

# KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*THE TRIBES OF YAHWEH* by Norman K. Gottwald. SCM Press, London, 1980. £12.95.

The press opinions of *1066 and all that*, it will be recalled, included "this slim volume..." (*The Bookworm*). Such a verdict will not be passed on *The Tribes of Yahweh*, a historical study of a rather different order, which has 916 pages and weighs 3½ lb. The idea of the paperback has undergone a drastic change.

Some immediate estimate of the nature of Gottwald's work can be obtained from the sub-title, 'A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.'. The book draws heavily on sociological theories and uses much of their jargon, so that, for example, we find a section entitled 'Yahwism as a Societal "Feedback" Servo-mechanism'; the stress on liberation gives a clue to the Marxist standpoint of the author; and the way of describing the date makes it clear that religious neutrality will be a prime concern of the book.

In the eyes of some potential readers one or other of these features may be sufficient to discourage any further sampling, and that would be a pity. It may be appropriate, therefore, to consider some of the characteristics of the book in more positive ways, before attempting any assessment. Gottwald's basic concern, as set out in the Preface, is to evaluate afresh the information available to us from every type of source about the rise of Israel, and to examine it in the light of as wide a range of modern historical, sociological and anthropological theories as possible. This means that, while the traditional methods of biblical study are not neglected, the social sciences play a much larger role than has been usual in Old Testament study. Some shrewd points are made in this connection right at the outset, in regard to the way in which—perhaps because of their own social origins—many biblical scholars have failed to come to terms with Israel as an ordinary society subject to the usual stresses and strains found in all societies.

After these preliminary remarks the first third of the book is largely devoted to the traditional concerns of biblical scholarship: an

examination of the nature of the relevant biblical material; an assessment of the current debate about the relation between primarily 'historical' and primarily 'cultic' contexts for the preservation of the traditions of earliest Israel. Detailed consideration is given to Joshua and Judges, and so the question is raised which of the various models for understanding Israel's presence in Canaan is most appropriate—the 'conquest' model (Albright, Bright), the 'immigration' model (Alt, Noth), or the 'revolt' model (Mendenhall). The values and weaknesses of each model are clearly analysed, but it is the picture of an internal revolt which is held to come closest to the available facts and which underlies the subsequent discussion.

The next section is devoted to a consideration of what constituted 'Israel', and at this point valuable sociological insights emerge. Sociologists have paid a good deal of attention to what is sometimes called parametric terminology, that is to say, the appropriate means of classifying the social structure of societies distant from our own. Whatever one's view of other aspects of Gottwald's thesis, his discussion of the various terms translated 'tribe', 'clan', 'father's house' and the like will repay careful study. Its strength lies in its careful analysis rather than in its positive conclusion, that the twelve-tribe theme can specifically be traced to the period of the united monarchy.

Various indications are given in this section that the usual understanding of the character of Israel as nomadic or semi-nomadic in origin is going to be brought into question, and an extended and extremely important section of the book is devoted to this issue. Indeed this may well prove to be the specific point concerning which greatest controversy will rage. Gottwald is emphatic that a true understanding of Israel can only be grasped through an analysis of the class structure of Canaanite society and not by positing successive waves of nomads emerging from the fringes of the desert. This position had already been outlined by Gottwald in his article 'Nomadism' in the *Supplement to the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*; here, of course, it is developed much more fully, with detailed

consideration of the *apiru*, whose rebellions, as described in, for example, the Amarna letters, are seen as essentially similar to those which constituted Israel. It may, however, be worth noting that the tone of Gottwald's discussion here seems to shift as it proceeds; at first pastoral nomadism is apparently rejected as in any way significant as a part of Israel's background, whereas later it is allowed a significant secondary role.

The use of sociological insights continues in the last part of the book, where Gottwald is insistent that attempts to explain religious practice without reference to their social context are misguided. The section is entitled: 'A New Egalitarian Canaanite Society; Liberated Israel vis-à-vis Indigenous Peoples', and the implications of this are summed up thus: "Israel's vehement and tenacious identity as one people under one God has its indisputable axis around an anti-feudal egalitarian social commitment" (p.491). That is to say, though certain distinctive features of Yahwism (including the name of Israel's God) may have been introduced by immigrant elements, such as Levitical groups whose earlier history included a sojourn in Egypt, there are no grounds for assuming that Israel as such was a group already existing outside the land: "Israel was a mutation of major proportions within Canaan" (p.502).

If this be so, against whom were the constant wars of early Israel directed? In order to answer this question there is a detailed analysis of all the biblical texts relating to war which are usually held to be early, together with an examination of the term *yoshevim*, usually translated 'inhabitants' or the like, but given the meaning 'leaders' by Gottwald in many more cases than has been usual. All this strengthens the conclusion that Israel's wars were not those of one ethnic group against another, still less of invaders against the native inhabitants of the land, but rather involved the rebellion of one stratum of society against its leaders. It is then possible to go on to discover from other texts how some 'Canaanites' (exemplified by Rahab) were incorporated into Israel, others (the inhabitants of Shechem and Jerusalem) remained neutral, and yet others became Israel's allies (the Gibeonites and the Kenites). The whole reconstruction is undeniably a neat picture, though too often it assumes a more

detailed knowledge of the history and its implications than is legitimate, and this is a point to which we shall need to return.

The last two sections of the book are also likely to arouse keen controversy among those who have stayed the course thus far. Their concern is more specifically with religious practice. First, there are severe criticisms of the methods of earlier biblical historians (Bright, Fohrer, even Mendenhall), for their excessive reliance on idealistic methods lacking in any serious sociological consideration. Then the claim is made that 'sociopolitical egalitarianism' must be seen as the appropriate model for Israel's religious distinctiveness, and to isolate this more precisely insights based upon Durkheim, Weber and Marx are used. The section ends with an outline of some ways in which our knowledge of emergent Israel can be enhanced by disciplines whose potential contributions have rarely been realised: new types of archaeology, botany, demography, and so on. It is an impressive yet at the same time a daunting prospect, which raises in acute form the question whether the object of our study is a body of literature or the history of a particular people.

With this tension in mind we reach the final section, 'Biblical Theology or Biblical Sociology?'. It is scarcely surprising that Gottwald maintains that many of the features claimed by the 'biblical theology movement' as demonstrating Israel's uniqueness will not stand up to detailed examination. His own suggestions follow those of Morton Smith, 'The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East' (JBL, 1952). (It would be instructive to arrange a debate between Gottwald and J.D. Smart, whose *Past Present and Future of Biblical Theology*, published shortly after Gottwald's work, adumbrates as desirable almost all those features which Gottwald so severely condemns.) After drawing attention to Israel's distinctive use of the 'high God paradigm' his exposition of the uniqueness of Israel's religion is couched in sociological terms, with particular emphasis on its differentiation between religion and sexuality, its rejection of involvement with the underworld, and its limitation of the claims of the priesthood and the demands of the sacrificial system. Finally a plea is made that attempts to read off current religious norms and values from ancient Israel's experience should be abandoned; rather

Israelite Yahwism has most to teach us in the way that it illuminates contemporary struggles for human freedom. Thus the book ends, as it began, by drawing out links between Christianity and Marxism.

The text is followed by appendices: 90 pages of notes, 5 indexes, and an epilogue commenting upon various relevant contributions to Gottwald's theme which appeared up to 1978, with particular appreciation of C.H.J. de Geus, *The Tribes of Israel*, some of whose conclusions anticipate those of Gottwald.

There are many important issues which have not even been touched upon in this outline, and a choice of points for comment must be even more selective. Precisely because of the wide-ranging character of the book, it is important to try to pinpoint the central issues; otherwise, like the review of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in terms of game-keeping technique, some basic considerations will be overlooked.

It seems therefore that the most important points being made by Gottwald can be considered under two heads. One concerns content, the other method. In terms of content, the heart of the matter must surely be the assertion, here argued through in detail for the first time, that Israel's origins should not be sought in a nomadic or semi-nomadic background. There can be no denying that many scholars who have shown a considerable degree of scepticism with regard to other aspects of Israel's self-understanding have simply accepted the idea of a nomadic origin without further question, and it is undeniable that in this area many of Gottwald's strictures are valid, particularly when he shows how reluctant biblical scholars have been to apply the insights of other disciplines to their material. At the same time the question must remain open whether he has given an entirely satisfactory account of the overwhelming testimony which the biblical material itself provides. Both the deliberate placing of Israel's past and that of her God in the Egypt experience, and also the constant hostility to things Canaanite, point to an awareness of an origin outside the promised land; indeed, the very idea of 'promised land' takes on different nuances if that promise is made to those who are already inhabitants of that land. In this respect it is curious that Gottwald makes no more than the

barest allusion to a development in the study of the Pentateuch which would have supported his case; that is, the literary analysis which has reached the conclusion that the theme of promise is a late one, influenced by the experience of exile.

Two further comments need to be made in this area. First, it would seem advisable that Gottwald should spell out more precisely to what extent he is prepared to allow transhumant pastoralism to be a formative factor in Israel's self-identification. At this point his argument is less clear than it is elsewhere, and it is not apparent whether the references to this element of a different life-style are intended simply as a sociological fact to be noted or are to be seen as a significant factor in the pre-history of Israel. Secondly, greater clarification needs to be given to the existence (or absence) of links between the wilderness experience (which Gottwald questions along the lines already indicated) and the 'exodus from Egypt' traditions which are recognised as having played a formative part in building up Israel's self-understanding.

The second basic issue raised by this massive work concerns method. Gottwald is at his most trenchant when he is criticising 'idealistic' biblical theologians and when he is upholding the importance of sociology as a necessary element in the study of ancient Israel. On the other hand, there are scholars, themselves competent in sociological methods, who would question the applicability of sociology to such study. Thus C.S. Rodd has asked, "Should we not be well advised, then, to leave the past to the historian, albeit the historian who is aware of sociological factors, and limit the sociologist to explaining the present by means of the ever-advancing future?" ('Max Weber and Ancient Judaism', *SJT* 32, 1979, p.409). It may perhaps be held that Gottwald has effectively answered this doubt by the very scope and extent of his achievement; his use of sociological categories has indeed thrown light into some very obscure corners.

But then another question arises. What is the subject of study? Is it the body of sacred writings revered as 'Tanak' by Jews and as 'Old Testament' by Christians? Or is it the history of ancient Israel? Gottwald's study poses the problem in two ways. First, there is the difficulty which led to Rodd's doubts whether sociology could

properly be applied to the study of ancient Israel, that is, the paucity of our assured historical knowledge. Detailed though his study is, Gottwald never gives specific attention to the question of our historical knowledge of the period under discussion. If, as seems probable, our evidence concerning the 'judges period' (if that be an appropriate description) and of the early monarchy is that which was available to and seemed valuable to the purposes of the Deuteronomistic historian of the seventh or sixth century, is this adequate for the kind of detailed reconstruction we are offered here? To take but one example, Gottwald makes much of the Philistine threat as a major cause in the coming to statehood of Israel; yet the nature of the Philistine threat, highly 'theologised' in I Samuel, remains extremely elusive to detailed sociological and archaeological examination.

More basically, though, Gottwald's book raises the same issue as that posed by the Hayes-Miller volume, *Israelite and Judaeon History*, one which will no doubt come to the fore with increasing insistence. Detailed historical analysis, backed up as it is by a variety of related disciplines, inevitably takes us further and further away from the Bible as a collection of 'history-like' writings held sacred by religious communities. For a long time it seemed as if greater knowledge of history re-inforced our approach to the biblical texts, and lent weight to the conviction of Judaism and Christianity as 'historical religions'. But what has long been recognised for Genesis 1-11 and more recently for the rest of the patriarchal traditions, is now seen to be part of a much wider problem. The kind of analysis so successfully carried out by Gottwald throws great light on many aspects of ancient history; but the more successfully this is done, the more acute becomes the problem of the relation of such an achievement to the biblical inheritance.

Richard Coggins

*GROUNDWORK OF BIBLICAL STUDIES* by W. David Stacey. Epworth Press, 1979. 448pp. £6.

Authors and publishers always have reason for self-congratulation when they recognise a gap

and manage to fill it adequately. David Stacey has done just that. His book is aimed primarily at intending Methodist Local Preachers, but it will serve as an admirable introduction for anyone beginning the serious study of the Bible. Its genre is well represented in German by the type of book known as *Bibel-kunde*, but there appears to be nothing quite like it in English. Clearly organised sections, between which cross-reference is easy, introduce the student to such background information as is needed for the intelligent study of the Bible, outline the methods of biblical criticism, and provide brief introductions to the contents and characteristic problems associated with each book. Of 'Introduction' in the conventional sense there is deliberately not a great deal; that is envisaged as the next stage of more detailed study.

It would of course be easy to find criticisms of a book of this kind where clarity and conciseness may be more important than precise accuracy. Historical outlines present a particular difficulty when set out briefly, for the relevant background must be provided along with the recognition that much historical-type material in both testaments is highly stylised; and the reader may often get the feeling that the historical picture is presented more confidently than the evidence warrants. So too the brief presentation of the four-document theory of the Pentateuch could be misleading in some of its assertions. But this kind of comment is really excessively carping; the whole aim of the book is that it should be a groundwork, leading on to more detailed study. Readers already familiar with some aspects of biblical study will recognise the influence of David Stacey's wife, better known as Professor Morna Hooker, in some parts (e.g. the vigorous rejection of 'Paul's missionary journeys'), but on the whole the Old Testament section is more successful than the New; perhaps the material lends itself more readily to this type of treatment, whereas New Testament scholarship inevitably becomes involved in principles of interpretation. All told then a valuable introduction to a neglected field.

Only two criticisms remain: an excessive number of misprints has been allowed to slip through, most of them fortunately unlikely to cause confusion; and bibliographical information is excessively limited. Two or three suggestions for further reading in each main

## A SYSTEM OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

David S. Cairns

*Although this book was written more than thirty-five years ago, it is appearing at just the right moment. For this distinguished theologian, author of THE FAITH THAT REBELS, was one of the most positive thinkers Scotland has produced. After the years of Barth, Brunner, Pannenberg and Moltmann, the issues which engaged Principal Cairns are being discussed again with new enthusiasm. Limp edition. £3.75. ISBN 0 7152 0434 3.*



**THE SAINT ANDREW PRESS: 121 George Street, Edinburgh.**

section would have been a welcome addition. But overall, the tiro theological student will find this a valued and reliable companion in his early days of study.

Richard Coggins

**THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT** by E. Wurthwein. SCM Press, 1980, pp.xviii, 244. £8.50.

The original edition of Wurthwein's *Der Text des Alten Testaments* dates from as long ago as 1952, when it was produced with the specific purpose of helping the student to use the third edition of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (BHK). A translation by Peter Ackroyd of the book in its original form was published in 1957. Fresh discoveries and new insights, and in particular the publication of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) have led to successive revisions of the German original, which has now reached a fourth edition, and it is this which has been newly translated by E.F. Rhodes.

This outline seems necessary for the proper evaluation of the present book. It is essentially the same book as that of 1952, with the advantages and disadvantages which that implies. On the one hand it is helpful to have new discoveries placed in the context of existing viewpoints; on the other hand this can sometimes imply that fresh developments are recorded with less modification of the original text than might have been expected.

With due allowance made for these characteristics, it can safely be said that reference to this handbook will certainly help to initiate the Hebraist into the mysteries of BHK or BHS. The four main sections deal with the transmission of the Hebrew text, primary versions (LXX, Targums, Syriac), secondary versions and the principles of textual criticism. The whole enterprise is made vivid by the addition of 49 plates, some newly added in this edition, and all of a much improved quality of reproduction. In all, this can strongly be recommended as a valuable guide for those who have mastered the elementary grammar and are embarking on more

technical study of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Richard Coggins

*PAUL: CRISIS IN GALATIA. A STUDY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY* by George Howard. (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 35). Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp.xii, 114. £5.95.

Paul's first enunciation of the doctrine of justification by grace was made in the context of a struggle in which the identity and beliefs of his opponents, and the exact nature of the issues over which he was at odds with them, remain uncertain. Professor Howard has examined, mostly in considerable detail, several of the less noticed grounds for this uncertainty. He has found a key to many of the problems underlying the text in a series of misunderstandings. The judaizing Jewish-Christians in Galatia (Howard underestimates the force of the objections of Munck, Mussner and others to this traditional identification) were not, in fact, 'opponents' of Paul at all, for they imagined that his message implied the circumcision of Gentile converts (5.11); Paul's failure to arrange this in the Galatians' case had been merely tactical and temporary. But this only reflected a much wider misunderstanding, for (and this is Howard's central thesis) it was not until the visit to Jerusalem recorded at 2.1-10 that Paul revealed to the 'pillar apostles' that his call had included a command to evangelize the Gentiles with a gospel free from reference to the Law. Again, Peter's behaviour at Antioch is explained as arising from his misunderstanding of directions from James (p.42).

Professor Howard has shown us how easy it is to read the evidence in terms of a preconceived confidence that one has grasped what must have happened, and to fail to ask questions which the text, carefully scrutinized, makes it imperative to answer if one can. But his own reading does not always convince. Few, for example, will agree that in chapters 1 and 2 of this letter Paul's relationship, of dependence or the reverse, with the 'pillar apostles' is at best of only secondary importance to him. And to say, further, that he was 'in all probability... 'disinterested' [*sic*; read 'uninterested'] in church

polity' (p.80) is to offer a somewhat curious assessment.

Most of what Howard has to say that is new is contained in the first two chapters, dealing with the reconstruction of events in Jerusalem, Antioch and Galatia. In the remaining two, on justification and the Law respectively, he gives the impression of straining to make (virtually) one new proposal: Paul saw Law as dividing and justification by grace as uniting the nations of mankind. No doubt the propositions Paul is held to have felt so strongly are true, but Howard heavily overemphasizes some parts of the text, and his arguments contain much special pleading.

The MS of this book was completed in 1976, and Howard had thus been unable to use J.W. Drane's *Paul. Libertine or Legalist?* (SPCK, 1975), which has material relevant to the discussion of the setting of Galatians; and Mussner's great commentary in the Herder series (1974; regrettably, no translation is yet available) has been only occasionally referred to. Delayed publication has also left the chapter on Law devoid of reference to E.P. Sanders' indispensable *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (SCM Press). Nevertheless, it is a pity that a work on this subject should appear without its author's having been able to make use of some significant recent contributions to Pauline research (another of which has now been published with the same date as Howard's book, namely Robert Jewett's *Dating Paul's Life*: this is a bold but well-documented proposal to arrive at a firm 'absolute' chronology on the basis of four datable events in Paul's career, and inevitably has some bearing on the history presented in Galatians).

C.J.A. Hickling

*STUDYING THE NEW TESTAMENT* by Morna D. Hooker. Epworth Press, 1979. 224pp. £3.25.

Most readers of this *Review* will welcome another new book from Professor Hooker; this time, not so much for themselves as for warm commendation to others. The book is an elementary introduction to the books of the NT designed for Methodist Local Preachers in training, and would make admirable reading for individuals or groups undertaking serious bible-

study with little or no previous preparation and not much time. Teachers should certainly also order this book for use, at least in the early stages, by 'A'-level candidates. With great clarity and some verve, and with occasional expressions of the kind once heard in 6C ('the evangelists did not work like stamp-collectors'), Professor Hooker sets out briefly what might be called the 'English consensus' view of each NT book (as opposed to the German or American one—Colossians is Pauline and the word 'gnostic' does not seem to appear); then, in each case, notes which provide *multum in parvo* are provided for selected passages. The introductory material on Paul as pastor (pp.141ff) and as theologian (pp.156ff) is particularly good, as might have been expected; but the level is consistent throughout (unless perhaps one might register a trace of disappointment over the Fourth Gospel). Occasionally we hear a little of another Morna Hooker (e.g. on the Transfiguration narrative in Mark as evincing a Moses-typology, p.52, and on the significance of the *lutron*-saying at Mk 10.45, p.58, while the inconsistency of the Lukan resurrection-appearance about the materiality of Christ's body is not often noted), but on the whole original or speculative material has rightly been excluded. Professor Hooker identifies Gal. 2 with Acts 11.30 and 12.25, which would not evoke universal agreement, and she seems interestingly reticent about Q: can she be a convert to Michael Goulder? However, nothing else suggests that this is so. Professor Hooker will have been vexed to find that, when reading her proofs, she overlooked (p.99) the charming description (anticipated, in a different form, by Billy Graham) of Lk 6.17-26 as 'beautitudes'.

C.J.A. Hickling

*THE EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS* by Jean-Francois Collange. Translated from the First French Edition by A.W. Heathcote. Epworth. 1979. pp.viii + 159. £5.

Paul's letter to the Macedonian believers is an epitome of the content and style of his letter-writing as a whole—intimacy of address, argument by persuasive appeal and personal

testimony, intolerance of error and faction, and a range of concerns running from mundane questions of financial policy to profound insights in theology and christology. This commentary by J.-F. Collange, translated with clarity and lucidity by A.W. Heathcote, is to be commended for its succinct but detailed exposition both of the letter itself and of the issues it raises in relation to Paul's achievement generally.

Perhaps in imitation of Paul, Collange does not shy away from controversy, arguing (a) that the letter as we have it is a compilation of three letters, (b) that the first two (i.e. 4.10-20 and 1.1-3.1a + 4.21-23) were written during an imprisonment in Ephesus (not Caesarea or Rome, the more common alternatives) and the third (i.e. 3.1b-4.1 + 4.8-9) after release from prison, and (c) that the first two letters, at least, were written relatively early, before 1 Corinthians, with the third letter ante-dating 2 Corinthians. In identifying Paul's adversaries at Philippi, particularly in the polemic of 3.2ff., Collange points to close parallels with 2 Corinthians (esp. 10-13), and argues that the opponents were Jewish-Christian itinerant preachers of the same ilk as the troublemakers (from Paul's point of view) in Corinth. Certainly, the recurrence of the issue of Paul's financial support—support which he had accepted (reluctantly?) from the Macedonians but refused from the Corinthians and Thessalonians—in both sets of correspondence, gives credence to this position.

Among numerous valuable suggestions, the following may be noted. (1) In the introduction (1.1), Paul does not refer to himself as *apostolos*, but links himself with Timothy as a *doulos* ('slave'), precisely the term of humiliation applied to Christ in 2.7. (2) the *episkopoi* and *diakono*i in 1.1 are best understood functionally. Paul 'was not thinking in terms of self-sufficient structures into which men could be fitted' (p.40). Their appearance here may be linked with the organization of support for Paul. In any case, an early foundation would explain the greater degree of rationalization at Philippi than elsewhere (cf. 4.15ff.), a point not made by Collange. (3) Underlying Paul's self-defence in 1.12-26 is an initiative he had taken to seek his liberation from prison by revealing his status as a Roman citizen (cf. Acts 16.37 ff.), an initiative

which had not met with a totally positive response amongst the Philippian Christians. 'Some may have accused him of cowardice and made it clear that the true vocation for a disciple of Christ was martyrdom.' (p.9). This is imaginative, but problematic: *ta kat' eme* in 1.12 refers more obviously to Paul's imprisonment and in the Acts narrative, which is strongly apologetic on questions of rights and citizenship (and therefore renders dubious the historicity of the events in 16.35-39), the issue of citizenship is raised only subsequent to Paul's release. Furthermore, it is anachronistic to appeal to a martyrdom-complex so early in Church history. (4) The interpretation of the famous hymn in 2.5-11 requires recognition of three factors: first, it must be seen as a unitary whole; second, it is primarily a Christian hymn; third, its position in the letter must be taken into account. On this basis, Collange suggests that Paul is not presenting an ethical pattern so much as he is reminding the disunited believers of the foundation which unites them as a community, namely Christ's Lordship under God, a lordship established by way of the crucifixion. (5) Finally, though by no means exhaustively, Collange recognizes Paul's application of sacramental terminology beyond the realms of cultic activity (cf. 2.17, 25, 30; 4.18). The implications of this are no less significant than those which can be drawn from Paul's description of the two women Eudia and Syntyche as his 'fellow-workers' (*synergoi*) in 4.3.

The commentary contains extensive bibliographies throughout (until 1973) and several valuable excursus. Its concise exposition makes it of particular value to students and teachers of Christian origins.

Stephen Barton

*HEBREWS AND HERMENEUTICS: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament example of biblical interpretation* By Graham Hughes. SNTS Monograph Series 36. Cambridge University Press, 1979. 218pp. £7.75.

The epistle to the Hebrews is an intellectually taxing document, and was probably intended to be so, for the author writes to stir up those

whom he deems to be intellectually immature (5.11-14). Dr Hughes believes that the author had already worked out his theology for his own satisfaction, and now comes to relate it to a particular situation. The key to his thought is found in his prologue, whose subject is God's speech: because God's, always the same; yet because spoken differently in different times, not the same. This pattern of continuity: discontinuity is reproduced in other congruous patterns. The author shares the characteristic New Testament eschatological tension between a sense of what is complete and fulfilled and what is unfulfilled and yet to come. Insofar as crisis still lies in the future, God's word remains the same: exhortation, warning and call for decision; but insofar as that crisis may be faced with confidence on the basis of promises received, God's word is different from what it has been in a past age. So Christians may be seen to stand with Israel, or over against Israel, depending upon the eschatological focus. Congruous too, and related, is the pattern of the author's presentation of Christ. He is both pioneer of faith, and priest. As pioneer, he belongs in the continuous history of the people of God who look forward believingly; as priest he brings in the eschatological realities in a new and once-for-all act. All this means that the author's appeal to the Old Testament may be to point to continuity or to discontinuity, but this is neither an inconsistent nor arbitrary use of it.

Or is it? For how is it decided which passages should be used in which sense? Dr Hughes rightly states that to read the Old Testament in relation to Christian affirmations is ultimately a matter of the faith of the interpreter, but he also propounds a notion of "permission". An interpretation that is not absolutely precluded by the text may be deemed to be permitted. Thus Hebrews' reading of the Old Testament in terms both of the continuity of expectation and the discontinuity of fulfilment is "permitted" because "the Old Testament writings manifest, and address themselves to, a situation which is predominantly one of expectation" (p.133). We are on shaky ground here. The ground is also shaky when Dr Hughes comes to relate his understanding of Hebrews' principles of interpretation to contemporary hermeneutical discussion, on the basis that this author has already faced the problem of interpretation over a

temporal and cultural gulf. The analogy will not do. The author of Hebrews sense of the past as different is not of it as different *qua* past, the sense that (rightly or wrongly) bedevils contemporary hermeneutics, but the sense of difference between those who look for a city (as in chapter 11) and those who have come to it (chapter 12).

To read Hebrews again through Dr Hughes's "frames", as he calls them, is a rewarding experience, but one it takes time to achieve. The argument is conducted with laborious painstaking, and it is worth reading at an early stage the review on pp.101ff. in order to discover where it is heading. 142 pages of text are followed by 54 pages of notes. It is presumably of no use to protest to publishers about the loss of the footnote, but if this is to be the format in future it is incumbent on authors to present any material or argument they deem to be important to the reader in such a way that he does not constantly lose the thread by cross-referring nor feel obliged (however good it may be for him) to read the book twice!

Sophie Laws

*ORIGEN: CONTRA CELSUM. Translated with an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick.* Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, London, etc. First paperback edition 1980. xl + 531pp. £27.50 hardback, £9.95 paperback.

Chadwick's 1953 edition remains a classic, and cannot for English readers be superseded by Borret's Greek-French edition in *Sources chretiennes*. The corrected reprint of 1965 is now again corrected in the light of more recent scholarship and papyrus finds which affect the text. Bibliography and Introduction are unchanged. Readers are referred to Crouzel's bibliography and Borret's edition. The only significant changes to the text are listed on p.vi, and affect only four pages. Hard-pressed libraries will not think it necessary to get the new edition if they have the earlier. A paperback edition is welcome. This classic of Christian apologetic, enshrining a vital moment in the amalgam of Biblical and Platonic thought which constitutes Christian theology, ought to be widely read, especially when so lucidly and magisterially presented as Chadwick does it. But because a

book is worth almost any price, that does not mean that publishers should pitch it high. It was tactless to leave the £15.00 sticky label in my review copy when the publication price on the slip is £27.50. And even the paperback is scarcely cheap enough to tempt the student or lecturer with access to a photocopier. If publishers are to defeat unlawful copying, they ought to use modern technology to make books so cheap that it is not worth the effort to defraud them. Nevertheless, anyone with an ounce of theological interest will soon find he has invested his £9.95 well if he gets a copy.

S.G. Hall

*UNDERSTANDING EASTERN CHRISTIANITY* by George Every. SCM Press Ltd., London 1980. Pp. xviii + 137. £3.25.

George Every is the author of a well-known and standard study on *The Byzantine Patriarchate 451-1204* (2nd ed., London, 1962) and of a valuable smaller work entitled *Misunderstandings between East and West* (London, 1965). Both of these are required reading for students of Byzantine church history and of the schism between the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Students, or even more advanced scholars, who look for further enlightenment from his latest book may find themselves dazzled if not baffled. It began as a series of lectures delivered in 1977 at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome under the auspices of the newly-founded Centre for Indian and Inter-Religious Studies, and it comes equipped with an Introduction by A. Mundadan CMI, a specialist on the history of Eastern Christianity in India. In its first edition, published at Bangalore in 1978, much of what now constitutes Chapter 1 was reserved for an appendix on 'Rome and the Christian East'. It is hard to see why it now takes pride of place in the book since, interesting though it is, it is almost all to do with the Russian Orthodox Church since 1905, while the following chapters rarely venture beyond the early middle ages. The final chapter 9, on 'The Holy Places', describes the long and complex study of the agreements to disagree among the various Christian communions of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The meat, or perhaps the haggis, of the book lies in Chapters 2 to 8

which treat of such topics as merchants, monks and missionaries in the Near and Far East, the Monophysite and Dyothelite controversies, Christians under Muslim rule and the Impact of the Crusades. The importance of Alexandria in the early church is emphasised in Chapter 3; and Chapter 4 has some fascinating observations on the different interpretations of the Kingship of Christ in Egypt and Babylon, in what are commonly, though the author believes misleadingly, called the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools. The book is wide-ranging, perhaps too much so, and its style is often Herodotean, enlivened by digressions. It is full of fresh insights, new evaluations and bright ideas. But it is doubtful whether all of them will be acceptable to those in the know; and those who are not in the know about the orthodoxy and heterodoxy of the early church may well wish that the author of this lively book had not so readily presumed that his readers would share his own fluency in the basic facts and sources on which to build an understanding of Eastern Christianity. It may be a *hortus deliciarum* for specialists but it is not a book for beginners.

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*THE CHURCH IN A SECULARISED SOCIETY*  
by Roger Aubert and others. xxxi + 63pp. of illustrations. Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978. £16.

This fifth and final volume in the collective international history of the Roman Catholic Church that has been appearing since 1964 under the general title *The Christian Centuries* covers the period from 1848 until the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. Of the English edition it is the third volume to appear; volumes three and four are still to come. The three last volumes of Hubert Jedin's *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte* cover the same period in well over twice the number of pages; unless they find a translator, which seems unlikely, this one will stand as the most useful introduction for English readers in search of a survey of the period and a guide to further study. The remark of the general editor and principal contributor, Roger Aubert, in the introduction, to the effect that 'there is no question of our production's

...serving as a university textbook' seems unduly modest; perhaps it indicates higher expectations of first-degree students in the continental part of the Old World than in off-shore and transatlantic places of learning.

The first part surveys the principal events and themes from 1848 to 1914, parts three to five deal respectively with the Anglo-Saxon world, Latin America, the missions and the Eastern Churches in communion with Rome, and a final part studies the general affairs of the Church from 1914 to 1965. The pages on England, which received the approval and benefited from the advice of the late Dom David Knowles, are particularly good on the nineteenth century, with their penetrating comments on some of the major personalities; those on the twentieth century are decidedly thin. Mgr Aubert is inclined to accept English Catholics' own rather negative view of themselves; one finds a more thorough appreciation in *Le Catholicisme en Angleterre* by S. Dayras and C. d'Haussy (Paris, 1970), mentioned in the bibliography. Continental interest in English Catholicism, long eclipsed, is now beginning to show signs of recovery. Catholicism in the U.S.A., in a chapter by John Tracy Ellis, receives deeper as well as more lively treatment.

In the context of the intellectual history of the period, attention should have been paid to the Constitution *Dei Filius*, on faith and reason, of Vatican I; papal infallibility has been allowed to overshadow the first part of the Council's work. Mgr Aubert's own masterly study of this theme, *Le Probleme de l'Acte de Foi* (1969<sup>4</sup>), deserved a mention, and could in fact have provided a unifying thread in the treatment of developments in thought.

The press photographs, cartoons and caricatures printed by way of illustration serve to show, with one or two honourable exceptions, how difficult it is to make elderly clergymen look appealing. But they provide a fascinating extra, absent from the French edition.

Specialists can always find points to criticize in a manual of this kind. It is neither a brilliant essay nor a work of research, changing our understanding. Its merit consists in its scope and in its information; as an introduction and a work of reference, enlarging horizons, it will no doubt long hold the field.

Michael Richards

*THE TWO HORIZONS. NEW TESTAMENT HERMENEUTICS AND PHILOSOPHICAL DESCRIPTION, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HEIDEGGER, BULTMANN, GADAMER AND WITTGENSTEIN* by Anthony C. Thistleton. Paternoster Press, 1980. xx + 484pp. £15.00.

It is a feature of contemporary theological studies that there occurs in them at least as much talk about doing theology, interpreting the New Testament, etc., as there is actual theology and interpretation. It is a sign of our current disorder and lack of confidence. But, given that this is the order of the day, it is important that we should be aware of what is at stake, and in this long study Anthony Thistleton, of the University of Sheffield, examines not only the major twentieth century contributions to the study of the theory of interpretation of the New Testament but also the work of philosophers he believes to be relevant to the issues. The book begins with five chapters which outline the scope of the study, argue for the need of interpreters to face philosophical questions, and sketch the historical background to the debate. This opening section already indicates the vast range of interests and learning that has gone into the book.

But the meat of the study is a detailed account of the four thinkers named in the sub-title. All are examined closely, with the latter two being argued to be of more positive assistance to the New Testament scholar than the former. Bultmann in particular receives much criticism for his dependence upon a Neo-Kantian dualism of fact and value, as well as for his limiting of the meaning of the texts to a world of private experience. (Here Wittgenstein's critique of private language is brought to bear with some effect). The last main chapters argue that Wittgenstein's insights can be used to understand the sort of questions that are involved in interpreting difficult passages from Paul, and thus the practical value of the exercise demonstrated.

The chief value of this study is its learning, and the sheer amount of information that can be obtained from it about a debate that has been continuing ever since the beginning of critical studies of the Bible. Its argument is clear, detailed and progressive, despite the fact that

inevitably there must be some doubt about the homogeneity of all the material that Dr Thistleton marshals. But the main question to be asked is not so much about the book as about the whole hermeneutical movement. In raising it, I do not wish to question either the importance of the basic concern to grapple with philosophical issues or the author's refusal to cut short the whole debate by appeal to the Holy Spirit: 'the Holy Spirit may be said to work *through* human understanding, and not usually, if ever, through processes which bypass the considerations discussed under the heading of hermeneutics' (p.92). Rather, the chief query is this. How far may we speak about language in almost total abstraction from the objects of that language? Admittedly, it is not the intention of this work to neglect the interrelation of language and reality, as, for example, when the author criticises Nineham's notion of the cultural setting of the Bible. But the discussion of Wittgenstein exposes the real nerve. Running through it is a distinction between 'grammatical' statements—i.e. those in which a biblical writer attempts to change the way his readers understand a word like 'faith' or 'justification'—and those which 'give information'. It can be argued that, here one Neo-Kantian dualism has been replaced by another, at least as questionable: that between cognitive and non-cognitive assertions. For while it can be agreed that many of the biblical passages he considers do serve the function of revising our understanding of concepts, is it not so that through them we may better know the object to which they point us, God and his ways toward us? Must there, in other words, always be a choice between understanding or insight and information?

The problem can be put in another way. Dr Thistleton at one point says that he 'cannot wholly accept C.E. Braaten's claim that the new hermeneutic is basically a return to Schleiermacher' (p.344), along with the subjectivism that it presumably involves. But the claim is likely to continue to be made, because the object of hermeneutics' concern is more the text than that to which the text is concerned to point us. Vague references to 'history' and 'life-context' do not obviate this central difficulty, particularly in view of the fact that both of these are often construed in a very subjectivist manner. That is to say, unless more attention is

paid to the theological question of *this* text all the talk about texts in general will mislead more than it will assist.

Colin Gunton

*A WORKING FAITH* by John Habgood.  
London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980.  
xiv + 193pp. £4.95.

In the century since the appointment of Lightfoot to the Bishoprick in 1879, Durham has had an almost unbroken succession of bishops distinguished for scholarship and a creditable contribution to the thinking and active life of the nation. The present bishop, John Habgood, stands firmly in that succession. He turned early to Theology from an established academic career in physiology; he served his apprenticeship in moral reasoning in a small inter-disciplinary group, meeting in Westminster, of which Ian Ramsey—later to become himself Bishop of Durham—was the intellectual centre; now he draws on these combined experiences to continue the tradition, both as the centre of new inter-disciplinary groups meeting in the North East of England, and as teacher, writer, lecturer, preacher, and broadcaster in his own person. *A Working Faith* is a collection of twenty pieces, occasioned by this activity, on Science, Medicine and Ethics. If one looks in such matters for a perceptive selection and arrangement of relevant empirical features, for a firm indication of relevant theological and philosophical principle, for a calm and reasoned consideration of each in the light of the other, for balance and caution where facts, interpretation and inference are all matters on which serious commentators disagree, and, finally, for clarity of style, one could not find a better model in contemporary English writing, ecclesiastical or academic.

In Part I, Science and Faith, the outstanding pieces are one on what has happened to evolutionary theories since Darwin and “a rejected radio script” entitled “Computerized Values”. In the first, changes in the scientific understanding of evolution are shown to make compatibility with theological understanding easier, more credible: an evolutionary account of the origin of the soul—of man’s ability to respond to God—becomes possible; the concept

of randomness in evolutionary response seems to lessen the grounds for imputing evil to the Creator. Scientists and theologians are alike in their awed enquiry into “making all things new”. In the second piece, a review of *The Biological Origins of Human Values* in which G.E. Pugh argues that some basic human values are built into us biologically, below the level of choice or decision, Habgood explores how fact and value are to be assessed together, with some pertinent observations on the tradition of natural law.

In Part II, The Ethical Dimension in Science and Technology, the dominant theme is nuclear technology and energy policies studied in relation to a Christian understanding of the nature of man and of human society. The analysis of estimated social, cultural and political consequences of nuclear development is well done. There is every reason for caution; and though I do not share Habgood’s reluctance to see Britain advance as rapidly as may be to the fast breeder reactor—I believe the bolder way may be the safer in the end—there can be no disagreement with him on the ethical imperatives which must accompany the development of new energy potentials, whether fast or slow.

In Part III, on Medical Ethics, we can follow the Christian statesman at work where he ought to be, on platforms offered to him by such bodies as the Royal Society of Health, the Royal Society of Medicine, a Medical Group in a teaching hospital, or a working group set up by the local Regional Health Authority. The outstanding pieces—since we must select—are, first, an essay on The Christian Tradition in Medical Ethics written originally for the *Dictionary of Medical Ethics*<sup>1</sup>; it is a beautifully clear exposition of method in ethics, just to both empirical features and theological data. Going with it—and passing over the routine exercises in euthanasia, contraceptives for children, experiments on human beings, and the like—are the products of group work on Prolonging Life for the Defective Newborn, and Screening (i.e. routinely, not simply examining mothers at risk) for Neural Tube Defects. Here again the interplay of technical data with ethical theory and theological truth is exemplary. The paper on Cloning distinguishes usefully between fiction and foreseeable possibility; and the address on Social Attitudes Towards

Sexually Transmitted Diseases offers a firm challenge to a stance of professional neutrality which masks a timid indifference to that moral cohesion which constitutes a human society.

The book is ideal for those who want to begin to think seriously about social ethics, and for those who want to keep up. Both groups of readers will learn from it a method, and a persuasion to develop it, appropriate to whatever level of study or of teaching they may be called upon to pursue. The Bishoprick has not failed this generation.

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<sup>1</sup>A.S. Duncan, G.R. Dunstan & R.B. Welbourn. Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977. 2nd edn enlarged and revised, Spring 1981.

*LONGEST JOURNEY: NOTES ON CHRISTIAN MATURITY* by John Dalrymple. DLT 1979.

Nothing that flows from the pen of Jock Dalrymple can be ignored and its certain fruitfulness is built-in. The short autobiographical first chapter on *Conversion*—with the omission of the word “Catholic” from the phrase “a conventual Catholic schooling”—could have been written by an Evangelical and the centrality of an experience of Christ is the theme of the greater part of the book. The sections on *Prayer* and *Reflection* are quite admirable, although one wishes that he had eschewed such cacophonous words as “interiority” and “internalization”.

He avoids the use of the individualistic (pietistic?) expression “private prayer” and prefers “personal prayer”, which never loses sight of the community dimension, however

long the solitary journey inwards “to that still point in the centre where you are most simply yourself. We all have this still centre, but we do not often visit it consciously”. Yet God is already there waiting for us. His recommendations on the possibility of prayer at all sorts of odd times are excellent and, as with all illustrative material throughout, rich in appropriate “modern instances”.

All this is so splendid that it seems ungracious to criticise any part of a book which one would willingly give to many enquirers and with safety to most. But there is one serious reservation arising from the otherwise superb chapter on *Contemplation* as an aspect of mature prayer: his use of the word “passivity”—seven times in one paragraph (pp.39/40)! This could be a dangerous word to employ. It suggests, at least, the quietism which may be lurking behind the folded curtains of contemplation. True, he expounds it in the sense of “receptivity”, but perhaps that is not so much a synonym as a real differentiation, as Dr Mascall perceives in *Grace and Glory* (p.31): “In contemplation we are not strictly speaking *passive*, but *receptive*”.

The last chapter on *The Journey Outwards* is somehow less satisfactory than the others and seems to be written for a different audience or even a different book. The professional “pastoralia”—the “externalization”—does not flow easily from the previous six chapters and perhaps would have been better as Appendix B, with the last words of Chapter 6 as the conclusion of the whole matter: “Once we have entered upon union with God in our hearts both the journey outwards and the journey inwards become an endless song of wonder... Our whole life sings to God of his glory, because we have let go inside ourselves.”

Donald Nicholson