Christian church' (p. vii). He does this in two ways. The sections of the *Introductions* which discuss the message of the books contain assessments of the theological significance of the prophets' message for today. This is not done in a simplistic way that ignores the historical and cultural gap between then and now. It is based on appreciating the theological content of the original message and trying to see its meaning for us in the light of Christ's work. The same approach is the basis of short indications of the contemporary applications of the prophets' messages which occur at the end of several sections of commentary proper. This, of course, enhances the value of the commentaries for the preacher and Bible study group leader.

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

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**Brevard S. Childs**, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 255 pp., no price.

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Readers of this journal cannot but have a natural sympathy with Childs' endeavour to get us to read the OT in terms of literary wholes, rather than in the picky way that historical criticism teaches us. After his *Exodus* and *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, he now offers an outworking of his thesis on the theological lines. He wades into the deep end, and those who are familiar with the present state of discussion in the area of OT theology will get the most out of his own input.

The structuring of the subject matter, which is not discussed, is by no means new. It is Eichrodt's *Theology* minus the heavy emphasis on covenant, just as Vriezen's volume was. The structure seems to matter little to Childs, apart from denying a need to find a centre (p. 12): the canonical perspective is what counts and it does not dictate the structure. He is thoroughly alert to current insistence on theological diversity in the OT. His approach might have brought harmony at any price and resulted in the levelling down of distinctives. He avoids this trap, though perhaps he subordinates the divine aspect of Gn. 1 too closely to that of Gn. 2 (pp. 33, 48). 'Tension' or 'dialectic' runs a close second to 'canonical' as the keyword of the book, and its most positive contribution is the persistent endeavour to accept diversity and to find significance in it.

His *Introduction* was concerned with the OT canon rather than with the biblical canon. So by and large is this volume, as a glance at

the index of biblical references shows. True, the term 'Old Testament' has a necessarily Christian import (p. 9). He sometimes draws out the relevance of OT material for today's world, for example in the light of feminist and gay concerns. He asks whether Yahweh was a male deity (pp. 39f.) and devotes a chapter to 'male and female as a theological problem', which includes a statement on homosexuality. Nor is the nuclear threat outside his purview (p. 233). Generally, however, he stays inside his own patch, seeking to delineate the theology of ancient Israel. 'The Old Testament theologian . . . identifies himself with Israel as the community of faith' (p. 15); the task of OT theology is 'closely to describe the profile of the Old Testament witness without fusing it with that of the New Testament' (p. 242, cf. p. 238).

The author's own emphasis may be gauged from his strictures against other methodological approaches. Word studies profit little, irrespective of semantic pitfalls: they are too narrow and too shallow (pp. 197, 205f., 230). Nor for him have anthropological or sociological approaches advanced theological understanding (p. 197, cf. pp. 175-177). Above all, the material is not to be so fragmented by critical analysis that its parts are assigned theological autonomy, for instance by establishing a 'J' theology (e.g. p. 5, 11), or are used just to trace historical development, correct though it may well be (e.g. pp. 5, 155). A lively and illuminating feature of the book is Childs' engagement with other scholars, whether his apparent enemies, such as Gottwald, or relative allies, such as Sanders, Clements and Milgrom.

Despite his strictures against critical scholarship, his own approach is by no means pre-critical. Genesis, Samuel and Isaiah 1-11 are each composed of material that arose at different times, but this evident truth is less significant than the functional 'intertextuality' of those disparate elements in the final form of the text (pp. 53, 237). Childs obviously depends heavily on previous researches. His cry is that they often have a wrong orientation or stop too soon by not proceeding in a canonical direction. Amen, so long as one can keep on studying the parts - without which the whole can never be discovered - as a necessary interim task.

Leslie C. Allen, Fuller Theological Seminary.

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**Daniel Patte, *The Gospel according to Matthew: a Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), xvi + 432 pp., no price quoted.**

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Matthew seems to have become a favourite book for those experimenting with a new type of commentary. Gundry's commentary on 'Matthew's Literary and Theological Art' (1982 - see review in *Themelios* 8:3) has been followed by Bruner's massive two-volume 'theological exegesis' (*The Christbook*, 1987; *The Churchbook* forthcoming), and by Patte's 'structural commentary'.

Patte is well known for his efforts to introduce and commend structuralism to those outside the magic circle. Unlike most structuralists, he tries to talk the common language, and this commentary is remarkable for its lack of the distinctive structuralist jargon. But for all that it requires something of a mental conversion to appreciate what he is trying to do.

He makes no attempt to deal with the sort of questions which occupy the notes of an annotated Bible. Nor is he interested in historical questions about what actually happened. This is single-mindedly a study of 'Matthew's faith', i.e. the convictions which the author wished to communicate. But unlike Gundry, he does not expect to find these by a comparative study of Matthew in relation to his presumed source(s); source criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism are all far away. Patte's interest, as a good structuralist, is simply in the text as it stands, 'Matthew in terms of Matthew'. Here is, then, only a very limited part of what we have traditionally understood to be the province of a commentary.

A brief introduction sets out, and rather self-consciously defends, his method. His starting-point is the search for *oppositions* in the text, places where by means of an explicit contrast Matthew indicates not only what he wants to say, but also what he does not want to say. Here his distinctive 'faith' is likely to be most obvious. An appendix of 12 pages lists all the 'narrative oppositions' he has discovered, and the

interpretation of each passage will begin from any such 'oppositions' which it contains. Such a list is inevitably rather subjective, despite the careful analysis of criteria for discerning 'narrative oppositions' set out on p. 8. This would not matter greatly if these were seen as just one approach among many to the understanding of the text, but Patte has not convinced me, either in theory or in practice, that they are *the* key to discerning Matthew's emphasis, as the commentary regularly assumes.

The text is divided into quite large sections (anything from half a chapter to four chapters), in each of which a 'main theme' is first postulated, before its constituent pericopes are studied. Clearly, if these main themes are to correspond to Matthew's intention, it is essential that the analysis into sections accords with Matthew's design. This analysis was Patte's first and essential task, but he gives only a brief account of his principles (pp. 3-4), and in the commentary seldom explains how an individual section was selected. Where he does, it is usually by looking for a later element in the text which in some way corresponds, either by similarity or by contrast, to the opening of the section (itself dependent, of course, on where the last one was discerned as ending!). All that falls between these two points is then regarded as a deliberate section with a 'main theme' of its own. In many cases the resultant analysis is fairly obvious to common sense, and corresponds to those found in other commentaries, but when, for instance, the whole of 9:35 - 13:53 or 13:54 - 14:36 is postulated as a single section with a single 'main theme', it is tempting to wonder whether the method has taken priority over the text. The explanations of these divisions given on pp. 138 and 206 do not increase confidence in the appropriateness of the method. And as the commentary proceeds we are offered progressively less justification for these main divisions.

Throughout the commentary there is constant and explicit methodological reflection, to the extent that it not only becomes tedious but also gets in the way of the interpretation it is designed to achieve. The reader feels somehow always at least one remove from the text, and is likely to feel that he has learned more about Patte than about Matthew. It is not so much commentary as prolegomena to commentary.

It is not easy to see how it will be used by the preacher or the ordinary Bible reader who wants to know what the text means. Many of the issues such a reader is interested in are simply not considered. Its interest is rather for the student of 'the Bible as literature', as a showpiece of one possible method of literary analysis. But even here it is likely to be left wondering if there is not a lot more to Matthew as 'literary and theological artist' (to use Gundry's phrase) than this very selective method can reveal. I do not think I shall often find myself wanting to refer to it again. Perhaps this simply reveals my conservatism, but I really do wonder whether when it comes to the art of writing commentaries it may not prove true that the traditional method, like the old wine, is more satisfying.

Dick France, London Bible College.

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**Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 1: *The Gospel according to Luke* (Foundations and Facets: Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 334 pp., \$19.95.**

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For the last decade a major paradigm shift in the academic study of Scripture has been in the making, especially in North America. Scholars are increasingly asking literary rather than historical questions of the text. OT criticism is now replete with such studies, which primarily examine the final form of a given book, asking questions about narrative unity, plot, character development, conflict, and the like. NT scholarship has just begun to show interest in this type of literary criticism, but the spate of studies which has appeared in the last few years suggests that many are trying to make up for lost time. Robert Tannehill, of the Methodist Theological School in Delaware, Ohio, has already distinguished himself in this movement with several previous works; his current offering, still only half-complete, may just be the finest exemplar of this scholarly genre to date. An while relatively technical, it is eminently readable.

Partially paralleling the structure of Luke itself, Tannehill begins by considering the details of the gospel in chronological/narrative sequence but then shifts to a series of thematic studies. He begins by tracing how Luke sets the stage in his infancy narrative for the key themes which will recur throughout the two-volume work. The most significant of these is the offer of the Messianic kingdom to Israel which they will ultimately, though perhaps only temporarily, reject. The tone of Luke-Acts thus reflects increasing tragedy and irony in this development. Nevertheless God is not restricted by human opposition; he sovereignly establishes his church, to save both Jew and Gentile, not only in spite of but even by means of Israel's antagonism.

While the stage is set for all of these themes in chs. 1-2, Lk. 3 proceeds to introduce the ministries of first John and then Jesus (as parallel prophets of the new covenant) with much optimism, as each receives widespread popular acclaim. As the gospel progresses, however, the seeds of conflict and rejection grow; by 11:14ff. key Jewish leaders are locked into positions of open combat. One of the crucial aspects of Jesus' ministry which has triggered hostility is his openness to the oppressed and excluded of Jewish society. Jesus' proclamation of release for such 'captives' appears as the programmatic manifesto of his mission (4:16-30); this release combines freedom from material deprivation (through the sharing of goods by the community of Christ's followers), demonic bondage and the slavery of sin. So after taking us sequentially through the first five-plus chapters of Luke, Tannehill inserts a transitional survey of Jesus' ministry to the outcast and then turns to a series of topical studies of the growing disillusionment of the crowds, the increasing conflict from the authorities, and the cycles of insight and misunderstanding by the disciples. A brief chapter on Lk. 24 demonstrates both the closure and open-endedness of the gospel, as both Luke and Tannehill prepare their second volumes.

A short review simply cannot do justice to the wealth of detail and breadth of coverage of secondary literature found here. For the Lucan specialist, there is little that is new, but it is impressively organized under one cover. For the less advanced student this is a 'state-of-the-art' report which needs little supplementation. Of course more traditional historical-critical investigations are not dead, and one will by definition find almost nothing of that nature here. But for this very reason many typical evangelical concerns do not arise with this kind of book. One might wish that Tannehill were committed to more than simply 'helping modern readers comprehend the breadth and depth of this Lukan vision so that they can decide whether it is still attractive to them' (p. 23), but one can fault very few of the interpretations of that vision actually presented. In fact on the crucial issue of the role of the Jews in Luke's view of salvation, Tannehill is much more persuasive than either of the competing poles of Jerrell and Conzelmann: neither Jew nor Gentile has priority in the church, and even by the end of Acts it is uncertain which direction the mission will take next.

**Craig L. Blomberg**, Denver Seminary.

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**Simon J. Kistemaker**, *James and I-III John* (New Testament Commentary: Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), viii + 425 pp., \$18.95.

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Professor Kistemaker of the Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi continues to fill out the popular 'New Testament Commentary' begun by the late Dr William Hendriksen with a new volume on the letters of James and John. Each book and pericope is introduced, and followed by word-by-word commentary, notes on the Greek text, and often practical or doctrinal considerations. The series is for the general reader, and not the pastor-scholar or any trained student of the Bible. Given the intended audience, and the price of typesetting Greek letters, I am surprised to find a section on notes in Greek. The general reader cannot use them, and readers with a modicum of Greek will find them overly elementary.

These short but powerful epistles are packed with theological, ethical and spiritual insight, and one looks forward to reading a solid evangelical exposition with anticipation. This reader, at least, was

disappointed at the thinness of the exposition in this volume. Granted that the book is meant for the general reader, one comes away after reading over 400 pages of exegesis on a few pages of Greek text feeling that something more could have been done. Still, what the volume lacks in theological profundity and ethical richness, it makes up for with clarity and thoroughness. Each book is introduced, and each word is discussed, in a way that any reader can understand. But readers of *Themelios* will be better served by Calvin himself for exposition, or a scholarly modern commentary for exegesis.

**Alan G. Padgett**, University of Oxford.

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**John Dominic Crossan**, *Sayings Parallels: A Workbook for the Jesus Tradition* (Fortress: 1986), xx + 233 pp., \$14.95.

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Do the canonical gospels accurately reflect the original sayings and teachings of Jesus? An important consideration in any attempt to answer this hotly-disputed question is the presence of numerous apocryphal parallels to the gospel tradition along with the 'agrapha' (sayings not found in the NT but attested elsewhere). Commentators have always recognized the presence of apparent contradictions among gospel parallels within the Christian canon, but only in recent years have many of the apocryphal documents been discovered or made easily accessible, so the complexity of choosing among a large diversity of portraits of the historical Jesus is not as well-known among non-specialists. Dominic Crossan, Professor of Religious Studies at De Paul and author of numerous books and articles on the parables and other sayings of Jesus in light of recent hermeneutical and literary fashions, now offers a new synopsis which can go a long way toward making this complexity apparent, while at the same time providing an important and convenient tool for analysing the Jesus tradition in its many forms.

Crossan chooses to treat four of what he believes are five main categories of units of material in this situation — parables, aphorisms (broadly defined as all non-narrative sayings), dialogues and stories, leaving to one side the specific form 'miracle story' as worthy of a separate study in its own right. Under each of the four headings Crossan begins with the NT gospels in their canonical order and proceeds through a variety of extra-canonical literature, including papyrus fragments, the largely Gnostic Nag Hammadi corpus, the Apostolic Fathers, and patristic citations of other apocryphal gospels no longer extant, printing in turn each text which he believes falls under that particular heading, with potentially variant forms of the teaching contained in that text juxtaposed in parallel columns. Asterisks appended to pericope titles indicate the presence of the same teaching in diverse genres. Cross-references and indexes make individual passages easily locatable. A given set of parallels is generally presented only once, unless Crossan believes part or all of it fits under more than one heading.

The value of Crossan's format and contents should be self-evident, inasmuch as no one else has compiled as many parallels, quoted in full, and as attractively laid out as this workbook has. Students who have not carefully studied the *Gospel of Thomas*, *Apocryphon of James* or *Dialogue of the Saviour* may be surprised to learn how much relevant comparative material appears in them. A special strength of Crossan's format is his inclusion of a generous amount of contextual material for many of the sayings, so that one may better appreciate the use of a given saying in a particular document. The use of bold type to highlight the parallel saying(s) in each passage makes comparison of lengthy pericopes much more manageable.

There are, however, several anomalies. To begin with, most of Matthew's five main 'sermons' of Jesus (Mt. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25) are minutely dissected (as in most synopses) while John's longer discourses are only minimally subdivided into shorter units. Crossan admits that this is due to the lack of parallels for a much larger percentage of John's material (p. xiv), but since this is not his criterion for establishing the limits of other passages, an inconsistency remains. This makes it look as if Matthew's and John's compositional techniques were quite different, an interpretation which may or may not be true but which must be defended rather than presupposed. Second, the early dates which Crossan suggests for many of the

apocryphal writings (usually in dependence on Harvard professor Helmut Koester) represent an extreme end of the scholarly spectrum and reflect an incautious optimism as to the possibility of recovering independent and even authentic sayings of Jesus from outside the canon (although Crossan commendably refrains from elaborating his views, amply documented elsewhere, in this particular work). Third, some categorizations should perhaps be rethought. Why are several of Jesus' parables repeated in either the stories or dialogues section while others of identical form are not? Is Lk. 17:37 par. really a full-fledged dialogue? If so, many other brief question-and-answer interchanges should have been included. In what way is the Lord's prayer (Mt. 6:9-13 pars.) a story, when most of the rest of Jesus' sermon teachings are not?

A few inclusions are puzzling (e.g. several references from 2 Esdras, which does not fall into any of the categories of literature Crossan defines in his introduction), as are several omissions — the version of the parable of the lost sheep in *Gosp. Truth* 32 (apparently this entire apocryphon was excluded from consideration, but many scholars find it at least as old as the other Nag Hammadi documents considered), the saying about the tree being manifest by its fruit in *Ign. Eph.* 14, or the Pauline parallels to the Sermon on the Mount in Rom. 12:14-21, to Jesus' woes in 1 Thes. 2:14-16, and to the eschatological discourse in 1 Thes. 4:16-17. The use of bold type is also occasionally inconsistent. Why, for example, should the saying about Jesus' baptism in Mk. 10:38b par. be highlighted but not the parallel saying about his cup in v. 38a pars.? Why is *Barn.* 4:14b in dark type but not its exact parallel in Mt. 22:14? A few parallels, finally, seem so remotely related to the passages with which they are aligned that their usefulness seems suspect (e.g. *Dial. Sav.* 65-68 linked with Mt. 11:28-30; 2 Clem. 12:1-6 with Mt. 18:3; or Lk. 13:22-29 with Mk. 8:5-13).

These minor concerns in no way overturn the generally favourable verdict which Crossan's compilation otherwise elicits. We may hope that the editors of the Foundations and Facet series, of which this work forms a part, will produce sequels covering those portions of the Jesus tradition which have not been treated here.

**Craig L. Blomberg**, Denver Seminary.

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**Christopher Tuckett, Reading the New Testament** (London: SPCK, 1987), 200 pp., £6.95.

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As a lecturer in NT, one is constantly on the search for suitable introductory text books for use with first or second year level work. This is particularly true when one approaches the complexities of precisely how do we go about the task of *interpreting* the text before us. It is with this particular readership in mind that Christopher Tuckett has written this book, '... an introductory book for students starting academic study of the Bible ...' (p. 4). He describes it as both a descriptive and critical book about methods. As such he is not concerned with *hermeneutical* problems relating to how we use the text today. Nor is he concerned with philosophical issues such as cultural relativity, historicity, or the credibility of miracles in the age of science. Rather he is concerned simply with what the text meant in its first-century context.

Logically enough Dr Tuckett begins with a chapter on Scripture and the canon. Various approaches to canonicity are examined. His conclusions are that the NT texts simply established themselves over the course of the years until the church officially recognized them. Thus apostolicity, reliability and antiquity were effectively of little moment. Such a conclusion arises at least partially from Tuckett's view that the NT is only a starting-point for Christian theology, the primary sources. As a result 'this does not mean, however, that we have to accept uncritically everything that the Bible says' (p. 17). Happily this rather low view of inspiration does not much affect the handling of the text in subsequent chapters. In fact the next chapter deals with textual criticism and shows a real concern for the text of Scripture. The history of textual studies is briefly outlined, followed by a succinct description and critique of the methodology.

Dr Tuckett has two chapters on what he terms 'problems of introduction' and divides them between the more standard issues of authorship, date, readership, etc. and a wider definition including

sociological, linguistic and other matters relating to religious background. In his handling of the standard issues Dr Tuckett shows considerable evenhandedness of approach to such old chestnuts as the authorship of the Captivity Epistles and historical problems surrounding Acts and Galatians. Very few *Themelios* readers will want agree with all of his conclusions but they will all be helped by the clarity of his description of the methodology involved. Moreover it is refreshing to find constant reference to the relevance of what is being discussed.

The three chapters devoted to the well-established disciplines of form, source and redaction criticism are once again clear and succinct. The rise of these disciplines is briefly documented and various major views are discussed. Examples are taken from throughout the NT and not simply from the Synoptic Gospels. The examples are occasionally somewhat contentious. For example, Mt. 2:18-20 is examined and verse 20 found to be 'a secondary addition to the early church' (p. 103). Nevertheless Dr Tuckett offers a very positive appraisal of the more traditional methodologies, affirming that they need not lead to historical agnosticism.

The writer is, however, much more sceptical of more recent approaches. His early chapter on genre left me somewhat confused as to exactly what he understood genre to be. Later on in the book appears to define genre and form criticism as doing the same to except on respectively larger and smaller units of tradition (p. 96). In the chapter on Sociology a distinction is made between 'social description' and 'sociological explanation'. The former is, of course, not new and Dr Tuckett has included this already in one of his chapters on 'problems of introduction'. The latter evokes a certain reluctance from Dr Tuckett. He is cautious about the work of Mee, Theissen and Elliott and fears that, though the work of the social historian is *per se* indispensable, the use of sociological models tends to press exegesis into certain moulds rather than liberating scholarship from any stereotypes. Structuralism is similarly accorded sceptical evaluation, allowing that it can only serve to confirm what has already been established by other methods.

The book closes with consideration of the canon criticism of B. Childs and literary criticism of the NT. Tuckett concludes that what all is said and done the older approaches of the historical-critical method are still indispensable; the newer approaches appear to contribute little that is new.

This book is a very useful introductory volume on critical methodology. It is well illustrated, using the same passage wherever possible (Mt. 3:1-6). It excels in its description of older approaches and provides a useful, if rather sceptical, presentation of recent developments. As I believe, at a comprehensible level. I shall be recommending it to students this year.

**Robert Willoughby**, London Bible College.

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**Duncan S. Ferguson, Biblical Hermeneutics. An Introduction** (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986/London: SCM, 1987), 220 pp., £7.95.

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'Not another book on hermeneutics!' Yes, but this one is different (p. 67f.) that the critical study of the Bible has not been very fruitful in enriching the life of the church. It has been, as Ferguson says, better at deconstruction than at reconstruction. This book aims to make a positive contribution, not merely to academic debate, but to equipping Christians to use the Bible better in worship, liturgy, preaching and Christian nurture.

In order to achieve this, the author has written in commendably clear English — something which is not always found in books in this area of theology. A good index and a systematic arrangement of material mean that the reader could dip into the book to find straightforward and helpful descriptions of, say, 'redaction criticism', or hermeneutics of Bultmann. However, the book is conceived as a whole, and takes the reader through in three sections: The Issue: Biblical Hermeneutics, The Practice of Hermeneutics, and Hermeneutics and the Life of the Church.

The book is not merely a work of reference, retailing other people's

points of view (although it does this, remarkably comprehensively and concisely). The author also has his own proposals for the use of the Bible in the church. Ferguson argues that both faith and critical study contributes to hearing the Word of God. This means that the issues raised by scholarship cannot be ignored – indeed they may help us to understand the content of Scripture better. Hence the careful attention which he gives to a wide range of issues in hermeneutics today. But hearing the Word of God is not an academic exercise; it involves the faith of the hearer also. The final chapter is entitled 'A Brief Summary and a Modest Proposal', and in it the author makes his own suggestion that, if we are looking for a pivotal hermeneutical principle, then 'an avenue of approach is to understand the guiding norm for the use of Scripture in the church as the inauguration of God's kingly rule in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus' (p. 192).

In some places, the space devoted to different topics might have been allocated differently (so that Origen has 13 pages to himself, while Ebeling, Fuchs, Ott, Pannenberg, Moltmann, the liberation theologians, process theology, Gadamer and Ricoeur share a rather crowded nine pages between them). All in all, though, its clarity of expression and practical concern will make this a most useful book. If you are looking for an introduction to biblical hermeneutics, this book will probably serve you better than any.

W. A. Strange, Aberystwyth.

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Thomas Edward McComiskey, **The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 259 pp., \$10.95.

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The author's stated purpose is 'to examine the theological importance of the covenantal structure of redemptive history'. Redemptive history for McComiskey centres on three main events in OT and NT history which involved the establishment of a covenant: the promise made to Abraham, which was basically renewed in the Davidic covenant, the giving of the law at Sinai, and the institution of the promised new covenant by Jesus. In order to accomplish his stated purpose, McComiskey sets out to substantiate his basic thesis that 'the major redemptive covenants in Scripture are structured bicovenantally', that is to say, two types of covenants, the promissory and administrative covenants, undergird the structure of redemptive history.

The first three chapters of the book, together with the very long appendices adjoining chapter two, constitute an elaborate defence of McComiskey's thesis and represent a little more than three-quarters of the book's total length. In the first chapter, the various elements of the Abrahamic covenant are examined. Particular attention is given to the promise of individual and corporate offspring and the promise of land because of their debated significance within certain segments of the Christian community. In the second and third chapters, McComiskey goes on to consider the relationship between promise and covenant in the patriarchal narratives, the Mosaic legislation and the new covenant, with a view to defending his thesis regarding the bicovenantal structure of redemptive history. More particularly he suggests that 'the people of God, from the time of Abraham on, are under two covenantal administrations: the promise-oath and the particular administrative covenant in force at the time'. By invoking a very broad definition of *berit* (covenant), McComiskey is able to argue that promise and covenant were intimately related from the time when the Abrahamic promise became a *berit* through to the covenantal formulation of the promise in both the Mosaic and new covenants. He contends further that in each period of redemptive history the promise was expressed in an 'administrative covenant' which functioned to define the terms of the covenant and to govern the kind of obedience required in each successive period. McComiskey names the covenant of circumcision as the first administrative covenant, the Mosaic covenant as the second and more formal administrative covenant and the new covenant as the third. Moreover, he avers that through the successive administrative covenants the terms of the promise are fleshed out in an ever fuller way, leading to the culmination of the promise in Christ. This being

the case, McComiskey concludes that 'the theology of redemption is covenant theology'.

In the chapters which follow, McComiskey explores some of the theological implications of his thesis for biblical theology. In chapter four, he looks at the redemptive relationship between the Father and the Son. He also seeks to clarify the function of promise in the history of redemption and stresses its importance in providing theological direction, stability and unity in the study of the Scriptures of the OT and NT. In chapter five, the author examines how the various administrative covenants might function as a theological category. Specifically, he proffers that the administrative covenants give shape and authority to the apparent diversity in God's dealings with his people in the OT and NT. In this regard, he addresses the controversial issue of the promise of the land. It is McComiskey's view that the promise of the land underwent expansion during the various periods of redemptive history, but that it was never abrogated. Hence he regards the presence of the Jewish state as 'an earnest of the future conquest of the world by Christ', but he also wants to speak of the spiritual aspects of the promise of land in terms of 'the territorial landedness' of Christians (cf. Heb. 3 and 4). In chapter six, McComiskey sets out to rethink the traditional concept of the covenant of works. Accordingly, he proposes to include the covenant of works under the general umbrella of the administrative covenants and to speak of it as 'the Adamic administration'.

In the final chapter of the book, McComiskey explores the implications of his study on the bicovenantal structure of the Scriptures on such issues as the relationship of law and grace, the two testaments and the church of God in the past and present. In addition, he explores its impact on both preaching and day-to-day Christian living.

Thomas McComiskey's work stands firmly in the tradition of covenant theology. Theological students and ministers familiar with exegetical studies and covenant theology will not find its specialized language and its subtle polemics with dispensationalism overbearing. Although McComiskey shows ample evidence of his ability to engage with modern biblical scholarship, his approach to the text is basically pre-critical. At the same time, he does not draw on comparative Near Eastern material on covenants as fully as one would wish. More positively, in McComiskey's attempt to relate the notion of promise and covenant in the OT and NT through the invocation of the notion of 'promissory' and 'administrative' covenants, and his subsequent use of the bicovenantal structure as the centre for a biblical theology, he has broken fresh ground. Whether this marriage will be a lasting one is open to question, however. McComiskey's book is stimulating reading. His attempt to relate the two testaments is to be commended, as is his refreshing attempt to explore the practical implications of covenant theology for the life of a Christian today.

Marion Taylor, Wycliffe College, Toronto.

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Peter Stuhlmacher, **Reconciliation, Law and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 200 pp., \$24.95.

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The English-speaking world has not seen much of Peter Stuhlmacher's celebrated work prior to the translation and publication of these eleven essays. As a collection of essays written over several years this book has obvious limitations, yet as a sampler of the work of a scholar who is productively engaged in the biblical-theological enterprise this book is of special interest.

Stuhlmacher adopts a traditio-historical approach to his NT themes, tracing them back to their antecedents in the OT by way of Judaism. By this means he hopes to 'reconstruct the verbal and experiential context from which the principal themes of New Testament theology and proclamation arose' (p. xiv). To get a flavour of these eleven essays we will attempt to summarize Stuhlmacher's thoughts on the three topics of reconciliation, law and righteousness.

For Stuhlmacher the theme of reconciliation is not to be credited to Paul or the early church alone, but originates in the ministry of Jesus in which he set himself forth as Messiah, the 'incarnation of God's word about reconciliation' (p. 12).

So *reconciliation* is consistent not only with an historical reconstruction of Jesus' ministry, but also with his interpretation of his own death. In his first essay Stuhlmacher argues that Jesus' death came as a result of his Messianic mission, but the meaning of his death as an atonement was not enunciated until after the resurrection, and then by the early church. Thus Mk. 10:45 reflects the primitive community's post-Easter perspective on the crucifixion. However, in his second and later essay, an analysis of Mk. 10:45, Stuhlmacher changes his mind. Mk. 10:45 (Mt. 20:28) is 'authentic Jesus tradition rather than a tradition derivative either from the theology of the early Christian community or simply from Old Testament-Jewish martyr tradition' (p. 17).

The turning-point seems to have been Stuhlmacher's discovery of the traditio-historical link for Jesus' saying not so much in Is. 53:10-12 as in Is. 43:3-4. Here the true equivalent for *lutron*, *kopher* (rather than the *asam* of Is. 53), is used in the context of Yahweh giving Egypt for Israel's ransom (43:3); people (*adam*) in exchange for Israel's life (*nephesh*). 'The Son of Man in Mk. 10:45 takes the place of the people whom Yahweh will give as a ransom for Israel's life' (p. 23). So Jesus rejects the exalted position of the Son of Man in Dn. 7 and, rather than being served by angels and worshipped by nations, he himself serves and gives his life for the many, thus embodying the creative and sacrificial love of God. Since Is. 43:3-4 'plays no significant role in early Christian arguments from scripture', its parallel with Mk. 10:45 confirms the authenticity of this Jesus saying.

A final essay on Eph. 2:14 (chapter eleven) picks up the theme of peace and reconciliation in its post-Pauline trajectory. Stuhlmacher views this passage as a Christological exegesis of Is. 9:5-6; 52:7 and 57:19, two passages held together by the catchword 'peace'. The law, conceived in cosmic terms as a hostile wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles as well as between God and man, is abolished by Christ. Thus a new community emerges, established by Jesus' atoning death and characterized by peace between Jew and Gentile, God and man.

Stuhlmacher views both Jesus' and Paul's understanding of the law as building upon a theological tradition found within Jewish Scripture. For Stuhlmacher it is necessary to maintain a distinction between the Sinai torah and the Zion torah of the prophets (e.g. Is. 2:2-4). The latter will bring the Sinai torah to completion and, aided by God's Spirit, go forth to the nations. Jesus' authority, his inauguration of a new age of salvation, as well as his proclamation of an original will of God, can best be understood in terms of this expectation of a Zion torah. This theological insight was developed by the Hellenistic Stephen circle in its understanding of a new covenant and torah superseding the covenant and torah of Sinai. Paul's understanding of the law develops along these same lines, though his theology was more profoundly and directly shaped by his personal encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road. The epiphany of the crucified and now risen and glorious Christ meant that the law which had condemned the Christ to death was now nullified by God's action in raising Christ from the dead. Christ introduces a new age in which the power of the law has been broken by the cross; he is both the end of the law and the obedient Son who fulfils the true intention of the law. The Sinai torah, which had been only a caricature of God's good will, dominated as it was by sin, has been brought to an end and God's will has been demonstrated in Christ, manifest in the 'law of Christ'. Thus the unique element in Stuhlmacher's treatment of the law is this distinction between the Sinai and Zion torah. But the essays on law have limited relevance to present-day discussions because there is no interaction with the views of E. P. Sanders, whose views have reoriented the scholarly debate. One wishes that at least an extended footnote had been added.

Perhaps the most challenging of Stuhlmacher's essays are those dealing with the topic of *righteousness*. Building upon and correcting his well-known dissertation (*Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus*, 1986), Stuhlmacher no longer views the righteousness of God as a *terminus technicus* always meaning God's own righteousness. He now argues for a synthetic range of meaning in both Jesus and Paul in which the righteousness of God is both God's creative power in bringing new life for sinners and the quality of that new life conferred. The overriding theme is not God's judgment, but his mercy and grace by which he reclaims a lost creation. Stuhlmacher finds the term 'satisfaction' to be an unbiblical way of speaking of the atonement (p. 48 n. 2) and he will not use the term 'propitiation' (*hilasterion* = mercy

seat/place of atonement), though he does view Jesus' death as a 'vicarious sacrifice' (p. 42). 'God's righteousness is to show itself as a power creating new life for sinners in this way, that the sinner-destroying no (in biblical terms, the wrath of God) strikes the Son of Man who takes the place of sinners and not those who are really guilty' (p. 42). In this Stuhlmacher is pointing the way towards a recovery of the eschatological context of atonement, an emphasis too frequently lost in classical debates as well as evangelical restatements of the atonement.

There is much food for thought in these pages and, as with the work of Martin Hengel, readers will be encouraged, not to say challenged, by the evangelical themes emanating from Tübingen.

Dan Reid, Downers Grove, Illinois.

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E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC - AD 135)*, rev. and ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman; vol. III part 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), xxi + 704 pp., £27.50; vol. III part 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), xix + 311 pp., £20.

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The excitement which greeted the inauguration of the new edition of Schürer's great work with the new vol. 1 in 1973 was tarnished for many of us by the fact that it had *no index!* To have such a treasure chest without the key to unlock it was a sore trial, and matters were only made worse when vol. 2 (1979) could still only point forward to the happy consummation of the index to follow in vol. 3. When at long last vol. 3 appeared in 1986 it was a cruel blow indeed to discover that it had been judged too large to fit between two covers, and the index was yet further postponed! But at last the eschaton is not just 'at hand', but has actually arrived, in the form of vol. 3 *part 2*, with a full 120 pages of index. At last we can discover what we have been missing all these years.

To review Schürer (even just one [two-part] volume of him) is like writing a tourist brochure for a whole continent. If you do not yet know how truly *essential* this work is for a proper grasp of the Jewish world in which Christianity arose, no words of mine can give you an adequate idea of its incredible riches of minutely documented information and of informed discussion of the whole range of relevant modern scholarship, all organized with considerate clarity. Go and pick up a volume in your theological library (and if it is not there demand to know why!) and if you are not captivated then you may be sure that you are not meant to be a student of Judaism or Christian origins (and may as well skip the rest of this review).

Vols. 1 and 2 almost completed the coverage of Jewish history, culture and religion of the period, leaving only the section on the Diaspora. Vol. 3 begins with this section (a mere 176 pages!). It includes a useful survey of the present state of knowledge on 'God-Fearers' and Proselytes' (pp. 150-176), from which some may be relieved to learn that despite much recent scepticism there is firm support for the time-honoured belief that 'God-fearers' was a recognized term for a group on the fringes of Judaism whose admiration for the religion stopped short of full proselyte conversion.

The rest of vol. 3 (except the index!) is devoted to a comprehensive survey of Jewish literature of the period, with the exception of Josephus and the Rabbinic Literature (including the Targums), which were discussed in vol. 1. This is, as far as I am aware, quite simply the most up-to-date and authoritative guide to this literature now available (bibliography up to 1983 is included). You will find here an account of virtually all Jewish writings of the period which exist or are known to have existed (for the survey includes lost works which we know of from the accounts of others, as well as those which survive only in fragments). The coverage is, no doubt, too full for the normal needs of the average theological student, but it is important to be aware that when you fail to find what you need in a briefer guide such as Nickelsburg's *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, you are not likely to be disappointed here. And yet it is not over-burdened with technicalities, and the presentation is surprisingly accessible to anyone who is not totally unfamiliar with the subject area.

The approach is essentially descriptive, though this includes

defined. This is why many are confused when reading the works of modern theologians. They do not realize that some theologians may mean by 'God' something radically different from their own understanding. For those who have experienced some of this confusion Peter Vardy's book will be a most helpful guide. He takes four different understandings of the word 'God' and shows how they lead to different views on many other issues.

What are the four views of God? The first two are more traditional: 'God as personal and everlasting' and 'God as timeless substance'. The latter is that of much traditional philosophical theology and Thomas Aquinas is taken as its chief exponent. The other two views are less traditional. The first is 'the linguistic view of God', the view that 'God is real and God exists as a reality within the language of the religious community alone'. This view is traced especially to Wittgenstein. The second is 'talk of God seen as affirming a possible way in which life can be lived'.

What are the issues discussed? Miracles; Prayer; Eternal Life; the Problem of Evil; Religious Experience and the definition of Atheism. The author shows ably how the positions taken on these different issues will vary according to the concept of God held by the thinker concerned.

The strength of the book is the way in which the implications of these four views are developed in a variety of areas. The weakness is the fact that the first at least is a very broad category. It spans the full range between many traditional doctrines of God on the one hand and process theology on the other. When a variety of views are reduced to a simple statement there is always the danger of oversimplification and distortion. The author does his best to avoid this, stressing that many issues are more complex than he can explain in a short space and pointing out that there are differences between theologians within each of his four views. But despite all the good intentions of the author it is inevitable that the picture presented should be over-simplified in parts. This is, however, an acceptable price to pay for such a clear presentation of the rival views and their implications in a variety of areas. It might have been better had the author confined himself to one representative theologian for each of the four views, though this would have made the book less general in its application.

Some details of the exposition can be questioned. Two examples will suffice. The author makes a sharp contrast between the view of heaven as 'a social kingdom in which time passes' and the view that 'the individual experiences the timeless beatific vision' (p. 63). He states that these two 'cannot be brought together without modification'. Now it is true that the life to come cannot be both timeless and within time, but it is wrong to say that a timeless future can have no social element. After all, Aquinas believed God to be timeless *and* to be a Trinity of three persons in relationship to one another. Aquinas' view of a timeless future does not necessitate an anti-social individualism. Secondly, the author states that 'Christians have never maintained that the same molecules will be used for the resurrection body' (p. 73). The early Christians may not have believed in molecules, but some of them certainly did believe that the self-same matter would rise from the grave, as is seen from the problems that they had with the resurrection of the victims of cannibalism!

What is the author's own view and does it show? He takes pains throughout the book to be fair to each of the four positions and to show where each of them is faced with difficulties. He does, however, make it clear that the last two cannot be reconciled with the traditional understanding of Christianity and that they are contrary to the beliefs of the great mass of Christians. In the final brief chapter he considers the resurrection of Jesus and suggests that 'the third and fourth views of God we have been discussing cannot be called Christian, even though they may have great depth and intellectual profundity'. But here, as throughout, the point is made gently and courteously.

This book is highly commendable as a brief clear statement of four important views of God and their implications. For a more nuanced approach or for more detail the student will have to turn to a fuller work.

Tony Lane, London Bible College.

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John Piper, *Desiring God* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1986), 281 pp., n.p.

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Everyone wants to be happy: the desire for happiness is the basic motivation of every human action. This desire is God-given, and Christians should recognize it as such. They should not be embarrassed by it, nor seek to deny their own happiness. On the contrary, Christians ought positively to pursue happiness with all the energy they possess. They will differ from non-believers, not by denying that the pursuit of happiness is a worthy goal, but only in their affirmation of where true happiness is to be found. It is not in any transitory pleasures, but only in God himself, and in knowing, loving and serving him.

Such, briefly, is John Piper's thesis. It is deliberately provocative, and so is the subtitle of his book: 'Meditations of a Christian Hedonist'. He believes that many Christians have been unconsciously influenced by a negative philosophy derived from Kant and the Stoics, and they are therefore embarrassed by the clear teaching of Jesus Christ, who offers reward both in this world and in the next.

You might expect such a book to come from the 'prosperity gospel' school of theology, but that is far from the case. John Piper is a conservative evangelical who is determined to establish his case by careful biblical exegesis. He argues fully and cogently from Scripture that he is not expounding a new theology, but a basic teaching of the Christian faith which would not have surprised Christians of former generations. John Piper's own roots are in Calvinist and Puritan theology. He quotes extensively from Jonathan Edwards, and shows that Augustine, the Puritans, C. S. Lewis and Karl Barth have also expounded the same truth.

Piper applies his main thesis very practically to the personal and corporate life of Christians, for example to worship, Scripture, prayer, money, marriage and mission. He raises challenging questions to some evangelical ideas which he believes to be unbiblical, and particularly to the commonly-found distrust of emotion. He disputes the assumptions that love is not what you feel but what you do, and that true worship can be disinterested duty, rather than a spontaneous overflow of joy and affection.

Many books enjoy a brief vogue among Christian readers simply because they are provocative or they propound the theological fad of the moment. This book is not one of them; if the author is provocative, it is not because he is seeking notoriety, but because he wishes Christians to recover an important truth in the teaching of Jesus Christ which has often been distorted or forgotten. This is an important book which deserves serious study and discussion. It reminds me of *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* by Richard Lovelace; it too is influenced by the biblical teaching of Jonathan Edwards and seeks to apply it to the twentieth century, and should have profound influence for deep and genuine renewal in the Church.

Christopher Hingley, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

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F. Lake, *Clinical Theology* (Abridged by Martin H. Yeomans) (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), 245 pp., £12.95.

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*Clinical Theology* was first published in 1966. It was written by Dr F. Lake who spent several years as a missionary doctor in India. He then returned to England and specialized in psychiatry. He began to train doctors, clergy and lay people in the psychiatric side of pastoral care. Psychodynamically Lake is in the British School of Objects Relations Theory. Theologically he grew up in the evangelical part of the Church of England.

The size of the original work, along with its complex language, made it a far from easy book to read. Martin Yeomans is a Methodist minister and was from 1977-1982 a full-time Pastoral Consultant with the Clinical Theological Association. He has attempted in this abridged version to open up the book to a wider audience.

Clinical theology as a system of pastoral care has been widely acclaimed by a large number of people, many of whom say that it has revolutionized their ministries.



## Book Notes

The book begins by looking at the Christian service of listening, in particular focusing on the great resource we have in the gospel. It goes on to look at a model of theology and psychodynamics. It deals with certain personality types — the depressed, hysterical, schizoid and paranoid, finally finishing up by looking at anxiety and related defensive reactions. The questions could be asked, where are the 'normal' problems that confront the minister or lay-person?

Lake felt that Otto Rank's insistence on the primacy of birth trauma in the production of anxiety began to make sense. He was convinced that any successful therapy needed to rediscover the patient's primal roots. Personality and psychosomatic stress are seen as ongoing from the first three months of pregnancy. The emotional state of the mother communicates itself to the foetus — so if the mother has negative feelings they transfuse to the foetus and hysterical-schizoid reactions may arise.

In order to help a person you need primal integration, that is, an alliance must be formed with the adult mature part of the person so he can recognize and accept the child part of the past and the foetus in the womb and bring together what the primal pain has split. Christ is central in this process, the source of a new being. The main clinical pastoral task is to deal with the evils we have suffered rather than those we commit. It is important in counselling to deal with the problems of being sinned against, but it is essential, if one is to deal with the whole person, to look at the sins committed by that person, which this book does not appear to do.

This book offers some valuable insights. It is particularly good on dealing with the counsellor himself, and the problems he needs to overcome — an area which many counselling books either overlook or treat superficially. The practice arising from clinical theology introduces the reader to a variety of methods. Appendix A is very useful on outlining the behaviour of the hysterical and schizoid personalities. Appendix B, which outlines the pastoral recording of a case, is excellent — a clear guide of the areas which a counsellor should investigate. The focus on Christ as the answer to our problems is absolutely vital. The innocent suffering is taken up in the afflictions of a crucified Christ. Lake aims to promote understanding between the disciplines of psychology and theology.

At times it tries too hard to make the connection between the two disciplines and makes somewhat tenuous links. Lake has been accused of 'baptizing the therapies' in his eclectic approach. The overall impression gained of clinical theology is that it looks at psychology, psychiatry and different experiences and then brings Scripture to them. Whilst at times this may work, all too often one can fall into the trap of interpreting Scripture in the light of experience rather than the other way round, which as evangelical Christians is the only way we can approach Scripture. The chapter on schizoid personalities looks at how Jesus deals with the paradoxes of those with hystero-schizoid problems. The illustration used is the Syro-phoenician woman in Mt. 15. After careful reading of that passage it is hard to see how with such scanty information one can diagnose the woman as a hystero-schizoid personality. There are other examples which make similar, seemingly unfounded, assumptions.

The language used is at times very technical and difficult to understand, especially if the reader has no background in psychology (the glossary does help a little). One almost feels that there needs to be an introductory book to this book! It goes into some quite complex psychological concepts but yet deals with them so briefly that the novice is left confused and battered by an immense amount of information.

It is a book that does offer some valuable insights into certain personality types. It also offers some practical suggestions on how to deal pastorally with such problems, although this area does need expanding and at times making more concrete. The major weakness of the book, apart from its inability not always clearly to express what clinical theology really is in straightforward terms, is in its use of Scripture. It is a book that is worth persevering with (and be warned, it is not light reading!), even if only to try and discover why some people find it so useful.

Clare Woodhouse, Oak Hill College.

Adrian Curtis, **Ugarit (Ras Shamra)** (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1985), 125 pp., £6.95.

This is one of the *Cities of the Ancient World* series, edited by Dr Graham Davies of Cambridge University. It covers briefly the history of Ugarit, everyday life in the city, its myths, legends and religion. There is a final chapter on Ugarit and the Bible. The text is enhanced by black-and-white illustrations together with such aids to the reader as a chronological chart, diagrams and guidance to further reading.

C. S. Lewis, **Present Concerns** (London: Collins (Fount paperback), 1986), 108 pp., £1.95.

Collins have given us a further collection of 19 short C. S. Lewis essays on ethical themes, edited by Walter Hooper. Lewis fans will be delighted to acquire a copy of these at a relatively small cost.

Derek Tidball, **A World without Windows. Living as a Christian in a secular world** (London: SU, 1987), 160 pp., £2.50.

How do Christians relate to and reach out to a secular world? Derek Tidball offers a clear and helpful answer to these questions presenting at a level accessible to the intelligent layman many of the insights of sociology and theology. A book which should be read by all thinking Christians and one from which the theological student or minister could learn a lot, despite its more popular presentation. An excellent book which deserves to be read widely.

C. S. Lewis, **Timeless at Heart** (London: Fount, 1987), 144 pp. £2.50.

Walter Hooper has in 1987, as in 1986, given Lewis fans another collection of essays. However, devotees should be warned that all but one of the ten items appeared previously in *Undeceptions* (1971), so check your shelves before buying this volume!

T. A. Smail, **The Forgotten Father. Rediscovering the Heart of the Christian Gospel** (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987) 207 pp., £2.95.

Hodder are to be congratulated on making this important work available again and at a very reasonable price. All that remains for them to do now is to repeat the process with the same author's *Reflected Glory*.

B. McGinn (ed.), **Meister Eckhart. Teacher and Preacher** (New York, Mahwah, Toronto: Paulist Press/London: SPCK 1986), xvii + 420 pp., \$12.95/£13.95.

It is a pleasure to be able to welcome another volume of the useful *Classics of Western Spirituality* series. The publishers are performing a valuable service in making available to a wide audience many of the great spiritual writings from the past. As always with this series, the American price is reasonable while the 75% mark-up on the UK price makes the volume expensive for what it offers.

## BOOK REVIEWS

- W. McKane* **A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah** (Gordon McConville)
- P. A. Verhoef* **The Books of Haggai and Malachi** (E. C. Lucchesi)
- Brevard S. Childs* **Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context** (Leslie C. Allen)
- Daniel Patte* **The Gospel according to Matthew: a Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith** (Dick Franco)
- Robert C. Tannehill* **The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation, vol 1: The Gospel according to Luke** (Craig L. Blomberg)
- Simon J. Kistemaker* **James and I-III John** (Alan G. Padgett)
- John Dominic Crossan* **Sayings Parallels: A Workbook for the Jesus Tradition** (Craig L. Blomberg)
- Christopher Tuckett* **Reading the New Testament** (Robert Willoughby)
- Duncan S. Ferguson* **Biblical Hermeneutics. An Introduction** (W. A. Strange)
- Thomas Edward McComiskey* **The Covenants of Promises: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants** (Marion Taylor)
- Peter Stuhlmacher* **Reconciliation, Law and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology** (Dan Reardon)
- E. Schürer* **The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC – AD 135)** (Dick Franco)
- R. A. Kraft and G. W. E. Nickelsburg (eds.)* **Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters** (Donald A. Hagner)
- Eberhard Jüngel* **Karl Barth. A Theological Legacy** (John Webster)
- John R. W. Stott* **The Cross of Christ** (Robert Lethbridge)
- Peter Vardy* **God of our Fathers? Do We Know What We Believe?** (Tony Lane)
- John Piper* **Desiring God** (Christopher Hingley)
- F. Lake* **Clinical Theology** (Clare Woodhouse)



**IFES**

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