KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

Volume IV Number 2 Winter 1981

incorporating The Kingsman

ISSN 0143-5922

KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

**The Journal of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies,
University of London King's College, Strand, London WC2R 2LS.**

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Published twice yearly, spring and autumn.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES (including postage)

Individual subscribers:	£2.00
Institutional subscribers:	£3.00

Orders to the business managers. Other correspondence should be addressed to the editors.

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**Printed by THE OMEGA PRESS
at The Teilhard Centre,
81 Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BW**

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WHAT THERE IS TO READ
III THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY SCENE

J.L. Houlden

The purpose of this article is to offer a survey of New Testament commentaries in English currently available, that is, in print now or until recently, together with some reflections on their existence and use. The field is limited in this way, partly because the aim is to interest those who do not necessarily have access to large theological libraries, with their accumulation of past literature, and partly because the number of works to be considered would otherwise become unwieldy. *Religion and Theology 6: a select book guide*, published by the SCM Press in 1981, lists eleven series of NT commentaries (not all of them by any means complete) as at present easily obtainable. For the most part, I shall concentrate on weightier rather than lighter works. Though small commentaries have their virtues, and economy (whether in schools or elsewhere) may compel their use, they generally fail to satisfy when consulted for any specific purpose, and I take the readers of this *Review* to be interested in something a little more ambitious than scraps of historical or literary information.

The bookshops report a marked decline over the last few years in the sale of biblical commentaries. If this were not accompanied by some comparative rise in the sale of other kinds of writing on the Bible, it might be covered by the blanket explanation of all such phenomena, recession. But it seems that the proportion of the market taken by commentaries has declined, and this provokes thought. It is not as if recent years have seen a reduction in the number of those who might be expected to need such works. Students continue to come forward in substantial quantity to read theology or religious studies; there is a persisting demand for teachers of religious education; the churches continue to tap new sectors of their membership for ordination, and part-time courses provide for the training of a constant flow of candidates, alongside the traditional residential theological colleges. At the same time, there is ample evidence of interest in extra-mural courses in the subject, and in many parts of the country the churches have been developing lay education with a new professionalism. Even at a time of stringency in the universities, the setting up of new courses is not wholly unknown.

Unless, depressingly, it is a question of sheer cost, the explanation of the tendency to shy off commentaries may be a shift of emphasis in the syllabus of a number of courses. The traditional concentraion on the set book, to be covered from beginning to end, tends to give way to a more selective use of the text, perhaps on thematic lines, a change of policy which discourages personal investment in expensive commentaries. Often, there is a more marked movement away from the close study of the text, at least of a kind which sends the student to a substantial commentary. At a time when the field of NT studies has become dauntingly wide and diverse, courses have become restricted in scope or reduced to surveys. Even thirty years ago, students could be at any rate exhorted to read a commentary on most of the NT during an undergraduate or ordination course. Now both the width of NT studies themselves and the increased claims of other theological subjects mean that such exhortation lacks even a minimal realism.

The Theory of the Commentary

But there may be other and more interesting reasons for the movement away from the commentary (if that is what is happening), at a time, it is worth observing, when 'biblical religion' retains its hold on a considerable section of the Christian public. Before turning to the commentaries themselves, it is worth standing back from this age-long genre of scholarly writing and enquiring what its purpose now is. It has after all had a good run for its money. It can claim to be the oldest continuous element in the range of Christian literature, going back to Origen certainly and, arguably, the Epistle of Barnabas in the early years of the second century. Of course the continuity masks enormous diversity of method and assumption. Sometimes there has been sharp contention about the right way to approach the task (as in relation to the validity of allegorical interpretation) but for the most part the development of the commentary has been gradual rather than disjointed, with slowly evolving changes of direction. And—though the present signs of the interested public's 'going off' commentaries may be straws in the wind—there has been little radical questioning of the commentary itself. Through extraordinary changes of approach to the Bible, the commentary has made its serene way. Publishers and editors have mounted series after series, each attempting the task from some marginally new standpoint or seeking to identify and attract a fresh section of the public. The time may be ripe for an assessment of the whole enterprise.

It is on the face of it remarkable that it has survived so robustly the massive changes of attitude to the Bible which have come about in the past two centuries, both critically and theologically. Either aspect alone might have been expected to deal grievous blows. It is not obvious that the writing of a commentary on the text is a suitable way of putting forward the fruits of the many different kinds of critical work which constitute modern biblical scholarship. It is hard to unify them in a presentable way in relation to a text followed loyally, one section after another. Notably in the Synoptic Gospels, and perhaps Galatians, the tangle of issues is so complex that it is virtually impossible to encompass them satisfactorily in the discussion of passages seriatim. It may be said that this need not matter much: other kinds of study can be read in addition. The difficulty is that to do what can be done in commentary form may be to be forced to mislead. It may be felt that those commentaries which attempt to be comprehensive are unreadable, and those which do not are objectionable for neglecting important areas of enquiry.

Theologically, the lack of serious questioning is perhaps less surprising; for both conservative and critical Protestants have (with some Anglo-Saxon exceptions) stood firm on the authoritative role of Scripture, while Roman Catholic scholars have developed a new and lively enthusiasm for the doctrine. Still, there has been enough discussion of the principles of biblical interpretation, as well as questions of authority, to make it strange that we have not seen a franker theological challenge to the commentary. For, theologically, its assumption has always been that somehow, line by line, sentence by sentence, as sheer words, Scripture remains significant, and is not merely a collection of texts of long ago. True, many modern commentators have written as if it were just that: in the interests of the pure pursuit of the critical method, they have refrained in effect from theological interpretation. But, apart from those whose horizons have been confined by impending examinations, most of their readers (and royalty-payers) have approached them with some sort of theological interest and expectation, however unformed.

In that sense, there is a sickness, even an unconscious confidence-trick, at the heart of the world of the commentary, regarded as an undertaking involving scholar, student, and worshipper. That world (and here it is simply one face of the religious and theological world generally) has not done much about the possibility that the role of the Bible within the Christian religion might be thought of otherwise than the commentary has traditionally assumed, and expressed otherwise than the format of the commentary easily makes possible.

Clearly, those concerned with the texts

purely historically, as manifestations of early Christianity, or even (again historically) for their formative influence throughout Christian history, have no necessary theological duty. But modern believers, who must encounter the texts in worship and debate as well as in the study, may benefit from conceptions of the biblical writings which the commentary is ill-fitted to foster. Bluntly, it may be that he who would now feed on the Bible theologically or religiously needs to be diverted from merely tracing the detail of the text, with the often implicit sense that it was written to provide him throughout with plainly serviceable truth, and should seek rather to grasp as a whole the religious and theological 'picture' of the evangelist or epistle-writer, according to the writer's own circumstances and intentions. He will do this in the hope of its stimulating his own theological striving rather than enforcing his every thought. True, he may then return to the detail of the text, but, in the order of his reading, the monograph or analytical discussion rather than the commentary may be the better starting-point. His need is for more discursive writing, which will point out the salient features of the text, show light and shade, and capture the writer's thought. One has only to turn from almost any commentary on Mark to, for example, R.P. Martin's *Mark, Evangelist and Theologian* (1972) or H.C. Kee's *Community of the New Age* (1977) to grasp the point. The latter, with their analytic and imaginative approach, are, whatever their demerits, incomparably more effective in promoting a theological appreciation of the Gospel, in its own historical right, while making full use of historical-critical method.

On such a view, the commentary may be justly dethroned from that position which, on an older concept of biblical authority and of the nature of the biblical text (both more literal and more literary), it has so long occupied. Its role will become more ancillary than primary, at all levels of the use of the Bible, where theological interest is chiefly involved.

What is more, the regrettable and largely harmful tension between critical and theological or religious interest, as it presently exists, might then be lessened. As matters stand, those in the latter position often feel unhelped by the historical and critical information so generously provided by modern scholarship. They are left wondering what to do next. But if that information can be brought into a form which gives a picture of the ancient writer's mind and world, seen as a coherent theological and religious whole, they may be stimulated to creative theological thought, appropriate to their own time and place. It is improbable that dogged study, line by line, even section by section, will produce that kind of stimulation, and the commentary is generally unsuited to be its literary instrument. This is not to deny that, especially in the case of texts where the historical aspect is less prominent, the cumulative effect of a penetrating commentary can sometimes be exactly what is required; and Ernst Haenchen's work on Acts (1971) shows that some masterpieces can achieve it, even where a mass of technical information is involved. Of course, neither approach does more than provide the starting-point for present use and interpretation—the hard work of hermeneutics remains—but it is important to find the most satisfactory basis for that work.

It is worth noting at this point that we may be on the edge of new developments in the theory and art of the commentary. One in particular will threaten to send the historical-critical approach packing. I think that there has not yet appeared a full-scale commentary on a whole NT text written from a structuralist standpoint, but it cannot be long delayed. It will see the meaning of the text by way of its logical patterns and verbal and syntactic rhythms; and it will deliberately eschew all historical material which seeks understanding by means of empathy with the original writer and his readers. The appeal of such a method is predominantly aesthetic. Its austere elegance purifies the mind, and 'meaning' is found at a level of refined abstraction—but it is not easy to rest content that it should stay there alone.

Theologically more significant would be commentary along lines laid down in the hermeneutical work of Paul Ricoeur (see, for example, his *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 1981). This would alter radically the focus in

which critical study is seen. He discounts the claims of historical method as 'romanticist' and illusory, in so far as it reckons to yield an entry into the writer's mind and life. Instead, there is to be direct encounter with the revelatory text, which, once written, he sees as freed from its original historical context and intention. It constitutes its own witness to 'the Word'. There is a sense in which this marks a return to pre-critical ways of coming to a text—a text rather than, as so often now, in effect the people behind it. It is an approach which abandons the uncommitted neutrality of the historian and reintroduces faith into the process of apprehending the text. In this, he is the heir of Barth and Bultmann in their exegetical work. The Christian interpreter is foolish to come to the NT as if with one hand tied behind his back.

Only time will tell whether innocence can be recovered and whether the historically minded commentators will be content with a new role or even to disappear altogether. So far, the signs are that they must be accepted and somehow worked with, however hard and uncertain a task they give to the theological user of the text.

The Use of Commentaries

To be more practical what do people expect from commentaries on the NT? Are their hopes realistic? What may a commentary reasonably be expected to provide, and what should a commentary writer set out to achieve? It seems likely that people often approach commentaries with misplaced or inordinate hopes. The very production of one new series after another, often differing little from each other in essential approach and content, indicates as much.

Three classes of people read commentaries: those working towards examinations, whether as teachers or students; those preparing for sermons and study groups; and interested people simply hoping to grow in knowledge and faith. School use, church use, home use. As far as students are concerned (and they now provide the bulk of the market—without them commentaries would not be published), there is a kind of unnoticed conspiracy of which they are the beneficiaries or victims. Though it represents only one of a number of options, some of them increasingly preferred, the doctrine is still widely held that the study of the NT ought to proceed by way of the detailed, linear investigation of texts, and its examination ought to be largely by way of comment on set passages. So mastery of a commentary becomes the route to—and often the hardly distinguished substitute for—mastery of a text. Mastery, of course, of one kind: akin to the mastery of a piece of terrain achieved by the walker who observes the path as he goes, step by step. It is one way, but not necessarily the most effective or important way, of coming to comprehend and appreciate the territory. It trains certain desirable intellectual qualities, but it leaves others undeveloped and even suppressed. Syllabus-makers, examiners, and commentary writers (hats often coinciding upon a single head) unite in perpetuating the doctrine—and the sales of the books on which its practical application depends.

As far as the question of mastery of the text goes, the truth may be that everything depends on the commentary used: on whether its author has the mind to use the detail in a way that is self-transcending, that is, so as to reflect the flow of the writer's thought in the work as a whole. The conventions of commentary-writing do not always lend themselves easily to the achievement of that purpose.

Preachers have a harder task than students, in principle if not in practice (few congregations now being as exacting as boards of examiners, where use of the Bible is concerned). For them, commentary lore is a potential snare. They may be tempted to find virtue in the mere conveying of information about the Bible, as if that could be more than a starting-point or resource for preaching, or perhaps its embellishment . With a few striking exceptions, commentaries offer mainly raw material, which may contribute to the church use of the Bible, but leaves much work still to be done. They pose the question, which has already been raised from another side: how may this material become, along with other ingredients, nourishing food for the faithful or the enquiring? The good commentary has made possible a moving and fascinating excursion into the early Christian world. But where is the motive power for the

return journey, or what may the voyager expect to gain beyond wistful memories?

At this crucial point, the preacher (or, more generally, the 'church user' of the Bible) is almost unsupported by the scholarly world, and can scarcely be blamed for losing heart, especially as no other world does much to help him either. No wonder he so often ceases to pay much attention to those who write on the Bible, whether in commentaries or elsewhere. The journeys they facilitate seem important, but how is that importance to be realised and translated into usable currency?

The matter may be stated thus. The preacher faces the task of preparing his message. In that task, he may see Scripture either as a resource to be drawn upon for subjects otherwise determined or as placed before him for comment and exposition. Whether out of tradition or impelled by modern lectionaries, most of them compiled to provide thematically arranged readings, he is more likely to adopt the second approach. Naturally, he will turn to commentaries for help: it is the obvious course. Occasionally, they will stimulate him, but often they will leave him baffled. The obvious source of help has failed to take him more than a few inches of his way, and, wanting to be faithful to Scripture, he is unsure what following steps are legitimate: canons of procedure are lacking, and the raw material seems raw indeed. So from this side too the question may be raised, whether, from the point of view of the preacher's task, which is one kind of theological use of the Bible, the commentary is the best tool. Other kinds of writing on the Bible, both its text and its use, may be more suited to his purpose.

And the domestic user, at his own gentler level, suffers similar perplexities. He may be fascinated to follow the argument of Paul through Romans. He may find it illuminating to have difficulties cleared up, exciting to be immersed in the construction and sense of the Gospel of John. But the more efficient and acute the commentary, the more it may make him aware of the distance between the world of the text and his own world, and of the curious combination of directness and complexity which relates him as reader to the writer of the text on which he works. And if his purpose in approaching the text in the first place was hope for its usefulness, then he may find the whole business much more indirect than he imagined. For him too, the commentary may not be the best tool to bring to the biblical writings. It starts him off, perhaps, but stops short at a problematic point, leaving few signs to guide the rest of the journey.

It takes an unusually good commentator to transcend the section by section approach to which his task for the most part commits him. He is almost bound to give the impression that a text may be 'understood' by discovering the lexical meaning of its words and the bearing of its historical references. His form impels him towards gross hermeneutical oversimplification. A text is more than the sum of its details, its thoughts more than the individual steps in its argument. It is false optimism to expect a commentary to reveal all that a text has to give. Even with the matter included by convention in introductions (concerning authorship, date, literary integrity, etc.), a commentary too often fails to convey much sense of the thrust of a writing as a whole or to give the reader a coherent picture of the mind disclosed by it.

There is then a case to be made against the commentary. Partly, too much has been expected of it; partly, the conventions which necessarily govern its production are too narrow. The case has a theological aspect, related to the place of the Bible in Christian theology; an academic aspect, concerned with both the many-sided question of the proper elucidation of texts and the best way of presenting scholarly work on them; and a practical aspect, concerned with the needs of those who wish to read the texts. Dissatisfaction is more often felt (as boredom, bafflement, or disappointment) than expressed.

There is also a case to be made on the other side. The commentary remains a useful way of assembling and presenting a mass of sheer information about a text. To follow a commentary from cover to cover remains an unrivalled discipline, enabling the reader to immerse himself in the argument of a text, usually without undue distraction from the commentator himself. There is a sense in which the good commentator lets the writer speak for himself. The commentary minimises the obtrusion of

the scholar and maximises the presence of the biblical writer. The commentator is the servant of the text in a way and to a degree that, for example, the writer of a monograph is not.

This has a special value at our present stage of biblical scholarship, especially in relation to the Gospels and Acts. Redaction-criticism and the general interest in the evangelists as theological writers of considerable subtlety and distinctiveness have led to the production of numerous works attempting to identify their theological ideas. Some of them are open to the criticism of concentrating too much on certain features of a Gospel, in order to achieve a coherent picture, to the neglect of other features which may be hard to reconcile with what is presented as the dominant conception. Admirable and creative though this approach to the Gospels is, it suffers from this defect—and there is no form of writing so calculated to remedy it as the commentary, forcing attention on the text, item by item, giving to each part its own weight. The commentary allows no escape into generalities or analyses which gloss over difficulties and inconveniences. It is, I think, a fact that there has not yet appeared a commentary on any of the Synoptic Gospels which has fully digested the considerable amount of redaction-critical and theologico-critical work already achieved. That work has been mainly done in the form of monographs on particular passages or more or less impressionistic analyses of the text as a whole, often singling out one theme or group of themes as the key to its message. It may be simply that the commentary is inimical to the presentation of this kind of work—it would blunt its effect and load it with needless impedimenta. But there may also be a suspicion of evasion of difficulty which is not wholly without basis, and it is an evasion which the commentary rejects.

The Series

It is time to turn to the commentaries themselves. For reasons of publishing convenience, they mostly appear in series. (When they escape into independence, as did C.K. Barrett's large and popular work on the Gospel of John, there is usually a tale of publishing negotiation to be told—in that case, the work was too long for the series for which it was intended.) Uniformity of appearance tends to arouse expectation of uniform treatment, even of uniform merit. The expectation is usually unjustified. The consumer should view the existence of a series not as an invitation to open-armed and comprehensive welcome but as a signal for caution. Few series are ever completed. They are produced, often through the dilatoriness or death of authors, over a long period, during which fashions of scholarship change and its achievements increase. Unless it is the work of one man (as in the relatively light though highly valued writings of William Barclay), a series usually represents several levels of competence, several stages of scholarship, perhaps several approaches to the task. A general editor may attempt to impose a single concept of what a commentary in his series involves, but he will not always succeed, and in the recruitment of contributors he is at the mercy of scholars' availability and his own fallible judgement. (I was once recruited, spy-like, in a chance encounter in an Oxford street, and did not dare to ask the editor whether he had left home determined to ask the first remotely plausible person he came across.)

While some, perhaps the occasional affluent student or ordinand keen to equip himself for a lifetime's ministry, set out to acquire a complete series, sales indicate that the public is more discriminating. Some series hardly sell at all, often because they are too ambitious for most readers' purposes, and in practice the Pelican commentaries, now mostly published in addition by the SCM Press or, in two cases (the Revelation of John and the Captivity Epistles), solely under the dual imprint, dominate the scene as far as the Gospels are concerned, while the volumes published by A. & C. Black hold the field for the rest of the NT. For the moment less complete, the New Century Bible makes a more and more significant third among the weightier series. None of the three expects knowledge of Greek, all aid the reader into some use of it.

Both the Pelican and the Black series illustrate the point about diversity. In the former, the commentary on the Gospel of Mark by D.E. Nineham (1963), the general editor, set the tone. Its two companions, on Matthew and

Luke (J.C. Fenton and G.B. Caird), appeared at the same time, but are briefer in proportion to the length of the texts concerned. They have something of a supplementary character, an approach by no means indefensible in the light of the orthodoxy on the Synoptic Problem and the concentration on a broadly form-critical approach current at the time of writing. It is a great pity that these justly popular commentaries were written just before the work of the redaction-critics came upon the English scene. (The work of Bornkamm, Barth and Held on *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* was published in translation in the same year, 1963, and Conzelmann's *Theology of Luke* in 1960.) For this reason, all three are dated in the range of considerations they bring to bear on the texts, but this is more serious in the cases of Matthew and Luke because of the comparative lightness of treatment. Nineham's Mark retains strengths enough.

As far as the other Pelican commentaries so far published are concerned, those on the Captivity and Pastoral Epistles (J.L. Houlden, 1970 and 1976) and that on the Revelation of John (John Sweet, 1979) come closest to the model set by the Marcan original, John Ruef's work on I Corinthians (1971) being much slighter. John Marsh on the Fourth Gospel (1968) is a good deal lengthier than his predecessors, and again had the misfortune to coincide with or just precede an outpouring of fascinating new work on John and indeed an abundance of major commentaries, both new and old (the translation of Bultmann, whose work started its German life in 1941, came out in 1971).

In the Black series, the volumes on the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, which made their appearance twenty and more years ago, have somewhat slipped into the background (they do not appear in *Religion and Theology 6*). They are victims of the remarkable developments in Gospel scholarship in recent decades. The commentaries on the rest of the NT (and now the set is almost complete) hold their own well and they appear to meet the needs of most students—the pipers who chiefly call the tune as far as the economics of the matter go. They have achieved considerable uniformity of scale and approach. Most remain up to date—alas, a wasting asset. The flagship is undoubtedly the triple contribution of C.K. Barrett (Romans, I and II Corinthians, 1957, 1968, 1973), with Sophie Laws on James (1980) making the most recent addition to the fleet, and F.W. Beare on Philippians (1959) as the oldest member still afloat.

The two series represent different ways of treating the text: the Black authors run alongside the text in an undifferentiated flow of comment and argument. Their temptation is to indulge in unreadable parenthetical asides, in order to fit in pieces of information not readily incorporated into the main discussion. But at least the reader is able to follow the text without undue distraction and complication. A modified form of the same method is adopted by the New Century Bible, and it has much to commend it.

The Pelican commentaries take a two-tier approach. general comment on the passage, followed by detailed notes. Undoubtedly, this gives the commentator greater scope and makes for tidy presentation. But readers may find it tiresome to approach each passage twice over at two different levels. The Hermeneia series works with three different types of comment, representing different degrees of detail. Value for money is increased, ease of use diminished, especially if one is primarily interested in reading the text rather than looking up particular points.

The New Century Bible and the Hermeneia series are more recent than Black and Pelican, and are gradually being extended. The editors of Hermeneia have shown commendable flexibility in bringing together original contributions in English and translations of established German commentaries, such as Conzelmann on I Corinthians and Bultmann on the Johannine Epistles (in English, 1975 and 1973). In the former category, the new work of H.D. Betz on Galatians is particularly welcome. It fills a yawning gap. (He is the only commentator I have noticed to question the value of commentary-making, but he announces his full conversion.)

The New Century Bible has already made a number of useful contributions and is rapidly moving to completion. Among them, Hugh

Anderson on Mark (1976) invites comparison with Nineham, published thirteen years earlier. He takes note of much of the redaction-critical and theological work done on Mark in the interval. The fact that, in the body of the commentary, it makes less difference to the treatment than might be expected, while no doubt deliberate, may also illustrate what was said above, both about the difficulty of using the commentary form for conveying the results of such work and about its value as putting a brake on one-sided and speculative attempts to capture the thought of an evangelist. This series can be relied on for uniformity of scale and weight, with the exception of W. Neil on Acts (1973), which covers the twenty-eight chapters in under two hundred pages of comment.

The Commentaries

From the series to the available commentaries on the books of the NT. Partly for reasons which have already been noticed and partly because of the sheer volume of scholarly work published on the Gospels in recent years, representing an increasingly wide range of techniques and approaches, commentaries on the Gospels (especially the first three) are less satisfactory than those on other NT writings. And the more the reader expects a commentary to be a comprehensive guide, the less he is likely to be gratified. Still, some attempts are more valiant and effective than others.

H.B. Green's work on Matthew in the New Clarendon Bible (1975), relatively brief though it had perforce to be, manages to gather the fruits of some of the more important recent work on the Gospel and points the reader in promising directions. In these respects, it stands alone. But consideration of Matthew gives the opportunity to make the point that sometimes works which do not purport to be commentaries may in fact serve the purpose. M.D. Goulder's *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* contains a detailed treatment of the whole text, section by section, admittedly in the interests of a highly distinctive and controverted standpoint.

E. Schweizer's *The Good News According to Matthew* (1976) explicitly distinguishes itself from 'scholarly commentaries'. It dispenses with what some may describe as the clutter that fills so many commentaries, and is distinctly expository in purpose, but it keeps recent studies only just out of sight. It is for the preacher rather than the examination candidate, like the companion volume on Mark (1971).

The second Gospel has already received its share of attention, but it is worth noting that, for the study of the Greek text, C.E.B. Cranfield's work of 1963 in the Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (in which it is partnered only by C.F.D. Moule on Colossians and Philemon, 1957) is full of useful material. It was written in the fifties (amended edition 1963) and so antedates the major developments in Marcan studies of the last twenty years. By present standards, its emphasis is linguistic rather than theological. The same datedness must be attributed to the other large-scale commentary of the fifties, that of Vincent Taylor (1952), which, classically impressive in appearance, remains available, but can hardly fail to disappoint especially from the point of view of general perspective. After thirty short years, such works seem now to lack a whole dimension of historical-theological acuteness.

Commentaries vary in the degree of originality of standpoint to which they aspire. Some frankly take a new or distinctive line, pressing it in the face of all obstacles. Others set out to present the current state of scholarly play. The Pelican commentaries have deliberately adopted this approach with the resounding exception of J.C. O'Neill on Romans (1975), which exhibited the transient brilliance of a fireworks display. And a glance at I.H. Marshall on Luke (opening volume of the New International Greek Testament Commentary, 1978) might give the impression that it too belongs to this second category. Massive, bulky, and technical to a fault, surely it must summarise all that has been thought about Luke. It does not. In the service of a view of Luke which sees him as closely dependent on a number of sources, it bypasses a whole stimulating area of recent work which brings out the strength of Luke's creativity. While there are serviceable shorter works (E.E. Ellis, New Century Bible, 1974, a revision of an older work, and G.H.P. Thompson, New Clarendon Bible, 1972), Luke

still awaits a satisfactory commentary which takes account of the great strides made in recent years. If, that is, the task is now worth attempting. As suggested earlier, Haenchen on Acts gives hope that it can still be done. His work stands unrivalled, though the sobriety of F.F. Bruce on the Greek text (Tyndale Commentaries, second edition 1952) makes him a desirable companion.

The Gospel of John has been attracting commentators on the grand scale: R.E. Brown (Anchor Bible, two volumes, 1966) is comprehensive without being in the least unreadable. R. Schnackenburg (1965) takes two large volumes to reach chapter twelve. On a more practical scale for everyday use, B. Lindars (New Century Bible, 1972) is not only attractive in its own right but gives more of an impression of the many interesting lines of Johannine study at present being pursued than, for example, J.N. Sanders and B.A. Mastin (1968), which nevertheless has the advantages of the mode of presentation of the Black series.

While the Pauline corpus is admirably served by the Black series (especially by C.K. Barrett on the Roman and Corinthian letters and Ernest Best on I and II Thessalonians, 1972), there are other luminaries. C.E.B. Cranfield's two volumes on Romans, heralding a new run for the detailed International Critical Commentary (1975 and 1979), provide an exhaustive treatment of the Greek text. More theological, but not uniformly digestible, because of its presentation in summary form of a vast range of research, is Käsemann on Romans (1973, translation 1980). It is relentlessly penetrating and rewards persistence. Works on other Pauline writings have been referred to in other contexts. A medium weight book on Galatians is still wanted, and its absence tends to keep a central NT writing out of the syllabus and the programme of the serious study group.

Gaps remain in the commentary repertory, despite the apparent abundance of works available. Apart from H. Montefiore in the Black series (1964), Hebrews is ill served when it comes to full-scale exegetical comment. The Catholic Epistles receive substantial treatment in the Black series at the hands of J.N.D. Kelly (Petrines and Jude, 1969), J.L. Houlden (Johannines, 1973), and Sophie Laws (James, 1980). G.B. Caird (Black, 1966) and J. Sweet (Pelican, 1979) both offer wholly adequate commentaries on the Revelation of John.

Whether the commentator's craft is on the wane and whether it should be are debatable questions. They deserve more discussion than they have received. Teachers and preachers could derive advantage from a more critical attitude to that approach to the Bible which the commentary represents. But no doubt it will survive, continuing to modify itself imperceptibly from one style to another, and fulfilling certain indispensable roles, but not perhaps hogging the centre of the stage quite as much as in the past. In the history of Christian theology, NT commentators, from Origen to Augustine, Luther to Barth, have used their work to make major contributions to the movement of Christian thought. Is the commentary likely to play that part again?

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE BOOK OF ISAIAH: THREE INTERRELATED STUDIES

I THEOLOGY OF A BOOK

Peter R. Ackroyd

There are clear advantages in starting this discussion with something that we can recognize precisely and agree on exactly. This is the fact that there is a book of the Old Testament which is described as Isaiah. If, as commonly and as in the general title given to these three studies, this is extended to 'The Book of Isaiah', there is both gain and loss: gain, because it thereby becomes clear that we are referring to the book rather than to the individual named Isaiah; loss,

because this common title can readily be understood in a limiting way so as to imply, what tradition has gradually imposed, the belief that there is a simple and direct relationship between the named individual and the book which bears his name. At this point, the original point on which it was clear that we could all agree comes to be clouded over with questions which have yet to be opened up. That these questions must be opened up is apparent to all who engage in the serious study of the biblical writings; but I hope we may open them up in a way which is more generally illuminating than some of the rather pedestrian literary analyses which have all too often attempted to do duty for a proper investigation of what is involved. That process must, however, wait for the ongoing discussion in which I hope to engage.

What we can agree on is the book; and here, essentially, on the book as it stands, as we know it. Of course, that is an over-simplification. The book which we normally handle—usually as part of the larger collection which Christians know as the Old Testament or the still larger collection, the Bible—is likely to be in the language which we generally use, in a translation—one of the many available to us in a period rich in translations of varying quality and differing intention, though many of them of importance in mediating insights into the nature and meaning of the original. We must, however, be continually conscious that it is a translation, and that like all translations, except of the most pedestrian factual matter, likely to contain more or less of paraphrase, of interpretation, of modification dictated by the range of the language into which the translation is made, and by the extent of our knowledge of the language upon which it is based. With an ancient language, and one inevitably only partially known by reason of the limitations of our sources—and the Old Testament really is a relatively small body of writings—the degree to which there are still uncertainties, about words, about shades of meaning, about idiom, about allusion, must be substantial.

Textual Variety

But that caution, which need not cause undue anxiety in this context, is itself a reminder that the book is essentially what we know: essentially, because this leaves open the recognition that we do have more than one text of the Hebrew. Alongside that which is represented by our modern translations—and even some of these are influenced by alternative traditions—we do now have an ancient text, from the Qumran area beside the Dead Sea, which shows many small yet not unimportant differences from the text later regarded as authoritative. In fact, from Qumran we have two main Isaiah texts: the one—a complete text—has these variants ($1QIs^a$), the other—incomplete—is virtually the text later established ($1QIs^b$). This in itself is a sober reminder that a religious community of the ancient world could possess and use, apparently at one and the same time, more than one text of the same writing. The variant text in some points indicates an affinity with the textual tradition known to us from the ancient Greek translations—though the varieties and complexities of their textual traditions would also need to be recalled and would be the potential subject of another and separate study (Cross and Talmon).

This preamble, in which what has been said is well-known, serves to introduce a fact of particular importance about the book of Isaiah in contrast to some at least of the other biblical books. Particularly relevant, because sufficiently similar, is the curious case of the book of Jeremiah, where attention has to be given to the oddity of the textual position. Anyone familiar with the problems which exist by virtue of there being not one text of Jeremiah but two, would wish to know which book of Jeremiah was to be the subject of discussion. The position is not, indeed, quite so extreme as that, for there is very substantial overlap and agreement between the two texts, represented for us by the Hebrew and Greek traditions: but the important differences of order between the two and the substantial differences of length—the Greek text is very much shorter than the Hebrew—would demand some attention to the problem of which book is the book of Jeremiah. And of course the answer would have to be that they are both rightly so described, and that we have here, but in a more extreme form, the oddity of the existence side by side at Qumran of two texts

of Isaiah: here the oddity is that of the survival of two alternative forms of the text of Jeremiah, the Greek text handed down to us within the Christian tradition, and the Hebrew text handed down within the Jewish community but providing the acknowledged basis of modern translations, whether Jewish or Christian (for discussion, see the commentaries on Jeremiah).

At a relatively simple level this is a reminder that the biblical writings—like many other ancient texts—provide us with more evidence than will fit neatly within a single and uniform theory. Textual evidence itself contains the reminder that the fixing of a single and generally acknowledged norm—whether textual or theological—belongs to later stages of the process by which the writings come down to us. The earlier stages are, in a great many cases, marked by variety, by alternative forms of the same story or poem or prophetic saying, by differing kinds of theological interpretation of both tradition and written or spoken word: and these within the same general religious community, a community which in some degree conceals its own richness and variety within a body of writings eventually regarded as having an authoritative quality, and therefore inevitably, but rather regrettably, supposed to speak with a single voice.

The most obvious example lies in the existence of the four gospels; had only one been preserved, or heaven forbid, only a gospel harmony such as was early attempted, our apparent gain in simplicity would be overwhelmingly outweighed by our evident loss in richness. But such alternatives abound, and the existence of two creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2; or the interwoven double or perhaps even triple stories of the origins of Israel's monarchy in 1 Samuel; or the overlapping but divergent occurrence of the same passage of prophecy in two forms in Isa.2 and Micah 4, and the similarly overlapping but divergent presentations of the story of king Hezekiah and the Assyrian ruler Sennacherib and of the prophet Isaiah in 2 Kings 18-20 and Isa.36-39—all these provide a wealth of evidence of a lively tradition of interpretation, of a community often alert to the problems of handling the subject of theological discourse, that elusive and often most ambiguous being to whom we give the name of God and whose nature must, by any definition worthy of the name, remain out of reach of the simplified statements which we, sometimes with an alarming glibness, venture to make about what he is and what he does.

To say this does not of course mean that such variety of material is unique to the biblical writings; it is a commonplace of the ancient world, both near eastern and classical. It provides in one respect a way into the study of ways of thought, of folklore and tradition, of mythology and custom. But when, as is so clear in the biblical writings—though here again by no means uniquely—such a variety is turned to the service of theological interpretation, to the understanding of life and experience in theological terms, the variety has its own particular value in warning us off the simple and the simplified.

Theological Variety

Such a reflection raises a major problem about the title of this first study—and indeed similar problems about the remaining two. For the use of the singular form 'theology' in relation to 'the book'—as subsequently for 'the tradition' and for 'the prophet'—would seem to presuppose that there is a single identifiable strand, a single theological theme, a consistent and recognizably unified theology, detectable in the material which makes up the 66 chapters of the book.

If, as appears to be the case, even the shortest Old Testament book—the tiny 21-verse book of Obadiah—offers variety within that brief compass, it must not surprise us if the book of Isaiah provides clues to more than one theological strand.

In the past generation or so there has been a substantial increase in the number of 'theologies of the Old Testament' which have appeared. This is hardly surprising, since the nature of the impact which the Old Testament writings have on our understanding of theology and of its manifold disciplines invites the attempt at a coherent account. Yet we may observe that, thought-provoking as many of these attempts

have been, and rich in insight into the problems of interpretation and into the ways in which those problems may be resolved, we still remain uncertain whether there really is such a thing as 'Old Testament theology', or whether it is not in fact the case that the richness and variety of the material is less than satisfactorily handled when the attempt is made at fitting it into a particular mould. It might appear that we could more hopefully encompass the theology of a book—as it were, the theology of Ezekiel or of the book of Ezekiel. But this would encounter the same problem, even though on a lesser scale. The unity and consistency which alone could enable a single theology of such a book to be written, just do not exist. For the book of Isaiah, the matter is even more evidently complex. The range of poetic forms (and of prose too, though this is of limited compass), the varieties of style and of content, the differences of emphasis, would suggest that the writing of a theology of the book of Isaiah, were it to be adequately undertaken, would include many if not most of the themes which normally find a place in a survey and analysis of Old Testament theology as a whole. The biblical index to almost any Old Testament theology of recent years shows a scatter of Isaiah references spread throughout the work, with some drawing upon its resources for a very wide range of the themes handled.

The Impact of the Book

It is here that we come to a further and more difficult consideration. Whatever we may say about the formation of the book of Isaiah—and what I have said has indicated that I do not believe there to be any simple exposition possible of what appears to be a long and complex process—it must be clear that the impact of the book as a whole, virtually as we know it, can only be felt when the book is complete. Only then, at whatever point in time we may believe this to be, could it be possible for someone to assess that impact. Only then could an attempt be made, in whatever way was at that point appropriate, to assess the theology of the whole.

We do not know that point precisely. It must be later than any main component of the book, but decisions on dating are very delicate and in most instances very tentative. It must be possible by the time of the earliest manuscript known to us—that from Qumran ($1QIs^a$), for which a date in the last two centuries B.C. appears likely.

Early in the second century B.C., in the work in the Old Testament apocrypha known as Ecclesiasticus, though more correctly as the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira, there is a passage which suggests familiarity with the book as we have it (Ackroyd, 1981). It is true that the reference is selective: it refers to the deliverance of Judah from the Assyrians 'by the hand of Isaiah' (Isa.36-37) to the healing of Hezekiah and the sign of the backward moving shadow (Isa.38), and ends the account with a brief summary of the latter part of the book

> 'with inspired power he saw the future and comforted the mourners in Zion.
> He revealed things to come to the end of time, and the hidden things before they happened.'
> (Ecclus.48.20f., 23-25)

We could not prove from this that ben Sira knew the whole book, but it would be a perfectly reasonable assumption, especially since similar statements about the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel follow in which central points of that prophetic material are noted. If it were to be demonstrated that this or that short passage was added only later, the main contention would not be invalidated.

Ben Sira gives us, in fact, a sort of clue to a theological interpretation of the book. Two particular points emerge from what he sets down in relation to Isaiah. First, he includes reference to much of the material which brings together Hezekiah and Isaiah, and hence the primary reference is to the chapters which incorporate those narratives, Isa.36-38 (though not Isa.39). The reason for this choice of material is clear: the reference to Isaiah comes in the context of comments on the kings from David to Josiah where we may also see references to Samuel and Nathan for the reign of David, Elijah and Elisha for the earlier period of the monarchy (only Solomon, Rehoboam and Jeroboam are named),

until we reach Hezekiah which provides the occasion for reference to Isaiah. Jeremiah and Ezekiel follow on the last royal references, where only Josiah is named; the twelve other prophets bring up the rear! But second, ben Sira includes the passage quoted which corresponds sufficiently, though not necessarily exclusively, to the chapters which follow the Hezekiah narratives, Isa.40ff. The wording 'he comforted the mourners in Zion' is precise enough to point to 40.1 and 61.2, though numerous other passages could be adduced where the same or similar wording is used. Of a more general nature is the comment on the revealing of what should happen at the end, in the final days; and on the hidden things which were revealed. Here again some precise allusion may be found, as to Isa.42.9, but more generally we may note links with other passages, scattered through the book, which use what is commonly termed eschatological language, language pointing to 'that day'—that is God's day of intervention—and to the future in expressions such as 'the afterwards', 'the future', i.e. rendered in some such way as 'the latter days'. Here we might think of the opening of Isa.2, or of Isa.4, or of numerous passages in Isa.7, as well as others which speak of the promises for the future.

A First Theology of the Book?

Here in Ecclesiasticus we have the first example known to us of an overall theological statement about the book. It was not necessarily the earliest example, and indeed ben Sira can certainly be seen to be in many respects so traditional in his outlook that we should expect him to be expressing teaching with which he was familiar. It is the first attempt that we know at saying what the book taken as a whole is about. Its context imposes certain limitations, and we may remark on some omissions which we should not have expected--there is no explicit allusion to the great visionary experience of Isaiah in the temple described in Isa.6, another phrase does, it is true, describe him as a prophet 'who was great and faithful in his vision' (49.22), but that could have a wider reference and might indeed be pointing to the title 'the vision of Isaiah . . which he saw' in the very first verse of the book, a title in which the word 'vision' is clearly used not in its narrower sense but as denoting the total message, the divine word which was mediated through him.

This first 'theology of the book of Isaiah'—for even so brief a summary can be a theology—affirms the story of the power of God mediated through the prophet in relation to the political situation in the time of Hezekiah and thereby affirms concisely an understanding of the nature of God in relation to historical events; and this is extended in regard to the granting of healing and longer life to the same king. It also claims the pronouncement of a message of well-being, of restoration and comfort and hope; and this in the context of the affirmation that through the same prophet the secrets of the final age were disclosed.

A theology does not write itself. It is the product of a subtle relationship between the man who writes it, the particular theological tradition in which he stands, and also of the particular moment in which it is set out. The assessing of such a theology therefore demands a good deal of background study, and to do this would take us beyond the limits of my present purpose, and would indeed demand a degree of detailed study of the book of Ecclesiasticus which it is not my intention to offer, even if it fell within my competence. We may, however, observe that this presentation of the theology of the book of Isaiah stands in the writer's endeavour to show the coherence and the pattern of Israel's experience from the very beginning; he offers a survey, interestingly selective, beginning with the general praise of famous men in the opening of ch.44, going right through to the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem after the exile, with Zerubbabel and Joshua the priest and Nehemiah, with a final exordium concerning Enoch and Joseph and Shem and Seth and Adam—thus coming virtually full circle—and then, making clear his real intention, offering an encomium on the high priest Simon son of Onias, active in about 200 B.C. This climax, virtually the end of the book and followed only by a poem as an appendix, seems to imply that for this writer the final point has in some sense at least been reached. The ominous political and religious pressures which were to follow within two

decades still lie in the future—though hints of them have been supposed elsewhere in the book in distressful psalm passages (see ch.36)—and there is implicit the belief that, in some sense at least, the final age has come. Within this the exposition of the book of Isaiah takes a small but not insignificant place.

But if we attempt an assessment of this first theology of the book of Isaiah, we must confess its limitations. The impressionistic picture it offers is inadequate to the richness of the book with its great variety of material. It not only omits much, it may also be said to distort. On the one hand, it ignores the whole of the darker side of the book's contents, for throughout the book there are shorter and longer sections which speak in harsh and condemnatory tones, and others which proclaim disaster and gloom; on the other hand, its assessment of the more hopeful aspect of the book's content is limited, too generalised and too little concerned to draw out the variety of lines of thought. This is no condemnation of ben Sira whose purpose was not to write a theology of the book, even though incidentally he offered one. But it suggests two guidelines for a more adequate presentation. First, it points to the dangers of so concentrating on a particular theme that this is viewed out of proportion to the whole. Second, it demands that whatever particular themes are drawn out in a theological presentation shall be treated not in isolation but in the whole context of the book's thought.

An Approach to the Wider Theological Compass

It is with these two guidelines in mind that I propose now to make some further comments and assessments. I propose to examine three areas of thought which are considerably represented in the book of Isaiah. They do not cover all that the book contains, nor will it be possible to attempt anything like a full discussion of any one of them. To that extent there clearly will remain wider ranges of exploration to be undertaken; we are simply engaging in a surface survey. We are simply noting, as it were, the outlines of buildings and collecting sample pottery sherds.

1. The kingship theme. In some respects this is a theme which has frequently resulted in an artificial narrowing of the interpretation of the book of Isaiah, because kingship with its consequential development into messiahship has provided one of the most popular lines of thought enabling links to be made between the book of Isaiah and the New Testament. It has been one of the points at which a prophecy-fulfilment style of linkage has seemed to lie ready to hand, a style which has frequently dominated discussions of the nature of the relation between the two Testaments, though by no means all such references are concerned with the king-messiah theme.

A consideration of the book of Isaiah opens up something of the wealth of material associated with kingship ideas in the Old Testament. The deeply theological theme of the kingship of God finds its place in relation to the Isaiah vision of ch.6—'my eyes have seen the king, Yahweh of hosts' (v.5)—and is echoed in a whole group of other passages—'Thus says Yahweh, king of Israel, his ransomer, Yahweh of hosts' (44.6). In relation to the kingship of God stands the concern with kingship in Judah. But here more than one pattern is to be traced. It is kingship from the death of Uzziah (6.1) through Ahaz (7.1-17) to Hezekiah—king at the death of Ahaz (14.28) and king in the series of narratives in chs.36-39. It is also kingship in an idealized picture—of the son who is heir to the Davidic throne depicted as 'Wonder of a counsellor' 'Divine warrior' 'Father of eternity' 'Prince of well-being', whose reign is in justice and right for ever (9.5-6—EVV 6-7); of the shoot from the stock of Jesse, the ruler in wisdom and understanding, counsel and power, true religion and reverence of God, true upholder of justice (11.2-4); the king of right and justice, the protector of his people (32.1-3). The relationship between these pictures—of the real and of the ideal—is partly one of contrast; Isa.6 and 7 are in part concerned with the failure of the Davidic dynasty, typified in the figure of Ahaz, the ruler who, in the presentation of 2 Chron.28 has become the type of failure and disobedience and apostasy. Over against him there are adumbrations in the presentation of Hezekiah of that ultimate idealization by which that one of the Davidic rulers will become pictured far beyond

what is claimed for him in later Old Testament material, in 2 Chronicles 29-32, so that he becomes himself a messianic figure in rabbinic writings (Ackroyd, 1974, 351-2; 1982). So in the early period of Jewish-Christian debate, it could be claimed that the messiah had already in some sense come in the person of Hezekiah, a claim which could be set over against Christian claims for Jesus. Along with this there goes another strand which appears to offer an alternative line of thinking about the relationship between king and people. If older tradition—so for example in 2 Samuel—could claim for David and hence for the Davidic line a position of special quality, a light for Israel (21.17), a protective power for Israel (18.3), what we might in such passages claim as an embodiment of Israel's well-being; in the book of Isaiah, as it now stands, these kingship themes may be traced further and differently in the use of the motif of the servant of God (Ackroyd, 1968, 125-8), a term used frequently in reference to the king elsewhere in the Old Testament, and here used with some interplay of ideas for both king and people, related in the depiction of humiliation to the experience of Davidic king and people in the deprivations of the exilic period, and anticipating a renewal of honour beyond humiliation (so especially Isa.53). The Davidic covenant is renewed with the people (55.3) (for critical discussion, see Vincent, 65-107), the reality of the promise to David is thereby reaffirmed but in the context of a changed political situation, with the texts in some measure reflecting disillusionment with the monarchy, perhaps in some degree now reflecting post-exilic experience when hopes of a Davidic restoration centred on Zerubbabel of the royal house (see for example Hag.2, 20-23) proved vain and a rethinking of political and religious life excluded the possibility of a Davidic king while seeking to preserve the values of the institution. A similar process may be detected in that range of writings in 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, commonly associated with the less than fully definable figure of 'the Chronicler' (Ackroyd), 1973). Such lines of development were not the only ones which existed, alongside them must be put both the re-interpretation of royal imagery in the Psalms and the undercurrent of Davidic, messianic hope, which surfaces again clearly in later centuries, not least in some elements in the New Testament.

In this area of thought, the book of Isaiah, as we may now see it, offers a variety of possibilities. It contains both a negative and condemnatory attitude to Davidic kingship, and also more than one type of positive appraisal, looking variously to a future in which an ideal king will reign, the agent of divine rule and empowered by divine spirit, or to one in which the realities of such an understanding are to be expressed through the life of the community itself, epitomised in a servant concept which enshrines the status of the king in relation to God and the incorporation of humiliation and glorification in the appraisal of that kingship, and hence an interpretation of the people's experience.

2. God and Israel and the nations. The theme of the supremacy of God appears either directly or indirectly in connection with much of the material of the book. It is at some points explicitly stated, especially in passages which concern the refutation of any claims that may be made on behalf of other deities (40ff.). In the theme of the Assyrian ruler as instrument of the divine will, the affirmation of God's control is set over against claims by the Assyrian of his own power (10.36-37); in controversy with the gods of Babylon and the idols which men worship, the powerlessness of these are set out in terms of biting irony (44, 46). Less directly, the claim is made in all those passages which deal with the theme of judgement on the nations, many of which are collected together in chapters 13-23, others to be found in 34 and 63, and implicit or explicit in the narratives of 36-37 and 39 in relation to Judah and Assyria and Judah and Babylon. The primary emphasis in these passages is on divine judgement, extended to all nations; it is an extension of judgement on Judah and on the northern kingdom of Israel. As in other such passages, particular elements in the life of the nations may be picked out—Babylonian violence against other nations (ch.13), Egyptian folly in the conduct of her affairs (ch.19)—more often the themes are more general, lacking the

specific accusations which are so characteristic of similar oracles in Amos 1-2. In a number of instances too the more narrowly directed accusations against a particular nation are given the wider context of the unversal judgement of all nations (see, for example, 24 and 34).

But there are two further aspects to this theme, each of them involving some consideration of the relation between Judah and the nations. (a) Judgement upon Judah is depicted in a variety of ways as being at the hands of outside powers—where these are specified by name they are Assyria or Babylon, and indeed the overlap between the two is one part of the interpretative tradition (Macintosh). At the same time, it is possible to detect another thought here, namely that the attack on Judah, however much it may be justified by the condition of the community, can be understood to be an attack on God himself. Response to that attack is therefore to be seen as itself exemplifying wrong and right understanding of the relation between people and deity. Isa.7 relates to the theme of the attack on Judah by the northern kingdoms of Israel and Aram, and the judgement upon these northern kingdoms is an essential element in the presentation both in ch.7 and at the beginning of ch.8. The response of king and people to this threat is itself an exemplification of the propriety of divine judgement upon Judah, since it reveals a lack of faith in God which automatically brings king and people under judgement. It also allows the exemplification of the response of faith in the reality of the divine presence, most clearly in the naming of a child as Immanuel 'God is with us' (7.14), and this theme is elaborated in the first part of ch.8 both in the continuation of the picture of judgement, but now at the hands of Assyria, and in the elaboration of the theme of divine deliverance, since the attack,

like that of the nations in Ps.2, is against God himself, and the assurance of his presence is the guarantee that what the nations plan cannot prevail (8.9f.). Ps. 46 offers a similar presentation, utilising the same Immanuel theme in its refrain.

Relation between the themes of restoration for Judah and judgement on the nations comes to be expressed further in passages which deal with a future in which Judah is glorified, her status increased, and her relation to the nations depicted in often highly nationalistic metaphor in terms of the subservience of the nations. The presentation involves both pictures of a narrower kind (e.g. 45.14; 60; 66) and those in which the nations, as witnesses of the divine restoration of Judah, are themselves brought to the acknowledgement of who God is, a theme also developed in Ezekiel (Ackroyd, 1968, 115-7).

(b) This last, more positive element, leads into the second point, the theme of the coming of the nations to Jerusalem, to God, not in warfare against his people but in acknowledgement of his law. The opening of Isa.2 preserves such a portrayal of the centrality of Jerusalem in the divine ordering of the world; it is the place where God has chosen to reveal himself, and therefore the place where not only Judah but all nations can learn of his ways; the theme is echoed again in ch.19 where, in a passage which is by no means easy to interpret, a picture is drawn of Israel, Egypt and Assyria all as sources of blessing; and yet again in the final chapter of the book (66) in which all nations are to see the glory of God, and some of them are to be envoys to ensure that he is known where he has not yet been heard of, the theme of Judah is incorporated, for the nations will bring the people of God back from every land, offering them as Israel makes its own acceptable offering to God, even, it would appear, some of the nations chosen for priestly function in relation to God (66.18-21). The relation of the people of God to the nations and to God is bound up with questions of the relation of the nations themselves to God. No single pattern appears, but a range of ideas capable of further explanation and development.

3. Worship and acceptability. That last point is also one in which the final chapter of the book provides a particular echo of the opening. The theme of judgement upon Judah and Jerusalem with which the book opens is broad in range, beginning from the unnatural behaviour of a people which rebels against the one who has cared for it; but the development takes this into the improprieties of Judah's worship, the unacceptability of ceremonials offered by those who have incurred blood-guilt. Again and again, particularly in the opening chapters of the book, the theme of the unacceptability of the people of God is set out. Their condition makes it impossible for them to be in a right relationship to him. What is set out here in relation to the practices of worship is taken further in repeated references to various types of improper religious practice, and particularly to idolatrous practice. In a biting satire in ch.44 those who make idols are held up to ridicule, and in ch.66 the religious practices of those who are unacceptable are to be regarded as equivalent to the most noxious alien worship.

But equally the unacceptable condition of the people is contrasted with a coming time of purification and acceptability. If the disaster to Jerusalem and its temple is more often implicit than explicit, the themes of restoration themselves indicate the radical nature both of that disaster and of the new situation which God will bring into being. The rebuilding of the city and of the temple, and the rehabilitation of the land as one which is acceptable to God--renamed as Hephzi-bah—'my delight is in her'—and as Beulah--'married to a husband (to God)' (62.4)—make possible the prospect of a true people of God. This theme thus, in its turn, links both to that of the king and people and to that of God, people and nations. It holds together--and it is surely significant that words of warning and caution appear again at the end of the book--the realities of man's condition and the promises of a true and enduring relationship with God.

* * * *

In this first stage of the discussion little attention has been devoted to what we may term the chronological aspects of the variety in the book. In endeavouring to see what the book as a whole has to say it has seemed proper to take material from any part of it, without more than occasional reference to the changes politically and socially against which some of the differences are to be set. It is a reminder of the total impact of the book to be seen alongside consideration for different levels.

It is perhaps important, however, to draw attention to one other point which is relevant for such a view of the book. While we saw a unified, though somewhat one-sided, view of the book in the words of ben Sira, and while we might, equally, take up questions of the interpretation of the book in the long tradition of commentaries, both Jewish and Christian, over the following centuries; we must also recognize the degree to which the impact on reader and hearer comes less from knowledge of the book as a whole and more from the immediacy of a particular passage. From later Jewish evidence we know something of the use of prophetic writings in synagogue worship; we have indications of particular passages associated with particular regular occasions and festal days. It is often thought, though the point cannot be fully demonstrated, that the reading from Isa.61, associated with Jesus' appearance in the synagogue at Nazareth in Luke 4, points to the use of the regular lection for the day. It certainly demonstrates a practice in which a passage from a prophetic book would be both read and expounded. When biblical writings are read piecemeal—as they are in the lectionary practice of both church and synagogue—something is inevitably lost in the lack of the broader context, though sometimes the preacher may supply this. But there can be gain, provided the interpretation of the individual passage is not rigidly subordinated to some systematised theological view.

If we may look back once more at Ecclesiasticus and recall the presentation of the book of Isaiah there, we may recall the limitation imposed by the singling out of the themes of restoration and of an ideal coming age. If such an overall view were allowed to dominate in the reading of each individual passage in the book, what might be thought to be gained in coherence would be outweighed by what was lost in the confining of view. For when each passage in the book is taken for itself, not subjected to even any one of the three lines of thought which have been examined in some measure in this study, there is opened up the possibility both of an enlarging of our theological outlook and of a critique of the straitjackets which we all too often impose out of our own particular theological tradition. It provides a warning that subjecting the biblical writings to our own particular theological tradition does less than justice to the richness of their thought and hence can prevent the opening up of that theological tradition with its inevitably constricting and limited presuppositions. Put quite simply, this is the recognition that if our reading of the biblical text serves only to confirm us in the rightness of our own opinions and in the immovability of the particular theological stance of those with whom we stand, we have not yet begun to hear what it has to say; we are hearing only what it may say to comfort, not what it must say to disturb.

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The two further studies: 'Theology of a Tradition' and 'Theology of a Prophet', will appear in the next two issues of the Review. The three studies were first given as the Annual Theological Lectures in the Queen's University of Belfast in February 1981.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CREATED ORDER

W.A. Whitehouse

This article was devised as the last prepared contribution to a conference on the theme of 'The Holy Spirit' convened by the Society for the Study of Theology. Four earlier contributions dealt with the New Testament matrix of belief in the Spirit, with Trinitarian theology, with 'The Charisms of Utterance in the Church' and with the Spirit and Culture. My commission was, so I supposed, to extend the range of enquiry beyond the realities of human fellowship in the Christian Church and beyond the pursuit of human culture in the activities of religion, politics, letters and visual arts, medicine and sciences, to that 'world about us' which is for us data not of our own making (though we do much to mould it), within which we are items set to be as we are and become what we may become. Mankind becomes informed--and misinformed--about this world through the attention given to it by 'natural philosophiers', astrologists and alchemists, and, more recently and reliably, by modern 'natural scientists' and technologists. Mystagogues, poets and transcendental meditators also proffer information and, however difficult it may be to assess the validity of their insight, they cannot be entirely overlooked in a theological enquiry about 'The Spirit and the Created Order'. I have assumed that 'the Created Order' is a phrase intended to refer to 'the world about us'. The phrase was presented to me by Dr Colin Gunton and I discovered it in his own writings (*Becoming and Being* p.169) where he argues that 'the created order does not have to be understood statically . . . It can also be conceived as that which *happens* in response to the will and word of God'. This particular piece of theological investigation seems to presuppose, and to be bound up with, another piece which investigates our right, in Christian faith, to appreciate the world about us as the creation of God and to use the clue of 'order' as one aid towards such appreciation. Our own particular topic is proposed, then, in declarations such as we find in *The Wisdom of Solomon* 1,7: 'the spirit of the Lord fills the whole earth, and *that which holds all things together* is well aware of what men say'. There the relevant declarations are incidental to the matter of human speech and the disposition from which it arises: 'Wisdom is a spirit devoted to man's good, and she will not hold a blasphemer blameless for his words, because God is a witness of his inmost being who sees clear into his heart and hears every word he says' (1,6). The incidental declaration is echoed in Christian prayer, as in Eastern Orthodoxy' 'Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, *who art everywhere and fillest all things*, Treasury of Blessings, Giver of Life, come and dwell in us, cleanse us from all filth and save our souls'. This speech, like most of Christian speech about the Spirit, is speech informed by experience of him as God's gift of himself by way of personal presence in the lives of Christian believers, corporately and severally. This speech refers to God 'in his personal contact with personal beings . . .' (Lampe: *God as Spirit* p.61); 'Spirit' (in a typical phrase used by Lampe) is a concept which serves to 'articulate and express the human experience of being reached out to, addressed, inspired and indwelt by God's personal presence' (p.60). It is not, at first

sight, at all clear that a concept shaped and warranted for use in the context of human personal experience may have an extended application to articulate the hold we may believe God to have upon the created order without humanity. More precisely, there may be reason to think that use of this particular concept, properly disciplined in its application to the ways of God with mankind, is inept and perhaps misleading when our thought turns to his ways, as owner, with the world about us.

Undeterred by these hazards I will try to open up lines of constructive exploration, but I do so with an awareness of difficulty in this area of theology—difficulty which is not altogether peculiar to the modern scene but which seems to have inhibited theologians throughout the Church's history. Using the concept of 'Spirit' they have gestured towards the works and ways of God in the created order but the gestures are apt to be defective in content.

At the end of his recent essay *The Via Negativa and the Foundations of Theology* (in *New Studies in Theology I*) R.G. Williams makes a pertinent observation about 'personalism' as a hallmark of the theological work done by the writer, Lossky, to whom his essay is devoted. He uses the term 'to indicate that the central and controlling idea of the system is that of the personal subject in the context of its relations with other subjects. In theology, it expresses a view which locates all dogmatic construction and reflection in the context of living personal experience, encounter with the personal God, in the Christian community' (p.112). Christian speech about 'the Spirit' takes shape within that matrix—God with human beings and human beings with God. Can it be reliably extended to a field of relationships where 'subjects' neither human nor divine are involved?

There are Biblical passages which oblige us to wrestle with this. 'The goal of divine action is to maintain and to create life, to achieve this aim Yahweh chiefly avails himself of two means which we encounter in varying intensities in all realms of his manifestation: the Spirit and the Word'. (E. Jacob. *Theology of the Old Testament* p.121). Their common origin, as apt theological indicators, is in the unfettered power and mystery displayed by *air*—in two forms, that of wind in nature and breath in living beings; and for present purposes we do not need to say more about their complementarity. They provide models for thought about 'the instruments of God's action'. By instruments conceived in this analogy God 'gives life' to everything in the created order—an order of things and of happenings which, so we suspect, was apt to be thought of as 'animated' throughout, though Biblical tradition is distinguished (among other things) by a pervasive impetus to correct this 'animism' and provide initial warrant for minds, religious as well as secular, to view much in the world about us as inanimate 'things'. How, then do *we* appropriate passages of deep significance such as (to take only two) Hosea 2^{19-22} and Romans 8^{19-21}?

The Hosea passage declares with prophetic assurance that God is 'husband', not 'baal', to his human covenant-partners and will, in the end, 'betroth you to me for ever in righteousness (true conformity), justice (or established right), covenant loyalty and tenderness'. When that day comes an answer will pass (translators have difficulty in deciding which way) between Yahweh and the heavens, between the heavens and earth, between earth and its vegetation and between that vegetation (grain, wine and oil in particular) and Yahweh's 'new sowing in the land'—Jezreel. These answers, though there is no explicit mention of the point in the passages, require as their medium the 'breath' which is the form of God's presence with his creation. 'The Holy Spirit is God at work within his creation enabling it to respond to him' (H. Cunliffe-Jones). Is not this a case in point? Yet, given our understanding of the non-human and non-divine parties involved, what credence can we give to an expectation so formulated? We are not inclined to let it disturb our version of how those parties operate in 'physical autonomy' and we let it pass as 'poetic licence' which serves to give extra resonance to the prospect of life for mankind in completed covenant-fellowship with God.

Then does 'poetic licence' (or an unpurged residue of animism) serve to exonerate St Paul when he asks us to believe that.

> the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in

hope; because the creation will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Some scholars, as Professor George Caird remarks, 'have wished to simplify Paul's thought at this point by restricting the word *ktisis* to humankind', but this will not do. Heavenly powers which have become 'world-rulers of this darkness' have established a situation where the subhuman creation has been 'subjected to futility', and for that subhuman creation there is now a basis for eschatological hope, affirmed in strict parallel with the hope for humanity founded upon the fact that now, through the Spirit, God does something that brings the *eschaton* into the present by way of 'adoption', in the 'now' but also 'not yet' so clearly expressed in the juxtaposition of verses 15 and 23 of Romans 8. Is the content of this hope for the subhuman creation to be interpreted by us, with our post-Pauline persuasions, wholly by reference to the bearing of renovated human activity upon the world about us?

The thrust of all Biblical passages which affirm the intimate presence of God to his creatures in their historical activity is to declare that when the Lord has his way with Israel, and beyond Israel with mankind, the whole created order will flourish as it was made to do. And now that the Lord *has* had his way with his representative Son of Man, this future is secured and is being anticipated. By the Spirit human beings are appropriated for God within his covenant, prepared for its future consummation, 'anointed' for the role of 'sonship'. The conflict between God's affirmation of his Son's obedient manhood and mankind's condemnation of it is a conflict which takes its course 'between the times'. Every anticipation of the glory to come is exposed to attack in that conflict—to external assault and discrediting, to internal corruption. Yet the Spirit which evokes these anticipations is powerfully present to sustain and to nourish them. Christians have learnt how to speak with responsible eloquence about what this meant for (persons(, who can believe, repent, mend their ways and *move* of their own volition towards renewal and consummation. Theologians are prepared (with Berkhof, for instance in the section entitled *The Renewal of the World* in his *Christian Faith*) to explore the expectations with which we should deal with 'structures and systems' ingredient to our 'world'—taken in the sense of 'institutional manifestation and extension of what man himself is'. But 'world' in the sense of planet Earth, with its physical systems, and the universe within which it is set, and the possible 'occult' factors which may be pertinent to the functioning of all within that cosmos—about *this* we hesitate to speak, though human existence may not be properly conceived in abstraction from it and, in its present condition, seemingly 'far from God', it is 'a threat to itself and a threat to man (Berkhof p.535). Berkhof is frank about this inhibition: 'While we know the mode of God's concern for man, we do not know the mode of his concern for nature' (p.536). Nevertheless, the name, 'Spirit', which denotes God's active presence to men in their experience, must be for us also the name which denotes his active presence to everything in the created order. And with that name, some kind of agenda is imposed for the faith, which is committed to seeking understanding.

In what follows I can offer no more than a selection of possible areas where reflection on elements in tradition and on current preoccupations may serve to bring such an agenda into view.

1. 'The one God reveals himself according to Scripture as the Redeemer, that is, as the Lord who sets us free. As such He is the Holy Spirit . . . ' (Karl Barth CDI.1.§12). We can, perhaps, begin our reflections in an area where attention is directed essentially upon man and upon Christian man in particular. He is set free by the Holy Spirit to conceive his own identity as a *creature of God* and to conceive all worldly things with which he has to do in the same way, as creatures empowered to hold their own in the presence of their Creator.

The *locus classicus* in Western theology for this liberation may be found in Augustine's report of his last conversation with Monica (Conf.IX.x):

> What we said went something like this: If to any man the tumult of the flesh were silenced; and the poles were silent

as well; indeed if the very soul grew silent to herself and went beyond herself by not thinking of herself, if fancies and imaginary revelations were silenced; if every tongue and every sign and every transient thing—for actually if man could hear them, all these would say 'We did not create ourselves, but were created by Him who abides for ever'—and if, having uttered this, they too should be silent, having stirred our ears to hear him who created them; and if he then alone spoke, not through them but by himself, that we might hear *him*—him for whose sake we love these things—if we could hear him without these, as we two now strained ourselves to do, we then with rapid thought might touch on that Eternal Wisdom which abides over all . . . Would not *this* be the reality of the saying, 'Enter into the joy of thy Lord'? But when shall such a thing be? Shall it not be when 'we all shall rise again' and shall it not be that 'all things will be changed'?

Eastern theology speaks (in significantly different ways—see R.G. Williams in the article already cited) of the Holy Spirit's work as 'Mystagogue of the Apophatic Way' which takes us through a new familiarity with creatures to God our Creator and theirs, and so into a rapport with the created order—a rapport in which intellection and feeling and capacity for correct participation are fused so as to lift humanity into a relationship with fellow-creatures richer than the 'natural' relationship in which they are obsessively preoccupied with technical mastery. Though this relationship is offered essentially by way of future promise it can be tasted already in obedient responses of faith and love and hope. We have opportunity to share God's own appreciation of the created order which exists under his ownership. We have opportunity, in consequence, to address ourselves to life within the created order in ways which reflect this shared appreciation. There is work always to be done in the matter of discerning where and how these opportunities arise. (This area of reflection has important connections with another which I have distinguished from it and have chosen to explore in section 3).

2. With attention still chiefly directed towards Christians (and to mankind in general) in their human subjectivity, it is appropriate in the second place to consider issues about *method* in our approach to the mystery of 'The Spirit and the created order'. In a passage written nearly forty years ago, which he may now wish to modify or to disown (though I hope not), Professor Cunliffe-Jones apologised for the little space accorded in his book *The Holy Spirit* to 'the activity of the Holy Spirit in the main areas of the world's life':

> It is very important. But to understand it we must understand the Christian meaning of the Holy Spirit first. If we could take that for granted, on the basis of a deep and far-reaching Christian faith in the Holy Spirit, then the exploration of the presence of the Holy Spirit (discerned by faith) in the most unlikely places in all phases of human life is a fascinating and enriching undertaking. But if we are still looking for the meaning of the Holy Spirit, and hoping to find this is something wider, more greatly divine and more greatly human than Christian faith, then it must be said that this wider outlook is leading us away from the truth of God. (p.20)

Karl Barth provides a synoptic view of the Biblical affirmations which govern his Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit, Lord and Life-giver. His credal name evokes N.T. passages—John 6,63, II Cor. 3,6—and 'in the first instance we have to regard the Life-giver *soteriologically*'. But behind those passages, he says, stands recollection of the significance assigned in O.T. passages to 'spirit' operative in the *regnum naturae*. He collects those passages and makes them point to the affirmation that 'it is *His*, the *Lord's* breath, by which the creature is created and without which it would forthwith vanish away' (C.D.I.1. p.539).

> 'Things created through the Word have their vital strength out of the Spirit from the Word' (Athanasius, ad Serapion III 5).
>
> 'Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to Paradise, our ascension to the Kingdom of God, our return to adoption as sons, our being made partners of Christ,

our being brought to all fulness of blessing both in this world and in the world to come' (Basil, DeSS36)

The method of proceeding from celebration of human salvation to affirmations concerning the *regnum naturae* may seem at times unduly to invite constriction and distortion in thought about the Spirit and the created order. Deeper reflection may reveal how method and substance fit each other and throw light on one another. Both have to do with the completing, perfecting (and the grateful acknowledgement) of divine ownership, fully established by grace in respect of all that is in the created order. And what is said then about life, as it has been and is and will be given to creatures, implies for those creatures effective renunciation of 'existing-for-oneself' in all its forms. Is this a possibility conceivable to the minds of men who have not had its reality wrought into their own existence by the Word of God in Christ, sealed upon them by the Holy Spirit?

3. The cosmos of created order, objectively around us, is of interest to us only (as the word 'interest' implies) insofar as it impinges upon our human subjectivity. But if, through the Spirit, that human subjectivity has become subjectivity 'in Christ', our perception of what happens in it and our expectations may be altered in refreshing ways. Is the Spirit at work also in this wider environment and if so how? In particular, is there any evidence that what is happening there has any correspondence with human Christian experience of being 'enabled to respond to the ultimate purpose of God'? 'While we know the mode of God's concern for men, we do not know the mode of his concern for nature'. I am deeply disposed to settle for Berkhof's sober agnosticism (as I think Austin Farrer was disposed to do, in a more lively and resilient fashion)—but not without a struggle.

Human history is pervaded by instances of 'enthusiasm', rooted in 'spirituality', where those involved have been apparently released from the shackles of prudent self-willed humanity and have been admitted (re-admitted, they say) to a more sympathetic acquaintance with cosmic happenings and thereby invigorated. There is at present a considerable appetite for 'Spirituality as Alternative'. (Cf. the article with that title by Michael Mildenberger in *Ecumenical Review*, 29, 3 July 1977). 'Spirituality is attempting to assemble all spiritual forces to help man'—and not only, or primarily, under Christian auspices. The cult of astrology, combined with elements of 'macrocosm-microcosm' anthoposophy developed in Stoicism, provided in ancient times a pseudo-science much easier to live with than is the science which shapes our current practice; and, in answer to deeply-felt needs, occult speculation has re-established itself in the modern world from which it was never, in fact, banished. We can perhaps move towards surer speech about the Spirit and the created order by asking about limits of tolerance for this kind of thing, but also by asking what may be said positively, with authentic Christian conviction, about cosmic correspondences which give support to mankind in its healthy aspiration.

It can, of course, be argued that Spirit-empowered perception cleanses from the vision of self-willed men fantasies which they have conjured up as factors in the created order. Prudent rationality, rooted nowadays in modern science, has cosmic support; but so, it is claimed, has the 'enthusiasm' which goes beyond and perhaps against prudent rationality. The problem, as ever, is how to steer a middle course between the Scylla of Apollonian rationalism and the Charybdis of Dionysiac-Orphic enthusiasm.

Against the 'positivism' associated with modern science (though not native to its expert practitioners), which leaves us with a cosmos seemingly impervious to God at work as Spirit, we are tempted to talk, with Lossky and the Cappadocians about 'the unknowable depth of things, that which constitutes their true indefinable essence' (R.G. Williams, article cited p.107). But left like that, this anti-positivist gesture simply lays us open to the charge of indulging in vacuous mystification. Against the expectations and excesses of enthusiasm, we must draw attention to the dicipline imposed by the 'not yet' element in the passage from Augustine quoted in an earlier section. But is there no content for the 'now' element?

4. Christian theologians, particularly in modern times, have been disposed, in effect, to renounce

any claim to self-sufficiency in this matter. They have welcomed as collaborators the more congenial poets and philosophers, whose secularised versions of 'Spirit' as God at work in the world about us have been derived in ways other than those of Christian theology. Wordsworthian 'nature-mysticism' speaks in its own way, as does dialectical Idealism and the philosophy of 'Process and Reality', from

> a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused
> . . . . . .
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls (somewhat drunkenly?) through all things.

For such alliances there is perhaps no more and no less justification than there is for alliance with dialectical materialists, whose version of 'something far more deeply interfused' is less congenial to the bourgeois mind but conceivably more pertinent.

It is instructive to see this process at work in the cultural history of Russia—in my case through a book with that title by Joel Carmichael which has a 'coffee-table' format but is not to be despised. In a climate created by Orthodoxy deriving from the Greek Fathers, a new intellectual universe was born when, after flirtations with the French Enlightenment, Russian thinkers plunged into the headwaters of German romantic philosophy and found, notably in Schelling, an antidote to the shallow mechanistic philosophy of the eighteenth century—since in Schelling's version of the organic unity of all nature and its creative world-soul, there was 'a place for both the beauty and the variety of the organic world, to say nothing of incontestable phenomena like mesmerism, telepathy, occult apparitions and so on' (p.142 ff.). Method for circumventing what the author calls 'the craggy realities of contemporary Russian society' seemed also to be on offer within this philosophy. 'Schelling may thus be regarded as a sort of half-way house between the occultism of Jacob Boehme and the rounded all-encompassing philosophical systems of Hegel and Marx'.

A Christian theologian, attracted towards these collaborators, knows that he must question the propriety of their gestures, made in human philosophy, towards the immanent presence of God in his creation, and he must do so by reference to his Christian instruction about the way taken by the Spirit as Lord and Life-giver. This instruction does not, however, provide esoteric knowledge about how the Spirit is active in the wider cosmos, preparing the whole order of creation for its consummation in ways corresponding to those he takes through Christ with humanity. Such glimpses as the Christian may have that this may be so, and how it is so, will occur within the texture of experience shared by all mankind. They will occur, if and when they do, to the mind which has been prepared by Christian faith to look for them with confident but patient expectation, and to distinguish between what is genuinely of God and what is an accident of nature readily but mistakenly accepted as nourishment for self-willed wishful thinking.

To round off this sequence of inconclusive reflections let me offer an elementary prescription for the kind of occurrence in which all this reflection is related. In the rapport between what goes on in the world about us and what we do in response to its stimuli—the rapport which constitutes for us the texture of our existence—we are able to *express* the reality which is happening in the created order. At times, this expression (done with words, with concepts, with sounds, with shapes and colours, with social acts and institutional devices) has an exciting quality and an invigorating effect. It is done, as we say, with 'inspiration'. Is there, beyond the human and the non-human agents involved in such happening, a transcendent divine agent who so holds together stimulus and response as to produce expressions of the underlying reality which are also expressions of 'spirit'? And is this 'spirit' recognisable as the Spirit whose way with his creatures has become familiar to us in our fellowship with God through Jesus Christ?

THE IMPOTENCE OF AGNOSTICISM

Ian Walker

Nowadays, Pascal's 'Wager' is not generally regarded as an argument of any consequence. Ever since Pascal's condemnation, by Pope Innocent X in 1653, his works have had a mixed or indifferent reception. I would like, however, to revive the argument by, as it were, turning it on its head.

The *Wager*, in brief, is this:

(1) Either God exists or he does not

(2) If God exists then the man who believes in him wins everything

(3) While, if God does not exist, the man who believes in him suffers only a finite loss.

The *Wager* is designed to show that there is advantage in belief in God that is not available in not believing in God. I will attempt to show a similar conclusion from the other end of things, i.e., there is disadvantage in not believing because of the very nature of some forms of disbelief.

First, we must be clear about one or two terms central to the debate:

(a) *Agnosticism*: (a-gnostic-ism) means literally 'not-knowing'. This, as far as I can see, may take two forms:

(1) The claim that religious belief does not make sense for one; not that it is, in principle, incomprehensible, but that it simply means nothing to one particular individual. Now this might be the result of un-interest, and here it will amount to saying, 'It just doesn't move me', or it may be the result of the fact that the enquirer simply cannot make anything of religious talk. So, to the proposition, 'God loves mankind', he might reply, 'I'm sorry, I just don't understand what that means; it means nothing whatsoever to me.'

This form of agnosticism does not suffer the difficulties of (2) below, for it entails no epistemic claims whatever and, as a consequence, cannot be accused of the kind of linguistic duplicity I shall argue is involved in (2). The central issue here is that the agnostic does not claim to understand a notion he then rejects as untenable. He claims not to understand the notion at all. I can see nothing incoherent in this although I think it is not without its problems. As far as this paper is concerned, however, my argument is not with this kind of agnosticism.

(2) The belief that we do not have sufficient reason to know that there is, or is not, a God. It is this form of agnosticism on which I would like to concentrate, but I shall defer the main body of my argument about this until I have noted just a little about two other terms.

(b) *Atheism*: (a-theism) means literally 'not-Godism', and it is the belief that there is no God of any kind. This may rest, as far as I can see, on either of the following:

(i) *Scepticism.* The ancestor of modern-day scepticism is, for many, David Hume. Hume employs reason to demonstrate the limitations of reason. The 'idea of a substance . . . is nothing but a collection of simple ideas, that are united by the imagination, and have a particular name assigned to them, by which we are able to recall, either to ourselves or to others, that collection' (*Treatise* I.i.6). Thus knowledge is limited to sense-data and perception of anything beyond, because of this limitation, is not possible. Hume's famous denial of causation led him to believe that all that we are in the habit of thinking of as cause and effect is really a matter of sequence; a habit of mind. We know nothing of the external world but impressions and copies of impressions between which we can discover only succession, but not necessary connection. Causation is thus only a subjective belief maintained by memory and expectation. Yet this, as has often been pointed out, makes for great problems. On what foundation is Hume going to insist on the distinction between truths of reason and matters of fact? It seems that the sceptic is not quite sceptical enough. Since it is assumed that there is no necessary connection between states of mind, no persistence of the self from moment to moment, it is not possible to be sure that the conclusions of an argument follow from the supposed premises. It is only by lack of courage that the sceptic saves nature and history, indeed, the world about him, from the flames to which he commits the Divinity.

(ii) *Theological doubt and anti-theism.* I group these two together because they suffer similar difficulties. Both make epistemic claims and so, in this respect, as we will see, they resemble (2) above. The theological doubter, unlike

the agnostic, thinks that there are good enough reasons to incline him to disbelieve the claims of theism. These reasons might not be conclusive, but they are enough to engender doubt; but doubt about what? We shall see that this constitutes the central problem for the theological doubter and the agnostic as well.

Atheism that takes the form of anti-theism is the claim that there could not possibly be a God. Its *locus classicus* of recent years is Professor J.N. Findlay's famous, and, I believe, now recanted paper, 'Can God's Existence be Disproved?'[1]. This kind of belief is that not only is there no God, but, given the concept of God as religion requires it, *there could not possibly be a God*. This, I believe, has been shown to be wrong on many occasions but the argument, quite simply, is this: Findlay's view is that God, defined as religion requires, necessarily does not exist. The reason for this is 'that Divine Existence can only be conceived, in a religiously satisfactory manner, if we also conceive it as something inescapable and necessary, whether for thought or reality. From which it follows that our modern denial of necessity or rational evidence for such an existence amounts to a demonstration that there cannot be a God' (p.48). This conclusion follows (so Findlay) because, if the concept of God requires that not only *actual* independent realities stand opposed to it but that such opposition is totally inconceivable, i.e. not only must the existence of other things be unthinkable without him, but his own non-existence must be unthinkable, then if this is seen in relation to 'modern notions' of necessity it will be shown to be palpably false. Necessity in propositions merely reflects our use of words, the arbitrary conventions of language: 'on such a view the Divine Existence could only be a necessary matter if we had made up our minds to speak theistically *whatever the empirical circumstances might turn out to be*' (p.54). Thus the religious mind is in a quandary: 'it desires the Divine Existence both to have that inescapable character which can, on modern views, only be found where truth reflects an arbitrary convention, and also the character of "making a real difference" which is only possible where truth doesn't have this merely linguistic basis' (p.55). Yet this is the kiss of death for religion, 'for if God is to satisfy religious claims and needs, he must be a being in every way inescapable, One whose existence and whose possession of certain excellences we cannot possibly conceive away. And modern views make it self-evidently absurd (if they don't make it ungrammatical) to speak of such a Being and to attribute existence to him' (p.55).

Now this argument has, I believe, been shown to be wrong[2]. I can, however, do no more at this point than say that its falsity lies in the fact that appeals to 'contemporary' or 'modern' views which 'show' that all existential propositions are necessarily contingent and all necessary propositions are necessarily non-existential does not constitute a sufficient premise to support the conclusion he draws. He simply has not argued his point. But this is not the main deficiency. All Findlay's argument amounts to is a denial of the ontological argument and, of course, the invalidity of this argument (if, indeed, it is invalid) does not entail the falsity of its conclusion. Even still, Findlay has not shown that there can be no classes of necessary propositions, other than the ones he mentions, that *are* in fact, existential.

The point of significance here is that if it is impossible to establish that there could not possibly (in whatever sense of 'possible' you like) be a God then this form of atheism is wrong. I do not want to argue that because Findlay can't establish his conclusion that it can't be done (i.e., that because his argument is false the conclusion is also false). I think there may be other reasons why this form of atheism is, in principle, incoherent[3].

These then are the terms about which we should be clear in assessing the merits of the *Wager* and its revision which I shall now argue.

I will return to the question of the second form of agnosticism we have noted ((2) above). This is the belief that we do not have sufficient reason to know that there is, or is not, a God. Now this form of agnosticism has several important consequences[4]. If the agnostic claims that we do not have sufficient reason to know that there is, or is not, a God, then this would seem to entail that he knows what it would be for a being to be God. If I say, 'We do not have sufficient reason to believe there are, or are not, fairies' then this means that I do not believe

there is adequate evidence for the existence of beings that are, say, approximately six inches tall, are equipped with wings, and who live at the bottom of my garden. Presumably it makes no sense to affirm or deny, or to state that there are insufficient grounds to affirm or deny, the existence of something about which one knows nothing, or which one comprehends not. In other words, the agnostic is questioning the grounds to support the existence of a certain being *which has certain properties predicated of it*. Now if he claims to comprehend the *concept* of God he may find himself in some distinct difficulties. Will he side with the school of thought, of which Findlay is one, which holds that God's non-existence is logically impossible, or that the concept of God requires necessary existence? If so, he will become embroiled in the perennial debate whether a belief that God's non-existence is logically impossible is inconsistent with a belief that God might not exist. *One* way of construing this may take the form of accusing the agnostic of implicitly denying the principle of non-contradiction, i.e., (1) if God exists then his existence is necessary, (2) God might not exist. (1) is incompatible with (2) because if God's existence is necessary then it is not possible that he might not exist (not both p and not p). But this latter belief (2), that God might not exist, must surely be a minimum thesis of agnosticism.

If, on the other hand, he sides with the other camp and does not construe God's non-existence as logically impossible, it is hard to see how this belief amounts to little more than atheism. A view which asserts the contingency of God's existence is compatible with those held by, say, Sartre or Nietzsche. For Sartre, 'Dieu n'existe pas', he says, 'He (God) is dead, He spoke to us and is now silent . . .' And, in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche (following Swinburne before him) tells the parable of the madman announcing the death of God in the market place and entering the churches of the realm to sing a *requiem aeternam deo* in recollection of the God who once was, but is now slain.

Now surely that is the whole force of saying that God's existence is contingent? It means that God might cease to exist. Yet when Sartre and Nietzsche affirm the logical consequence of the contingency concept of God's existence they are not being agnostics, but atheists. To say, 'God is dead' is the same, materially, as saying 'There is no God'. It could also be argued that it is the same, logically, as saying 'God might not exist'. It will not do to claim that the difference between the atheist and the agnostic in this respect is simply that one (the atheist) claims that God is dead while the other (the agnostic) holds a view which entails the possibility of God's death. This, after all, is an argument about the *nature* of God. It is clear that both Sartre and Nietzsche construe God's death as *the work of man*. This is an argument which can be enjoined by anyone who philosophizes; one can argue about whether God's existence is necessary or contingent without being a committed atheist, theist, or agnostic. So what makes the agnostic different from the atheist in this respect?

Agnosticism in the sense we are talking about, is the belief that we do not have sufficient reason either to affirm or to deny God's existence. Presumably this sufficient reason, among other things, applies to the linguistic reasons about the nature of the concept of God. And therefore the agnostic must remain agnostic about the linguistic arguments. If this does not mean that the agnostic must be irrational over one area of linguistic debate (which I take it, it does not mean) it does mean that he might find it difficult to be committed to a view ('there is not sufficient reason to know that . . .') which requires non-commitment ('neither God is nor is not . .') and yet to which, if he is to claim to understand the view about which he is uncommitted (there is nothing incoherent about being committed to a view which is one of non-commitment. Or is there? Compare Marcus Aurelius: 'there is only one thing of which you can be certain and that is that there is nothing of which you can be certain) then there must be, at least, some level of commitment (i.e., if God is, he is this, rather than that . . .).

(Frege[5] draws a distinction between first-level and second-level concept-expressions. Concept-expressions of the first-level are those which require completion with a name (or singular term) to yield a grammatical sentence. Those of the second-level require completion by a first-level concept-expression to yield a grammatical sentence. There is no difficulty in identifying predicates with Frege's first-level concept-

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first-level predicate; it must be seen as on a par logically with ordinary first-level predicates, requiring completion by a singular term to form a sentence. This, besides raising difficulties such as those surrounding the possibility of a valid ontological argument for the existence of God, widens the gap between quantificational logic and the ordinary language sentences it is intended to symbolise.)

Now what does all this do for the *Wager*? We might restate it as follows:

(1) If God exists then his existence is necessary (because if it were possible that he might not exist then he would not be God).

(2) If a man believes that God's existence is necessary and yet believes that God might not exist then he is maintaining a view which is self-expressions. 'Exists', however, has a strong claim to membership of the second-level. The ordinary predicate calculus treats '(Ex) (-x)' as a second-level expression, with the gap to be completed by a predicate. One consequence of this, which I have argued in 'The Logical Status of "God" ' (op.cit.), is that once a Descriptivist Theory of Names is abandoned, it is no longer possible to treat positive and negative existentials as about concepts—as saying, of a particular concept, that it is or is not uniquely instantiated. Accordingly, 'exists', can no longer be treated as a second-level predicate, requiring completion by a contradictory (both p and not p).

We have seen that one form of agnosticism at least amounts to this view. Therefore, one form of agnosticism, at least, is self-contradictory.

But suppose that I am wrong about (2) above. Suppose it is possible to maintain both:

(a) that God's non-existence is logically impossible (i.e. that his existence is necessary)

and,

(b) that God might not exist.

At this point I am not really interested in *how* this might be possible but one can imagine various arguments, say, that (a) is a notion which relates to propositions only whereas (b) is an existential proposition. Whatever the reason may be, however, suppose that it is possible to maintain both (a) and (b) without contradiction. I suggest that the agnostic, in asserting (b), is espousing a view which amounts to little less than atheism[6].

A minimum requirement of atheism is that it is possible that God does not exist, which is entailed by 'God does not exist'. Both these propositions could be regarded as, respectively, the necessary and sufficient conditions of atheism (note here that old principle of modal logic: *ab esse ad posse valet consequentia*—whatever is the case can be the case). God does not exist, therefore it is possible that God does not exist. Now this minimum requirement of atheism (it is possible that God does not exist) is a simple statement of the contingency concept of God's existence embodied in (b) which is, in turn, a sufficient condition of at least one form of agnosticism. Therefore, one form of agnosticism is equivalent to a minimal requirement of atheism.

How, some might ask, does this relate to the *Wager*? The answer, in fact, is quite simple: the argument I have put forward is largely about *what is believed*, i.e. the things believed by theists ((i) that God's existence is necessary), by agnostics ((ii) that God might not exist), and by atheists ((iii) that God does not, or could not, exist). The *Wager*, on the other hand, is largely about the advantages or disadvantages of certain sorts of belief, i.e. if one believes (i) then one stands to gain more than if one believes (iii). At the beginning of this paper I said that I would like to revive the *Wager* by 'turning it on its head', and by this I meant that while the *Wager* was designed to show that there is advantage in belief, I have attempted to show that there is disadvantage in certain forms of disbelief. My attempt, and the *Wager*, do not amount to the same thing because even if there is disadvantage in certain forms of disbelief or unbelief this does not mean that there is therefore advantage in certain forms of belief. Such a conclusion would be a simple logical error. I have tried to show that there is a certain inconsistency in one form of agnosticism and that this same difficulty does not apply to theism.

The agnostic gains no advantage in maintaining the sort of belief we have been examining for several reasons. One is the simple reason that it is undesirable to contradict oneself. The second has to do with a general observation I would like to hazard, but one which I cannot hope to substantiate. All I can note is that

it is a view I have often heard expressed. It is that agnosticism is, somehow or other, more 'intellectually respectable' than, say, atheism; that the agnostic is 'keeping his options open' in that, unlike the atheist, he is not committed to a view which may prove false. In short, agnosticism is sometimes construed to be a detached, uncommitted view. If my argument against agnosticism is correct then this general presumption is false. Not only may agnosticism be more closely allied to atheism than is sometimes assumed, it may also, at least in the form we have considered, be wrong. There can be no 'intellectual respectability' attaching to a view which is wrong.

Agnosticism, therefore, if it is construed in the way I have outlined it (which I suggest it often is), is impotent. [7]

NOTES

1. *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. A.G.N. Flew and A. MacIntyre, SCM, London, 1955.
2. See *New Essays*, op. cit., G.E. Hughes, pp.56-67, and A.C.A. Rainer, pp. 67-71.
3. I do not have space to argue this here, but it is not essential to the general thesis I will presently argue, viz., that one major form of agnosticism is impotent.
4. On the consequences of this belief see my 'The Logical Status of "God" ' in *Religious Studies*, Vol. 16., No. 2, June 1980, pp.217-228.
5. *Foundations of Arithematic*, para. 53, 'Function and Concept', p.38 in Geach and Black, *The Basic Laws of Arithematic*, para. 21.
6. Mr Christopher Kirwan of Exeter College Oxford suggested to me that if we take (b) as meaning 'God's existence is not necessary', someone who believes it will be committed to atheism if he also believes (1) (that if God exists then his existence is necessary). But, he argued, (b) could also be read, quite differently, as 'God's existence is not certain', which is a statement of agnosticism and which commits its proponent to no more than agnosticism even if he combines it with belief in (1). This, however, it seems to me, does not mitigate the force of my argument because 'God's existence is not certain' is elliptical for saying 'God might not exist'. Whilst the former is more a statement about an individual's beliefs and the latter *appears* to be a statement with ontological import the effects for the argument are the same. In modal terms, the two statements can still be expressed as 'It is possible that God does not exist' and this, after all, is exactly the statement I have considered throughout this latter section of the paper.
7. I have benefitted, in my consideration of this problem, from discussions with my students at Dulwich College, Adrian Crickmer and Richard Mico.

BOOK REVIEWS: CHRISTOLOGY FOR THE LEISURED AND OPULENT

CHRIST: THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IN THE MODERN WORLD
by Edward Schillebeeckx. Translated by John Bowden.
pp.926. (London: SCM Press, 1980). £19.50.

When, on 13 April 1977, Fr Schillebeeckx gave to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith a written clarification of certain points that had been raised concerning his book *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, he explained that that book, vast as it was, was only the first volume of a projected trilogy on Christology, of which the second volume was already completed. The dogma of Chalcedon, he affirmed, was his undisputed presupposition, and he had deliberately rejected the views of Marxsen and Bultmann. More than two years later, in December 1979, he was asked to go to Rome for conversations with three "consultors", and just a year later—not an excessive delay, if they were adequately to read and ponder his two enormous volumes—he was officially informed that the cardinals to whom a decision fell accepted his clarifications, explications and adjustments but asked him to devise a means of making them known to a wider public. Fr Schillebeeckx's reaction was first to decline this invitation and then to publish what he describes as an *Interim Report on the books Jesus and Christ*; it has the (for him) moderate length of 150 pages. The reviewer of such a gigantic mass of material has been faced by the author and the publishers with a really impossible task. Bigger is not necessarily Better, and sheer size witnesses to nothing but the author's capacity and enthusiasm for writing and the privilege of his situation. Many of his assertions seem to me to be true and illuminating, many to be questionable and some to be quite definitely wrong, and if I cannot give

detailed justification for this judgment he has no one to blame but himself. In reviewing the volume *Jesus (Religious Studies* XVI (June 1980), 242ff), I asserted that Schillebeeckx had failed tragically to question the secularist presuppositions of the "established" but already senescent methodology of Biblical study and had faced himself as a committed Christian with the impossible task of seeking some point of entry for the supernatural in a nature from which it had been antecedently excluded. In spite of the orthodox professions to which he is led after 800 pages of his second volume ("Is not this the dogma of Chalcedon?", 804) I feel obliged to repeat this judgment, but with a clearer understanding of what his method is. He himself tells us, in the Introduction to *Christ* (22):

> The perspective of this book is different from that of its predecessor, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, of which it is a continuation. At this point I am not concerned, as in the first volume, with those features of the "historical Jesus" which may have led to the New Testament confession of him. Now I am immediately concerned with the New Testament elaboration of what Christians experienced in their encounter with Jesus the Lord. I might say that the first volume was a "Jesus book", though it did not neglect the Christ this second volume is a "Christ book", though it does not forget Jesus of Nazareth.

Many readers, and not only those of traditional or conservative outlook, may feel that this dichotomy is unsatisfactory and itself conceals certain tacit presuppositions, and their unease will be increased by the way in which the books of the New Testament are allocated to the two volumes: the Synoptic Gospels and Acts to *Jesus*; the Epistles, the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse to *Christ*. At least we may admire the honesty and humility with which Schillebeeckx himself writes:

> It is indeed the case that I did not know the Gospel of John well enough when I wrote my first Jesus book. I studied it only in preparing to write my second Jesus book. As a result of my study I could certainly have filled out the historical picture of Jesus in my first book, though this would not have altered its main lines [*Interim Report*, 45].

But it is important now to see what exactly are the structure and method of the book *Christ*.

Jesus, the Introduction tells us (19), is "the story of a new life-style", and the book is divided into four Parts of vastly different lengths, 54, 548, 17 and 194 pages respecvely. Part One is concerned with the basic question how what happened in the first century can be authoritative for us today; "experience", "interpretation" and "revelation" are the key concepts, and much is made of the principle that "Experience is always interpreted experience". What this involves in post-Kantian terms is not Schillebeeckx's immediate concern, which is expressed in his assertion that "because in this book I 'begin from' the New Testament history in which Christians articulated their experience of grace, it does not mean that my starting-point in Christian theology contradicts a starting-point 'from the other end', with our contemporary experiences" (78). One might expect a Catholic to lay more stress on the Church as providing the concrete and organic continuous experience between the experience of New-Testament Christians and our experience today. Perhaps that will come in volume three, but its earlier absence suggests a serious methodological structural defect in Schillebeeckx's system.

"The disciples' experience with Jesus", writes Schillebeeckx, "was the dynamic origin of a religious movement and thus the actual founding of the church" (65). Nevertheless the title which he gives to Part Two of the book, which occupies 65 per cent of the whole, is "New Testament Theology of the Experience", not of Jesus, but "of Grace", and, after an introductory discussion of Grace in the Old Testament, he expounds at length the Pauline and Petrine Epistles, Hebrews, the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse. The amount of material amassed is colossal, as the frequently interpolated bibliographies indicate; its precise relevance to the central theme is not always so clear. Much is controversial, but there are telling insights, as in the remark "There was never an originally 'religionless' Christianity; this

is a scholarly invention" (552). The climax of this part comes in the account of the life of the New-Testament Churches as "exodus-communities" with an ethic socio-culturally determined yet arising out of the life of grace. This leads on to the very short Part Three, on the embeddedness of the saving action of God in Christ in human history: "Such an event can and even must be articulated in an inexhaustible way, with a constant variety of images and 'interpretative elements', when people in changing cultures want to give authentic expression to what the New Testament seeks to state, confess and proclaim. I would not call this demythologising, since it is certainly not that, it is rather the *inculturation* of the one datum of the Christian faith; to put it more simply, it is a matter of keeping alive the content of the Christian faith" (633f). Admirably said; but is there not needed a more thorough and adequate account than Schillebeeckx gives us of the relation between truth on the one hand and its media and modes of expression on the other?

Finally, Part Four—"God's Glory and Man's Truth, Well-Being and Happiness"—is concerned with the implications of Christology for politics and sociology in general. It is on the whole admirable, though I cannot help thinking that the same conclusions might have been reached more rapidly and simply by a more traditional route. It begins with the sentence. "Some readers who have followed the argument of this book thus far may perhaps want to ask, 'So what. What do *we* do with this view of the Christian Bible in the year 1980, in our modern world?'" But these words occur on page 647, and to get thus far, even without turning to the Scripture references or allowing any time for reflection, supposing he devotes six hours a day to the task, will take the reader nearly five days. So the number of people who are in a position to ask the question is likely to be small indeed. Human life, even the life of a scholar, being limited, what right has an author to demand such a slice out of it from his fellows or to expect such a demand to be granted if he makes it? If a man believes himself to be in possession of a truth of great and universal importance, is it not a moral duty to express it with the greatest possible lucidity and brevity, so as to communicate it to as many people as possible? Schillebeeckx has a sensitive social conscience and in the sentence immediately following that just quoted he indignantly declares that "while two-thirds of the world population is crying out for justice and love, a powerful block made up of the remaining

third, in East and West, is concentrating all its knowledge and its science, its power, its diplomacy and its tactics and means of subjection, on keeping what it has." But is not something very like this in the realm of the spirit done by a Christian theologian who speaks the Gospel to the modern world in a medium accessible only to the opulent and the leisured, to those who can spend fifty pounds on his three gigantic volumes and three weeks of their lives on reading them? For Schillebeeckx is no minute researcher, concerned only with some remote area of scholarship of interest only to a few specialists, such as Seventh-century Armenian pilgrims on Mount Tabor or the Birthplace of Ecolampadius; "I have tried", he writes, "to bridge the gap between academic theology and the concrete needs of the ordinary Christian" and he claims to write "in such a way as one might suppose would put the contents within the reach of anybody interested" (*Jesus*, 5). That he recognises the problem of a technical vocabulary is shown by the careful glossaries which he provides, but these do nothing to mitigate the other problem of the sheer size of his work. What was originally to be one volume became two and then three, with an Interim Report on the side. Fr Schillebeeckx has said some important things and if he would limit his output he might receive that constructive criticism for which he has appealed. But at the moment he has simply run away with himself and created a dust-cloud in which his true outlines can be only dimly discerned.

E.L. Mascall

THE TRINITY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD—THE DOCTRINE OF GOD by Jürgen Moltmann. SCM Press, 1981, pp.xvi, 256, £7.95.

Moltmann seems to me to have written a book that is, from many points of view, an exemplary piece of Christian theology. Thoroughly grounded in an orthodox faith, he accepts that the Church's traditional doctrines serve to structure that faith into intelligible patterns expressed in terms of God and of man and of the new relationship which is revealed to faith as existing between them. These patterns, in turn, provide the materials which continually challenge and guide the Christian theologian to work out interpretations of the faith which are contemporary, open and practical. In this way Christian theology may progress: on a circular path, to be sure, but a path that draws men, in an ascending spiral, towards a fuller communion of knowledge and love with the God of Jesus. Thus there is a true mystagogy involved in any theology worthy of the name 'Christian', and it characterises the work of the recent best: Barth, Rahner and (although both of these come in for a measure of criticism in this book) Moltmann. The precise mystagogy which Moltmann proposes here is best expressed in the title. nothing less is involved in a proper appraisal of the doctrine of the Trinity than a radical reinterpretation both of God and of his 'Kingdom'. Acceptance of the doctrine entails a vital shift from Kingdom to Fatherhood, from power to love.

In his rehabilitation of the doctrine of the Trinity Moltmann boldly tackles some big problems. First, of course, the problem that Christian faith continues to have with the impassible God of monotheism (Moltmann's name for theism): 'Anyone who starts from the experience of suffering and who perceives the mystery of the world in God's own sorrow is compelled to talk about God in christological terms. And he inevitably thinks of God in trinitarian ones . . .' (p.40). Then there is the problem of the biblical basis for the doctrine. Here Moltmann exploits the implications of the New Testament presentation of Jesus as 'the Son': 'A theological doctrine of the Trinity can only be biblically justified if the history of God to which the Bible testifies, itself displays trinitarian forms. It then has to follow these trinitarian forms. In the historical and eschatological testimony of the New Testament, we do not merely find one, single form of the Trinity. We find a trinitarian co-working of Father, Son and Spirit, but with changing patterns' (p.94f.). In other words, Moltmann's Trinity will be a flexible arrangement of Persons, open to an eschatological future,

freely and actively involved in the created world's developing history. How this may be conceived is Moltmann's next problem. The notion of *opera ad extra Trinitatis* must give way to the difficult view that initially God somehow contracts, withdraws himself into himself to make an interior *nihil* which provides 'the space in which God then becomes creatively active' (p.109). The world is thus truly in God. And it is this 'self-humiliation of God' which 'is fulfilled in the incarnation of the Son. God permits an existence different from his own by limiting himself. He withdraws his omnipotence in order to set his image, men and women, free. He allows his world to exist *in* his eternity. The divine kenosis which begins with the creation of the world reaches its perfected and completed form in the incarnation of the Son' (p.118). In the light of this there follows interesting criticism of certain presentations of the doctrine of the Trinity, including some wise words on the *Filioque*, and some practical conclusions are drawn concerning the political, ecclesiastical and religious implications of the newly appropriated doctrine.

What we are confronted with in this book is a remedial critique and exploration of the Christian 'doctrine of God' 'remedial' in the sense: that it calls for a basic revaluation of many traditional ideas —of the nature of the Christian God and the nature of Christian man: and also of creation, providence, consummation, love, freedom, suffering, knowledge and experience. This is liberation theology in the strictest sense: new meanings are released. 'All theological work on the doctrine of the Trinity is devoted to this transformation of meaning. The concepts and terms must correspond to and be suited to the thing that has to be conceived and comprehended' (p.162).

It will not be surprising if the reader of this broad attempt to christianise our theological concepts feels occasional doubts and reservations. For instance, the panentheistic position adopted by Moltmann still needs more rigorous clarification and precision from some appropriate philosophical discipline. And Moltmann's notion of the unity of God—an open, perichoretic, unifying at-one-ness and fellowship of the Persons—seems both inadequate in itself and ultimately destructive of the proper characteristics of those Persons. Can it really be the case that the monarchy of the Father 'only applies to the *constitution* of the Trinity. It has no validity within the eternal circulation of the divine life, and none in the perichoretic unity of the Trinity. Here the three Persons are equal; they live and are manifested in one another and through one another' (p.176)? Equal, certainly, but their personal distinction remains always, and in their operation, in the mutually *opposing* relationships between them. Again, Moltmann's apparent ignorance of Roman Catholic efforts over the past fifty years with regard to the theology of trinitarian indwelling, with the concomitant attempt to adjust and transcend the old categories of causality, leaves a gap in the book. Perhaps it is the more 'pastoral' emphasis of Vatican II that pushed this promising work into theological near-oblivion. On the other hand, it is pleasing to note Moltmann's appreciation of some older Anglican theology (C.E. Rolt, G.A. Studdert Kennedy). Overall, however, Moltmann is very thin on 'grace', a topic which might be thought important for his purposes. But this thinness is perhaps no more than a part of a general weakness in the Christian anthropology which corresponds to his remarkable theology. To be finally convincing a properly Christian theology must tackle not only grace but also sin and human freedom more directly than Moltmann does here. He is now intent on presenting 'a series of systematic contributions to theology' (p.xi), and no doubt he will be led to make good the deficiencies of this book later. But as it stands, we have here a first-rate opening attempt to present a crucially trinitarian hermeneutics of the Christian faith.

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CHRISTOLOGY IN THE MAKING by James J.G. Dunn. SCM Press 1980. 443pp. £10.50.

This learned and lucidly written book merits the careful attention of both New Testament scholars and doctrinal theologians. In it the

author surveys the whole of the New Testament's testimony to belief in the Incarnation. He is especially concerned to answer the following question. To what extent does the New Testament express belief in the pre-existence of Christ as a divine figure who became man for our salvation? Holding (rightly in my opinion) the (by now traditional) view that, at least on crucial points of christology, the fourth gospel presents us with an interpretation of Christ from the standpoint of apostolic faith Dunn is obliged to rely on the synoptic gospels for knowledge of Christ's teaching and consciousness. According to these gospels, he maintains, Jesus, though claiming to stand in a unique relation to God as his Father, was not aware of himself as one who pre-existed as the Father's divine Son. The most obvious concept for establishing such awareness is that of the Son of Man; but here Dunn endorses Todt's conclusion 'that there is not a single Son of Man saying within the synoptic tradition which links up with the concept of pre-existence from apocalyptic literature' (p.89). At the same time apostolic belief in Jesus as God incarnate 'was, in the light of the whole Christ-event, an appropriate reflection on and elaboration of Jesus' own sense of sonship and eschatological mission' (p.254).

We are left, then, with the teaching of the apostolic church. Here, inevitably, Dunn is compelled to examine the ideas of Wisdom and Word in Hellenistic Judaism. His question, then, is this. Did Jews hold that these were objectively existing forms of divine being or did they regard them merely as personifications of God's power and activity? Dunn takes the second view. So he writes of pre-Christian Jewish literature that 'there is no clear indication that the Wisdom language of these writings has gone beyond vivid personification' (p.170) and that Wisdom signifies simply 'God's wise ordering of creation and of those who fear him' (p.173). Similarly he asserts that 'the Logos seems to be nothing more for Philo than God himself in his approach to man, God himself in so far as he may be known by man' (p.228). Judaism, therefore, did not provide a category of hypostatic pre-existence through which Christ's pre-existence could be interpreted. The next question, then, is this; By what stages did the primitive Church arrive at belief in Christ's pre-existence? Dunn's answer is clear. Within the New Testament the belief is found only in the fourth gospel. In John 1. 1-18 'beyond dispute the Word is pre-existent, and Christ is the pre-existent Word incarnate' (p.239). 'Here we have an explicit statement of incarnation, the first, and indeed only such statement in the N.T.' (p.241).

However, although Dunn finds evidence for belief in Christ's pre-existence only in the fourth gospel he maintains that Paul affirms Christ's deity and, moreover, affirms it by stating that Christ embodies the divine Wisdom. According to Paul 'divine wisdom is now to be recognised as *wholly identified* with Jesus, so totally embodied in Jesus that the distinctive character of divine wisdom is to be read off not from creation or in terms of speculative knowledge (*gnosis*), but from the Cross' (p.195). 'Jesus is the exhaustive embodiment of divine wisdom; *all* the divine fullness dwelt in him' (*ibid.*) The relevant passages in 1 Corinthians and Colossians cannot be reduced to a mere doctrine of Jesus as a man inspired by God; they pass beyond the language of inspiration to the language of incarnation in so far as they identify Christ with God (p.212). Furthermore although they do not affirm Christ's pre-existence they come very close to the affirmation. 'In the Wisdom christology (and mystery terminology) of the later Paulines we see the most immediate antecedent to the doctrine of the incarnation, the womb from which incarnational christology emerged, the explicit assertion of an ideal pre-existence of Christ which was not far from an assertion of Christ's real pre-existence and which may have been understood in the latter sense quite soon after the letters were first written' (p.256).

One further point in Dunn's exegesis of New Testament christology must be noted. Although he restricts the New Testament's assertion of Christ's pre-existence to the fourth gospel he warns us against inferring from this that all the other christological passages in the apostolic books therefore imply adoptionism. 'The danger of calling the early post-Easter Son of God passages "adoptionist" is that

"Adoptionism" is the technical term for that later view which *denied* Christ's pre-existent deity—he was *only* a man adopted by God as Son at his Jordan baptism. But the earliest use of Ps. 2.7 in reference to the resurrection of Jesus can hardly be designated a *denial* that Christ was already God's Son before his resurrection. Nor can we say that Mark was intent to *deny* Jesus' divine sonship prior to the Spirit's descent and the heavenly voice at Jordan. Nor indeed that the birth narratives were deliberately setting their face against the idea of a pre-existent divine sonship' (p.62). Towards the end of the same paragraph Dunn generalises as follows. 'In the earliest N.T. formulations the idea of a pre-existent divine sonship of Jesus does not yet seem to have crossed the threshold of thought, is neither affirmed nor denied.'

Finally, Dunn claims that there is no parallel in pre-Christian Jewish and Graeco-Roman thought to belief in the Incarnation—to the belief that in one figure of history a pre-existent divine person became man. Thus on p.22 he asserts, in words he repeats in his Conclusion, that 'there is little or no good evidence from the period prior to Christianity's beginnings that the Ancient Near East seriously entertained the idea of a god or son of god descending from heaven to become a human being in order to bring men salvation, except perhaps at the level of popular pagan superstition'. Again, he says that 'we have found nothing in pre-Christian Judaism or the wider religious thought of the Hellenistic world which supplies sufficient explanation of the origin of the doctrine of the incarnation, no way of speaking about God, the gods, or intermediary beings which so far as we can tell would have given birth to this doctrine apart from Christianity' (p.253). More specifically he states on p.243 that 'for Philo it was inconceivable that the Logos should *become* flesh, as it is inconceivable for Greek thought generally, as indeed also for Jewish'.

In assessing this book from a doctrinal standpoint it is necessary to distinguish between the two forms—a less and a more developed form—that belief in the Incarnation can take. According to the first it means simply (in terms of the Judaeo-Christian contrast between the Creator and his creatures) that Jesus was both God and man. According to the second it means, more specifically, that Jesus pre-existed as a divine person who was both identical with and distinct from the God whom, in his human state, he addressed as *Abba*. Dunn shows that in the first form the belief was enshrined in the first response of Christians to Christ as their risen Lord. To this extent his book valuably supplements C.F.D. Moule's *The Origin of Christology* in ruling out the idea that the apostolic church first regarded Jesus merely as an inspired man and then 'deified' him (perhaps by assimilating him to the gods of current mythology). The particular question that this book raises concerns the point at which first century Christians formulated the nascent doctrine of the Incarnation in its second form. When, in the evolution of christology, did the Church first come to believe in the divine Christ's pre-existence? Here I think that Dunn dismisses too readily the view that pre-Christian Jews regarded 'Wisdom' and 'Word' (though not, in my opinion, 'Spirit') as objectively distinct forms of divine being. I also think that Christ's pre-existence was affirmed by Paul and the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. Thus it seems to me unsatisfactory to assert of Colossians 1.16 ('in him all things were created') that 'this may simply be the writer's way of saying that Christ now reveals the character of the power behind the world' (p.190).

Nevertheless, Dunn admits that Paul comes near to affirming Christ's objective pre-existence and that he may soon have been understood as affirming it. In any case even if Dunn is right in asserting that Christ's objectively real pre-existence was affirmed only by the fourth evangelist, this assertion would be doctrinally sufficient. It was inevitable that at the beginning Christians should apprehend Christ's deity primarily in terms of the impact that he made on them as the agent of divine salvation and the founder of a new creation. Yet the attribution of a creative function to Christ as God's personally pre-existent Wisdom and Word was not an extraneous and inexplicable addition to apostolic faith. On the contrary it was an unfolding of the perception (first obtained

within the order of redemption) that Christ was on the one hand distinct from God (as a son is distinct from his father) and on the other hand that he fully shared God's nature and power.

H.P. Owen

THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, Volume IV. Edited by G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids. Distributed in the U.K. by SCM Press. 1981. pp.xix, 493. £15.00

The *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* was inaugurated in 1970 and separate fascicles have been appearing at intervals since then. It was envisaged from the outset that an English translation would be undertaken, but this ran into early difficulties, and the original translation of Volume 1 had to be withdrawn. Eventually, however, the various difficulties were resolved; the current translator, D.E. Green, is experienced and very competent in producing a readable English version; and with four volumes now published a clearer picture of the whole enterprise becomes possible. It should be noted that, unlike the original New Testament 'Kittel', volumes and pages do not correspond with the German original; in the Hebrew alphabet the volumes so far published reach midway through the letter *heth*.

What, then, is a dictionary for? Most obviously, one might suppose, to give the meaning of words. But the recognition that that is not a wholly sufficient purpose goes back at least as far as Dr Johnson whose dictionary defined 'horse' as 'animal so called'. Dr Johnson then went on to illustrate the range of usage in which the word 'horse' could be found, and it is of course largely in that second sense that the TDOT is a dictionary.

But there is an important difference from the Johnsonian situation. He assumed, no doubt rightly, that his readers did not need to be told what a horse was. Such an assumption could scarcely be justified with regard to most of the terms here set out. Here is a major problem for the compilers of dictionaries of this kind: how are they to ensure that the reader can actually locate the information that he wants? The problem is not limited to the non-Hebraist, for whom *z^{eth} 'ebh* and *hms* (the first and last entries in this volume) will be meaningless; it will not always be clear, even to the Hebraist, what topics will be covered within a particular article, or where he may find treatment of a particular theme, since theological issues do not always lend themselves readily to treatment under individual word-entries. Thus, to take one of numerous examples, the article on *zera^{c}* (seed) contains an excellent discussion of 'promise to the patriarchs': only the obligation of having to read all (or, in honesty, a substantial part of) the book for review brought it to the present writer's notice. In this volume, therefore, as in the first three, there is much excellent material, but it may prove infuriatingly difficult to know where to find it. If indexes are provided when the whole project is completed, they will clearly offer some assistance.

The corresponding New Testament dictionary, the original 'Kittel', was much criticised for some of its underlying assumptions. James Barr (*The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 1961) was particularly trenchant in pointing out the frequent lapses into the etymological fallacy, that is, the supposition that the 'root' meaning of a word somehow pervaded all subsequent usage of that word, and the tendency to think in terms of vague 'concepts' rather than precise meanings. In particular little consistent attempt was made in the original 'Kittel' to map out with any degree of exactitude the semantic fields of the words under discussion. In both of these respects TDOT marks a considerable improvement: etymologies are provided in the opening section of each entry, but their limited value is recognised. Frequent, though somewhat unsystematic, attempts are made to show the semantic range of a particular term by comparing its usage with that of other words of like meaning. At times, indeed, awareness of the danger of excessive reliance on etymologies leads to curiously little being said, as if caution were being carried to extremes. Nor is any significant attention paid to post-biblical Hebrew and the light it might throw on biblical usage. One final general comment: it

does appear at times as if stricter editorial control might have been useful, e.g. by providing more systematic cross-referencing between articles on related topics, and by ensuring greater consistency in the usage of technical terms.

To comment on Volume IV in isolation is bound to be somewhat arbitrary. It is only possible here to draw attention to a number of articles that will deserve wider attention than they might find: those on *zabhach* and *chagh* both have important insights into the development and characteristics of Israel's worship; *za^{c}aq* deals interestingly with the theme of the people 'crying unto the LORD' in lament and prayer; and the Israelite understanding of life in its different connotations is well brought out in *chayah*. But these are only samples; others will certainly find plenty with which to disagree and from which to profit. All told therefore a worthwhile project, containing much valuable material but with the problems of communication still not entirely overcome.

Richard Coggins

PAULINE STUDIES. ESSAYS PRESENTED TO F.F. BRUCE. Edited by Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris. Paternoster Press, 1980, pp. xlii + 293. £10.

It has become fashionable to present scholars with volumes of essays to celebrate a birthday, but it is rare for one scholar to be the recipient of more than one such volume. It is some indication of the esteem and affection with which Professor F.F. Bruce is regarded, that the occasion of his seventieth birthday last year should have been marked by the publication of the third collection of essays to have been gathered in his honour. No doubt it will have given him particular pleasure that the contributors to this volume are former research pupils at Sheffield and Manchester. There can be no better tribute to a teacher than the scholarly work of those whom he has taught.

The present collection of essays is introduced by two brief appreciations of Professor Bruce, one by the editors, the other by Professor C.F.D. Moule. These are followed by 'a select bibliography' of his writings in the past ten years; the fact that this alone covers some fifteen pages is sufficient indication of Professor Bruce's immense industry. But anyone who does not know Fred Bruce and who skips the appreciations and begins reading at the bibliography will certainly get the wrong impression of a man whose humanity is as great as his scholarship, and his wit as keen as his judgments.

The editors have wisely limited the scope of the volume to one theme, and it is an appropriate one, since Professor Bruce has written widely on Paul. Many of the sixteen essays take up problems with which he himself has been concerned. In the first part of the book, Colin Hemer offers some 'Observations on Pauline Chronology', Paul Garnet discusses 'Qumran Light on Pauline Soteriology', and Swee-Hwa Quek looks at 'Adam and Christ According to Paul'. The Old Testament roots of Professor Bruce's theological understanding (and those of Paul himself!) are ably represented by the contribution of Ronald Clements, who discusses the theme of ' "A Remnant Chosen by Grace" (Romans 11:5)', and explores the Old Testament background and origin of the remnant concept. Dr Clements argues that the use of this idea in Romans demonstrates the way in which, at one and the same time, Paul's own interpretation of the identity of the remnant was 'a strikingly fresh and original creation' (p.119), while he nevertheless shared certain assumptions about the meaning of the concept and the use of the Old Testament with his Jewish contemporaries.

Other contributions in this first part (which is subtitled 'The Life and Theology of Paul') include an analysis of 'Thanksgiving Within the Structure of Pauline Theology' by Peter O'Brien, a comparison of 'The Christ-Christian Relationship in Paul and John' by Stephen Smalley, and a lively discussion of 'Interpretations of Paul in *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*' by Margaret Howe, who sounds a topical note by asking whether this apocryphal work is a 'liberation document'. She concludes, however, that far from being portrayed as a liberated woman, Thecla is regarded as capable of leadership only

in so far as she suppresses everything that is essentially female, and 'exists only as an extension of Paul's influence and personality' (p.46).

Moving on to the twentieth century, we have an essay on 'Process Theology and the Pauline Doctrine of the Incarnation' by Bruce Demarest, who compares the two and reaches the unsurprising conclusion that they are in important respects very different. Although we may well agree with the author that 'it is irresponsible to dismiss the Pauline testimony' (p.139), it is arguable that he is himself too hasty in dismissing modern expressions of Christology when he contrasts 'the timeless truth of revelation' with 'the whims of the current philosophical fad'. Process theology may or may not be a fad, but the problems of cultural relativity are not so easily solved: nevertheless the demonstration of the differences between Pauline theology and process theology remind us of the folly of trying to read back twentieth-century ideas is contributed by Donald Hagner, who surveys the interpretation of 'Paul in Modern Jewish Thought', and shows how 'Jewish scholars have increasingly stressed Paul's authentic Jewishness' (p.155).

Two of the essays in this volume tackle the well-worn problem of Rom. 7. The first, by David Wenham, entitled 'The Christian Life: A Life of Tension?—A Consideration of the Nature of Christian Experience in Paul', argues in the direction that the title suggests. the struggle of Rom. 7 is that of the Christian living in two ages at once. The second, by Robert Gundry, entitled 'The Moral Frustration of Paul Before His Conversion' Sexual Lust in Romans 7 7-25', is found in the second part of the book (incidentally demonstrating the artificiality of the division between Part I and Part II, which is sub-titled 'Literary and Exegetical Studies within the Pauline Corpus'). Gundry adopts the autobiographical interpretation, and argues that Rom. 6:7-25 describes the experience of Paul *before* his conversion; the command not to covet which proved Paul's undoing is to be understood in terms of sexual lust, which is the most likely temptation to attack a boy at puberty, when he achieves the status of *bar mitzvah*. The possibility cannot be denied, though there is nothing in the context of Rom. 7.7 to point to sexual desire, and 7.8 seems to suggest that Paul had 'all kinds of covetousness' in mind. Nevertheless, Gundry's article is a spirited defence of a somewhat unfashionable view of this chapter.

Other essays in this section include 'Colossians 1:15-20', a useful exposition of that passage by Paul Beasley-Murray; 'The Pauline Style as Lexical Choice', a study of IN KEIN and related verbs' by Moises Silva a survey of the theme of 'Justification by Faith in 1 and 2 Corinthians' by Ronald Fung, and an interesting attempt to answer the question 'Why did Paul Write Romans?' by John Drane, who finds the answer to lie more in Paul's own situation than in the problems of the Roman church. Romans, he suggests, is a reformulation of the teaching of Galatians, 'as Paul now saw it through the spectacles of his experiences at Corinth' (p.223). The final essay, by Murray Harris, on 'Titus 2:13 and the Deity of Christ', sets out the arguments for believing that this verse refers to Jesus Christ as 'our great God and Saviour'—arguments that would be even more persuasive if the Pauline authorship of Titus were not assumed.

Most of the essays in this book are written, as one might expect, from a conservative stance. The fact that only rarely is this allowed to prejudge the issue is some indication of the influence of the scholar whom they honour.

Morna D. Hooker

A BASIC INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT. A BASIC INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT. Robert C. Walton (ed.). SCM Press. London. 1980. 234 and 216 pages. £3.50 each.

These books have a family history; they are descended from *The Teachers' Commentary*, published by SCM Press in 1932, revised and enlarged six editions later in 1955, and for almost forty years a valued friend (not to say refuge in time of need) to teachers, students, clergy, lay preachers and indeed anyone with a more than superficial interest in the Bible.

In 1970 the *Commentary* was succeeded by *A Source Book of the Bible for Teachers*,

edited by Robert C. Walton,—succeeded, but never really replaced, for the *Source Book* was both broader in scope and more restricted in detail than the *Commentary*. The restriction lay in the replacement of the traditional introduction to and verse-by-verse commentary on the books of the Bible by a series of articles roughly following the chronological order of the Old and New Testaments, dealing thoroughly with critical problems, methods of study, ideas and their significance, but only very selectively with the text itself. The Editor summed up the change in the Preface when he wrote '... if the reader wishes to know, for example, what the Covenant meant to the people of Israel, he will find the information here. If, on the other hand, he requires a full exposition of such a phrase as "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Num. 25.13) he will need to consult a commentary on the book of Numbers'. The assumption was that close textual study (apart from examinations) was less used and useful in schools than a general grasp of the sweep of events and the lives and ideas that lay behind them. The broadening in scope consisted in the inclusion of a series of articles by religious educationists designed to help teachers use the Bible not only effectively but also in accordance with the new ideas which had revolutionised Religious education following the research done in the nineteen-sixties by Ronald Goldman, Harold Loukes, Edwin Cox and others. Child-centred, life-orientated, topic-or-theme-based, socially relevant: these approaches needed much thought and scholarship if biblical teaching in schools was not to be reduced to the use of a series of convenient proof-texts. Teachers grumbled at the disappearance of the *Commentary*, but were grateful for the academic and paedagogical help offered by the *Source Book*.

Ten years and several educational revolutions later some, though by no means all, of the Religious Education articles have a dated look; the biblical articles, on the other hand, continue to provide solid basic material for anyone who uses the Bible in statutory or voluntary education. It was an excellent idea to make separate volumes of the Old Testament and New Testament chapters, prefacing each with Robert C. Walton's 'What is the Bible?', and John Bowden's 'The Biblical Scholar and his Tools'. The articles are reproduced unaltered (obviously deceased contributors could hardly be expected to re-write, and it is not difficult to guess how much extra cost in production and printing would have been involved in any radical revision). So the price remains reasonable, and the Editor has replaced with some photographs the tedious-looking maps of the *Source Book*, and has revised the books recommended 'for further reading'.

I was disappointed with both lists, admittedly it is difficult to know where to stop, but it seems extraordinary that whilst older books have been removed suitable newer ones have not always appeared to replace them. For example, John H. Eaton's *Psalms: Introduction and Commentary* (SCM Torch Series, 1967) had been excised, but his *Kingship and the Psalms* (SCM, 1976) has not been included; in the 'Miracles' section of the New Testament volume C.F.D. Moule's *Miracles* no longer figures, leaving only three books on the list. One concludes that *Kingship and the Psalms* is deemed too difficult for this readership (a judgment with which I venture to disagree), and that there is one book less in print on the subject of Miracles, (a state of affairs which I find hard to accept).

This carping aside, these books are splendid value. If you are a student or graduate of theology they may not tell you anything you have not been told already, but they summarise clearly, they are potentially considerable time-savers, and they give what they promise,—a *basic* introduction to the Old and New Testaments.

Enid B.Mellor

THE HUMAN POTENTIAL by P. Hinchliff and D. Young. D.L.T. 1981: 161pp: £4.50.

The Foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury sets the scene of this book which he sees as an attempt to speak to "those many men

and women who stand outside the Christian Church but who share the Christian desire for a better world, and the Christian search for ways of realising such a world". That the authors have this aim is clear from the welcome lack of theological 'in-talk' and, more importantly, from their desire to commend a lowest common denominator as regards man's view of himself and the reality of which he is a part, upon which then to construct a reasoned and progressive Christian apologetic. Whether or not they are successful is another matter.

The authors rightly conclude that we, in common with all mankind can no longer view God as a causal explanation of the way things are. The reasons why this is no longer possible are already well versed, they are, however, presented here simply and concisely. We are then presented with an alternative, to believe in God is to believe that the whole of reality is at basis 'personal'. Such a view is not new, the way has been well trodden by, amongst others, Temple and Whitehead, and here it shares the same difficulties previous attempts encountered. Is it really being true to the very accurate picture these authors paint of modern man and his demands, to so quickly abandon any attempt to commend God as an explanation (even if that word were to be somewhat refined and qualified) and to move so totally and readily to what is, admittedly a much more subjective, indeed poetic, description of God? Like it or not, right or wrong, modern man demands explanations, runs his life by, sets his parameters within that which is explicable, but nowhere in this book is any attempt made via 'personal' concepts and language to view God as an explanation. Surely a fatal error in a book claiming to address modern man "where he is".

We are then invited to consider Jesus as the 'stencil' through whom we view reality, our own life and conduct. Whilst the less-structured, less-dogmatic view here presented is refreshing and honest, the question remains as to what is the precise relationship between viewing Christ as the 'stencil' and viewing reality as 'personal'. Which comes first—or is that an inappropriate question? Does the honest enquirer need to be convinced of the 'personal' nature of reality before Jesus has sufficient attraction, not to mention authority to be seen as a 'stencil'; or does the enquirer, rather, have to make a leap in the dark and accept Jesus as the 'stencil' before any vision of 'personal' reality is at all possible? The authors would not wish to be committed to either of these alternatives and would view such 'temporal' considerations as inappropriate, for on page 105 they state that we "move back and forth between the way in which we see reality and the New Testament assertion that in Christ God has reconciled the World to Himself". No doubt here, they are providing a correct description of how our faith develops, we rightly monitor our claims and beliefs about Jesus by what we know of the world and our life in it, whilst at the same time 'nudging' and refining our vision of the world by what we see in Christ. That this is gloriously circular we know, and we are able to live with that knowledge, because within the Christian community we see that the circularity doesn't stop the process working. But, what about the honest outside enquirer who does not have the privilege of the insiders' experience. Will not he, analytical empiricist that he is, be at best put off, at worst totally alienated by such blatant circularity?

The reader is then led into a consideration of the Christian response. Great stress is rightly and clearly laid upon the corporate nature of Christian discipleship, and the balance finally kept between political involvement and political drowning for the Christian. There is a brief, perhaps too brief, treatment of Christian morality, motive rather than specific actions is what matters. Perhaps to ask for more is a little unrealistic in a book dedicated in just over 160 pages to such a vast and basic apologetic, but it surely can't have escaped the authors' notice that one very urgent and pressing area of debate between the Christian and non-Christian man of goodwill is that of moral action.

This book deserves to be read, it is a brave and refreshingly humble attempt at respectful persuasion rather than a self-satisfied frontal attack on secular man. As such, it will prove useful in parish as well as college as an example

of the attitude from which all of us should be working. The questions which can be raised are not peculiar to this single book, but sadly they remain for the future.

Edward Morris

THE FIRE AND THE ROSE ARE ONE by Sebastian Moore. Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1980. xv + 158pp. £4.95.

The words from T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding" which Dom Sebastian Moore has chosen for the title of his new book aptly set the tone for a theological work in which he explores familiar ground in a new way, leading us "to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time". In his deeply personal search into the meaning of the crucifixion he chooses the way of the heart rather than of the intellect (as he says, from "inside out" rather than from "outside in"), and succeeds in achieving "that weddedness of mind and heart" which has been denied for centuries. He takes the feelings seriously and this together with the liveliness of his speculative intelligence gives the book its warmth and engages the reader's commitment.

Acknowledging a debt to Ernest Becker and Bernard Lonergan who helped his thought along the way, and equipped with a sound understanding of the insights of modern humanistic psychology, he begins his search by asking, what do all human beings desire? He finds the answer not in happiness but in the need to feel significant. This raises the question, significant to whom? and presupposes the existence of another or others; so the self cannot rightly be considered in isolation. On the level of human relationships, mature fulfilment comes through acceptance in love. On the deepest level the question about significance addresses itself with more urgency and anxiety than we consciously admit to the source of our being, the unknown reality. The transforming experience of religious conversion is the realisation that the unknown other is the loving God.

The counterpull to the radical desire to be of worth and to be loved is radical guilt, seen as isolation, withdrawnness, love in reverse; this pulls us out of our proper shape which is formed by the positive desire "to be myself for another." Guilt is tied up with a sense of worthlessness, it makes the other ugly, blames it and embitters relationship. Only the true sense of self given by love can dissolve it.

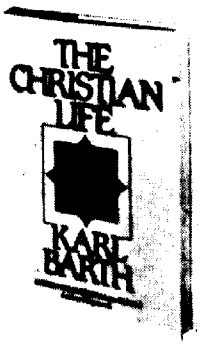
Jesus alone is without guilt, and therefore hears unimpeded the Yes of the Beloved; he lifts people up so that they too can shed their guilt and hear this voice. That was how the disciplies felt in those ecstatic days when they seemed to have entered with him the Reign of God. But then came the collapse, the ignominious death of Jesus on the cross. To his followers this failure, this eclipse of their new vision, must have seemed like the death of God. And indeed it was the death of the old perception of God whom man's guilt had seen as essentially powerful rather than essentially loving, in the Master-Slave relationship which had traditionally perverted the relationship between God and man. Through their desolation the disciples enounter Jesus alive and enspirited after death, and come to experience God as loving and as opening up his eternal vitality to us through lifting Jesus out of death. No wonder there was at first a "displacement of divinity" from God the Father to Jesus.

This is the major argument, but the book is difficult to summarise and touches on many other matters which are found relevant as the main thesis is pursued. A tendency to discursiveness is kept in hand by the short chapters and the division into three parts; there are summaries along the way, and some chapters are almost in note form (e.g. ch. 2); sometimes the language is obscure, as the writer seems to be wrestling with his thought (ch. 17), sometimes it rises to poetry (ch. 26). This variety of style is refreshing, and throughout the book is remarkably free from theological jargon.

For believers this book offers new insight into beliefs and formulas that have come to be taken for granted, for non-believing searchers it offers a statement of belief which starts from their own felt experience.

Helen Hudson

From T. & T. Clark

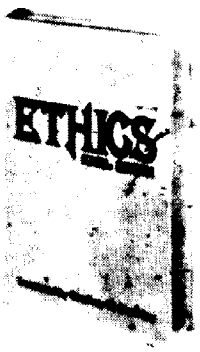


THE CHRISTIAN LIFE by Karl Barth

Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley

This is the English version of the surviving draft of Barth's work on the ethics of reconciliation, which, if completed, would have provided the final chapter of Volume IV part 4 of *Church Dogmatics*. It has obvious value as a mature statement of Barth in many matters of both contemporary and permanent importance in ethics and theology.

0 567 09320 4 Cased 296 pp. £7·95.



ETHICS by Karl Barth

Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley

Originally published in German in an edition edited by Dietrich Braun, Karl Barth's ETHICS is at last available in English. This volume, containing lectures given as courses at the University of Münster in 1928 and 1929, represents Barth's first systematic attempt at a theological account of Christian ethics.

Barth's ETHICS are arranged on a trinitarian basis, dealing in succession with the command of God the Creator (life), the command of God the Reconciler (law), and the command of God the Redeemer (promise).

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KARL BARTH, LETTERS 1961-68

Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley

This collection offers readers an opportunity to become better acquainted with Karl Barth both as theologian and as human being. Here is the most interesting and significant correspondence from the last eight years of his life.

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