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IN THE STUDY

Readers of Guthrie's "New Testament Introduction" will know what to expect from his long-promised presentation of New Testament theology.[1] 2750 footnotes accompany the thousand pages of text. There is the familiar passion for order, with the careful listing of points and the summary conclusions. Nearly everybody gets a mention, though most are hardly allowed to contribute to the discussion in a meaningful way. "Painstaking" is the adjective that irresistibly springs to mind. It points to a homespun virtue currently in short supply.

Is the journey worth making? I confess that I emerge from it in two minds. Comprehensive overviews of the doctrinal reaches of the New Testament are hard to come by. Discussions that allow the apparently "minor voices" their fair share of speech, in company with a Paul or a John, are scarcely thick on the ground. A hefty dose of plain man's commonsense has its attractions after a surfeit of flights of fancy from scholars too clever by half. Even the constant preoccupation with the hoisting of doctrinal danger flags may be defensible in our confused age - though one may suspect that the majority of the book's keenest potential readers are not renowned for wandering near the ditches that Dr Guthrie descries.

So far, so good. The trouble is that we are still left with the really important questions not convincingly answered. The basic issues surface at two points: in the introductory chapter with which the book opens and in the discussion of Scripture with which the book closes. The key questions to be faced are these. How is New Testament theology to be presented? How is the Bible to be used in such an enterprise?

In the matter of Scripture the controlling factor is judged to be the attitude of Jesus to the Old Testament and the authority he sets behind his own teaching. It is this that drags inspiration in its train and confirms the presence of an authoritative biblical text. Let us overlook the (perhaps inevitable) circularity of the argument and for the sake of progress concede the point. We have still to ask what in practical terms is meant by "authoritative" and what in specific terms is meant by the "biblical text". On the first count Dr Guthrie's answer seems to be something like: "doctrinally normative". On the second count his answer is unequivocally: "the canon" - of the Protestant Reformers.

Just here a mound of problems are bypassed. We are told that the canonical Old Testament means those writings sanctioned by Jews speaking Hebrew. What we are not told is that it is at least an open question whether any such "sanction" existed until after most of the New Testament had been written. It is indeed odd that, in an exhaustive bibliography of 1050 entries, the relevant von Campenhausen is missing; and it is almost inconceivable that the name of Sundberg never appears. The slippery nature of "canon" disappears behind a few unbuttressed assertions.

So what about the authoritative deployment of the biblical text? With this question we come hard up against the method by which New Testament theology is to be presented. Guthrie has two clear preoccupations. First, he is concerned with moving beyond a merely descriptive laying out of theological material. The New Testament must be seen to be "normative". Amen to that. But what does "normative" mean, across nineteen centuries of historical change? The answer given is that the time gulf becomes substantially insignificant because a spiritual constant, in the shape of man's changeless need, abides. As a reaction against some current convoluted hermeneutical agonising that may be a timely word. As a solution to a serious problem it may be perilously near a slick evasion.

The second preoccupation is with the unity of the New Testament. Concern with diversity has run riot. Too much analysis; too little synthesis. Scripture is authoritative revelation and thus harbours no internal self-contradictions. There must be a "theology" which manifests the coherence of the material. So the chosen method is thematic: from God, through man and his world, via the person and work of Christ, and on to the Holy Spirit, the christian life, the church, the future, ethics. Within each section sub-themes are tabled; and under each sub-theme material from the various New Testament books is presented in such fashion that the distinctive voices sound before a summary unison chorus.

If this sounds like the old dogmatic straitjacket it is not because Dr Guthrie is unaware of the danger or unconcerned to guard against it. Indeed he struggles manfully and with his usual honesty. "Care must therefore be taken to avoid imposing on the scattered material categories which are alien to it" (p.432). "The N.T. theologian is (not) entitled to impose on the N.T. a dogmatic structure which is derived from the historic dogmatic formulations" (p.32). Yet the result is too often bloodless and sometimes jejune.

What has gone wrong? Could it be that the New Testament is being viewed through the wrong pair of spectacles? To seek its theological unity is a worthy, necessary and urgent task. But what if it must be allowed to correct our presuppositions about what *unity* involves? And what if the road of discovery drives directly through the taking of its diversity with quite relentless seriousness, with less premature forcing of one model of what harmony must mean? I fancy that part of the price of taking scripture seriously might be to allow the model of "canonical unity" to reorient us all.

Donald Guthrie finds testimony to the preexistence of Christ scattered throughout the New Testament. James Dunn finds it hardly at all. He is concerned to seek the origins of the doctrine of the Incarnation,[2] and he finds it a complicated quest. The title of the book initially raises hopes that at last we have that comprehensive and up-to-date study of New Testament christology so badly needed. But the reality is more modest. Prompting the limited search is, of course, *The Myth of God Incarnate* and all that.

Where did the doctrine of the Incarnation come from and when did it emerge? Dunn proceeds by way of a detailed examination of the categories of Son of God, Son of man, Last Adam, Spirit, Angel, Wisdom, Word. Throughout there is an obvious concern to determine what the evidence is actually saying, to hear through first century ears, to avoid the imposition of long-familiar assumptions. Occasionally material seems to be dragged in because it bears on christology rather than on the precise issue under investigation. In general, however, the thrust remains true and directed.

Dunn concludes that the idea of the incarnation of a pre-existent divine being is not derived from the pre-christian world, that it surfaces with second generation christianity in the Johannine Logos/Son of God/Son of man christology, that its seed-bed was the Wisdom imagery of pre-Christian Judaism, that its congenial atmosphere was the widespread appearance at the end of the first century of ideas of preexistent divine redeemer figures. Now, in itself, such a conclusion is hardly epoch-making. In broad outline it is a familiar picture. At first reading, indeed, I set this book aside as a classic example of overkill. - lengthy elucidation of the more or less obvious.

Second thoughts, and a second and third reading, prompt however a vastly more respectful conclusion. Even familiar ground is worth retracking if the guide has a perceptive eye and a sensitive ear. Further, once the alarm bell has been rung, there can indeed be recognised everywhere the curious imprecision and ambiguity with which theologians currently traffic in terms like preexistence and incarnation. The puncturing of such airy balloons is a sterling service. And if Dunn has a tendency to find Adamic christology in places where some of us search in vain, he more than makes amends by his careful presentation of what the oft-quoted Philo actually said and meant.

Can we then distinguish in this book between firm ground and shifting sand? Perhaps the place to begin is with some clearer definition of what is meant by preexistence. There is what may be called protological preexistence, where what is in question is the existence of personal being "in the beginning". On such a definition, incarnation becomes a proper and meaningful "partner term": the preexistent personal being enters history, takes flesh, becomes man. This is the Johannine affirmation. There is also what may be called eschatological preexistence, where what is in question is the ultimacy of the power and purpose of God "from the beginning", finding unique and final personal expression in time and history. On such a definition, incarnation is not a relevant term.

Now this is not exactly Dunn's language. I do not think, however, that it materially misrepresents his argument. In general, the movement of the New Testament is backwards and forwards from the exalted Christ. Its point of departure is the Resurrection. It takes the time-honoured images of God's creative and revelatory purpose, power and activity (Wisdom, Word, *et al*) and identifies Christ as their eschatological embodiment and final definition. Jewish monotheism always en-

sured that these images should remain personifications not hypostases. Protological preexistence gets "read in" because the reader stands on the other side of Johannine christology and its mighty impact on the thinking of the Church.

Dunn is not propounding some Johannine bolt from the blue. He fully recognises stages of christology in transition. My hesitation is not with his main thesis but with the point at which the line is crossed between protological and eschatological preexistence. Hebrews and the Colossians hymn I willingly concede him; but the Philippian hymn bothers me, partly because I am unconvinced by his Adamic christology explanation of it. Perhaps the balance is wrongly tipped by concentration on the post 70 A.D. period as the time when full-blown preexistence became (for a variety of reasons) thinkable and by the almost casual dating of the Fourth Gospel at the end of the 1st century. Those who lay heavy weight on christological development *within* the Johannine tradition and who suspect that its "high" christology did not originate in its *final* phase will want to keep their options open a little longer. Nonetheless this is a powerful essay not in reductionist christology but in careful exegesis, and it says things that contemporary theology badly needs to hear.

James Dunn notes monotheism as the bulwark against any tendency to hypostasise Wisdom, Shekinah, Word. For Jurgen Moltmann, on the other hand, monotheism becomes in Christian history almost the villain of the piece, leading Trinitarian dogma to the brink of catastrophe.[3] This is a strange reversal. For some time it has seemed that with Barth the doctrine of the Trinity reached something like a stable plateau. Thirty years ago, Claude Welch, in a remarkable study, traced a century of trinitarian thinking and awarded Barth the palm. One God in three "modes of being" became the watchword. Rahner seemed to underwrite the essential direction with his three "modes of subsistence". Jungel's discussion in 1966 took Barth as the springboard. It seemed that we knew in what direction we should be facing.

Now the applecart has been upset. "Sabellianists all!" cries Moltmann. Western theology has gone disastrously wrong by taking as its point of departure an understanding of God either as supreme substance or as absolute subject. In fact "the unity of the divine tri-unity lies in the *unity* of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, not in their numerical unity" (p.95). Listen again to the Eastern Church. Begin with the three Persons, in biblical fashion, and allow the history of salvation to determine for you what "unity" must mean.

All this is not academic hair-splitting. Unless the doctrine of the Trinity is to become an appendix to theology in Scheiermacherian fashion, it must be allowed to shape and control. Trinitarian theology is baptismal theology, and must shape Christian worship, Christian believing and Christian living. Trinitarian understanding provides the "grammar" of theology, and its delineation of the "unity" of God speaks a controlling

word on the nature of the unity of the Church as well as on the nature of the theological unity of the New Testament. Not the least of Moltmann's strengths lies in his keen eye for the shock waves that decision on the Trinity releases in all directions.

For him the question of theodicy is the "open wound of life" in this world. The rock of suffering must find entry into the citadel of the divine Being. So we must take the history, life, mission, destiny of Christ with relentless seriousness as the key to the understanding of God. We must allow the Trinity of revelation to dictate the essential contours of Godhead. We must allow creation, the world, human history to "count" for God, with God, and in God. "Just as the cross of the Son puts its impress on the inner life of the triune God, so the history of the Spirit moulds the inner life of the triune God through the joy of liberated creation when it is united with God" (p.161).

What is it that drives Moltmann so formidably along his revolutionary paths? Certainly a determination to let the New Testament remould the trinitarian traditions. Certainly also a commitment to allow the "history of the Son" to exercise transfiguring retroactive and prospective control. Certainly again a resolution to permit the timeless problem of suffering to aim its probing arrows at the holy of holies. Yet beyond all this are convictions about what makes life truly human. Religious ideas always interact with the political complexion of societies; notions of the Kingdom of God buttress manifestations of the kingdoms of the world. Monotheism with its stress on unity and its exemplification in the divine "monarchy" has had baneful effects on society. Freedom and brotherhood, on the other hand, march right along with the "perichoretic" at-oneness of the triune God. So does the modern understanding of "person" which has overcome discrete individualism and inherently involves social relations.

What shall we say to these things? I am left with two problems. Moltmann too readily gives the impression of knowing altogether too much about the inner life of God. A certain confident boldness is properly the result of taking the trustworthiness of christological revelation seriously. But the foundations must be strong, and I am not reassured at points where a tracing back of a chain of ever more rarefied deductions seems finally to encounter a quite debatable exegesis of a text here or a text there. Whether any of the substantial building blocks are thus menaced is a nice point which, even on a second reading, is difficult to decide.

The other problem relates to the trinitarian formulation itself. On the one hand there is the familiar precariousness about the place of the Spirit. "The concept of the Holy Spirit really has no organic connection with the doctrine of God the Father and the Son" (p.169), admits Moltmann. Though he then proceeds to demonstrate that an "inner coherence" actually exists, I confess that I wholly lose the force of his argument

at this point. On the other hand there is the unyielding insistence that the only "unity" that is truly trinitarian must be that implied in the reality of the Persons and of their perichoretic relationship. And here the lurking suspicion remains that in the analogy between the humanly personal and the divinely personal the differentia of finitude is not being given adequate weight. In the end, however, we can only salute a sustained theological vision which illumines, disturbs and challenges.

Modern discussion of the Trinity, as of any foundation dogma, depends for its full understanding upon some acquaintanceship with theological tradition. It may be that the history of doctrine needs to be rewritten in every generation; but who currently is sufficient for these things? Evidently Jaroslav Pelikan. Since 1971 he has been producing contributions to what promises eventually to be a five volume coverage of the Christian era. With the appearance of Volume 3[4] two years since it may be worthwhile to take stock - and marvel a little.

Not since Harnack or Seeberg has there been anything like it. Volume 1, "The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition", surveyed the scene to 600 A.D. Volume 2, "The Spirit of Eastern Christendom", carried on the story, within its stated bounds, as far as 1700. Now with Volume 3 the Western Tradition is picked up again where Volume 1 terminated and is carried forward to 1300. It is the logical temporary terminus.

It is important to be clear as to what and what not to expect. The Pelikan Story proceeds with blissful inattention to what was going on in the world around; and those who like their doctrine mixed with the cut and thrust of historical events will faintly disapprove. Nor are we offered any presentation of the systematic theological constructions of particular thinkers; and those who are looking for a rounded coherent synopsis of Thomism will be sadly disappointed. From first to last, "doctrine" is the concern; and for Pelikan the history of doctrine means the history of what the church has believed, taught and confessed on the basis of the word of God. In each chronological period the doctrinal themes that preoccupied the Church, as it strove for their satisfactory formulation, are reviewed and unfolded.

Detailed assessment is a matter for the mediaevalist. The humbler task is one of description and comment. In the 7th and 8th centuries we encounter via Isidore, Bede, and Alcuin the deposit of tradition on the Trinity, the sacraments, grace, scripture and church; and all seems harmony and peace. With the 9th century and the age of Charlemagne, however, battles begin to rage. Christology and Trinity, eucharist, predestination, the relationship between faith and reason - all are storm centres, rumbling on into the future without adequate resolution. In the eucharistic skirmishes we meet that happy pair of Ratramnus and Radbertus which was to make a dramatic re-entry at the time of the Reformation. In the trinitarian

conflict we company with Gottschalk of Orbais, condemned by Synod in 853, whose views have in certain aspects passing resemblance to those of Moltmann of Tubingen. After a brief lull, the 11th century sees unleashed the articulation of the Work of Christ under the presiding genius of Anselm, Bernard, Abelard, and this fresh concentration on the doctrine of salvation carries inexorably with it controversy over the nature and vehicles of the communication of grace, spilling over into the 12th century. The period under review reaches its close with the "rule of faith" grappling with Judaism, Islam, heresy, the claims of reason, and with the 13th century attempt at reintegration of the catholic tradition.

The shift from the patristic period is of course striking. From baptism to eucharist; from the Person of Christ to the Work of Christ. Yet over it all broods the shadow of the mighty Augustine whose authoritative legacy became the happy hunting ground for interpretative controversy. Pelikan is splendid in his earlier chapters and superb in his discussion of the Work of Christ. It is with the 13th century that the hand seems to falter - or perhaps the method proves inadequate. Yet from first to last the mastery of material is demonstrated by an undeviating clarity of progression and an extraordinary economy of word. At its price this must be the bargain of the decade.

Histories of doctrine remind us that yesterday still has much to teach us. Nowhere is this more true than in the area of European Old Testament scholarship, where the classics of yesteryear took overlong to gain translation. Noth has been a particular sufferer. It took a quarter of a century for his "History of Pentateuchal Traditions" to see the light of English day. It has taken nigh on forty years for the arrival of his Deuteronomistic History.[5]

It requires an imaginative effort to recall a time when Noth's portrayal was not - so pervasive has been its influence. In a magisterial but succinct survey of scripture from Deuteronomy to II Kings he exposed the impressive grounds for concluding that, in its present form, the whole corpus had been integrated by a master (exilic) hand. It was the Deuteronomist who gave to the tangled story of Israel's years with its unthinkable terminus order and meaning and who, by setting the book of Deuteronomy as frontispiece, moved Israel's foundations from monarchy to wilderness, from Canaan to Egypt.

This study retains its enormous significance still and therefore deserves a wide English readership, particularly in an age in which Old Testament scholarship tends to find deuteronomic influence under every prophetic stone. Part of the enduring significance of meaningful solutions is that they expose new questions and thereby make possible fresh illumination. And not least among the legacies of Noth's reorientation has been a shattering appreciation of the theological dynamics which (post-exile) sundered the Deuteronomic corpus and irrevocably settled Deuteronomy within the Pentateuch.

NOTES

1 *New Testament Theology* by Donald Guthrie. Inter-Varsity Press. 1981. £14.95.

2 *Christology in the Making* by J. D. G. Dunn. S.C.M. Press. 1980. £10.50.

3 *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* by Jurgen Moltmann. S.C.M. Press. 1981. £7.95.

4 *The Christian Tradition, Volume 3: The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)* by Jaroslav Pelikan. University of Chicago Press. 1978. $6.95.

5 *The Deuteronomistic History* by Martin Noth. J.S.O.T. Press. 1981. £7.50.

NEVILLE CLARK

MR C. B. JEWSON

It is with deep regret that we record the death of Mr Charles B. Jewson, a Vice-President of the Baptist Historical Society. Mr Jewson was held in high esteem in his native city of Norwich, as tradesman, philanthropist, local historian and sometime Lord Mayor; in St Mary's Baptist Church, of which he was Secretary for twenty-five years; in the Baptist Missionary Society, which he served as Treasurer for ten years; and not least in this Society. His love of the history of Norwich, above all of the part played in it by Baptists and other nonconformists, bore fruit in a number of publications, notably *The Baptists in Norfolk* and *Jacobin City*, not to mention the flow of articles he supplied to this journal from 1937 onwards. He was the lecturer at the Annual General Meeting of the Society in April 1969, and was considerably involved in the arrangements for the Society's Summer School at Keswick Hall in July 1978. His deep sympathy with his local scene, combined with the greatest diligence in research, will long be cherished as an ideal in Baptist historiography, and as a further tribute to him we hope soon to publish the paper he himself gave at the 1978 Summer School.