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# KING'S

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# Theological Review

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**KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW**

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# CHRISTIANITY AND THE NOVELISTS<sup>1</sup>

A. N. WILSON

You have asked me to discuss the relationship between Christianity and the art of fiction, and so I must begin by determining what sort of relationship this might be. That is, are we to be contemplating a practice which is compatible with the Christian revelation, even one which grows out of it, as all good things grow? Or are the two things opposed?

If I were an architect or a musician, my task would be easier. Many of the most beautiful buildings in the world are not simply great works of art. They are tangible and visible expressions of Christian truth, very often full of deliberate Christian symbolism. The stones of Salisbury Cathedral, rooted and grounded in earth, soar upwards into the sky, defying gravity, with such stupendous delicacy that the most unobservant wanderer in the aisles of Salisbury could not fail to grasp that we, creatures of earth, can be led upward into the godhead through the mystery of the ascended Christ. And how? When the eye does not stray up, it is led, by the perfect perspective of the nave and chancel, towards the high altar, to remind us that the link between earth and heaven is to be found there, at God's board. Similarly obvious Christian truths can be discerned simply by listening to Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus*, or Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* or Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*.

Novels are, of course, lesser things than buildings, lesser things than music. But in this regard, they are also different in kind. There are Christian novels – by Tolstoy and Dostoevski, by Charlotte Mary Yonge and Rose Macaulay, but nobody could pretend that fiction has necessarily been at its best when it has been most Christian. Indeed, there are a number of disturbing facts which I think you will probably wish to contemplate or discuss. I do not present them in any logical order, but here they are.

First, there has been a consistent tradition in Protestant England that there is something vaguely unChristian about reading novels at all. Until about 1920, perhaps until the second world war, it was not at all unusual for English families to disapprove of reading novels on a Sunday. And there must still be many people who regard it as tantamount to a sin to read a novel in the morning. In the early days of the novel, it was not customary to acknowledge one's authorship of works of fiction. Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen both wrote anonymously. And there lurked behind this reticence not merely the sense that the art of fiction was ungentle, but that it was improper.

What was improper about it? Well, unquestionably, there were improper novels about; so that even to pen *Waverley* or *Pride and Prejudice* was to put yourself in the same league table as the authors of sensational or scabrous or even pornographic productions such as *Tom Jones*, *The Monk* or *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The impropriety of novels, by this standard, did not consist solely in the fact that they contained frank depictions of licentiousness. It was that they stirred up artificial extremes of emotion about non-existent characters; emotions which it perhaps was, and perhaps is, improper for a Christian man or woman to feel in any case. As you turned the pages of *Melmoth the Wanderer* (the work of a clergyman), you could enjoy all the dizzying sensations

of artificial fear. And yet we are supposed to have believed another book which tells us that perfect love has cast out fear. *Melmoth* contains, moreover, like *Tristram Shandy* (the work of another clergyman) a great deal of simple smut: dirty passages, written for the sexual titillation of the audience. It is sexual excitement stirred up by images of cruelty, and by silly phantoms of evil, a man who has sold his soul to the devil, and paces the earth, an accursed soul, unable to find peace. Scott and Jane Austen were both devout Christians, and there can be no doubt that this played its part in their hesitancy about proclaiming authorship of novels. I suspect that the hesitancy goes very deep, and has an ancient lineage. The Church learnt much of its wisdom from Plato, and one of the features of the Reformation was a rediscovery of that Platonic wisdom. Plato was himself a poet. But he banished the poets from his Republic simply because what they wrote was untrue. Those devout English men and women who were brought up not to read novels on a Sunday would, if they were pressed, give very similar reasons for their devout habit. The mind is dark enough, cloudy enough as it is. It needs all the discipline of the Christian life to be able to penetrate the shadows and see into the life of things. The great end of all Christian mystics has been to see beyond the forms of this world into the light of the heavenly places. How then can we dare to sully our vision by deliberately contemplating imitations of this world, shadows of a shadow?

So much for the Protestant world. If we go abroad and look at the continental tradition, we find a remarkable similarity. There are a great many good books on the *Index*, of course, including *The Bible*, and the works of Voltaire and *The Water Babies*; and the *Pensées* of Pascal. But there we will also find the names of the great French novelists: Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola. Ever since Cervantes suffered at the hands of the Inquisition, there has been a natural enmity between the Catholic Church and the novelists. It is in fact very rare to find any great Italian, French, German or Spanish novelist who was a practising Catholic. The death of Proust is entirely emblematic in this respect. Like Bergotte, the novelist in his own great masterpiece, Proust was scribbling his fiction to the end, revising, changing and improving, his semi-fictionalised vision of French high society. Napoleon, at the end of his life, had relented; he consented to receive last rites, and asked for his bed to be placed in a position from which he could gaze at the Blessed Sacrament. There was, in the end, no contradiction between Christianity and the man of action. But Proust left instructions that they should only send for the priest when they knew it was too late. The novelist was dead by the time that dear man Abbé Mignier reached 44 rue Hamelin.

Why does that seem so appropriate? Why do we feel, if we value Proust's masterpiece, that this ghastly risk was almost worth making; and that the presence in his horrible cork-lined bedroom of a Christian priest, even for ten minutes before his death, would have been inappropriate?

Before I attempt a stumbling sort of answer, let us contemplate one other great novelist, perhaps the greatest novelist in the history of the world: Tolstoy. How can a man capable of writing *War and Peace* dismiss it as 'gossipy twaddle'? How can a man, on finishing *Anna Karenina* feel so deeply dissatisfied with it? How could Tolstoy develop, as we all know he did, such a profound aversion to his own work, and to the whole art of fiction that he reached the

same conclusion as Plato, as the Popes who put Zola on the index, and as the sabbatarian men and women of Victorian England?

I think that the answer lies partly along these lines. Nobody can help having points of view about something or another. It may be that we believe that Socialism will alone save the world; or that the world is flat; or that alcohol is evil, or that the Russians, or the Jews, or the Irish are plotting to over-run what is left of our civilisation. If we happen to believe these things, and write a novel, it is perhaps equally inevitable that some vestige of this creed will creep through the pages, in the dialogue between the characters, or even in the turn of the story's events. But it will be neither a worse novel, nor a better one – and *that* is the important point – for these beliefs of ours. It is notoriously difficult to define the nature of great fiction, but whatever else it depends upon, it does not depend on a point of view. *Waverley* or *Pride and Prejudice* or *Dombey and Son* or *War and Peace* are not great novels because they are expressions of a *point of view*. Their greatness derives from something quite other. It derives, largely, from the extraordinary fact that Scott and Jane Austen and Dickens and Tolstoy were able to create wholly real worlds, peopled with characters in whom it is possible to invest all our sympathy; whether they make us laugh or weep, they are *there*; as magically real, while we read the book, as we are. Tolstoy could call this achievement 'gossippy twaddle'. In fact, the greatness of his fiction offended his own egotism. Although he had the extraordinary capacity to invest, create and shape great human characters, he valued it less than his own desire to sound off about vegetarianism, pacifism and the simple life.

Nevertheless, however much we try to vilify Tolstoy, the strength of his position remains. If it is true that the greatness of a novel does not depend upon its point of view, is it not corollary of this, if not a *sequitur*, that the novelist, when she or he holds a pen in hand, should suspend opinion and belief? Is it not perhaps necessary for the novelist to be agnostic and amoral in surveying the world? Regardless of his or her private beliefs, does not the novelist need to gaze solely at the world they have created, and at that only? The task of the novelist is to paint that world as accurately and as fully as he can, to bring the figures in it to life, to observe them in their moral predicaments without passing a judgment and without defining a point of view?

Take, for instance, the novels of Evelyn Waugh. There are readers of his books who would say that though they are unblemished in style and form, they fail only in the passages where they press home a theological point of view. The necessarily cold eye, the unerring eye, which sees Captain Grimes and Lord Copper and Anthony Blanche in all their absurdity and comedy is misted over with sentimentality when it attempts to look at Mr. Crouchback. His sanctity is implausible not because there are no saints in the world, but because Evelyn Waugh, in describing him, has ceased to be a novelist, *tout simple* and shown his hand as a devout Catholic. We see something of the same thing at work in Graham Greene's *End of the Affair*. In his introduction to the revised edition of that book, Mr. Greene confesses to have lapsed from the high code of artistic excellence into the position of a propagandist. The agnostic who is converted to the Faith when his hideous facial mole is removed through the intercession of the heroine at the end of the book has ceased to be

a figure in the very world which is the world of all of us and become a cardboard cut-out from a Catholic Truth Society pamphlet. That is *not* because miracles are an impossibility. It is because novelists must, if they are true to their calling, be detached from theology, just as they must be detached from politics.

We find then, every reason for not reading a novel on a Sunday. On the one hand, novelists presume to be creators of worlds, of men and women. In so far as they are dealing with something manifestly fake, made-up, and unreal, they are distracting us from the Truth. And in so far as they are successful in their creation of human characters, they are setting themselves up as rivals to God. But in addition to this they are pursuing a craft in which excellence would appear to be dependent on a colourless detachment from any theological point of view. Though they are born within the Christian dispensation and have perhaps heard the good news of Christ, they must, for their professional livelihood, behave as though they had not been so born, had not so heard. They must lie, like the dead Proust, in the dangerous never-never land of the unredeemed, unhouseled, disappointed and unannealed.

It would therefore seem to be very questionable whether Christians should take novelists very seriously or waste much of their time reading their work. But what of the Christian novelist himself? Even if he decided to disregard the standards of the highest artistic excellence, and to use his fiction as a vehicle for an expression of Christian belief, a manipulation of plot and characters into positions which disturb the reader into believing the Christian gospel, is there not a deep impropriety even about this? Are not the truths of Christianity too important, and too searching, to be dressed up in the frivolous pages of an essentially trivial form such as fiction?

I do not know. For myself, I have a weakness for such stories as those of James Adderley, whose novels were best sellers at the turn of the century, and which invariably told of how a heedless young worldling, as a result of attending an Anglo-Catholic mission in the slums of the East End, became a Christian socialist, selling all that he had in pursuance of evangelical precedent. Others probably can enjoy the yarns of Charlotte Mary Yonge (Was it Tennyson who said, on reaching an exciting passage in one of her books, "I see light at the end of the tunnel: the heroine is about to be confirmed"?) or the spikier passages of Compton Mackenzie or Sheila Kaye-Smith. But this branch of literature, or sub-literature, is not quite what we are talking about. In the mainsteam of European literature, in the great novels, we do not find these literary equivalents of *bondieuserie*. And the novels in English which take man's quest for Divine Truth as their theme are both rare, and rarely good. I think what I enjoy in *John Inglesant*, for instance, is a mingling of my pleasure in a good historical film or 'costume drama' with the pleasure I would take, if I were less of a middle-brow, in reading the works of the Cambridge Platonists and the Molinist mystics. My pleasure in that book, deep as it is, is quite different from my pleasure in *Oliver Twist* or *The Last Chronicle of Barset*.

But of my pleasure in the great novels, I would say this, falteringly and uncertainly, to those who say that novels are an un-Christian thing. Even more falteringly and uncertainly, I would say it to that inner voice which condemns my

own slight and occasional attempts to write fiction. The excellence of a novel depends on the extent to which its author has realised the characters within it. You cannot write a novel, even a bad one, without something bordering on an obsession with human character. Who knows where the 'characters' in novels come from? Novelists believe that they 'make them up'. Perhaps they do. And in that 'making up' there is involved a partial memory of lots of real people we have met and known and heard about. In the process of a fictional character becoming real on the page, they are detached from any of their 'originals'. And it is only by a total concentration of heart and intellect upon these 'unreal' creatures of fancy that they become 'real'. Good, or evil, or something in between, they only exist because of the novelist's obsession with them, an obsession which borders on love. When Paul Dombey died, Dickens paced the streets of London, dazed with grief, as if he had lost one of his own children. Each of his characters bears the stamp of this manic concentration; he has worked at them and worried at them until they have come to worry him, he will not be at peace until they are down on the page. Once written about, they are real and solid for posterity, more real to us than most of the hundreds of thousands of people who swarmed about the streets of Victorian London and now lie buried in its cemeteries. Novelists are not necessarily good people. In many cases, they have been positively wicked or unpleasant. But they have all, the great ones, possessed or perhaps been possessed by, a curiosity about the human race bordering on mania. I have already said that, in this act of creation, there is a danger of blasphemy, of the novelist playing at God. And we have remembered Plato's banishing the poets because their art can only be a shadow of a shade.

But when we turn to the writings of the neo-Platonists, in particular to Plotinus, we find a different view of art. Plotinus believed that a work of art need not necessarily be a shadow of a shadow. He accepted Plato's theory of the Forms; the view that everything in Nature was but a shadowy imitation of a real idea which existed in Heaven.

But he believed that it was possible for the artist, in depicting nature, to penetrate that shadow, and give us a glimpse of thing itself. It would be over-solemn to apply his doctrine to most novels. To any novel, perhaps, except those of the greatest writers – Tolstoy, Scott, Dickens. Any human being's perception of another human being is likely to be distorted: by sentiment, by ignorance, or by sheer absence of sympathy. The obsessive interest which a novelist takes in his characters compels sympathy. By sympathy, I do not mean that our hearts bleed for Quilp falling into the sludge of the Thames; or, for that matter, for Bingo Little falling into the swimming bath. I mean that a novel enables us to see human beings much more fully than we can ever see one another in 'real life'. By pure artifice, a novelist can take us into another character's thoughts and emotions. We can watch, not merely the outer actions of that character, but chart the movements of his soul. In that process of sympathy, between a novelist and his creation and (if it is successful) between the creation and the reader, there is something which is not necessarily at all at variance with the following of the incarnate Christ. If we realise that it is something *like love* which creates even the evil characters in a novel, something like love, even, which satirises them and makes us laugh at them – then, we might blow the dust off our novels and read them with a less troubled conscience on a Sunday afternoon. Then it would seem that the extraordinarily dangerous detachment of which I have spoken (detachment from point of view, detachment from prejudice) which is necessary for great fiction to work, has something in it of the wisdom which told us to judge not that we be not judged. And the acceptance of human character which is forced upon us by reading fiction might, on occasion, have something in it of *sic Deus dilexit mundum*. But it would still be silly to think of novels as a very high art form; and positively dangerous to take them too seriously.

1 A talk given to King's College Joint Christian Council on 1 March 1983.

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## RESPECT FOR LIFE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT<sup>1</sup>

ANTHONY PHILLIPS

The sixth commandment reads: Thou shalt not kill. But this is not to be understood as giving unqualified support to those causes which advocate pacifism, the abolition of capital punishment or vegetarianism. The Hebrews were constantly at war, executed their criminals and ate meat. Yet it is fair to say that while all these activities carried a sacrificial connotation, they were also regarded as a necessary evil. God did not create man for physical violence.

The Hebrews' attitudes to life derived from their creation theology. They understood all life to owe its origin to God to whom the life force (*nephesh*) belonged. This applied to both men and animals (Jer. 38:16). Simple observation confirmed that loss of blood caused death. Consequently the blood was said to contain the *nephesh* (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11, 14; Deut. 12:23), and ownership attributed to God. While blood was central to the ritual of the cultus, for through its use it secured the right relationship between God and man, steps had to be taken to make sure that it was not appropriated by man. This is clearly seen in the rules about eating meat.

From earliest times the Hebrews ate meat. The animal was taken to the local sanctuary for slaughter, its blood being poured out on the altar as a sacrificial act, and so returned to God. Later, following the centralisation of all worship in Jerusalem in the wake of Josiah's reform, and the consequent destruction of all local sanctuaries (2 Kings 23), this duty became impracticable, and the killing of animals for food was secularized. This could still be undertaken locally, but the blood had first to be poured out on the earth (Deut. 12:20f.) which swallowed it up (Gen. 4:11). Although the Holiness Code written just before the exile may have attempted to reverse this secularization (Lev. 17:1-14), in fact the totally changed conditions of post-exilic Israel prevented this. To this day orthodox Jews only eat meat from which the blood has been drained.

For the Priestly theologians of the exilic period the eating of meat is seen as a concession given by God. For in their creation account (Gen. 1) man and animals were created as vegetarian. It is due to man's rebellion symbolised by the generation of Noah that the world ceased to be an idyllic place in which the animals were at peace with man. Instead they lived in fear of him for God has given man authority to kill them for food. Man is, however, not given an entirely free hand: before eating meat, the blood of the animal, its life force, must be drained from it and returned to its creator, God (Gen. 9:4).

None the less the ideal of a world in which there was no bloodshed neither within the animal kingdom nor between man and the animals is preserved in the messianic prophecy of Is. 11:6ff., 65:25. The messianic kingdom can only reflect what was God's will in creation, that all in whom he has placed his life force should live in *shalom*, peace and harmony. Then wild and domestic animals will lie down together in peace and children play in safety by snakes' nests. Until then man is given dominion over the animals: they are to be instruments in his ordering of the world in accordance with God's will. But as created by God, they are

always to be revered by man.

So among the large number of humanitarian and charitable provisions of Hebrew law none of which could be enforced in the courts but were left to man's moral sense to obey, there are a number of enactments concerning animals. For instance engagement in a legal suit does not absolve a litigant from his duty to rescue his opponent's animal in distress (Ex. 23:4-5). Nor should a threshing ox be prevented from feeding itself while working (Deut. 25:4), nor a mother bird be taken as well as her eggs or fledglings (Deut. 22:6-7). And it is not merely the poor who are to benefit from the rule that there should always be land left fallow, but wild beasts as well (Ex. 23:10). While the Old Testament recognises that this is not an ideal world, and makes concessions until the messianic kingdom comes, it remains man's duty to do all in his power to reverence animal life. While animals, like all God's creation, were made for man, he must still order that creation in accordance with God's will. What that will is is left to man to discern from his own moral sense and in the light of the nature of God as revealed in his *torah*, understood as the complete expression of his will.

The late Priestly provision of Gen. 9:1-7 dating from exilic times sums up this Hebrew attitude to life. Its aim is to differentiate between man and animals. While animals may be slaughtered for food, God himself demands death for the killing of a man whether by his fellow man or a beast. This had always been the case in pre-exilic Israel as the law in Exodus 21 makes clear. So murder results in the execution of the murderer whether he is a man (Ex. 21:12) or an ox (Ex. 21:28). Indeed the word *ratsah* found in the sixth commandment and translated 'kill' is only used absolutely or with a person as object, never of an animal.

It is the Priestly justification for this difference in attitude to the slaughter of animals and men which is new. Unlike the animals, man is made in the image of God, that is for relationship with him (Gen. 1:26). He was created both to hear and be heard by God – to act as the representative of the creator in his creation, to master and control it.

The creation narratives record the first murder (Gen. 4). As soon as Cain has killed his brother, God is on the spot to interrogate the offender: "Where is Abel your brother?". To this Cain replies, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?". God then answers Cain, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground." In this exchange, part of the Yahwist's creation account probably dating from the time of Solomon, we have set out the Hebrews' ideas concerning murder.

When a man committed murder, he was understood to take possession of his victim's blood (2 Sam. 4:11). Literally this blood was on his hands – that is in his control, and God as owner had to take action to recover it. So in such circumstances God is described as the seeker of the blood of the murdered man (Gen. 9:5, 42:22, Ps. 9:13; Ezek. 3:18, 20, 33:6, 8). And this seeking is what God is doing when he confronts Cain. For by his action, Cain had taken possession of his brother's blood which as God explains had been crying to him as its rightful owner to come and repossess it (Gen. 4:10; cp. Job 16:18). Cain's answer to God is singularly ironic. He denies knowledge of his brother's whereabouts by claiming in a pun that it is not part of brotherly duty for

him to shepherd the shepherd (Gen. 4:9). By his action Cain has in fact taken possession of his brother's blood, become Abel's keeper.

The idea that where life was taken the ownership of the blood was transferred to the killer lies behind two Hebrew expressions about blood. The first refers to shedding innocent blood (Deut. 19:10, 13, 21:8f., 27:25) – that is the blood of someone who has not committed a crime and therefore does not deserve to suffer the pre-exilic criminal law penalty of execution. For instance where a killing took place by accident – as when a man goes into the forest with his neighbour to cut wood, and his hand slips from the handle and strikes his neighbour so that he dies (Deut. 19:15) – in such a case it is not murder and the accidental killer must be protected from an attempt to treat him as a murderer. If he were executed it would be innocent blood which was shed and an action intended to free the community of blood guilt would in fact bring blood guilt upon it for there was no blood to be released from the accidental killer's hands (Deut. 19:10). So cities of refuge were established to which the unintentional killer could flee for an impartial trial. Earlier legislation described such a killing as an act of God (Ex. 21:13). The refusal of the Deuteronomist legislators to attribute an accident to divine causation is an early example of coming to terms with the God of the gaps theology.

The second phrase deriving from these ideas about the transference of blood following a killing describes a person's blood as remaining upon him or upon his head (Lev. 20:9, 11ff., 16; Josh. 2:19; 2 Sam. 1:16; 1 Kings 2:37). This indicates that where a crime has been committed, and death is exacted according to the requirements of the criminal law, the victim's blood would not pass into the hands of his executioners, but remain on the victim himself. Indeed execution was seen as a sacrificial act by which the local community sought to propitiate God for the criminal's action and so avoid divine retaliation falling on them. But nowhere is there any indication that individuals could take the law into their own hands. All crimes were a matter for the local community which tried, and on conviction, executed the criminal.

Execution was by communal stoning which enabled all members of the community physically to take part in this corporate act of propitiation and would have made them collectively liable for any miscarriage of justice. It appears that where the land or people were already suffering what was interpreted as divine punishment, the corpse of the criminal might be exposed until that suffering stopped, thus signifying that God had been appeased (cp. Num. 25:4f.). This would explain the execution of the seven sons of Saul by the Gibeonites in the first days of the barley harvest which had failed for the third time, and Rizpah's watch over their bodies until the rains came (2 Sam. 21). The Deuteronomists in ordering a criminal's burial on the same day as his execution evidently considered this practice not only improper but positively harmful, preventing the very thing it was designed to achieve – the prosperity of the land (Deut. 21:22-3). Even the bodies of criminals were to be respected for they too were part of the created order and belonged to God. Of course when the messianic kingdom came there would be no need for capital punishment for everywhere God's torah would be kept. Until then those who put themselves outside the elect community by their

actions towards God or their neighbour must be executed – sacrificed to the God whose law they had broken.

Both the necessity to propitiate God for a murder and the fact that it is the murderer who has possession of his victim's blood is confirmed from the ancient provision dealing with the case of murder by person or persons unknown (Deut. 21:1-9). No attempt is made to provide a substitute for the offender because only the actual murderer has possession of his victim's blood. Instead the elders take an unmated and unworked heifer to a valley where there is permanent running water and in which the soil has not been disturbed by ploughing or sowing, and there break its neck. The elders wash their hands over the animal and disclaim all responsibility for the murder. No blood is shed and the animal's corpse is simply abandoned. Nor is any attempt made to shift any guilt on to the heifer as in the case of the ritual scapegoat in the law of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:21). Rather the washing, confession and abandonment of the animal's corpse in the open countryside alone effects expiation for the murder and ensures that God will take no further action against the community or its land.

While in pre-exilic Israel criminals were always executed, in post-exilic law with the exception of murder excommunication from the cult community replaced execution. This reflects the new situation of post-exilic Judaism which constituted a worshipping community centred on the temple rather than a political entity. Yet for murder execution is still required. The reason remains the necessity to free the blood of the victim to God to whom it belonged. He must be compensated for the loss which he has suffered. It is this principle which underlies the *lex talionis*.

This occurs three times in the Old Testament, once in each of the major legal collections. In all three places (Ex. 21:23ff.; Lev. 24:17-22; Deut. 19:21) it is a late addition having no direct connection with the material into which it is inserted. Its origin is most probably to be sought in Babylon. For post-exilic Israel it acts as a shorthand expression to indicate that in every case of loss due compensation is to be made to the injured party whether an individual or in the case of murder God himself. So Lev. 24:17f. attaches the first talionic provision 'life for life' both to the tort of killing an animal and also to the crime of murder. There is certainly no indication that at any time Israel practiced literal retaliation as a form of punishment. Indeed there is only one case where any kind of mutilation was prescribed by the law, indecent assault by a woman on a man's private parts (Deut. 25:11ff.) which resulted in the loss of the offending hand. The mutilation is not ordered simply because of the woman's immodesty, but rather because by her action she might have damaged the man's testicles, and thereby affected his ability to have children. He could consequently be left in the position of being unable to father a son, and therefore having his name blotted out (cp. Deut. 25:6). This accounts for the position of this law after the provision on levirate marriage, also concerned with the continuance of a man's name.

Like the slaughter of animals for food, and the execution of the criminal, killing in war was also regarded as sacrificial – the foe being pictured as the enemy of God whose holy war it was. So war began with sacrifice (1 Sam. 7:9, 13:8ff.) and required the participants to keep themselves clean by abstaining from sexual intercourse through-



out the campaign (1 Sam. 21:4f.; 2 Sam. 11:11ff.; cp. Deut. 23:10). Sometimes the enemy were formally dedicated to God by the infliction of the ban. This could be of varying severity; (i) total destruction of all persons and property (Deut. 20:16-18; 1 Sam. 15:3); (ii) total destruction of all persons but not property (Deut. 2:34f., 3:6f.); (iii) destruction of all males only (Deut. 20:10-15). Failure to carry out the ban as at Jericho could lead to direct divine punishment (Josh. 7). In Deuteronomic eyes the ban is what ought to have been inflicted on the Canaanites which would have ensured that the Israelites would never have been led into apostasy by them. How often the ban was in fact inflicted in ancient times remains uncertain, but evidence for it is found on the ninth century B.C. Moabite stone. This records that Mesha, king of Moab, exterminated the inhabitants of the Israelite city of Nebo whom he had dedicated to his God, Ashtar-Chemosh.

None the less war is to be avoided if possible so preventing unnecessary loss of life. Before attacking a city overtures of peace are to be made, and only after these are rejected is battle to start. In this case males are to be executed, but if the city surrenders without fighting then no one is to be harmed (Deut. 20:10ff.). Only the Canaanites are to be utterly exterminated, but that is a late theological rubric which was never entertained in reality. Further, there was a limit to the ferocity with which war might be prosecuted. While trees which did not yield fruit might be cut down and used for siege works, this was not so of trees which supplied food. It was important that after the war there should be a regular supply of food (Deut. 20:19f.). Further a woman prisoner whom an Israelite might marry was to be treated humanely. She acquired full rights as a wife and so if her husband subsequently tired of her she could not be sold off as a slave (as prisoners usually were) but had to be divorced in the normal manner and sent off a free woman (Deut. 21:10ff.). Characteristically Deuteronomic humanitarian law ensured that certain people were exempt from military service. These included anyone who had built a new house which he had not yet dedicated, planted a vineyard and not yet used it, betrothed himself to a woman, but had not yet taken her, and even those who were afraid (Deut. 20:5ff.). Further Deut. 24:5 allows a newly married man a year's exemption from military service to enable him to found a family. The laws of warfare indicate that for the Hebrews victory was not to be won at any price. Even in war one had a duty to act humanely as the clear horror of the war crimes listed in Amos 1-2 indicates.

But war, like eating meat and capital punishment, would cease when the messianic age dawned. This could not be until the nations accepted God's *torah*. But the prophetic vision points to a time when Israel will act as a light to the nations (Is. 49:6) mediating to them that *torah* which is his will for all his creation. So the nations will come to Jerusalem to receive it and return to their own lands to practice it, so enabling the beating of swords into ploughshares as peace encompasses the whole world (Is. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-4).

Finally we must consider those without legal status and so without the protection of the courts. Only free adult males were both responsible under the law and could appeal to the courts to enforce it. All other persons were denied legal status. These included women, children and slaves, who could be disposed of by men as they liked under family

law, part of the general body of customary law, mostly unwritten. It was of no concern to the courts but instead was administered in the home by the head of the household acting unilaterally. Change of a dependent's status was achieved either by a declaration being uttered by the head of the household and/or by his performance of a prescribed ritual. This applied to betrothal, marriage, divorce, adoption and the making of slavery permanent.

But in spite of the absolute authority of the head of the household in cases of family law, he nonetheless never had power of life or death over those under his protection. So for instance there was no question of a father being able to kill his daughter for consenting to her seduction before marriage or his wife for her adultery after marriage as in other ancient Near Eastern law. Nor was any child ever punished instead of his father for a crime which the father had committed, nor except for apostasy, when it appears that the whole male line was exterminated in order to blot out the father's name (Ex. 22:20), was any child executed along with his father for one of his father's crimes. Yet in other ancient Near Eastern law injury to another's son or daughter could result in corresponding injury being inflicted on one's own child. And although Naboth and his sons were executed (2 Kings 9:26) almost certainly for apostasy (repudiating God and the king), later Deuteronomic law even put an end to that practice (Deut. 24:16).

Even slaves were to be protected from vicious masters. So if a slave died as a result of a disciplinary beating, the master would be prosecuted, though to be murder the death had to occur during or immediately after the beating which caused death. The law presumed that no master would want to deprive himself of his property (Ex. 21:20f.). Similarly a slave was able to bring an action for assault against a master in the case of permanent injury (Ex. 21:26f.).

But respect for life in Hebrew law also had its positive side. This is found in the so-called laws of humaneness and righteousness to some of which we have already referred. These were designed to protect those without legal status, the widow, orphan and foreigner and those whose status is threatened, the poor. Such people were not to be left to the mercies of a free economy. Those with sufficient means are placed under a moral duty to ensure that those without are protected. So loans are to be made free of interest, and a limit is placed on the legal rights of a creditor (Ex. 22:26f.). Later Deuteronomic law provided that all debts were to be written off at the end of every seventh year and enjoined that even when this year of general release was imminent, loans were still to be made though there could be no hope of recovery (Deut. 15).

As we have seen, these provisions though commonly termed laws, in a technical sense are not laws at all. They envisage no legal action for their breach and specify no penalties. Rather they are a sermon to society at large which bases its appeal on a sense of moral responsibility and justice. They recognise that there was a limit on the courts' power to secure order in society, but that true order went much deeper than what could juridically be enforced. How far practice matched ideals we cannot of course know but it was for breach of such unenforceable provisions that the eighth century prophets condemned a self-righteous and prosperous northern kingdom, a charge later repeated against southern Judah.



Respect for life in Hebrew *torah* was not then confined to the negative Thou shall not kill. It included the positive injunctions to charity which was no optional extra but part of God's will alongside his criminal, civil and cultic law. It is a principle which has sustained the Jewish people to modern times and one which needs reasserting both nationally and internationally. Respect for life involves ensuring that economic pressures do not result in those made in the image of God going under, but in securing for them a satisfactory quality of life which will enable them to enjoy their relationship with their God which is his will for all mankind – for all owe their creation to him who provided their *nephesh*.

1. A talk given to a day conference at King's College, London, on 17 March 1983.

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## JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE: A NEW PROPOSAL

DAN COHN-SHERBOK

In a recent issue of the English journal *Theology* I discussed whether it is now possible for Christians and Jews to engage in real dialogue given that a significant number of Christians have come to see the Incarnation as a myth. It seemed to me that this new, liberal interpretation of the doctrine of the Incarnation removes the traditional impediment to authentic Jewish-Christian dialogue since the liberal Church can no longer condemn the Jew for refusing to accept that Jesus was literally 'God of God'.

In subsequent issues of *Theology* the position I put forward was criticized for several reasons. In a letter to the editor, E. L. Mascall stated that he could see no grounds for hope in my suggestion. What is needed instead, he believes, is for Christians who accept the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation and Jews committed to their heritage to "set out on a sympathetic project of mutual exploration and understanding; they would no doubt be in for some very hard work, but it might be very fruitful".

In another letter to the editor in the same issue, David Cockerell pointed out that his experience of Jewish-Christian encounter was a positive one: "Our warm and generous Jewish neighbours showed a willingness to share and discuss religious ideas". Possibly, he suggests, real exchange should take place on such a spontaneous, neighbourly level for it is only when the theological 'experts' get to work that "the air turns blue and the knives are drawn". Further, like Mascall, Cockerell believes that in dialogue Jews and Christians should confront the differences between the two faiths. Christians should not have to be saddled with what seem to many to be reductionist interpretations of their faith as a precondition for entering into conversation with men of other faiths. "We begin to learn from each other, and so grow closer together, when we come together genuinely to listen to and to learn from the insights of others – but their integrity and ours, is not respected where they – or we – are expected to whittle away the areas of substantial difference which exist between us." In this light the aim of interfaith dialogue is to create an environment in which differences can become a point of growth.

This same point was taken up by Valerie Hamer in 'A Hair's Breadth' in the next issue of *Theology*. Like Mascall and Cockerell, Hamer contends that dialogue does not commit us to drawing closer in belief but rather in mutual understanding. Thus she states that dialogue may well illustrate how far apart Jews and Christians are, and this should not be an obstacle to friendship and tolerance between Jews and Christians. "The fact that Christians are re-examining the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation," she writes, "should have no bearing upon the progress of dialogue. The question of the Incarnation is an internal Christian issue . . . however, it is not part of dialogue for one party to make any comment upon or show partisanship in the internal affairs of the other."

The view of dialogue that Mascall, Cockerell and Hamer adopt is one shared by a number of modern theologians. Leslie Newbigin, for example, in 'The Basis, Pur-

pose, and Manner of Inter-Faith Dialogue' argues that the Christian who participates in dialogue with other faiths must subscribe to the tenets of the Gospel tradition. "He cannot agree that the position of final authority can be taken by anything other than the Gospel . . . Confessing Christ-Incarnate, crucified, and risen – as the light and the true life, he cannot accept any other alleged authority as having the right of way over this . . ."

This understanding of dialogue however is not far removed from the old attitude of Christian superiority and a rejection of non-Christian traditions. If Jesus is regarded as "true light and true life" it is hard to see how interfaith discussion can take place on a sympathetic level. Here the Church speaks out of the belief that God has entered human history in the person of Jesus Christ. For those who adopt this position, the Christian revelation is uniquely true. And if, as Newbigin and others suggest, the partner in dialogue adopts an equally confessional stance, all that can be gained is an insight into one another's convictions. Furthermore, insofar as they hold to the absolute truth of their respective faiths, they may well try to convert one another.

At best such a confrontation between believers would be an educational exercise in which those engaged in conversation could learn about one another's theology. In the 'Goals of Inter-Religious Dialogue', Eric Sharpe defines this type of encounter as "discursive dialogue" in which there is "meeting, listening and discussion on the level of mutual competent intellectual inquiry". This kind of interchange is important, but it is far removed from dialogue at the deepest level in which Christians and non-Christians are engaged in a mutual quest for religious insight and understanding. Interfaith discussion must move beyond the stage of confessional or discursive encounter to a position of openness and receptivity. Such an approach is well formulated in the 'Guidelines for Inter-Religious Dialogue' proposed in 1972 by Stanley Samartha of the World Council of Churches in which he recommends that dialogue should be truth-seeking: "Inter-religious dialogue should also stress the need to study fundamental questions in the religious dimensions of life . . . World religious organizations should support the long-range study of the deeper questions which today ought to be taken up not just separately by individuals of each religion, but also together in the larger interests of mankind."

The difficulty is that when inter-faith dialogues are organized they frequently lose sight of this goal, and instead of engaging in a mutual quest, participants adopt a confessional attitude or decide to teach members of other faiths about their practices and beliefs. This was particularly evident in the recent consultation between Anglicans and Jews held at Amport House at Andover, England in November 1980. Despite the primary objective to discuss an issue of mutual concern – law and religion in contemporary society – it became clear that religious convictions about the nature of Jesus and the Christian revelation stood in the way of a constructive exploration of shared problems. This confrontation is thus a concrete illustration that the kind of dialogue envisaged by Mascall, Cockerell, Hamer and Newbigin inevitably is constrained by conflicting theological presuppositions.

The subject of this encounter between Anglican and Jewish leaders focused on three basic questions: (1) What is

the legitimacy or need of an objective law of God beyond situational ethics? (2) Is the religious objection to 'permissiveness' more than a mere return to religious triumphalism? (3) Have Jews and Christians any insights to the line to be drawn between individual personal freedom and the authority of the State? The Conference lasted three days, and according to the Archbishop of York and the Chief Rabbi, the participants "did begin to see the value and relevance of exploring our different religious heritage to come up with clues that have at least a sporting chance to be taken seriously".

Despite this claim, it is clear from the papers published in the *Christian Jewish Relations* (Vol. 14 No. 1) that prior religious commitments made such a joint quest extremely difficult. From the Christian side, the centrality of Jesus continually came to the fore. Thus in 'Law and Religion in Contemporary Society', G. R. Dunstan draws attention to the fact that St. Paul argued that ritual ordinances – what he called "the works of the law" had been fulfilled by the self-offering of Jesus and need not be demanded of those who partook of the benefit of his sacrifice. Yet he affirmed the demands of the moral law in its full rigor – fulfilled to a new depth what he perceived it to be in the life and teaching of Jesus. "Obedience was due in grateful and loving response to God's love, or grace, as seen in Jesus." For Paul, baptism "into Christ implied baptism into his obedience, a partaking of his sacrifice" (Rom. 12). St. Paul is thus the authoritative teacher of New Testament ethics: "he had to give his Gentile Churches, made up of men and women with no common religious culture or bond, a common morality, a 'way' to walk in, a Christian *halakah*".

This understanding of morality as obedience to God's love in Jesus has no connection with Jewish ethics. Dunstan thus offers no suggestions how Jews and Christians could reach some sort of agreement in the area of ethics. Rather he points to the fact that in the area of medical ethics (which he had discussed with the Chief Rabbi for several years), there were deep divisions between the two traditions. Clearly then, in Dunstan's discussion of law in society, the obstacle to fruitful dialogue is the Christian conviction that the moral law is ultimately grounded in Jesus Christ. Similarly, in 'The Place of Law in Contemporary Society', A. Phillips emphasizes that "Christianity rests entirely on the authority of Jesus alone, what he was and did. The Christian is called to identify with Christ by taking up his cross and following (Matt. 16:42). It is in this self-denying cross that his ethics are located." Membership of the Israel of the New Covenant was not determined by obedience to any Christian law, but it was subjected to the new situation created by the Christ event. Further, Phillips contends that for Christians, "the spirit, under whose direction all ethical rulings must be made, continues to guide into all truth" (Jn. 16:13).

In 'A Christian Understanding of Law and Grace', C. F. D. Moule also locates the moral law in the personhood of Christ. The thesis of his paper is the conviction that the Christian Church is the Israel of the New Covenant and that a right relation with God depends solely on trusting him for his forgiveness which has taken shape in history and continues to take shape in the death and aliveness of Jesus. "There is no way," he writes, "of being within the Covenant except trust in God – the God whom Christians find supremely and decisively in Jesus". If Jesus is one with God and one with humanity, his death and resurrection are

at one and the same time the affirmation of law and grace. The main thrust of the Mosaic Revelation thus extends beyond itself – into the Christian revelation.

The understanding of Jesus as God Incarnate is therefore central to a Christian conception of ethics, but as Moule himself remarks, this standpoint "cannot be without offence to the Jew". And, though these papers are illuminating in various ways, they do not facilitate Jewish-Christian dialogue. Fundamentally they are confessional and educative. Jesus is seen as the climax of human history, and Christianity is understood implicitly and at times described explicitly as the fulfilment of God's Revelation.

From the Jewish side, there is likewise an appeal to revelation as the basis of morality. In 'Law as a Basis of a Moral Society', W. S. Wurzbarger draws a distinction between philosophical doctrines which base law upon morality and the Jewish tradition in which "morality ultimately derives its normative significance from the transcendent authority of the law". Jewish ethics attributes the 'imperativeness' of the moral law to the property of being commanded by God on Mt. Sinai, a view in direct opposition to the Christian view that ethics must be grounded in Jesus Christ – the word made flesh.

The contrast in approach is explained in some detail by U. Tal in 'Law, the Authority of the State, and the Freedom of the Individual Person'. It is not unity, he argues, but rather plurality which Judaism should seek in dialogue: "In the realm of pure theology the fundamental principle of Christianity, that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah in whom in the dispensation of time . . . all things . . . both which are in heaven and which are on earth (Eph. 1:10) will have been re-established and reconciled (2 Cor. 5:18), is unacceptable to Judaism. As long as Judaism remains faithful to the tradition of the ontological all-inclusiveness of the Torah it cannot accept . . . that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36; Heb. 5:5; Ps. 2:7)."

In the concluding paper 'Review of Christian-Jewish Relations', C. M. Reigner points to the fact that Christian-Jewish dialogue must be based on a recognition of "the fundamental differences" between the two faiths, yet it is difficult to see how dialogue understood in this sense can go beyond the confessional or the educative stage. No doubt the participants in this Conference learned a great deal from one another, but because of the Christian's commitment to the traditional understanding of the Incarnation and the Jew's refusal to look beyond the Jewish conception of revelation on the basis for the moral law, no progress was made in formulating a common approach in the problems outlined. This encounter is an example of the type of inter-faith dialogue recommended by Mascall, Cockerell, Hamer, Newbigin and others; yet by bearing witness to their respective faiths, it consisted simply in the display and comparison of irreconcilable beliefs. What is needed, however, is for participants in such discussions to adopt an open-minded and inquiring disposition in exploring fundamental questions. As can be seen from this consultation, this can happen only if the doctrine of the Incarnation is understood in such a way that Christians will recognize the separate validity of non-Christian religious traditions.

For Jewish participants in dialogue, there must also be

the same level of tolerance. In the past Jews have maintained that their religion is at the centre of the Universe of faiths; Sinaitic revelation is thus understood as a unique divine act which provided a secure foundation for the religious traditions of Israel. From the Pentateuchal revelation Jews believe they can learn God's true nature, His dealings with His chosen people, and the promise of the world to come. In this fashion the Written Torah as well as the rabbinic interpretation Scripture is perceived as the yardstick for evaluating the truth claims of Christianity, and the significant feature of this view is that Christianity is regarded as true only in so far as its precepts conform to the Jewish faith.

If Jewish-Christian dialogue is to take place on the most profound level, such a Judeo-centric picture of revelation must be replaced by a more tolerant view in which God is understood as disclosing Himself to each and every generation and to all mankind. Thus, neither in Judaism nor in Christianity nor for that matter in any other religion is revelation complete and absolute. In such a model of God's activity, it is God Himself who is at the centre of the universe of faiths with both Judaism and Christianity encircling Him and intersecting only at those points where the nature of Divine reality is truly reflected.

Given that Christians and Jews are prepared to begin from this starting point, there are a number of central issues, of which the following are a few representative examples, which Jews and Christians could fruitfully explore together:

(1) *Symbols* – The two faiths could profitably discuss the nature of religious symbols as long as neither Jew nor Christian adopts the standpoint that the symbols in his respective faith are intrinsically superior. Not very much is known about the logic of symbols. We do not understand why, for example, people chose to use certain symbols, why they give up some symbols, why they remain unmoved by symbols that others find meaningful, and why they are moved by a symbol that others find offensive. If discussion took place across religious lines, it might be possible to gain greater insight into what is involved in religious symbolism.

(2) *Worship* – In Judaism and Christianity worship is a response to God, an acknowledgement of a reality independent of the worshipper. Assuming that neither the Jewish nor the Christian participants maintain that their conception of God is uniquely true, it would be useful to discuss the ways in which various forms of worship give some glimpse into the nature of the Godhead. Furthermore, it might be possible to explore ways in which the liturgical features of one tradition could be incorporated into the other. The Passover Seder, for example, is regarded by most scholars as the ceremony celebrated at the Last Supper. In this respect it is as much a part of the Christian as the Jewish tradition and could become an element of the Christian liturgy. Similarly, the Psalms are shared by both Christians and Jews, and their recitation in the Christian musical tradition could enter into the Jewish liturgy. These are simply two examples of the ways in which Jews and Christians could enrich the liturgical dimensions of one another's faith.

(3) *Ritual* – Like worship, ritual plays a fundamental role in Judaism and Christianity and there are areas worthy of joint investigation as long as neither party adopts an attitude of religious superiority. First an examination of formal and elaborate practices as well as simple actions could reveal the

various ways in which the believer interprets his action as making contact or participating in God's presence. Second, a comparative study of ritualistic practices could illustrate the ways in which an outer activity mirrors an inner process – a relationship fundamental to the concept of ritualistic behaviour. Third, it might be beneficial to look at various contemplative and mystical activities in these faiths which allegedly disclose various aspects of God and enable the practitioner to reach a high state of consciousness.

(4) *Ethics* – Orthodox Jews believe that God chose them to be His special people and gave them His law through the revelation on Mt. Sinai. The moral law is thus embodied in immutable, God-given commandments. For the traditional Christian, Christ is the end of the law, thereby superseding the Torah as the mediator between God and man. Allowing that both sides adopt a more flexible attitude to moral attitudes within their respective traditions, it would be worthwhile to embark on an exploration of Jesus's critique of Pharisaic Judaism. Such an investigation would help to illuminate the tension between specific rules and general principles as well as the relationship between action and intention.

(5) *Society* – Religions are not simply systems of belief and practice; they are also organisations which have a communal and social dimension. Given that neither the Jewish nor the Christian partner in dialogue assumes at the outset that his faith possesses a better organisational structure and a more positive attitude toward modern society, it would be helpful to examine the way in which each religion understands itself in relation to the world. In addition, since Judaism and Christianity have religious hierarchies, an analysis of the nature of institutional structures, the training of leaders, and the exercise of authority could clarify the ways in which religious traditions reflect the non-religious characteristics of the societies in which they exist. In the face of modern secularism, such an examination is of particular consequence since more than ever before religions find themselves forced to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

These subject areas by no means exhaust the possibilities for dialogue, but they do indicate the type of discussions that could take place. Of course such issues could be discussed by traditionally-minded Christians and Jews, but as was illustrated in the case of the encounter at Amport House, such debate is inevitably constrained by conflicting religious presuppositions: as in the past the Christian belief that Jesus was literally God Incarnate and the Jewish conviction that Judaism is the supremely true faith are central stumbling-blocks to a mutual quest for religious insight and understanding. However today there is the possibility, as never before, for authentic inter-faith dialogue of the deepest kind. If Jews and Christians can free themselves from an absolutist stand-point in which claims are made to possess ultimate and exclusive truth, the way is open for a radically new vision of Jewish-Christian relations.

# RISEN, ASCENDED, GLORIFIED

JOHN M. COURT

Modern investigation in Christology, whether conducted under the auspices of Myth and/or Truth, or pursued along some independent, scarcely neutral, line, is a very large endeavour. It is much larger than it used to be, because it goes beyond the obligatory preoccupation with titles and encompasses events and their implications, contexts and their interpretations. Such a journey, even with several best-selling guide books as companions, offers many pitfalls for the unwary.

The investigation could begin from a small sample of clearly related texts from the New Testament. The danger lies in being so concerned with the individual features and contexts of each passage that no general pattern emerges from the study. Another investigation might start by selecting a central theme of Christology. The difficulty is to relate a generalised and rather arbitrary 'model' to the particular contents of a New Testament book, so as to say of one author that he uses this model and that it is his primary concern. A third investigation might make a compromise by combining a thematic approach with pre-packaged textual examples. The danger is inherent in the connection, for the arguments may be circular or *a priori*. The whole construction may be a pious fiction.

However much I too would like to cover all the ground and avoid all the pitfalls, my present purpose must be much more modest. I offer, as a working example of methods and problems in Christology, a small group of texts that are clearly related by general theme, particular vocabulary, and direct use of Old Testament quotations: 1 Cor. 15:25ff.; Eph. 1:22ff.; Phil. 3:21; Heb. 2:7; 1 Pet. 3:22. These are the undisputed founder-members of our group, although we may find it necessary to add other associate members. But already the group is widespread and 'representative' (in the most uncontroversial sense) of different traditions in the New Testament. The most direct Pauline tradition is represented by 1 Corinthians; this is not to disparage Philipians, but as I wish to relate Phil. 3:21 to 2:6-11, this inevitably raises the question of how directly this is the responsibility of Paul himself;<sup>1</sup> Ephesians may be taken as deutero-Pauline; and the texts from Hebrews and 1 Peter represent two other quite different non-Pauline traditions.

Immediately, before we have made any progress, we have encountered the problem of what traditions these texts represent. The similarity in ideas expressed, wording used, and the exegesis of Old Testament proof texts, may compel us to relate these passages together as a common tradition.<sup>2</sup> This may impress us more strikingly because the passages come from such different sources. But suppose they all borrowed from Paul himself? This may seem historically implausible, and certainly incapable of proof, but it raises in turn another possibility: if Paul's most direct use (in 1 Cor. 15) gives the impression of a man using a traditional argument, perhaps all the New Testament writers borrowed it. What then is the status of this "borrowed" tradition, what is its historical source and impetus? What started as an interesting sample from a cross-section of independent and creative traditions may in fact bear witness to the fairly routine rehearsal of a traditional article of faith.

The New Testament writers themselves may not help us greatly in resolving this problem. We lack the background information and opportunity for cross-reference to enable us to decide in most instances whether the writers' treatment of a topic was an original creation, a deliberate borrowing, or his own preferred development of an inherited tradition. Sometimes the best that may be done is the rather subjective assessment of the way a writer treats a topic within the larger context of his writing. Thus the treatment of our example in Eph. 1:22 and 1 Pet. 3:22 may appear to some as brief and formulaic, a nod in the direction of tradition and not a creative development.<sup>3</sup> If all our writers, including Paul, are borrowers of formulae or making use of their inheritance, where do we look for the origin of our tradition?

Perhaps at this point we can begin to realise such advantages as we have in the texts before us. Two Old Testament quotations (Ps. 110:1 and Ps. 8:6) are used together in (almost)<sup>4</sup> all our examples. Clearly the overlapping of these quotations is the main reason why they came to be used together. But the differences between them also meant that the associations remaining from two distinct frames of reference could both be brought to bear on the new Christian use. Fortunately we can still use the differences of vocabulary in the two quotations to distinguish between them in the process of conflation.<sup>5</sup> But we cannot tell for certain whether these two quotations were found together in Jewish exegesis or Christian testimony collection much before their use by New Testament writers.

We have to do with arguments from silence, the evidence of later exegesis, and plausible conjecture. It seems that Psalm 8:6 was not particularly significant (at least messianically) in Judaism<sup>6</sup>; Psalm 110:1 was used of the Davidic king (and of Abraham) and therefore it is likely, but not certain, that it could be used of the Messiah prior to Christian use.<sup>7</sup> With Messianic implications, Psalm 110:1 would be readily available as a proof text for Christianity; was it because of the coincidence of language about subjection that Psalm 8:6 was drawn in as a supplement? Can we say that Ps. 8:6 was adopted "to fill out Ps. 110:1's description of Christ's exalted authority as Lord – a development which happened at a very early stage and left its imprint on earliest Christian apologetic throughout the first decades of Christianity"?<sup>8</sup> This may involve some hypothetical collection of proof texts for apologetic purposes, or represent a conjecture about liturgical use of the Psalms in Christian worship, with implications for development in confessional formulae and catechesis.

By concentrating on the overlap between these Psalm quotations and their constructive blending in Christian use, let us not neglect what may be a key difference between them. Psalm 110:1 is a future promise; Psalm 8:6 is a past statement of evidence. Of course early Christian apologists were not particularly sensitive to considerations of tense in the quotations they used from the Septuagint and elsewhere (unless an apologetic point could be made to hang on a grammatical distinction). Yet, looking at our examples, not only can we disentangle our conflated quotations, but we can also recognise that 1 Cor. 15:25ff.; Phil. 3:21; and Heb. 2:7 have a future orientation, while Eph. 1:22f. and 1 Pet. 3:22 have a past reference. This may be an important clue, but let us not rejoice prematurely. Discussions of tenses may be notoriously unreliable in the context of eschatology

(which has the capacity to turn tenses inside out). Eschatology, however, may furnish us with another criterion for our historical investigation, alongside that of the use of Old Testament quotations. Does the original idea represented in our sample of texts presuppose a particular eschatology and can we relate it to some historical environment?

If Paul and the other New Testament writers have all borrowed this original idea, is it possible to set up a comparison between the eschatologies of the idea itself and of the wider contexts? The first requirement is a (well-nigh impossible) consensus on the eschatology of Paul, or of Hebrews. And the second requirement is a general agreement on the consistency, or lack of it, to be found in the eschatological orientation of our text examples. In response to this we find one study which emphasises the diversity of eschatological perspectives in our chosen examples, suggesting that in each instance the idea takes its colouring from the context<sup>9</sup>; while other commentators stress the uniformity of application, namely that these texts all relate to the past event of the Resurrection and represent an almost completely realised eschatology.<sup>10</sup> The *Vorlage* of the Church's confession conditions all interpretation of the Psalm texts, and any eschatological differentials are eroded immediately.

What, then, might be the terms of this confession in the earliest church? Do we have sufficient evidence to reconstruct the particular beliefs about Resurrection and its aftermath, about Ascension, Exaltation to Glory and the Parousia? Modern scholars have provided, very confidently, a variety of reconstructions. It is difficult to see how any of them can be quite so confident; their conclusions very obviously depend upon the point from which they start. Does one begin from the scant clues of the Gospels (e.g., Mt. 27:53),<sup>11</sup> or from an optimistic appraisal of the historical material in the early speeches recorded in Acts, from the simple acclamation formula 'Jesus is Lord', or from a semi-credal affirmation such as 1 Tim. 3:16? It is true that very few texts in the New Testament refer to the Ascension as a specific event, while more are concerned with its theological implications, and most are content simply to assert the idea of exaltation.<sup>12</sup> But does this mean that "the Exaltation . . . was originally an alternative way of talking about the Resurrection, though it slips into denoting a separate, successive act"; and that we must unhesitatingly subscribe to the "axiom of New Testament scholarship", namely that the Ascension as a distinct event is a "Schematization devised by Luke for ease in the presentation of his material"?<sup>13</sup>

Such historical criticism of particular texts is vital, though much hindered by presuppositions. Does a phenomenological study of the patterns of belief, preserved in such literary forms, assist our analysis or merely destroy the remaining historical parameters? For it is possible to distinguish the elements in the sequence from Resurrection to Parousia and to construct at least two scenarios applicable to given sets of circumstances for early Christian belief. The first scenario concerns the response to Jesus as an exceptional person of prophetic stature<sup>14</sup>; his death is seen as a major reversal, until there are grounds for belief in resurrection and this resurrection is interpreted as the messianic pledge of a general resurrection. The act of raising from the dead represents God overcoming for his messiah the human obstacle of death; for the human witnesses this is made known in visionary experience or some other consciousness of Jesus's continuing presence with them beyond death. If

this experience was in the first place direct and subsequently seemed less direct, and indeed was translated into spiritual terms of a sense of empowering, then it might be necessary to posit some event or events to represent the transition. The New Testament writings "tell us that Christ ascended to heaven, beside his Father, because there is no other means for our human mind to express the truth that a human being has been taken from our corruptible world and introduced into the world of God".<sup>15</sup> But we may not say that the sense of Christ's triumph began as a spiritual concept and was developed into the myth of an historical event, without prejudging how Jewish tradition regarded the resurrection of the dead.<sup>16</sup>

The statement of glorification in this context represents the taking up of the Messiah into the glory of God and his vindication after the earthly experiences of suffering and condemnation. The expectation that this messianic glory might very soon be universalised would be strong at first; if Jesus was the forerunner, then the End was awaited; if Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Messianic Kingdom might delay the End for a set period. But these events, this glorification and heavenly enthronement, were undeniably the beginning of the End. And the Parousia stands for the act of universalising in glory and judgement. If Christ is to come to the world again, rather than the world come to his judgement seat, then it follows that Christ is both throned in heavenly glory and also stands ready to come.<sup>17</sup> This first scenario has allowed some time for theological reflection upon what has happened, but in essence it retains the conviction of imminent consummation.

The alternative scenario has a significant difference of perspective; it can only represent the considered application to the person of Jesus of a theological pattern embracing the whole of life, death, and resurrection. The figure of a divine Revealer-Redeemer is also seen in parallel developments of gnostic systems. In itself the pattern appears to be a working out of the symmetry expressed in John 3:13: "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man". It may not be helpful and it is certainly anachronistic to apply the label of kenoticism; even if this is defined by Philippians 2:6-11, much depends on the extent of the 'self-emptying' and the point from which it starts.<sup>18</sup> The full symmetry of the theological pattern is obtained if one begins from the status of pre-existent glory and equality with God; the emptying proceeds by the stages of renunciation, descent, incarnation, suffering, crucifixion, death and possibly descent into Hades.<sup>19</sup> The descent is then balanced by an ascent, equally by specified stages (such as the ascent through seven heavens of the Ascension of Isaiah): Christ rises from the dead; he may visit the souls in Hades in that glorious form in which he rises from the dead; he ascends to heaven and is enthroned or re-installed in his pre-existent state of glory. Such an ascent is the outcome of a sequence of conflicts and represents the ultimate triumph. This is itself the End and the theological pattern is complete. There may well be provision for the redeemed souls to ascend following Christ's ascension, but the scheme leaves little room and no obvious purpose to be fulfilled by the Parousia.

Both of these scenarios are clearly composite, artificial constructions, deployed in response to a question about the phenomenological study of patterns of belief. If the question of a suitable historical context is then raised, it can be said that the latter seems closer to a received body of doc-

trine while the former gives the impression of a developing theological awareness and response to events. But unless one or the other can be found intact in a New Testament document (and this is very improbable), there is no justification for asserting the historical priority of one complete pattern over against the other. But it may be possible to advance the argument by giving some historically plausible account of the process of development and construction of one or other scenario. For example, while the latter shows clear evidence of evolution parallel to salvation expectations in pagan environments, the former can be separated into significant components from Jewish tradition such as Davidic kingship, the assumption of Moses or a prophet, Daniel 7 and the kingdom inherited by the saints,<sup>20</sup> and the sacrificial/apocalyptic images of the Lamb of God.<sup>21</sup>

It has become obvious that the conjunction of Ascension and enthronement in glory means at least two different things, according to the larger context in which it is found. At opposite poles are the elevation of the figure of Jewish tradition with a view to future expectations, and the completion of a theological pattern, with the effective restoration to his original status, of the Redeemer/Revealer figure. Is it merely coincidental that these polarities of future and past correspond to the differences of tense in the two Old Testament proof-texts and to the two groupings of texts in our New Testament examples?

I would argue that it is no coincidence. Admittedly the verbs in the Old Testament Greek texts are only what is appropriate and natural to the contexts of promise (Ps. 110) and legal guarantee (Ps. 8). But when they are used in Christian exegesis their respective orientations correspond to the twin emphases that are in conflict (or tension) in Christian experience: the hope to which they look forward, and the past event which is the foundation of faith. It is presumptuous then to assume that either is merely a formulaic response in a given context; there is still the possibility of a creative tension at work between future promise and past event in each stage of Christian experience.

For Paul, according to 1 Cor. 15, the resurrection of Christ is the definitive past event, but the ultimate subjection of all things (v. 27) did not take place at his resurrection. Psalm 110:1 speaks to him of a future, eschatological hour of deliverance.<sup>22</sup> "Jesus the heavenly Man is he in whom man's rightful position in and over creation is restored. But not yet; for he is still to come from heaven (Phil. 3:20f.) to transform the 'body of our humiliation' to make it like the 'body of his glory'."<sup>23</sup> However closely the hymn of Phil. 2:6-11 corresponds to the theological pattern of completed redemption, in Paul's use it has present implications "as the basis of his ethical appeal to the Philippians", and a future direction "in describing the goal of Christian life which he links with the Parousia".<sup>24</sup> Equally the orientation of Heb. 2:7ff. (cf. 1:13; 10:12f.) is unashamedly future; it is not just a deficiency in our sight that we cannot recognise that everything is already subjected;<sup>25</sup> nor is "not yet" the impatient exclamation of a writer who finds that the mythical scheme or theological pattern doesn't quite fit with doctrinal realities (this is to undervalue the eschatological interests of Hebrews).<sup>26</sup>

The main emphasis is very different in Ephesians and 1 Peter. 1 Peter 3:22 speaks of the subjection to Christ "as present fact, with the implication that he gained it with or immediately following his resurrection and ascension".<sup>27</sup>

But there is still to be a future revelation of Christ's glory (1:7; 4:13) and 5:8 implies that not all the powers are yet subject to him. So the wider context makes clear that the (formulaic?) affirmation of faith in a past event needs qualification in some important respects. The concerns of Ephesians are ecclesiological and the parallels revealed by a comparison of 1:20-23 with 2:1-10 are informative. As H. Schlier's commentary suggests, the author of Ephesians sets "his ecclesiology as a mirror image of his christology. Both Jesus and Christians were raised from the dead (1:20; 2:1, 5) and set in heavenly places (1:20; 2:6)." "Somewhat as gnostics might have expressed it, the author of this epistle declares that Christians have already taken part in Christ's ascent into heaven."<sup>28</sup> But Paul himself would have recognised the pressures of this point of view,<sup>29</sup> while more than compensating for it by his use of the futurist terminology of apocalyptic expectation (such language is still reflected in the references in Ephesians to the age/s to come - 1:21; 2:7).

I have tried to indicate, without a full exegesis, the orientations and the eschatological tensions of these texts. Their range corresponds with the polarities of the Old Testament proof texts, of early Christian experience, and of the composite models of early Christology. I simply wish to suggest that the New Testament reveals a diversity and a fusion of Christological traditions, as well as a creative tension of eschatological emphases. The patterns and the harmonies which these reveal are no coincidence; and they provide ways for us to observe and understand the processes of growth and the reactions to the stimuli of experience, without succumbing to an overly neat and linear theory of development in New Testament Christology.

1. cf. R. P. Martin *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* Cambridge 1967. M. D. Hooker 'Interchange in Christ' *JTS* NS 22 (1971) 349-61; 'Philippians 2:6-11' in *Jesus und Paulus (Festschrift für W. G. Kümmel)* eds. E. Earle Ellis and E. Grässer, Göttingen, 1975, pp. 151-164.
2. cf. W. R. G. Loader 'Christ at the Right Hand - Ps. 110:1 in the New Testament' *NTS* 24 (1977/8) 199-217, especially pp. 209, 217.
3. cf. the discussion in D. M. Hay *Glory at the Right Hand - Ps. 110 in Early Christianity* (SBL Monographs 18) Nashville/New York, 1973, Ch. 5.
4. Phil. 3:21 has an allusive reference to Ps. 8:6 only. Does this allusion also imply that the discussion at 1 Cor. 15:25ff. is presupposed? Alternatively the connection with the two psalms is made because Phil. 3:21 "depends on the Christology formulated by means of linking both these passages" (B. Lindars *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* London, 1961, p. 50). But cf. J. D. G. Dunn *Christology in the Making* London, 1980, pp. 109f.
5. cf. G. Delling 'tassō', etc. *TWNT* 8:27-48 (Eng.).
6. cf. Delling (n. 5) p. 41.
7. cf. Loader (n. 2) p. 199; Hay (n. 3) pp. 19ff.; Strack-Billerbeck IV:1, 458f.
8. Dunn (n. 4) p. 109.
9. Hay (n. 3) e.g., pp. 45ff., 155ff.
10. e.g., Dunn (n. 4) p. 111; Loader (n. 2) p. 208.
11. For the hypothesis that the oldest tradition taught an ascension directly from the cross - G. Bertram 'Die Himmelfahrt Jesu vom Kreuz aus und der Glaube an seine Auferstehung' in *Festgabe für A. Deissmann zum 60 Geburtstag*, Tübingen, 1927, pp. 187-217. In Mt. 27:53 the words "after his resurrection", reflect an attempt to combine this early ascension tradition (where the saints rise with Jesus at his death) with the later tradition of resurrection on the third day.
12. cf. P. Benoit 'The Ascension' in *Jesus and the Gospel* Vol. 1, London, 1973, pp. 209-252.
13. Lindars (n. 4) pp. 42, 45.
14. In itself this allows for ascension in the manner of Enoch, Moses and Elijah.



15. Benoit (n. 12) p. 251.
16. cf. Benoit (n. 12) pp. 226ff. cf. W. Pannenberg *Jesus – God and Man* Philadelphia, 1968, Ch. 3.
17. Acts 7:56 cf. H. P. Owen 'Stephen's Vision in Acts 7:55-6' *NTS* 1 (1954/5) 224-226; C. K. Barrett 'Stephen and the Son of Man' *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen* Berlin, 1964, pp. 32-38.
18. cf. G. Howard 'Phil. 2:6-11 and the Human Christ' *CBQ* 40 (1978) 368-87.
19. cf. R. Leivestad *Christ the Conqueror – Ideas of Conflict and Victory in the New Testament* London, 1954, pp. 269ff.
20. With due deference to the important work of P. M. Casey *The Son of Man: the Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* London, 1980.
21. cf. C. K. Barrett 'The Lamb of God' *NTS* 1 (1954/5) 210-218.
22. cf. Hay (n. 3) pp. 61f.
23. Quotation from C. K. Barrett *From First Adam to Last* London, 1962, p. 76; the second sentence, not quoted in Dunn (n. 4) p. 309 n. 52, significantly alters the application he wishes to make of it on p. 111.
24. Hooker (n. 1) 1975 article, p. 156.
25. ctr. Loader (n. 2) p. 208.
26. ctr. Leivestad (n. 18) p. 299. cf. C. K. Barrett 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews' in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology: Studies in Honour of C. H. Dodd* eds. W. D. Davies and D. Daube, Cambridge, 1954, pp. 363-393.
27. Hay (n. 3) p. 76.
28. Quotation and discussion, Hay (n. 3) pp. 98, 156. Cf. Col. 3:1ff.
29. e.g., 2 Cor. 5:17; 12:2ff.

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## THE LAST OF THE Gnostics

### H. DAVID SOX

The site of much of the Iraqi-Iranian conflict has been around the Shatt-al-Arab, Iraq's oil route to the Persian Gulf. One of the casualties of the war is virtually unknown to the public – the last remaining Gnostic sect in the world, the Mandaeans who dwell near the battle-zone, in the swampy marshes of the Tigris-Euphrates delta, and in Khuzistan along the Karun River.

The war has exacerbated an already difficult situation for the remaining practitioners of the faith. Modern education and communications have already taken their toll, as has the incentive to move to Baghdad and Basra because of opportunities to earn money and raise themselves socially. Many Mandaean men are expert boatbuilders, gold and silver-smiths, and few of the young people have any interest in the complicated religion and culture of their ancestors. Candidates for the priesthood are almost nonexistent, and it is no exaggeration to suppose that Mandaeanism may disappear as a practising sect in our day.

Unlike other religious minorities of the Near East, such as the Armenians, Copts or Jews, the Mandaeans have no influential spokesmen or champions in the West to publicise their condition. Ethel Stefana, Lady Drower, the indomitable researcher of the sect until her death in 1972, referred to them as “a case of arrested development” and this is increasingly true. By all odds, the last of the Gnostics should have vanished long ago. Potentially more destructive than the war is the awareness of the Iraqi government that the bitumen-laden swamp homeland of the Mandaeans and the ‘Marsh Arabs’ sits upon rich petroleum deposits.

After the publication in the 1920s by Mark Lidzbarski of three books of the Mandaean canon, they were pounced upon with eagerness by scholars who saw in them evidence of a pre-Christian Gnosticism illuminating the religious environment of several books of the New Testament. Rudolf Bultmann, the great ‘demythologiser’, based his contention for a pre-Christian Gnostic Redeemer (from which the Christian idea evolved) almost solely upon evidence from the Mandaean literature. Rudolf Macuch asserted, “The Gospel of John is so saturated with Mandaean elements that these can be unperceived only by one who is blind”. Enosh-Uthra, the Mandaean messenger from heaven, was seen as the prototype of the New Testament doctrine of the Son of Man. Much of this discussion has abated with the passage of time, and today the Mandaean influence receives minimal notice in most theological disputation.

Few English-speaking scholars have taken an interest in the sect; the notable exception was Lady Drower who, after the Second World War, obtained the most reliable information about present-day Mandaeans. Lady Drower was in the best tradition of Englishwomen archaeologist/scholars, teaching herself the intricate Mandaic language and gathering the largest collection of Mandaean literature that exists. It is now kept in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Mandaic is an East Aramaic dialect, and some scholars feel it is the long-sought-after connecting link between Nabataean and Elymaean writing. Similarities have also been noted between Mandaean magical bowls and some from Knossos.

Both Mandaean and Minoan bowl inscriptions begin spirally from the centre, and contain a lilit (Semitic evil spirit) in the centre.

The origin of the Mandaeans is disputed, and since they believed their religion was primordial and founded by “the world of light”, they were not concerned with the history of this world. The publications by Lady Drower in 1953 of the Mandaean *Haran Gawaita* scroll gave the interesting narration of a first century exodus of Mandaeans from Palestine to Mesopotamia (via Abraham's town of Harran).

Scholars who argue for a Syro-Palestinian origin also point to Mandaean affinities to Judaism – familiarity with Old Testament writings; parallels to Jewish ethics (especially the high value placed on marriage and procreation); a stress of cultic purity, and the use of Hebrew angelology and symbols on their magic bowls. The familiar antagonism toward orthodox Judaism among such sects as the Ebionites and Elkesaites is also present in Mandaeanism. That odd collection of sects which developed in Transjordan following the Jewish revolts against the Romans in AD 66-70 and AD 132-135 has much in common with the Mandaeans. Some scholars have suggested links with the Essenes of Qumran and there has been a wide assumption that the Mandaeans were important in the history of early Christianity. Due to their practice of oft-repeated immersions, early observers supposed them to be the descendants of John the Baptist's followers. Portuguese missionaries who went to Iraq in the 17th century called the Mandaeans “followers of St. John the Baptist” or “St. John's Christians”.

Another view of Mandaean origin has stressed its Babylonian and Persian affinities. These proponents note the Babylonian elements in Mandaean magical texts, the use of the Iranian calendar and the incorporation of Persian words into their language. The father of Mani has been viewed as a member of the Mandaean cult, but the recent discovery of a tiny fifth century Greek Manichaean codex (the Cologne Codex) indicates that Mani belonged to the Elkesaite sect. This second century group insisted on the observance of the full Jewish ritual, but recognised Jesus as Son of God. Elxai reportedly had first-hand experience with Jesus, since it is said he had seen him in a vision in which Christ appeared as a mountain 96 miles high! The Cologne Codex, rather than disposing the close relationship between the Mandaeans and the Manichaeans, may be indicating an influence of the Elkesaites upon both sects, and further strengthening the argument for a Palestinian origin for the Mandaeans. The studies of Torgny Säve-Söderbergh of a Coptic Manichaean psalm-book have indicated a firm dependence of Manichaeism on Mandaean writings.

The Mandaeans' strong Gnostic characteristics and possible relationship to the origins of Gnosticism have been widely debated by scholars; almost overlooked is its position in Islam. The Mandaeans are called the *Subba* by Arabic-speaking peoples which means something like ‘dippers’. This is also probably related to the Koranic term, *Sabian*, the mysterious other “people of the Book”, who with the Christians and Jews were granted special religious toleration by Islam. The appellation *Sabian* has not been exclusively identified with the Mandaean sect; there are also the famous Harranian ‘pseudo-Sabians’ who translated so many classics into Arabic. The latter group, according to Lady Drower, are probably related to their simpler and more primitive

brethren of the marshes, and this relationship is possibly indicated in the *Haran Gawaita* 'exodus'. The word *Sabian* also has a relationship to Muhammad's idea of revelation; he believed that his monotheism was a pure faith from Abraham, before Jews and Christians.

Even more intriguing is the earliest name the Mandaeans have for themselves, *Nasoraean*. It means 'observants' and has come to designate those "adept in the mysteries of the religion" while 'Mandaean' which is 'Gnostic' in derivation now signifies 'layman'. The relationship of *Nasoraean* to the Koranic term for all Christians, *Nasara*, is an interesting possibility especially since there seems no answer as to what that word originally meant or why it was chosen. It is Syriac in origin like so many religious terms in the Koran. (It has been estimated that of the 'foreign' linguistic influences in the Koran, 70% are attributable to Syriac – including Aramaic and Palestinian Syriac). A great deal of scholarly ink has been spent indicating that the Syriac root has no affinity, as might be supposed with 'Nazarene' (Nazareth). It remains a mystery, unless it has a meaning similar to the idea of the Mandaic *Nasoraean*.

The fourth century heresiologist, Epiphanius of Salamis, precluded an identification of two Jewish groups he described with seemingly similar names, the Nazoraioi and the Nasaraioi (Panarion 1:18). The former were Jewish Christians; the latter pre-Christian Jews dwelling along the Jordan River, rejecting sacrifices, but observing much of the Jewish Law, and possessing a concept of revelation which seems similar to that of Muhammad. The Nasaraioi, like the Elkesaites, entertained the notion of revelation and prophecy as being living and actual; ongoing. It has often been stated that Muhammad's doctrine of revelation could not have come from orthodox Judaism or Christianity. His concept of the scriptures was dynamic, not static. Like Mani, he excluded the writing prophets from consideration. We also know the Book of Elxai alludes to a concept of Christ as being often born on the earth, at different times, in different forms. Muhammad's idea of a particular revelation for each people seems related to this current of thought. Orthodox Jews and Christians were only groups among many exper-

encing Divine guidance and revelation. Muhammad realised that every people had its prophet – where was the one for the Arabs? Islam would become a religion going back to the pure monotheism of Abraham which was neither Christian nor Jewish.

The Mandaeans were careful in their history to distinguish themselves from the Byzantine Christians, the *Kristiyane*, whom they despised for practising baptism with non-flowing water. An ancient inscription at Naqsh-i-Rustam enumerating the non-Zoroastrian sects persecuted by the Zoroastrian authorities, shows the same distinction between *Kristiyane* and *Nasoraye*. One is tempted to speculate that Muhammad may have been perpetuating an important distinction by his choice of *Nasara* in the Koran.

The Mandaeans with their combination of Babylonian and Persian cultic practises, bizarre Gnostic mythology plus Christian and Jewish affinities possess a truly unique culture. They are a remarkable link to the genic days of both Christianity and Islam. Their rich traditions provide us with an opportunity of studying the inner life of a Gnostic community, but as East German Mandaean scholar, Kurt Rudolph, has said, "It is tragic that this is happening at a time when this exceptional religion is moving towards its end, a movement which, according to the Mandaean religion itself, is towards the Kingdom of Life and Light, for which Mandaeans have always longed".

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### Israel's Prophetic Tradition. Essays in honour of Peter Ackroyd

Ed. R. Coggins, A. Phillips and M. Knibb, Cambridge University Press, 1982. Pp. 272. £21.00.

"Scholarly advance in the humanities often depends less upon sensational new discoveries than upon the questioning and re-evaluation of what had become unquestioned assumptions, and it is in this latter area that Peter Ackroyd's especial contribution to Old Testament scholarship will probably be judged to rest." In beginning their Preface to this handsome *Festschrift* for Professor Peter Ackroyd with these words, the editors not only capture succinctly the distinctive character of their honorand's important place within contemporary biblical studies, but also aptly sum up the particular merits of their own volume. Their aim, they say, was to produce a more unified volume than the general run of *Festschriften* by having all the contributions relate to one theme, the prophetic tradition in the Old Testament, and they have been remarkably successful in producing a book on the prophets that is a genuinely unified work. And its hallmark is an approach to the various aspects of the question of prophecy which is cautious in claiming to have made 'advances' in the study of the subject, but carefully critical of (as well as compendiously informative about) the trends in other scholarly studies. The result is a collection of essays that provides an authoritative guide to the field, and helpfully suggests areas in which further progress is to be looked for: a worthy and appropriate tribute to Peter Ackroyd.

The first two essays survey the state of our knowledge about the phenomenon of prophecy in the ancient Near East and in early Israel. Both are inclined to argue that we know a good deal less than we thought we did, but both define more closely the questions that future discussions will have to deal with. Helmer Ringgren's 'Prophecy in the ancient Near East' proceeds chiefly by a serial discussion of various alleged parallels to Israelite prophecy in many other cultures, while J. R. Porter, 'The origins of prophecy in Israel,' is a meticulous analysis of the character of the biblical sources and a cautious critique of the main recent hypotheses about such matters as prophetic psychology, the relation of prophets to the cult, and the 'social location' of the prophet in Israelite society.

The next six essays survey trends in the study of particular books on the latter prophets. A. S. van der Woude, 'Three classical prophets: Amos, Hosea and Micah,' provides an invaluable and comprehensive guide to recent scholarship on these three books. He shows that the study of Amos has become somewhat bogged down in redaction-critical hypotheses that are attractive but essentially too speculative to admit of proof, given the paucity of material that the book of Amos contains; but he suggests that the time is ripe for some fresh work on Hosea, and urges us to reconsider the question of authenticity in regard to the later chapters of Micah. His bibliography is outstandingly useful even in a volume which is marked by particular care in the selection of bibliographies. John Eaton picks up Ackroyd's own interest in 'The Isaiah Tradition', and tries to show that his and other recent studies of the whole book of Isaiah as a proper subject for interpretation might be enhanced by

attention to the liturgical tradition in Israel. The unity which the finished book possesses is traced back to a constant reshaping of Isaianic tradition in a cultic setting. Eaton is perhaps inclined to see all prophets as having some connection with liturgy, but in the next essay, 'An alternative prophetic tradition?', Richard Coggins distinguishes between 'anthologies' of prophecy (such as Isaiah) and those prophetic texts that *originated* as liturgical pieces: Joel, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Zechariah 9-14 and (a thought-provoking addition) Isaiah 40-55. One value of recognizing these prophecies as a distinct group is that they are, on the whole, rather little affected by the deuteronomistic redaction that has had a certain standardizing effect on the other prophetic books; another is that they may help us to form a clearer picture (or to challenge the idea) of 'cult-prophets'; and a third is that the very absence of personal information about the prophets whose names they bear might divert our attention from the *personality* of the prophet to the *themes* of the individual books.

Walther Zimmerli offers an essay on 'Visionary experience in Jeremiah', which brings out distinctive features of the Jeremiah tradition as against, for example, the tradition of Ezekiel. R. E. Clements contrasts the same two prophets, but this time with reference to the redactional influences which have given us the finished books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He provides a more exact statement of a position that would be widely agreed when he shows that the Jeremiah redactors can broadly be characterized as 'deuteronomistic', the Ezekiel redactors as 'priestly'. In both cases we have a single substantial reworking of the basic material to adapt it to the theological concerns of the 'school' in question, rather than the complicated revision by successive generations of 'disciples' which is sometimes suggested. Clements's use of Occam's razor leaves an attractively simple working model for further study of these two books. Prophecy in the post-exilic period is discussed by Rex Mason, whose essay 'The prophets of the restoration' follows Ackroyd's own lead in rehabilitating Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and their anonymous editors. He draws on his own research and on that of Beuken to make a careful distinction between the outlook of the prophets themselves and that of the circles who contributed the editorial framework of their books, and handles such ideas as 'realized eschatology', the relation of eschatology to 'theocracy' (with useful criticisms of Plöger and Hanson), and the question whether prophecy 'failed' (with reference to the work of R. P. Carroll).

Four essays discuss the relationship between prophecy and other traditions in the Old Testament. Michael Knibb, 'Prophecy and the emergence of the Jewish apocalypses,' continues a theme already touched on by Mason, with further criticisms of Hanson and a particularly useful survey of recent work on the definition of 'apocalyptic'. He seeks to show that the truth about apocalyptic lies neither with Rowley ("apocalyptic is the child of prophecy") nor with von Rad (who, notoriously, derived it from wisdom and saw it as utterly alien to the prophetic tradition), but in a much more subtle analysis of movements of thought and literary conventions in post-exilic Judaism. R. N. Whybray brings us up to date on the issue 'Prophecy and wisdom'. He sees most arguments for a close dependence of prophets on 'wise men' as foundering on the rocks of definition - what was a 'wise man'? - but thinks the debate has had a useful role in clarifying many questions. Robert Murray's 'Prophecy and the cult' is perhaps less a report on the state of the question

than the other essays (with the possible exception of Eaton's), being in large part a sustained and fascinating study of Isaiah 33. He argues that this is a liturgical text in which many allusions to the superstitious subculture that characterized much 'unofficial' religion in ancient Israel lurk not far beneath the surface; the poet has used memories of a time when the cult was concerned with what we should frankly call magic to produce a dense and allusive text. We are back to a survey of current trends, however, with Anthony Phillips's essay 'Prophecy and law', which provides a comprehensive guide to possible uses of legal traditions in the pre-exilic prophets, and interestingly relates this material to its author's thesis that the Decalogue formed both the criminal code of early Israel and the foundation-document for its highly distinctive, theological polity. Phillips shows how evidence from the prophets can be used to help chart the development of legal practice under the monarchy.

The two concluding essays are of a more general kind. John Sawyer describes 'A change of emphasis in the study of the prophets', by which he means the recent phenomenon of 'holistic' and 'synchronic' reading of Old Testament books, as advocated in his own book *From Moses to Patmos*. The historical-critical method, he argues, has run us into a blind alley, and the only way out is over the wall that (he believes) has for too long separated biblical critics from linguistic and literary scholars. There are some important ideas here, which limitations of space make it difficult for him to develop; there are also some quite sharp criticisms of the way the Old Testament is, in the author's experience, generally presented to students. The volume ends with an essay by Ulrich Simon, 'Martin Buber and the interpretation of the prophets,' which succeeds in combining a fascinating analysis of Buber's approach, especially as exemplified in his great translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, *Die Schrift*, with a timely treatment of the hermeneutical problem of the prophetic books for Jews and Christians respectively. He stresses the new forms this problem has assumed in a century which has come to distrust both the apocalyptic eschatology that has taken a secular form in the opposing ideologies of international Marxism and of the Third Reich, and also the realized or inaugurated eschatology represented for some Christians by the claim that the church is already the kingdom of the Messiah, and for some Jews by the establishment of the state of Israel. It is fitting that the *Festschrift* should end with a word on the modern problem of the Old Testament, a matter which mainstream Old Testament scholarship has never neglected and which Peter Ackroyd has been alive to in so many of his publications.

John Barton

### **Jesus Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels in the Light of Recent Research**

B. Lindars, S.S.F. S.P.C.K., 1983. Pp. 260. £15.00.

The expression *The Son of Man* has been a centre of controversy among New Testament scholars for most of this century, but in the last 20 years the discussion has taken a turn that previously seemed unexpected. The term occurs nearly 90 times in the New Testament, where it is to be found almost only in the gospels, and there practically

entirely in the direct speech of Jesus. A generation ago, one explanation was that Jesus had been referring by this expression (which was taken to be a title, capable of being understood as such by his hearers) to one who would come at the end of the world, to judge all men and bring in the time of God's final rule; it was disputed whether he was referring to himself, or another. So, for example, R. Bultmann divided the Son of Man sayings into three groups: (i) those which speak of the Son of Man as coming in the future; (ii) those which speak of him as dying and rising again; and (iii) those which refer to him in the present tense, as now at work. Bultmann thought that the third group was "a mere misunderstanding of the translation into Greek"; the second group contained *vaticinia ex eventu*; and "the first group alone contains very old tradition"; in these sayings, Jesus spoke of the Son of Man in the third person. (*Theology of the New Testament*, E.T., 1952, p. 30).

All this has changed, and attention is now focussed on the third group of Son of Man sayings: the original and authentic usage is thought to be found there only, and the first and second groups are regarded as developments of the Church, probably working in Greek rather than in Aramaic, and misunderstanding what was meant.

One of the first writers who challenged the idea that Son of Man was a title, was G. Vermes, in 1965; he argued that in Aramaic it was a circumlocution, referring to the speaker. A further study of the term, with special attention to the Old Testament and the Intertestamental writings, by P. M. Casey (*Son of Man*, 1979), argued that in the original Son of Man saying Jesus was making general statements about mankind, in which he included himself. Now, we have a book from Professor Lindars of Manchester University, which builds upon the work of Vermes and Casey, and examines every instance of Son of Man in the New Testament.

Professor Lindars adopts a position that is different from that of Vermes and Casey: he thinks that the Son of Man idiom in Aramaic refers to "a class of persons with whom [the speaker] identifies himself"; e.g., "a man in my position". He finds nine instances in the New Testament when Son of Man is used in the authentic idiom; and these are either in Mark, or in the hypothetical document (Q) used by Matthew and Luke independently. All the other sayings reflect the Church's developing understanding of Jesus in the post-resurrection situation.

The main line of argument is vulnerable on two counts: first, the theory of synoptic relationships which he uses, while it is still the most popular, is under attack in many directions, and it is not clear how much depends upon it; secondly Professor Lindars proceeds from a decision on the first century Aramaic idiom to conclusions concerning authenticity; e.g., "The Son of Man here [Luke 6:22] can only be an exclusive self-reference . . . therefore it cannot go back to Jesus himself" (p. 135); when experts disagree on a first century Aramaic idiom, it seems hazardous to build everything on one hypothesis.

In the final chapter, Professor Lindars addresses himself to the question of Christology, and he shows that the authentic Son of Man sayings "do not include a claim to be the Messiah" (p. 187). He then argues that Jesus was, nevertheless, thought to be the Messiah before the crucifixion. One wonders whether "The Messiah" may not be another

broken reed: whether there is any better evidence for the titular use of "The Messiah" than there was for "The Son of Man". Writers on the New Testament may have to use more lower case in future.

The debate will continue, and it will be fascinating to see whether it takes another unexpected turn in the next 20 years. Meanwhile, every student of the New Testament will be indebted to Professor Lindars for the detailed and careful consideration he has given to these sayings of Jesus in the four gospels.

John Fenton

## Jewish and Christian Self-Definition: Volume Two

Edited by E. P. Sanders with A. I. Baumgarten and Alan Mendelson. SCM Press, 1981. Pp. 485. £15.00.

The second volume of papers from the McMaster University research project is sub-titled 'Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period'. The material and methods of the study of Judaism remain to many students of the New Testament and the early Church a foreign field, and this is a substantial contribution to its exploration. Some papers are of a specialist nature, and their contribution to the McMaster project might have been made more obvious; thus D. W. Halivni on 'The Reception offered to Rabbi Judah's Mishnah' and A. I. Baumgarten on 'The Education of R. Judah the Prince'. Some, while useful, add nothing especially new or enlightening; thus J. Blenkinsopp on 'Interpretation and the Tendency to Sectarianism' and S. Z. Leiman on 'Inspiration and Canonicity'. Others are detailed pieces of textual analysis leading to cautious but important conclusions. J. H. Charlesworth examines 'Christian and Jewish Self-Definition in Light of the Christian Additions to the Apocryphal Writings': the alteration of received traditions is one manifestation of a community's self-definition, and in these documents the predominant tension remains that with Judaism rather than variant forms of Christianity. F. Dexinger discusses 'Limits of Tolerance in Judaism': the existence of Samaritanism over against Judaism shows how there may be a breaking point for the flexibility of Judaism; but it is a "model" to be used with care. In a complementary discussion of 'Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism', L. H. Schiffman shows how Jewish Christians could not lose their character as Jews in the eyes of Rabbis. Though Schiffman does not make the connection, his essay is suggestive of how he may himself have understood his relation to his nation. The longest paper is that of B. S. Jackson, 'On the Problem of Roman Influence on the Halakah'; a highly technical study, but containing interesting examples of the conflict of laws, and working out models for the assessment of parallels as "influence" that are of more general applicability.

Four contributions stand out as of especial interest. J. Goldstein discusses 'Jewish Acceptance and Rejection of Hellenism', demonstrating the very broad degree of openness possible without compromising Jewish identity, and also drawing valuable comparisons with Roman intolerance of things Greek: Jewish "exclusiveness" is not exclusive! R. Kimelman on the '*Birkat Ha-Minim*' gives a careful assessment of Jewish, New Testament and Patristic material to

demonstrate the 'Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity'. The addition of *nosrim* in the fourth century is directed against the Jewish Christian sect of the Nazareans; the *birkat* at no point marked a watershed between Jews and Christians *per se*. Church historians may wonder why the luckless Nazareans suddenly deserved such treatment. E. E. Urbach on 'Self-Isolation or Self-Affirmation in Judaism' shows that so-called universalism and particularism are not necessarily antitheses, and that the necessary affirmation of Israel's integrity does not rule out her openness to the world. Finally, A. F. Segal on the 'Ruler of this World' provides an example of sociological exegesis; his demonstration of the polemical and sectarian function of this image in the gospel of John and gnosticism is comparable to Wayne Meeks's celebrated article on 'The Man from Heaven'.

A mixed bag, then, as such collections tend to be; and others will no doubt differently identify the plums. The editorial hand could have been laid more firmly upon it (for instance, Urbach takes for granted some positions Kimelman puts in question, but there is no note to that effect). The Preface expresses a hope to probe to "the question of why the driving forces?" and to why the insistence "not only that it was important to be Jewish or Christian, but to be so in a certain way?". I should have welcomed an Epilogue assessing the contribution of these papers to these questions, and indeed the state of play of the research project. E. P. Sanders is of course the person to write it. Without such drawing together of the threads, there is a danger that the McMaster volumes will be just more essay collections; individually important no doubt, but not obviously furthering a continuing enquiry that it potentially of great significance for Jewish and Christian mutual understanding, and that not only in the historical realm.

Sophie Laws

1. *S.B.L. 1972 Proceedings*, Missoula, 1972, Vol. 1, pp. 285-313.

## The Making of the Church

J. G. Davies. Mowbray Religious Reprint, 1983. Pp. 208. £4.50.

Browsing in a bookshop at Neuchatel in Switzerland during the summer of 1970, I came across a volume by J. G. Davies on the Early Church. I purchased it eagerly, for, like many of the distinguished Edward Cadbury Professor's other works, it was out of print. How good then that *The Making of the Church* which appeared first in 1960, should again be available, now under another publisher's imprint and with a new look!

Professor Davies has the gift of making Church history interesting, and of bringing to life characters that for many are little more than names with a string of writings attached. Even within the limits of the present 200 pages he succeeds in achieving this, not least by means of apt quotations drawn from original sources which add to the book's value.

I select for special mention chapter 5 entitled 'The Social Life of the Church', and chapter 7 dealing with the Church's 'Inner Life' particularly in regard to worship. The former, reflecting material found in two of the author's earlier books *Daily Life in the Early Church* and *Social Life of Early*

*Christians*, gives a reminder of the restrictions on a Christian in the first centuries, not only in the choice of a profession but even in the pleasures allowed, since the Church was "convinced that the test of a man's spiritual health was the tone and temper of his leisure hours" (p. 106). Chapter 7 reveals the author's interest in early Christian worship and architecture – he is editor of *A Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*. I liked his comment: "If the step from the Upper Room in Jerusalem to the glories of Sancta Sophia at Constantinople (563) seems a long one, it may be regarded as but the natural working out of man's thankful response to the divine initiative, a response which is emphasized by the name of the principal Christian act of worship, i.e., the Eucharist or Thanksgiving" (p. 167). A pity that illustrations of early Christian buildings and works of art so graphically described could not have been included; alas, that would have been to put up the book's cost!

Of the remaining six chapters the second, entitled "The structure of the Church" gives a lucid account of the development of the various orders and of the parochial and diocesan systems. Chapter 3 on "Church and State" has a paragraph which indicates the complexity of the relationship between the two: "If hostility and persecution is not to be condoned, dualism is not without its difficulties, for while it rightly affirms that the State is not omnipotent, it is hard to be precise as to what exactly belongs to each sphere, and it involves the danger that part of life will be regarded as outside God's concern" (p. 78).

Perhaps the weakest part of the book is its scant treatment of Gnosticism and the teaching of Marcion. Certainly the uninitiated would scarcely appreciate the menace which these presented to the Church in the making. There is a slight mistake in the dating of Cyprian's martyrdom which should be "two years later" i.e., 258 A.D. (p. 87); and "Petilian of Constantine" should read "of Constantina" (p. 91).

Although *The Making of the Church* will not replace the more detailed recommended studies, it may well provide students with an additional source, supplying them with flesh to clothe those dry bones which are all that some seem to possess!

Gordon Huelin

## Augustine on Evil

G. R. Evans. Cambridge University Press, 1982. Pp. 198. £12.00.

Miss Evans will need no introduction to students of medieval theology. Her previous books have earned her a well-deserved reputation for sympathetic understanding of unfamiliar, even at times uncongenial, people and ideas. She is an authority on Anselm of Canterbury, and has done much to revive interest in his work. Her latest contribution takes her further back in time, to the man whose ideas were uniquely influential in medieval thought.

Miss Evans has tackled, in a short space, a problem which was central to Augustine's theology, and which plagued him nearly all his life. It may be unwise to give full weight, as Miss Evans does, to Augustine's reminiscences in

his *Confessions*; had he really been as aware of his actions when still a child as he later claimed to be, he would probably have professed conversion a good deal sooner. The *Confessions* are a reflection rather than factual history, and this needs to be taken into account more obviously than is the case here. On the other hand, it is important to be reminded that Augustine knew that the problem of sin is inherent in man from birth, and this point is brought out admirably.

After a somewhat lengthy biographical introduction, the book launches into a discussion of the ideas which made Augustine tick. Pride of place goes inevitably to Neoplatonism. Miss Evans explains briefly what Augustine took from it, how his own thought squared with it, and why he was occasionally obliged to differ from it. In this region of immense complexity Miss Evans seldom puts a foot wrong, a remarkable achievement, though she manages this at the price of concentrating on ideas rather than facts. Several times she compares Augustine to Plotinus, but without demonstrating that there was a real link between them. She uses Plotinus as her main source for Neoplatonic ideas, though most scholars would say that Augustine was more dependent on Porphyry, whose views were rather different. On the other hand, she has hit the nail squarely on the head when she claims that for Augustine, non-Christian philosophy could never escape the bondage of sin and error. We are told, firmly and rightly, that his use of pagan philosophy was eclectic; in the end, he was his own man in intellectual as in other matters.

Miss Evans follows the course of Augustine's thought from an originally finite conception of good and evil, to the point where he was able to confess that evil was fundamentally no more than non-being, a delusion which had clouded the rational mind of Adam. On the way she takes us through a fascinating variety of topics, like the union of body and soul, the exegesis of Scripture, and the doctrine of the Trinity. At each stage her concern is to demonstrate how Augustine understood the effects of evil on the mind. Her learning is prodigious; quotations and allusions to a vast literature abound, giving us a panoramic view of the whole age.

Towards the middle of the book Miss Evans takes us from what will soon appear to be the relatively trivial question of truth and error to the much deeper problem of the *vitium originis*. Why does man sin? What is the flaw in his nature which he cannot eradicate? Augustine considered the issue in both heavenly and earthly terms; Satan and his angels belonged to the universe of responsible beings as much, if not more than, man. Miss Evans does us the very useful service of pointing out that Augustine's views sharpened in controversy, especially in the struggle against Pelagius. She represents his views as having hardened, though on his own principles it might be better to say that they were clarified. Grace became for him the *sine qua non* of all victory over sin and evil, and Augustinianism received the imprint which was to mark it down to the Reformation and beyond.

This is a book for scholars, rather than for beginners. Quotations are given in Latin and not usually translated; we are assumed to be in possession of a good general knowledge already. Those who want a quick summary of Augustine's teaching on sin must look elsewhere; this book is for those



who have gone beyond the elementary stages. At the same time it is not a work of meticulous scholarship, since it relies as much on suggestion as on proof in its re-creation of a mental world. Yet Miss Evans's work has a compelling fascination for all who are prepared to think boldly, to reconstruct in their minds not just a set of facts, but the portrait of a great thinker and a great man. It is a book for those who know the fourth and fifth centuries well, but who need to look at them in a fresh way, forging new links and changing old habits of thought. For those prepared to risk such an adventure, this book will be a stimulus to further study and exploration, and as such it can be highly recommended.

On technicalities, the notes, bibliography and index are brief but adequate for their purpose. The print is small, a sign of cost-cutting, and though there is Latin, there is no Greek, apart from the odd word in transliteration.

Gerald Bray

## The Church in the Theology of the Reformers

Paul D. L. Avis. Marshalls Theological Library, 1981. Pp. 245. £10.95

In a most readable, interesting, well-written and well structured book, Avis makes a fresh contribution to the subject of the Church in the theology of the Reformers. Surprisingly, there is little written in this important field, and this book is a most acceptable contribution. The work is scholarly and well-informed, and its comprehensive and comparative nature will prove most useful, not only to ministers and clergy but to everybody interested in the current ecumenical debate. It contains valuable source references, shows a clear grasp of the secondary literature, and provides a useful bibliography with critical notes for anybody who wishes to pursue the subject further.

In his introduction, he argues that Reformation Theology is dominated by two questions: "How can I find a gracious God?" and "Where can I find the true Church?". He sees these questions as inseparably related and as constituting two aspects of the over-riding concern of 16th century man for salvation, questions answered by Luther with startling clarity and simplicity in his emphasis on justification by the Gospel of the free, unmerited Grace of God through faith alone. To Luther, the Gospel brings the Church into being: the Gospel alone, when believed, constitutes and creates the Church. It was at this point, when Luther's evangelical theology was rejected by the Roman Church, that the acute question of "What then is the true Church and where may I find it?" demanded a new answer. Avis deals with that answer.

The book rightly brings out the fundamental concept of the Church, to which all the Reformers subscribed. Avis argues that this was enshrined in the 95 Theses of Luther (1517): "The true treasure of the Church is the holy gospel of the glory and the grace of God". In Part One of the book, 'The True Church,' it is Luther's *Ausgangspunkt* which forms the basis for an account of the Protestant doctrine of the distinctive features or 'notes' of the true Church. He indicates the Christological centre and then describes its true circumference. Here he shows the ambiguities inherent

in Luther's theology of the Church, and describes how Melanchthon moved the doctrine, conceived as an object of faith, to that of a visible institution. He describes this evolution through Melanchthon and Calvin, through the radicals, proto-puritans and anabaptists, through John Jewel and Richard Hooker. He describes the work of Hooker as an effective attempt to set Reformation ecclesiology on a fresh footing while at the same time holding on to the first principles of the classical Reformers.

In Part Two of his book, he turns to the implications the Reformed doctrine of the Church has for the Christian ministry. Ministers and clergy will find this section provides a very solid base for the discussion of what the Ministry is, and what it should be in today's world. He here provides a good chapter on 'The Priesthood of all Believers' and relates this to a doctrine of the Ministry, showing that this does not mean the secularisation of the clergy, nor does it mean the idea that "we are all laymen now", as Karlstadt and the fanatics urged. He demolishes many prejudices and misunderstandings, showing very clearly the high regard in which the Reformers held both the parish ministry and the episcopate. He has here an important chapter on 'The Godly Prince', and shows exactly what was being claimed and what was not being claimed by the Anglican Reformers for the royal supremacy of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.

He completes his work with the third part on 'The Mission of the Church'. This is perhaps the most original part of the book, for in it he gives a wholly new account of the Reformers' views of the mission of the Church to the world. He discusses the reasons why Catholicism in the 16th century was involved in mission to the New World and to the Far East, and why Protestantism was not, but rather sought to re-form and re-inspire the de-formed and de-spiritualised Church in Europe: why Protestantism sought not to take the Church to the world, but rather to take the world out of the church. There is a fine, though disturbing chapter on the attempted conversion of the Jews of Europe to the evangelical faith, and of its tragic failure, issuing in the most bitter invective against Jewish unbelief. The author rightly examines this in theological not in racial terms, even though it issued in racial consequences from time to time.

He concludes with an all too short but very good chapter on the relevance of Reformation ecclesiology for an ecumenical age. He rightly emphasises the unanimity of the Reformers, their catholicity, and their reluctance to accept schism as inevitable, and, in the fine words of T. F. Torrance, calls for the repentant rethinking of all tradition face to face with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

The book will help ministers and clergy how to believe again and how to preach again. It should not go unheeded.

James Atkinson

## The Bishop of Rome

J. M. R. Tillard (E. tr. of French original, Paris 1982). S.P.C.K., 1983. Pp. xii + 242. £6.50.

John de Satgé has produced an excellent English translation of Fr. Tillard's recent book on the papacy. The book is intended to give an exposition of the papacy which

will make it not only intelligible but also acceptable to those who are not Roman Catholics. The book falls into roughly three parts: first we have an exposé of the extreme Ultramontanist position, very frequently met with between Vatican I and Vatican II but repudiated by Fr. Tillard. Next comes a review of the powers and titles which the author believes the bishops of Rome may reasonably claim, in the light of the evidence of the New Testament and of church history. Lastly he writes a sketch of what a future papacy might be like. The whole study is informed by a most genuine ecumenical spirit, though I am afraid that the author over-estimates the willingness of those who are not under the Pope's obedience to contemplate the possibility of accepting it.

Before taking any overall estimate of the question of the papacy, it might be as well to pick out a number of particular issues raised by the book. Fr. Tillard is aware that "apostolic succession" cannot be defended today in the old-fashioned sense of the phrase. He realises, for instance, that there was no single bishop in the church of Rome before the middle of the second century (p. 83). But he still quotes Irenaeus's account of the succession of bishops there, in which Clement is presented as succeeding to the episcopate in Rome (p. 76). And on p. 152 he can write: "The 'apostolic succession' secures the vertical communion". Another interesting point arises on p. 89. Fr. Tillard makes it clear that a candidate duly elected to the papacy cannot become pope until he is consecrated bishop, if he is not already a bishop. But there is evidence (See *The Study of Liturgy*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, etc., (London 1978) p. 215) that for several centuries during the dark ages: (a) the candidate elected pope was always a deacon, and (b) he was ordained to the office of bishop of Rome without the actual laying on of hands. A stickler for correct order would be compelled to admit that for several centuries the Church in the West had no validly ordained pope. But if the Church in the West survived for centuries without a validly ordained pope . . . ?

Again Fr. Tillard overemphasises the leadership of Peter in the N.T. At the council in Jerusalem in Acts 15, precisely where we should expect Petrine leadership to appear if it is according to the Lord's will, it is James, not Peter, who presides.

On one or two occasions Fr. Tillard seems to be hardly consistent with himself: thus on p. 165 he applauds Leo III for having refused to insert the *filioque* clause into the Nicene Creed in 808. But he makes no allusion to the fact that it was in fact admitted into the creed, presumably by the consent of the contemporary pope, soon after 1000. Or again on p. 179 Leo I is commended (rightly, no doubt) for objecting to the action of the bishop of Constantinople in ordaining a bishop for the church of Antioch. But modern bishops of Rome frequently ordain bishops for sees all over the world.

I conclude from Fr. Tillard's careful discussion (p. 176) that he holds the dogma of the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven to be infallibly true. But he does not seem aware of what an appalling stumbling-block this alone presents to the vast majority of Western non-Roman Catholics. Or can infallibly true dogmas be optional only?

One could go on like this a long time. But not very much is to be gained by this sort of sharp-shooting, and it is

not really appropriate in view of Fr. Tillard's absolutely genuine desire for reconciliation. However one thing must be made completely clear: even the greatly reduced terms (compared with the ultramontane atmosphere of 1870) in which Fr. Tillard presents the claims of the bishop of Rome are very far indeed from anything that most informed Anglicans would be prepared to accept. I do not think the distinguished Dominican is fully aware of how far he is from presenting anything like the sort of papal primacy that the great majority of those who are not Roman Catholics could possibly contemplate. And I believe that this goes for the Eastern Orthodox as well.

Is there then no prospect of agreement and unity on this topic? I would not say so. I see hope in the progress of biblical and historical scholarship. The position defended by Fr. Tillard would, I venture to say, be regarded as strictly indefensible by such distinguished R.C. scholars as Raymond Brown, Robert J. Daly, S.J. and Fr. E. Schillebeeckx. The whole doctrine of the ministry is undergoing a very thorough re-assessment at the hands of Roman Catholic and Anglican scholars in the West. What will emerge may well be a consensus, but it will be a consensus that will present a doctrine of the ministry considerably different from the traditional Catholic one. In the working out of that doctrine a radically revised presentation of the papal primacy must surely have a part.

Anthony Hanson

## Households of God

Dom David Parry, OSB. Darton, Longman and Todd, 1980. Pp. 199. £4.50

Historical generalisations are open to criticism but it would not seem outrageous to suggest that there have in the Christian era been three periods of major human and social disturbance, of which our own times are the third. The first was the break-up of the Roman Empire. From this emerged the thinking of Augustine of Hippo in his *Civitas Dei* and the *Regula Monachorum* of Benedict. The medieval, Christianly inspired, achievement owes more than can be estimated to the insights and institutions springing from these writings. The second major disturbance was the break-up of the medieval synthesis during the centuries we label Reformation and Renaissance. The impetus of the new learning vastly expanded the range of human exploration and endeavour. Today we would seem to be reaching the end of renaissance man. We live in a global ferment caused by exponential escalation of world population, the break-up of ancient cultures through the development of world communication systems and the accumulation of thermonuclear devices of unlimited destructiveness.

Through it all the Benedictine Households of God are still with us and many lay people are re-examining the wisdom stored up in the Rule of St. Benedict. This Rule itself was the gathering up and re-expressing by a genius of Christian experiments and experience of community spirituality flowing from the Church – communities which wrote the documents of the New Testament, and the search for God characterised by the lives and sayings of Anthony and the desert fathers in turn co-ordinated and developed in the *Conferences* and *Institution* of John Cassian.

Dom David Parry has provided for those who do not know the deep spiritual and human considerations and arrangements of the Rule of St. Benedict a most valuable introduction and interpretation "for monks and lay-people today", together with a new translation of the text. As acute for us today as it ever was is the perennial human question: "How can human beings live together?". The question relates to family and to city, to national and international tensions and distress. The churches no less than secular and political institutions are faced with the question. Dom David writes: "Two things stand out as objects of permanent desire: the Transcendent (How do I find the answer to my soul's desire for the Other?) and the Community (How do we live together in love?)"!

No one who recognises these desires within his or her own heart can fail to be helped and encouraged by becoming familiar with this priceless jewel bequeathed to us by the architect of the soul of Europe. Dom David will be found an excellent guide. "All Christianity is properly concerned with these two things: the return to God and the formation of a society such as to lead to that end."

Sydney Evans

## **A Social History of the Diocese of Newcastle**

Edited by W. S. F. Pickering. Oriel Press, 1981. Pp. 352. £12.00

This volume of essays commemorates the centenary of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, and as such is an opportunity for pause and reflection. Such volumes are also perhaps an opportunity for a little sentiment and nostalgia, of which this particular one has its share.

The major problem in producing volumes for a specific and very local purpose is to produce something attractive and appealing to the captive audience – in this case the local Anglicans of Newcastle – and also something of interest to a wider audience. Dr. Pickering has attempted to meet these two requirements by blending essays of personal recollection, with more rigorous historical studies. Nevertheless, the range of topics is strangely dull and unexciting and has little to offer the reader who is not either a native or a student of the North East.

Each essay of itself is well produced and cogently written, but no attempt has been made to set these studies in any wider context. Both geographically and ecumenically the horizon is limited, and this seems at least partly to have been a deliberate policy. The Editor's aim, and indeed his achievement, was to produce a local account of local affairs and a record of Anglican activity for posterity.

What a pity that the opportunity was not taken to consider some of the social and ecumenical implications of a 19th-century Diocesan foundation. However, the volume is an admirable one for its limited purpose, and will prove to be a useful source and guide to anyone pursuing the social and economic history of the North East.

Judith F. Champ

## **A God Who Acts**

Harry Blamires. S.P.C.K., 1983. Pp. 128. £3.95

"We can get ourselves into a fine intellectual and spiritual tangle by chattering about the *divinity* and *humanity* of our Lord, so long as we chase nouns and avoid verbs . . ." (p. 77).

Not only has this book kept fresh its integral message since it was first published in 1957 under the title 'The Will and the Way', it speaks now with remarkably topical directness to a society facing very different but no less urgent problems than when it was first written.

Harry Blamires, in his fourth decade as an important apologist for the Christian faith, writes with uncompromising grasp of principle tempered with deep understanding of what makes people tick. There is humour, irony and a delightful appreciation of life's apparent absurdity. Here is a book about God which is a pleasure to read! Blamires invites the reader to do his or her own theology, to square up to the immediate concerns, anxieties and pressures of life and to perceive them as the essential arena within which the "God who acts" is to be known.

The substantial chapter 'Personal Vocation' is a particular triumph. Urging a livelier awareness of God's *activity* in human busy-ness, whether at the international conference table or at the family breakfast table, Mr. Blamires opens our eyes to a new sense of personal vocation. Seeing life steadily and seeing it whole, our vocation is to respond to the God whose call to holiness comes to every person in every activity. Grasping the nettle of suffering and failure, the author infects the reader with his quiet exuberance and joy. His aim is to challenge, inform and vitalise the spiritual life, so that "we may find Thee in life and Life in Thee". He succeeds. Sharing his convictions – forged through years of personal discipleship – Harry Blamires ranks with such spiritual masters as Roger Schutz. What is remarkable is that this book first saw the light of day long before the Taizé Community and its Prior became a household word. Its timely re-appearance will be welcomed by the many who already value his writings. To those who do not yet know Harry Blamires as a friend, *A God Who Acts* is warmly recommended.

Richard Kingsbury

## **The Church of the Poor Devil. Reflections on a Riverboat Voyage and a Spiritual Journey**

John S. Dunne. London: SCM Press, 1983. Pp. x + 180. £8.50

No one can doubt that Professor Dunne has chosen a difficult path in this book but one that needs to be taken if the gap between North and South is not to become as unbridgeable in matters of faith as it seems to have become in terms of political and economic goals. All Professor Dunne's books are journeys of different sorts. In *The Way of All the Earth*, for example, it was a journey into the thought of eastern religions. In his last book, *The Reasons of the Heart*,

it was a journey into the experience of loneliness and back again. In this book the journey is into the religion of the poor. It begins on a riverboat on the Amazon and ends in Manaus at the patronal festival of the Chapel of Santo Antonio – the Church of the Poor Devil of the title. On the boat, he discovers that the poor possess secrets of life from which he is excluded and he tries to share these secrets by participating in the festival two years later. The Church of the Poor Devil becomes for him an image of the religion of the poor which he explores in different ways, beginning with Marx's definition of religion of the poor as "the sigh of the oppressed, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions" – a much more sympathetic definition than is sometimes allowed – and ending with the definition that it is a " 'halleluyah' from the heart of God" (p. 128).

Anyone familiar with Professor Dunne's books will know that his characteristic method of enquiry is to "pass over" into the experiences of others and then to return to his own standpoint to see what difference it has made to his own spiritual journey. It is a method which involves a kindling of heart as well as mind in active contemplation. This gives his books their particular flavour. If one had to compare him with anyone, it would be with Simone Weil, for whom disciplined, intellectual enquiry was also combined with deep feeling. Many different sources are called upon in the course of the enquiry: Marx, Kierkegaard, Kafka, Roualt, Corbusier, even Ray Bradbury. But the quotations with which each chapter usually begins are not used as external authorities but rather as fragments for meditation around which Professor Dunne organises his own thought and to which he returns again and again until they have yielded all the illumination they are likely to give for his purpose. As well as the main journey into the religion of the poor and back again, therefore, there are little journeys into the thought of others. Partly as a result the range of themes and problems touched upon is enormous. (One particularly arresting example is the discussion of God's passibility and transcendence, which takes its starting point from Aquinas's statement, "God has no essence".) But these quotations are used for the purposes of reconnaissance rather than diversion and all contribute in different ways to further the main task.

But what is the main task? Professor Dunne is careful to make the distinction between poverty, as commended in monastic spirituality for instance, as a voluntary state in which there is hearts-ease and wholeness, and the misery imposed on the materially poor by unjust social and economic conditions which are at war with their deepest longings and aspirations. He is aware that to join the poor on their journey is also to join them in their struggle for emergence and recognition. On the other hand the life of the poor is not one of unremitting struggle. It has its moments of insight and rest and celebration as Professor Dunne discovered on the boat and at the Church of the Poor Devil. The poor are no more bound to their conditions than we are to ours and in the religion of the poor it is possible to discern an understanding of life that goes deeper than mere dreams of escape. Professor Dunne makes good use of the diary of a poor woman in the slums of São Paulo, who escaped them for a time and then returned to them to die. When she returned she wrote: "One can live better when one is poor than when one is rich . . . perhaps that is why Jesus Christ chose to be poor" (p. 96). Poverty of spirit as revealed in that remark and in the story of the building of a the Church of the Poor Devil is the fruit of an attitude taken

to the conditions life imposes on us. It cannot be identified with the conditions themselves. To be poor in this sense is to choose to "know and be known in our naked humanity" (p. 132). The unfulfilled need which the poor discover through the pain of material conditions and which we may discover in the pain of loneliness and our common poverty in the fact of death, can lead on the one hand to disintegration and despair or on the other to a following of the "heart's desire" in which we enact our relationship with Christ. "When the poor emerge in their naked humanity, it seems the great I AM of God is revealed in them" (p. 83). Professor Dunne goes on to explore what this implies about God and our human essence. In his exploration he reverses the Marxist chain of thought which resolved the religious essence into the human essence and the human essence into social relations. The communal celebrations of the poor reveal a human essence which is in turn the image of God.

The book stands or falls by its truthfulness to the life of the poor. It is difficult when starting from outside the conditions imposed on the poor not to be patronizing or exploitative – not to be a tourist dipping one's toe into their world, diverted by what one sees, but not allowing one's fundamental attitudes to be changed significantly. Professor Dunne manages to avoid this. He is aware that his book is "a work of contemplation more than action, though it is the kind of contemplation", he hopes, "that can be the heart and soul of action" (Pref. ix).

It would be interesting to learn what a South American exponent of liberation theology would make of this book. It reminds me of Moltmann's *Theology of Joy* in that it gives to the poor a status as "signs of Christ" which is only possible from within a Christian context whilst in no way undermining the determination to see the conditions under which they live changed. But Christian praxis, as opposed to Marxist praxis, will always be one of acting upon insight into suffering rather than resistance to it. Like Professor Dunne, we may wish to celebrate the life of the poor as a means of changing our own lives by participation, as well as changing theirs in recognising their true dignity.

C. J. Moody

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A.N. Wilson is the author of seven novels, including *Wise Virgin*. The latest is *Scandal*.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

J.M. Bonino *Toward a Christian-Political Ethics*. S.C.M. £5.50.

R. Cameron (Ed.) *The Other Gospels*. Non-canonical Gospel Texts. Lutterworth Press. £8.95.

R.F. Collins *Introduction to the New Testament*. S.C.M. £9.50.

G.R. Dunstan and M.J. Sellar (Eds.) *Consent in Medicine*. Convergence and divergence in tradition. Published by O.U.P. for King Edward's Hospital Fund, London. £8.50.

R. Etchells *A Model of Making*. Literary Criticism and its Theology. Marshall, Morgan & Scott. £7.95.

G. Gutierrez *The Power of the Poor in History*. S.C.M. £6.50.

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F. Young *Sacrifice and the Death of Christ*. S.C.M. £3.50.

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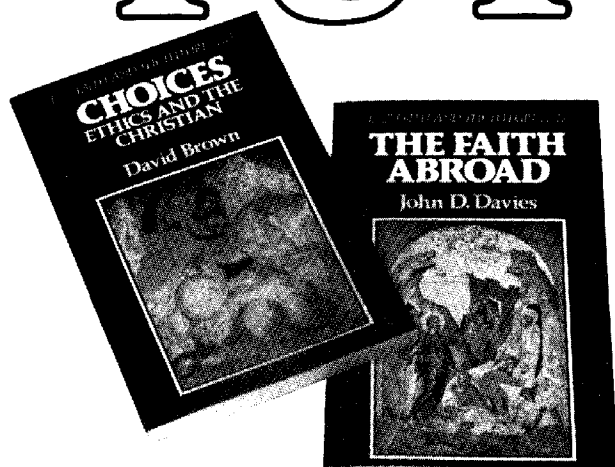
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