

# Book Reviews/Revue des Livres/ Buchbesprechungen

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**Oskar Skarsaune*****Incarnation – Myth or Fact?***

(tr. from the Norwegian by Trygve R. Skarsten).  
St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1991,  
134 pp., \$14.95 (paperback).

**SUMMARY**

Now that Bultmann's existential restatement of Christology has crumbled and Oriental notions of man's quasi-divinity are invading the West more scholars are devoting attention to the New Testament doctrine of once-for-all divine incarnation in Jesus Christ.

Efforts to derive the New Testament doctrine from a non-biblical environment are wholly unpersuasive, Skarsaune contends. The Christian doctrine of the incarnation of the Logos was not a late evolutionary superimposition of Greek or Hellenistic thought. Nor was it derived from the prevalent Jewish view of Messiah. Instead, it arose in a climate that would have considered divine incarnation in Jesus an ontological impossibility.

The New Testament copes with two views that are incompatible with Christian incarnation-doctrine. One is the Jewish concept of a strictly human being divinely chosen as Messiah; the other, the Greek anti-mythology philosophy that declares that God cannot suffer or be powerless.

Insofar as we view the oldest incarnation texts in the New Testament in an Old Testament background, that background sharply distinguishes Creator and created reality. The New Testament doctrine was therefore as offensive to such Hebrew thought as it was to Greek philosophical conceptions.

The central conception of the New Testament, Skarsaune contends, is that Christ was the (pre-existent) agent in creation. The Old Testament had used Wisdom, Word and Spirit of God as more than personification. The transfer of Wisdom to Jesus gave the conception new significance.

Jesus had affirmed his personal authority in respect to rabbinic tradition, prophetic inspiration and the Law, and the forgiveness of sins also. He depicted himself as the incarnation of Wisdom. The background for the view of a personally pre-existent and incarnate Messiah lies in the Old Testament and Jewish discussions of the Wisdom of God.

A variety of views of Messiah existed among Jews in Jesus' time. But the resurrection of Jesus linked messianic confession with the confession of Jesus as Lord of the living and the dead. The oldest confession declares Jesus to be both Messiah and the incarnation of Wisdom.

Skarsaune finds in the New Testament or apostolic fathers no trace whatever of a conflict between Hebrew monotheism and Christian faith in Jesus' divinity. Long before Jesus' time Judaism spoke 'of "personified" (hypostatized) aspects of God serving as "agents" or "acting authorities" for God' (pp.47f.). What was scandalous was

not an implied plurality within the divine essence, but 'the overstepping of the boundary between God and humanity which the incarnation implied' (p.48).

Yet one may ask whether the controversy in John 5:17f does not imply that monotheism was an issue – that is, not only the Nazarene's self-affirmation of divine prerogatives, but the claim also of ontological equality with the Father in the Godhead.

Skarsaune views the Chalcedonian Definition with respect, but thinks it may serve as 'the prelude to a new phase in Christological controversy'. 'The Bultmann myth', he says, 'has disintegrated and virtually disappeared from debate', and the search for 'myths' paralleling claims made for Jesus has been fruitless (p.132). Behind the incarnation-Christology lies the identity of Jesus' I 'with the Wisdom or Logos of God, which is identical with God's own salvific and creative intention through which the world was created' (p.134).

**RÉSUMÉ**

Maintenant que la reformulation existentialiste de la christologie par Bultmann s'est effondrée, et que les notions orientales soutenant la quasi divinité de l'homme envahissent l'occident, d'avantage de théologiens portent leur attention sur la doctrine néo-testamentaire de l'incarnation divine, une fois pour toutes, en Jésus-Christ.

Skarsaune affirme que tous les efforts pour tirer de l'environnement non biblique les doctrines du Nouveau Testament ne sont pas convaincants. La doctrine chrétienne de l'incarnation du Logos n'est pas une addition tardive, surimposée au christianisme originel par l'influence de la pensée grecque ou hellénistique. Elle ne dérive pas non plus des conceptions juives dominantes, concernant le Messie. Au contraire, elle a vu le jour sous un climat qui aurait considéré l'incarnation divine en Jésus comme une impossibilité ontologique.

Le Nouveau Testament fait face à deux thèses incompatibles avec la doctrine chrétienne de l'incarnation. La première, c'est la conception juive d'un simple homme, divinement choisi comme Messie; la seconde, c'est la critique philosophique grecque de la mythologie, qui soutient que Dieu ne peut pas souffrir ni connaître l'impuissance.

Si nous considérons les plus anciens textes néo-testamentaires relatifs à l'incarnation tels qu'ils se détachent sur la toile de fond de l'Ancien Testament, celle-ci distingue très nettement le Créateur et les réalités créées. La doctrine du Nouveau Testament était donc aussi choquante pour la pensée hébraïque qu'elle l'était pour la philosophie grecque.

L'idée centrale du Nouveau Testament, plaide Skarsaune, est que le Christ était l'agent de la création (préexistant). L'Ancien Testament a parlé de la Sagesse, de la Parole et de l'Esprit de Dieu en dépassant la simple personnification. Le fait de nommer Jésus «Sagesse» a donné à ce concept une nouvelle portée.

Jésus avait affirmé son autorité personnelle par rapport à la tradition rabbinique, à l'inspiration prophétique et à la loi, ainsi qu'au pardon des péchés. Il s'est décrit lui-même comme



l'incarnation de la Sagesse. L'arrière-plan pour l'idée d'un Messie incarné, personnellement préexistant, se trouve dans l'Ancien Testament et les discussions juives sur la Sagesse de Dieu.

Toute une gamme de conceptions du Messie circulaient au temps de Jésus. Mais la résurrection de Jésus a lié la confession messianique avec la confession de Jésus comme Seigneur des vivants et des morts. La plus ancienne confession déclare que Jésus est à la fois le Messie et la Sagesse incarnée.

Skarsaune ne trouve nulle trace, dans le Nouveau Testament ou chez les Pères apostoliques, d'un conflit entre le monothéisme hébreu et la foi chrétienne en la divinité de Jésus. Bien avant la venue de Jésus, le judaïsme parlait «d'aspects «personnifiés» (hypostasiés) de Dieu, servant pour Dieu d'«agents» ou de «puissances agissantes»» (pp.47sq). Ce qui faisait scandale n'était pas la pluralité au sein de l'être divin, mais bien plus le fait que Dieu se soit mêlé à l'humanité, le «franchissement de la frontière entre Dieu et l'humanité qu'implique l'incarnation» (p.48).

Pourtant, on peut se demander si la controverse dans Jean 5.17sq ne sous-entend pas que le monothéisme était en question dans le débat — non pas seulement la revendication par le Nazaréen de prérogatives divines, mais aussi la prétention à l'égalité ontologique avec le Père dans la divinité.

Skarsaune éprouve du respect pour la définition chalcédonienne, mais il pense qu'elle peut servir de «prélude à une nouvelle phase du débat christologique». «Le mythe bultmannien, écrit-il, s'est désintégré et a presque disparu de la discussion», et la recherche de «mythes» montrant des parallèles aux affirmations chrétiennes sur Jésus a été vaine (p.132). Derrière la christologie de l'incarnation se trouve l'identité du *Je* de Jésus «avec la Sagesse ou *Logos* de Dieu, qui est identique à l'intention de salut et de création conçue par Dieu lui-même, par laquelle le monde a été créé» (p.134).

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Nachdem Bultmanns existentielle Darstellung der Christologie an Boden verloren hat und asiatische Anschauungen einer Quasi-Göttlichkeit des Menschen im Westen Einzug halten, zollen mehr und mehr Wissenschaftler der ntl. Lehre von der ein für allemal göttigen Menschwerdung Jesu Christi ihre Aufmerksamkeit.

Skarsaune stellt heraus, daß die Versuche, die Inkarnation aus einer nicht biblisch geprägten Umwelt herzuleiten, im ganzen nicht überzeugend sind. Die Lehre von der Inkarnation des Logos war nicht eine späte evolutionäre Überlagerung griechischen oder hellenistischen Gedankengutes. Auch ist sie nicht von der vorherrschenden jüdischen Sicht des Messias abzuleiten. Sie entstand stattdessen in einer Atmosphäre, die eine göttliche Inkarnation als ontologische Unmöglichkeit angesehen hätte.

Das NT steht gegen zwei Sichtweisen, die mit der christlichen Inkarnationslehre nicht vergleichbar sind. Es handelt sich zum einen um das jüdische Konzept eines Menschen, der eine göttliche Erwählung zum Messias erfährt; zum anderen um die antimythologische griechische Philosophie, die davon ausgeht, daß Gott weder leiden noch machtlos sein kann.

Wenn man die ältesten Zeugnisse der Inkarnation im NT von einem altt. Hintergrund aus betrachtet, wird von diesem Hintergrund her scharf zwischen Schöpfer und geschaffener Realität unterschieden. Die ntl. Lehre stand deshalb im Gegensatz sowohl zum jüdischen Denken als auch zu den philosophischen griechischen Konzeptionen.

Skarsaune behauptet, daß die grundlegende christologische Aussage des NT die der (präexistenten) Schöpfungsmittlerschaft Christi sei. Das AT benutzte Weisheit, Wort und Geist Gottes in umfassenderem Sinne denn als bloße Personifikationen. Die Übertragung der Weisheit auf Jesus gab der Konzeption eine neue Bedeutung.

Jesus hat persönliche Autorität hinsichtlich der rabbinischen Traditionen, der prophetischen Inspiration und des Gesetzes, aber auch der Vergebung der Sünden beansprucht. Er beschrieb sich selbst als die Inkarnation der Weisheit. Der Hintergrund für die Sicht eines persönlichen, präexistenten und inkarnierten Messias, ist im AT und den jüdischen Diskussionen über die Weisheit Gottes zu finden.

Eine Reihe verschiedener Ansichten über den Messias kursierten unter den Juden zur Zeit Jesu. Aber die Auferstehung Jesu verband das messianische Bekenntnis mit dem Bekenntnis Jesu als Herr über die Lebenden und Toten. Das älteste Zeugnis sieht in Jesus beides: den Messias und die Inkarnation der Weisheit.

Skarsaune findet im NT und bei den Apostolischen Vätern keinen Hinweis auf einen Konflikt zwischen hebräischem Monothismus und dem christlichen Glauben an die Göttlichkeit Jesu. Lange vor Jesus sprach das Judentum von 'personifizierten' (hypostasierten) Eigenschaften Gottes, die als 'Mittler' oder 'handelnde Autoritäten' für Gott eintraten (S.47ff.). Anstößig war nicht eine implizierte Pluralität innerhalb des göttlichen Wesens, wohl aber 'der Schritt über die Grenze zwischen Gott und Mensch, der die Inkarnation implizierte' (S.48).

Man mag fragen, ob Jh 5.17ff. belegen könnte, daß der Monothismus ein Streitpunkt gewesen ist, also nicht nur die Selbstbezeichnungen des Nazareners mit göttlichen Titeln, sondern auch der Anspruch auf ontologische Übereinstimmung mit dem Vater in der Gottheit.

Skarsaune zollt dem Chalkedonense Respekt, meint aber, daß es als 'Auftakt für eine neue Phase christologischer Auseinandersetzungen' dienen kann. Er meint: 'Der bultmannsche Mythos hat sich aufgelöst und ist praktisch aus der Diskussion verschwunden'. Auch blieb die Suche nach 'Mythen', die ähnliche Aussagen hinsichtlich Jesus machen, erfolglos (S.132). Hinter der Inkarnationschristologie liegt die Identität Jesu 'mit der Weisheit oder dem Logos Gottes, der identisch ist mit Gottes eigener erlösender und schöpferischer Absicht, durch die die Welt erschaffen wurde' (S.134).

This sturdy evangelical contribution to Christology, appearing in the series titled Concordia Scholarship Today, addresses the debate over the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Contrary to those who reduce Jesus to merely an ideal role model, important as that is, the Norwegian scholar Oskar Skarsaune insists on the factuality of God's once-for-all incarnation in Jesus Christ. His grappling with Christology is a fresh breeze that preserves Christological discussion forthrightly on an anti-Bultmannian course, and deserves the widest reading as evangelical interest increases in the personhood of Jesus Christ.

Skarsaune argues that neither the then-prevalent Jewish view of the Messiah nor the Greek view of divinity could have engendered the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of the



Logos. Moreover, the belief was not a late evolutionary superimposition. The doctrine arose, he emphasizes, in an environment that would have considered it an ontological impossibility.

Skarsaune's main thrust was first delivered in a series of lectures to the Independent Theological Faculty in Aarhus, Denmark, after he had spent two study leaves in Israel researching Old Testament aspects. His faculty colleagues at the Independent Theological Faculty in Oslo subsequently encouraged publication in Norwegian. Trygve R. Skarsten has translated the revised Norwegian edition, containing extensive end-notes, and has appended a bibliography.

Skarsaune focuses on the technical concept of incarnation more than on the wider concerns of Christological credal development. The New Testament, he contends, already copes with two views incompatible with the Christian incarnation-doctrine. One is the Jewish concept of a strictly human being divinely chosen as Messiah; the other is the Greek anti-mythology philosophy that insisted that God cannot suffer or be powerless. Hence it is wrong to suggest that the early Christian milieu inevitably nurtured an incarnation-Christology. The Hellenic world perceived that the Christian incarnation claim differed qualitatively from the polytheistic religious myths and, moreover, considered that event philosophically impossible.

Similarly, if one holds that the oldest incarnation texts in the New Testament were nurtured by Jewish backgrounds, one is confronted by Hebrew sources that sharply differentiate Creator and created. Belief in divine incarnation was therefore no less offensive in a Jewish than in a Greek environment. Matthew (16:16) and Luke (Acts 2:36) (and Peter whom they quote) regard the basic Christian confession to be that Jesus is the promised Messiah – the Christ, or Anointed One. This Messiah was expected to be a royal son of the Davidic line. Prevalent Jewish thought 'directly excluded' any thought of messianic pre-existence or incarnation; 'at bare minimum...nothing in the inner dynamic of the oldest (pre-Jesus) Messiah confession...would call forth an incarnation-faith.' In Jewish literature contemporary with Jesus the Messiah has 'no divine "I".'

During the 1970s many critical scholars contended – untenably so, Skarsaune stresses – that incarnation-doctrine originated relatively later than the earlier Messiah-confession and emerged on Greek soil or in a heavily Hellenistic form of Jewish Christianity. Martin Werner maintained, unconvincingly, the mediating view that angel Christology was the pre-Nicene church's original Christology.

Only John 1:14 'speaks *directly* about incarnation', Skarsaune concedes, although many passages speak indirectly of Jesus' pre-existence and incarnation. But foreign to all the texts is any affirmation of the pre-existence of the human soul, or of a reincarnated heavenly angelic form, or of Messiah as a 'resurrected David'. 'The central thought rather', stresses Skarsaune, is that Christ was the agent in creation (and hence pre-existent to it). The Old Testament uses the Wisdom, Word, Spirit of God 'as though referring to a person.' Poetic personification less than adequately explains such texts. 'The moment discussion about the Wisdom of God was transferred to Jesus, the discussion of Wisdom as a person took a totally new shape.'

Skarsaune shares the now widely held view that 'we must go to the Old Testament Jewish understanding of Wisdom if we wish to find the background of the New Testament statements about the pre-existent Christ as an agent of creation.'

But this raises two pressing questions: firstly, what led to the identification of Jesus and Wisdom?; and secondly, do Wisdom Christology and messianic Christology entirely differ, or is there an interconnection?

Jesus' use of the 'I' set him apart from the prophets no less than from the rabbis in that he not only spoke as a representative of God but additionally set his personal authority against the entire tradition of the Law. 'The law had to be understood through Him.' He even 'admonished his disciples to be prepared for martyrdom for his sake.' He did not implore God to still the storm, but did so with his own word. He exercised the divine prerogative of forgiving sins. He spoke God's creative word: 'Rise, take up your bed and walk.' His role and function 'burst all previously known categories in Judaism.' 'He who said of *Himself* what was usually reserved only for Wisdom or Law could not be understood as anything less than the incarnation of Wisdom.'

Skarsaune believes that Christian scholars have often been misled by the notion that Judaism assumed that salvation in the messianic age would be 'tied directly to the Messiah himself and to his work...as savior.' There existed in fact an openness to a variety of views of the Messiah, including that of 'a Messiah who, in combination with Wisdom, would destroy demonic power and usher in the Kingdom of God.' But the dominant belief was in a coming 'messianic age or political state.' This expectation did not lead to a personally pre-existent and incarnate Messiah. The background for the later view lies nonetheless in the Old



Testament and in Jewish discussions of the Wisdom of God.

More importantly, the disciples' belief in Jesus' messiahship, Skarsaune contends, rested primarily on faith in his resurrection and ascension as the beginning of his real messianic work. Skarsaune does not doubt that there was an elemental pre-resurrection messianic confession, along with 'the disciples' keeping of a Messiah-secret,' but he holds that the fact of the resurrection coupled that messianic confession with the confession of Jesus as Lord of the living and the dead. Hence it was not Hellenistic myth but the Old Testament background and the resurrection that were decisive. 'When the oldest confession to Jesus confessed him to be both the Messiah and the incarnation of Wisdom, it was a juxtaposition that could at least be understood in a Jewish environment where the first (Christian) proclamation was heard. The final and deciding factor with regard to this juxtaposition lay not in the expectation or demand of the people but rather in Jesus' own person and in His behavior' (p. 44).

Skarsaune disputes the view long dominating historical theology that early Christianity precipitated a conflict between Hebrew monotheism and Christian faith in the divinity of Jesus. He finds not 'even a trace of such' conflict either in the New Testament or in the apostolic fathers. Much as Jewish monotheism repudiated heathen idol-worship and insisted on the unqualified distinction of Creator and creation, it was not engaged in a controversy over 'differentiating between dissimilar attributes of God as though God has an inner structure.' Despite talk of a Son of God and an agent who participated in the creation of the world as well as serving as a soteriological mediator between God and humanity, there seems not to have been a clash over monotheism, says Skarsaune. Long before Jesus' day Judaism spoke already of "personified" (hypostatized) aspects of God serving as "agents" or "acting authorities" for God' (p. 47). 'It was not in and of itself offensive to speak about an inner structure in God so that for example, His Wisdom would be spoken of as an attribute within God' (p. 75). The scandal lay rather in the transference specifically to Jesus of Nazareth of the traditional hypostasis concepts (pp. 47 f.). 'What was scandalous for Judaism in Wisdom Christology was not the implied plurality or structure within the essence of God but, from a Jewish perspective, the overstepping of the boundary between God and humanity which the incarnation implied' (p. 48). Just as to Greek ears a suffering and crucified (Son of) God was a self-contradiction

and absolute impossibility (to recall Celsus and Tertullian), so also to the Jews what was scandalous was that a particular historical man should be identified as the divine Wisdom and Logos. If Jesus' humanity was a given, his identification as divine Wisdom or Logos, or as *Theos*, is excluded. 'It is a miracle', Skarsaune writes, 'that the evangelical account of the suffering Savior was not offered on the altar of Greek logic, which demanded either that Jesus was not God because He suffered, or that He had not suffered since He was God' (p. 111). Hence while Greek philosophy and Judaic theology would have rejected incarnation-theology for different reasons, neither of these involved a basic dispute over monotheism – which both assumed.

Much as Skarsaune insists that monotheism was not an issue for early Christianity, it seems difficult to read the controversy in John 5 in any other way. Jesus' self-affirmation was perceived as an express assertion of equality with the Father, and in reply to the hostility of unbelieving Jews he claims the prerogatives of deity. Skarsaune appears at times, moreover, to concede too much to fideism in defending orthodox Christology. To be sure, personal faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. But Skarsaune seems to treat not only speculative reasoning, but also reason and logic per se as necessarily hostile to revelatory truth. The unqualified reference to 'Greek logic,' already mentioned, is noteworthy. The great theologians, Skarsaune comments, 'made clear the folly (for human minds) of the incarnation' (p. 112). The theologians 'who clung to and expanded upon the doctrine of the incarnation', he avers, 'taught that God was "beyond all our comprehension and conception"' (p. 133). The early church theologians 'believed, taught and confessed' a mystery which they had no desire to 'explain' (p. 134).

Yet Skarsaune insists that this mystery is not a product of 'mythological pressure'. Affirmation of the incarnation arose rather because of 'theological pressure' inherent in 'Jesus' own Jewish context and which became unleashed through this context's own encounter with Jesus – the *historical Jesus*' (p. 135).

Skarsaune notes that the early Christology of the Fathers (e.g., that of Ignatius) emphasized that the Logos truly became a human being and (so Barnabas as well as Ignatius) that Wisdom is the category that describes the relationship of the Father and the pre-existent Son. Skarsaune somewhat hurriedly moves through the Fathers in a survey of 'Christology in East and West' (pp. 77–98). He regards the Chalcedonian Definition as reflective of 'great theological and



ecclesiological wisdom' (p. 124) but thinks it may as appropriately be considered 'the prelude to a new phase in Christological controversy as the conclusion of an earlier one' (p. 129).

But of one thing Skarsaune is sure: scholarship has seen the collapse of Rudolf Bultmann's ready dismissal of the New Testament picture of Jesus Christ as 'easily traced to the contemporary mythology of Jewish apocalypticism and the Gnostic myth of redemption' (so Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology*, tr. by Schubert M. Ogden, Philadelphia, 1984, pp. 1-3).

'Few scholarly positions,' comments Skarsaune, 'have had to endure such treatment in recent research as has this Bultmann myth, which has disintegrated and virtually disappeared from debate' (op. cit., p. 132). Skarsaune comments, 'If any relatively certain conclusion can be drawn from the last few decades of research regarding the background of New Testament Christology, it is the acknowledgment that handy, 'available myths, with the same structure as the confession of Christ that could easily be transferred to Jesus, just are not to be found in spite of the fact that many have searched for them' (p. 132).

In summary, Christian belief in the reality of

the incarnation arose among Jews. The Hellenistic environment denied that gods could actually become human beings, although a few select humans might become divine. The Hebrew environment maintained the sharpest possible separation between God and the creation; every compromise of it was blasphemy. Moreover, the philosophical tradition of those who refined the doctrine was anti-mythological and considered theology to be a cognitive enterprise. Judaism had many messiah-candidates, but the incomparable claims made for Jesus Christ are to be traced not to the cultural environment but to the life and deeds of Jesus himself (p. 133). Behind the incarnation-Christology was the fact that 'Jesus' I is identical with the Wisdom or Logos of God, which is identical with God's own salvific and creative intention through which the world was created' (p. 134). Yet the early church insisted that Jesus was 'a completely human being...a truly human I.' Chalcedon declared that - without commingling them - 'both Jesus' divinity and humanity are intact' (p. 134).

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***Reckoning with Barth: Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of Karl Barth's Birth***

Nigel Biggar, ed.

Mowbray, London & Oxford, 1988; 215pp, £25.00, hardback; ISBN 0 264 67173 2

**SUMMARY**

This book brings together nine essays written for a commemorative conference held at Oxford in 1986. The essays cover a wide range of topics in Barth's theology. The writers are critical, but they are united by the conviction that while the way forward in theology today may lie beyond Barth, it certainly lies through him. There is little in it of great interest for the specialist, but several essays are worth recommending, especially those by Williams and Gunton.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Ce livre présente neuf essais écrits pour une conférence commémorative tenue à Oxford en 1986. Ils couvrent toute la gamme des sujets relatifs à la théologie de Barth. Les auteurs sont critiques, mais sont unis par la conviction que, si la voie de la théologie actuelle mène peut-être au-delà de Barth, elle passe certainement par lui. L'ouvrage apporte peu qui soit de grand intérêt pour les spécialistes, mais plusieurs des chapitres méritent recommandation, particulièrement ceux de Williams et de Gunton.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Das Buch enthält neun Aufsätze, die auf einer Konferenz zum Gedenken an Karl Barth 1986 in Oxford gehalten wurden. Sie decken ein weites Spektrum der Theologie Barths ab. Die Verfasser sind kritisch doch vereint durch die Überzeugung, daß der Weg heutiger Theologie zwar über Barth hinausführen muß, ohne aber an ihm vorbeigehen zu können. Für den Spezialisten ist das Buch allerdings von geringerem Interesse, obwohl einige Aufsätze, insbesondere die von Williams und Gunton, empfehlenswert sind.

May 10, 1986 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of this century's most prolific and (arguably) most significant theologian, Karl Barth. The book before us brings together nine essays written for one of several commemorative conferences, held at Oxford, by leading British, American and Canadian theologians and ethicists.

The essays cover a wide range of topics in Barth's theology - the nature of theology as conceived by Barth and its relevance to church life, the doctrine of creation, religious and moral epistemology, politics and ethics. The writers are critical but they are united by the conviction that while the way forward in theology today may lie beyond Barth, it certainly lies through him. Barth ought not be ignored. Not all of the