

## In The Study

WHERE will you go for a book devoted to the theology of St. Paul? It is not an easy question to answer. The mind finds itself groping, surprised and uncertain. Prat, Cerfaux, perhaps Schoeps—all of them continental; and then we are back to Anderson Scott—and 1927! After such a depressing mental exercise, I turn to a recent book<sup>1</sup> with more than usual curiosity. What will Mr. Whiteley have to offer?

A mine of information, to begin with. The pointer to the value of this book is its bibliography. We are introduced at all points to the rich ongoing theological debate. The author is a sane guide, a reliable commentator, and within limits a shrewd assessor. The style is unpolished, especially in the earlier pages, and the impression of lecture notes not quite satisfactorily worked over remains. But as a reference work that may confidently be consulted on numerous problems of Pauline theology this book is of considerable importance.

But having sat with it and learned from it, I think that I emerge understanding more clearly part of the reason for the paucity of such works, and why it is that the scholars content themselves with ploughing sections of the Pauline field or with sifting it from a special point of view (as for example, with W. D. Davies). From the introduction I quote the following sentences. "St. Paul's theology is very closely integrated. It seems to 'cohere' in such a way that it can be made to centre equally well upon the doctrines of, e.g., Christ, the Cross, the Church, and the Last Things. For this reason the traditional 'chronological' order of presentation has been adopted." So the author moves from creation to eschatology, devotes a quite disproportionate space to some issues as over against others, and provides for himself and his readers some unfortunate pitfalls. Let me illustrate at two representative points.

Page 160 informs us that for St. Paul "'justification' has an eschatological ring; it does not belong exclusively to the sphere of realized eschatology, since a futuristic meaning is retained in Rom. ii:13 . . . and in Gal. v:5." (It may be questioned whether these two texts really support this kind of assertion—but let that pass). On the other hand, page 246 states that the divine redemptive work of love "is not exhausted by the initial phase of 'justification' or 'reconciliation,' but continues until its purpose is achieved." And this is by way of comment upon Romans v. 9-10. Now one of

the fundamental questions that arises for a Pauline theology is connected with the word usage of the apostle. Let us say that St. Paul understands "reconciliation" to describe primarily what has been accomplished at the Cross and Resurrection and "salvation" to describe what will be accomplished at the Parousia. Where then does "justification" belong? It may be answered that Pauline usage is not inflexible, that we must not press it into a rigid dogmatic framework. But true as this may be, it does not quite meet the point, and certainly does not constitute a valid line of escape. The fact of the matter is that, having devoted a chapter to "The Whole Work of Christ," Mr. Whiteley moves at once to a further chapter entitled "How Christ's Work Affects Men," and it is under this rubric that the meaning of justification is considered. Now if "justification" describes the same reality as "reconciliation" (see p. 246), then it may be argued that both belong under the finished work of Christ and speak of what has already been accomplished. In this event we may be led to the conclusion that to ask the question "how does the work of God in Christ become effective for human beings?" (p. 155) is to pose a problem in terms which just do not fit Pauline theology. Let me emphasise that I am not seeking to argue a case one way or the other. My point is rather that by his methodological treatment Mr. Whiteley has escaped facing a basic issue of Pauline theology in explicit fashion, has virtually concealed it from his readers and, one suspects, has partially concealed it from himself.

The other illustration may be taken from the various discussions of the "body." In the chapter "Church and Ministry" attention is given to I Cor. xv, and in opposition to the view of J. A. T. Robinson it is concluded that in the Pauline exposition "body" refers to individuals, and not to the church, and that the term "spiritual body" "refers to the manner in which individuals are to exist as individuals after the parousia" rather than being an attestation of the solidarity of all in Christ (pp. 194-7). So far so good. But then in the closing chapter the whole question of the resurrection of the faithful is taken up, I Cor. xv. is more closely examined, the question of a development in Pauline eschatology between I Cor. and II Cor. is posed and answered affirmatively, and II Cor. v. 1-10 is brought under discussion. Now let us suppose that II Cor. v. indeed reflects a development in thinking occasioned by a threat to the apostle's life which led him seriously to wonder whether he would in fact live till the Parousia (II Cor. i. 8, iv. 7-18). What if he died before the coming of Christ? Well, he would not have to endure "nakedness"; at death there was a building from God to act as clothing (II Cor. v. 1). But what then is left for the Parousia? Paul does not provide an explicit answer. It may be that, noticing that afterwards he does not speak either of the resurrection

of the dead or of the passing of judgment at the Parousia, we shall conclude that it is *corporate* redemption that belongs to the Final Coming. But Mr. Whiteley's verdict is that "the 'house not made by human hands' is a temporary phase of the eternal body of the deceased" (p. 260). Perhaps. But now note this. We are told that the house not made with human hands in I Cor. v. 1 "is a body of a 'higher,' supernatural order" (p. 259), and that it may be the case that when he wrote I Cor. xv. Paul "already thought, but did not yet commit to paper, the views concerning the 'spiritual bodies' of the deceased which he later expounded in II Cor. v. . . ." (p. 260). That is to say that twice over we are referred to II Cor. v. for Pauline teaching about the "body." In fact, of course, St. Paul does not refer to the "body" at all in that chapter. He speaks of a "building," a "house." It is Mr. Whiteley who makes the jump. It is the same sort of unwarranted assumption as is made by the *Revised Standard Version* at Rom. viii. 23 where it neatly imports the plural "bodies" for the singular "body" (*sōmatos*) which stands in the text. Once more, I am not primarily concerned to argue a case. My point is rather that the Pauline theology of the redemption of the "body" needs to be plotted from the Cross, through baptism, through death, to the Parousia. By his segmented treatment the author has put his readers at a critical disadvantage, and perhaps misled himself.

Coinherence and integration; these are indeed the marks of St. Paul's theology. Mr. Whiteley's method of treatment creates problems just there. For this reason his study will be found most valuable and reliable where points of detail are in question, and most suspect where the interrelationship of Pauline emphasis demands most attention.

Form-criticism is apparently not a tool that fits easily into British hands. An older critical approach found its expert exponents among us. The newer key, designed to unlock the mysteries of oral tradition is on the whole still viewed with an unenthusiastic suspicion. It is to be hoped that the provision at long last of a translation of Bultmann's *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* will lead us out of darkness into light. That epoch-making, if occasionally perverse, study will surely make its inevitable impact over the years. Meanwhile, an influence just as great should stem from a book<sup>2</sup> that must be adjudged a classic from a master hand. C. H. Dodd uses *Formgeschichte* with the precision of an expert. Such usage proves the more judicious as it is backed by a range of knowledge, a sensitivity of discernment, and an analytical accomplishment unsurpassed in our generation.

This is the worthy sequel to *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. The author is concerned to disentangle such distinctive and independent tradition as may underlie the "spiritual" Gospel;

and he has amply made good his claims. He examines the Passion Narrative, shows the fundamental significance of the *testimonia* it contains, and with a wealth of brilliant argument advances his familiar conclusion that the understanding of the Christ of the Passion in terms of the Righteous Sufferer of the Psalms belongs to the early tradition which John appropriated. He explores the Ministry, its healings, its miracles, and reveals among other features of the pre-Johannine tradition the political aspect of the claims made for Jesus. He discusses the references to John the Baptist and the first disciples, and delicately assesses with fascinating results the measure of historical truth to be attributed to the contention of the Fourth Gospel that the Baptist bore witness to the Christ. In the final section, which deals with the Sayings of Jesus, points of formal comparison with the Synoptic witness are presented, and a surprising amount of parabolic material is prised loose from subtle Johannine reinterpretation.

Throughout the author moves relentlessly forward with a majestic and single-minded concentration. References to the work of other scholars are rare; original research is like this. Since this is a study in probabilities, Dodd is scrupulously careful not to claim more than seems to him to be warranted. Let us hope his readers will be equally cautious and not leap to optimistic but unjustified conclusions. Not the least valuable aspect of this work is the detailed nature of its exegetical enquiry. Typical of this is the lengthy note (pp. 134-5) on *ekeinos* in John 19:35, which almost literally says all there is to be said. On the other hand, it is inevitably on points of detail that questions will be raised. I note, for example, that Dodd still stands by his refusal to allow that paschal symbolism played any significant role in the Johannine understanding of the Passion or that the Lamb or God in John 1:29, 36 is to be seen as the paschal lamb (pp. 43, 110). Yet he appears to have given no attention whatsoever to the possible reason for the difference between the Markan and the Johannine dating for the Anointing. St. John, of course, has pushed it back to 10th Nisan—the day for the setting apart of the paschal lamb (Exodus 12:3).

Such questions remain. They are minor when set against a study which while adding so substantially to our understanding of the pre-canonical gospel tradition also tells us so much both about the Synoptists and about the Fourth Evangelist.

A hasty glance at any book devoted to the examination of the Sermon on the Mount to the extent of nearly five hundred pages is not guaranteed to kindle much initial enthusiasm; but in this particular case<sup>3</sup> both the name of the author and the exact terms of the title indicate that the labour will yield a more than adequate reward. A brief introductory section on the modern problem of Matthew v-vii captures the interest at once, and the reader moves

with good heart and high hopes to an enquiry into the setting of these chapters in the First Gospel itself, in Jewish messianic expectation, in contemporary Judaism, in the early Church, and in the Ministry of Jesus. Fifteen short appendices provide the dessert for those not wanting to leave after the main course; and for the gastronome there are cheese and biscuits to be toyed with, in the shape of forty pages of indices, together with a choice bibliographical cigar. An expensive meal! But a man may go in the strength of it for forty days.

Was Matthew concerned to set forth the Christian dispensation in terms of Judaism, to show Christ as the new Moses proclaiming from a new Sinai the Sermon on the Mount as the new Law? His treatment of material from Mark and Q, and the content and arrangement of his own peculiar material, suggest that the motifs of new Exodus and new Moses are used with great restraint, with tentativeness, and with reserve. Mosaic categories are transcended. The Sermon is messianic Torah, however suggestive it may be of the Law of a new Moses. The fivefold structure of the Gospel does not point to an explicit understanding in pentateuchal terms. In Matthew v-vii it is a new interpretation of the Old Law that is offered. In all this there is a restraint, caution, and ambiguity which still need explanation. A wider background of understanding is necessary.

So Davies turns to Jewish messianic expectation, and plunders the Old Testament, the intertestamental literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the rabbinical sources. In its thought of a new Exodus, Judaism was inevitably involved in speculation on the future role of the Law, and the Messiah as a kingly figure had of necessity to be related to it. But the evidence fails to justify large assertions. That the Torah was expected to persist into the messianic age is clear. That the Messiah would bring a Torah which was *new* is not so clear. Matthew is cautious about any explicit claim that the christian Torah is *new* in an unqualified way. In this he may have been influenced by the ambiguity of Jewish expectation. Were there also contributing factors of another kind?

This is the cue for the investigation of contemporary Judaism as focused in Gnosticism, and at Qumran and Jamnia. The first of these is barren land. The enquiry into the other two constitutes one of the most valuable sections of this book. Davies disentangles from the Sermon on the Mount material which arose originally out of a confrontation of Jesus and the Essenes, and which Matthew uses to serve the confrontation of Church and Synagogue, the Gospel and Pharasaic Judaism. He further suggests that the Sermon is to be seen as a "mishnaic counterpart" to the work of Jamnia, an attempt to provide "a formulation of the way of the New Israel at a time when the rabbis were engaged in a parallel task for the

Old Israel" (p. 315). Significant formal comparisons are revealed. But beyond this, there is provided a mass of detailed information, not readily available elsewhere, from a specialist in the field.

The way is now open to move from background to foreground, to the setting of the early Church. The alleged anti-Paulinism of the Sermon is discussed and rightly rejected. Q also is judged unhelpful at this point. A close comparison of its probable contents with the catechetical teaching that may be discerned in the Epistles suggests that we are not dealing with general ethical exhortation. Teaching there may be; but it belongs to the crisis constituted by the Ministry of Jesus, and as such expresses a radical absolute ethic uninfluenced by the practical necessity of adaptation to daily circumstance. It is when we turn to M that we begin to encounter the sort of regulatory directives that the Church soon found itself to require. Here there is clearer reference to Judaism and its Scriptures, a distinct flavour of the casuistry of the school, a noticeable Christian gemaric element. Thus Q and M reveal two different approaches to the words of Jesus. Yet these constitute the two main sources of the Sermon on the Mount. The conflict is however, in a certain sense, more imaginary than real. Reference to James and to the Johannine writings serves to underline the variety of understanding and emphasis that the New Testament contains. There is richness rather than contradiction. The understanding of the Gospel in terms of law is pervasive.

There remains one further question. In what way is the Matthaean presentation of the Torah of the Messiah related to the actual ministry of Jesus? Davies agrees with many contemporary scholars in questioning any extreme scepticism about the possibility of reaching the actual teaching of the Lord. In so far as he affirms that Jesus was both teacher and eschatological preacher he upholds the fidelity at this point of both Q and M. He further suggests that Jesus may have taught on two levels—the absolute and radical demand to the uncommitted, and the regulatory precept to the disciple. But all the teaching stems from a personal knowledge of the nature and will of God, is revelatory as being the word of the Messiah, and in its tremendous demand is yet preceded and follows by the pure gift of the ministry of compassion. Rightly understood, the Sermon on the Mount agrees with the whole of the New Testament in refusing to recognise a gulf between Gospel and Law.

One word of warning needs, I think, to be uttered. Davies has performed a valuable service in reopening the whole question of the place of Law in New Testament ethical understanding, and a kerygmatically orientated age will surely need to listen to him. Nevertheless, we shall be wise to ask ourselves whether he has slightly overstated his case, and even more significantly to remind ourselves of what it is he does *not* claim. Let these words be

pondered: "There can be little question that what is peculiarly characteristic of Jesus, as a teacher of morality, is the absoluteness of his words. Whether in attempting, however tentatively, to make of Jesus' expression of the ultimate demand, which seems so little governed by any consideration of historical contingency, a way of life, that is, halakah, and the basis for it, Matthew wholly departed from Jesus, it is not possible to decide categorically owing to the extreme complexity of our sources." They are Davies' own words. They should prevent us from drawing quick ethical conclusions too lightly from this massive examination which is always judicious and generally convincing.

To review a collection of theological essays<sup>4</sup> produced over a decade and ranging widely in theme and concern is neither an easy nor a profitable task. I comment on this compilation only because the author, who succeeded Emil Brunner at Zurich, is a truly significant figure, and because what he has to say, at many points, suggests a way of cutting through the contemporary impasse that meets us on so many fronts. The title of the volume does justice, so far as any title could, to the recurring emphasis and preoccupations.

Here is the work of a Lutheran speaking from within his tradition. This needs to be remembered and to be emphasised. There is a certain narrowness of interest and presentation. Three of the essays deal with characteristic Lutheran topics. Others with difficulty move outside the traditional Lutheran frame of reference. Nevertheless, in intention and often in reality Ebeling stands with his theological predecessor in an overriding concern to take both Reformation theology and modern thought seriously and to set them in fruitful encounter.

He is a church historian turned *systematiker*. This has meant that for him the hermeneutic problem has been seen to be basic; and he understands the task which this poses as a grappling with the presentation of the Gospel to contemporary man. In turn this logically and inevitably commits him to the facing of the existing tension between theology and proclamation, and to the plotting of their necessary relationship and mutual interaction. The discussion is at its best when it wrestles with such themes.

The chapters I found most helpful and provocative were those on the significance of the critical historical method, the Word of God and hermeneutics, and the non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts. Ebeling ably expounds Bonhoeffer, and sets forth the basic presuppositions in the light of which his approach is to be understood. Theological thinking is concerned with Jesus Christ, the demand for intellectual honesty must be respected, and all depends on orientation towards the task of proclamation. From these presuppositions emerge the rules which must guide us as we

seek to interpret the Gospel. Christological interpretation, concrete interpretation, interpretation of faith—these are the necessary demands. All this is illuminating, and should set the student thinking furiously. So should the shrewd comment that to reject the claim of critical historical method is really to throw overboard justification by faith. "Let everything burn that will burn and without reservation await what proves itself unburnable, genuine, true." The Word alone is the basis of faith!

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<sup>1</sup> D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul*. Basil Blackwell, 35/-. 1964.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*. C.U.P., 55/-, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*. C.U.P., 63/-, 1964.

<sup>4</sup> Gerhard Ebeling, *Word and Faith*. S.C.M., 45/-. 1963.

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