

oral Greek tradition which was sufficiently well established to account for the fairly similar wording used by the translator of Matthew and by Mark. But here we find a problem. This sees an extraordinarily complex theory with redundant elements to explain a phenomenon which is more simply explained by Matthew's use of Mark. Here, then, is the problem: how do we choose between the two hypotheses? The Marcan hypothesis can be defended by a detailed examination of the text, such as various commentators have undertaken; the Wenham hypothesis needs an equally detailed defence to show that it is superior. But in the nature of things this book does not provide it, and I do not think that it has given even sufficient evidence to show that there are passages where it works better than its rival. In other words, much of what Wenham offers is a statement of possibilities that are not necessarily more plausible than other, rival possibilities.

There are also places where he offers hypotheses that seem quite unlikely. Where is the evidence that 'the former treatise' of Acts 1:1 refers more naturally to a previous work than to the preceding part of a two-volume work? And how can one translate Irenaeus the way Wenham (following Chapman) does on p. 241? How does 'writing a gospel' differ from 'handing down in writing' the things preached by Peter?

It is important to observe, however, that Wenham's book presents several hypotheses which are to some extent independent of one another, and therefore if some of them are dubious, it does not follow that the others automatically lapse also. At the same time, it shows that some generally accepted critical hypotheses rest on shaky evidence and need to be reassessed. All in all, it is an impressive work which deserves careful scholarly attention.

I. Howard Marshall

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Let Justice Roll Down. The Old Testament, Ethics and the Christian Life

Bruce C. Birch

Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1991

RÉSUMÉ

Ce livre tente de rendre l'Ancien Testament plus accessible à l'Eglise d'aujourd'hui, en tant que source d'inspiration morale. Comme introduction générale, il est excellent, bien que sa méthode, fondée sur la 'critique canonique' de Brevard

Childs, présente des inconvénients. La seconde partie du livre, réservée aux questions éthiques, est excellente, en dépit de sa brièveté.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In diesem Buch wird versucht, das AT als Quelle der Ethik für die heutige Kirche zugänglicher zu machen. Als allgemeine Einführung ist dieses Buch hervorragend geeignet, allerdings ist die auf der 'kanonischen Kritik' von Brevard Childs basierende Methodik des Verfassers problematisch. Der Schwerpunkt des zweiten Teiles liegt auf der Ethik und ist trotz seiner Kürze ausgezeichnet.

This book is written with the laudable intention of attempting to make the OT more available as a moral resource for the Church today. As a general introduction to the state of current scholarship on almost the whole range of OT literature, and a stimulus to a more thorough application of the richness of the sweep of the Bible to our context today, it is nothing short of excellent – Birch writes clearly and is extremely easy to read, which cannot be said of many OT scholars! There are several drawbacks to his work, but these will become apparent as we proceed.

In the Introduction, the author makes it clear that he is not attempting to write a book on OT ethics (despite the impression which may have been given by the title), but is writing from an avowedly pastoral standpoint, with the sole purpose of opening up the OT for Christians.

'Part One' of the book is then devoted to a statement of Birch's method, which is basically derived from Childs' 'Canonical' approach to the OT viz irrespective of the history of tradition, it is the final text which is authoritative for the Church, and so it is the final, canonical text which should be the focus of our studies. While this may seem attractive at first sight (especially when compared to the atomising excesses of previous generations), 'Canonical Criticism' has been rightly criticised at length elsewhere, and ultimately amounts to a less than satisfactory doctrine of scripture for the evangelical. This is clearly demonstrated in Birch's own words: 'Authority is not a property inherent in the Bible itself ... it is a recognition of the Christian community over the centuries of experience that the scripture is a source of empowerment for its moral life in the world.' (p.34) Birch stands in line with the current desire of critical orthodoxy to reclaim the Bible as a source of life for the Church (understandably!), and while, of course, we all welcome such a trend, the rationale and desirability of such a move is never adequately grounded. Even in his work on reclaiming the ethical material in OT narrative, which comes as

a much needed breath of fresh air, we are left wondering how the biblical narrative differs from any other serious literary work.

The second (and major) part of the book is taken up with 'The OT Story as Moral Resource'. Probably constrained by space, Birch concentrates on showing his readers how they might go about extracting moral principles from the OT, rather than actually extracting such guidelines himself, which may well be no bad thing. He traces the movement of God's dealings with man from Creation (Gen. 1–11) through Promise and Deliverance (Gen. 12–Ex. 15), Covenant, the Monarchy and via the Prophets to the Exile and Return, before concluding with a short chapter on Wisdom. It is here that the book comes into its own – every chapter is a pleasure to read, and the writer's obvious enthusiasm for the OT spills over throughout. In a few pages he gives an excellent, concise introduction to the subject and suggests areas today where we might apply the biblical teaching. While some of his exegetical observations will be found unacceptable to evangelicals, many are stimulating and helpful – e.g. his section on Exile theology as a distinct entity from Exodus thought, which is particularly appropriate to oppressed minorities today – and in general his whistle-stop tour of the OT is of great benefit to our grasp of the Bible.

Within the limits of his approach, Birch has produced a valuable and extremely usable volume, which provides an insightful and thorough introduction to the OT (although his extensive footnotes show a decided gap when it comes to much British scholarship). He has captured something of the dynamic of God's unfolding purpose for his people, and has made a worthwhile contribution to the ongoing task of putting the moral teaching of the OT within the reach of the Church.

Gary Millar
The Queen's College, Oxford

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The Bible's Authority: A Portrait Gallery of Thinkers from Lessing to Bultmann
J. C. O'Neill

T. T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1991; 312pp., £12.50, paperback; ISBN 0–567–29189–8

RÉSUMÉ

Série de conférences sur les principaux biblistes allemands des deux derniers siècles. L'opinion de l'auteur est que des considérations philosophiques se trouvent au coeur du libéralisme allemand, mais qu'il s'est révélé presque impossible à

des hommes élevés avec la Bible de la rejeter comme la source de leurs croyances religieuses. Le tour philosophique du livre permet à des personnages comme Kant, Hegel et Nietzsche d'y figurer, tandis que des biblistes comme Lachmann, Weiss et Hengstenberg sont omis. Les travaux allemands plus récents sont également omis, ce qui rend le livre d'une utilité douteuse comme guide de la recherche actuelle.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dies ist eine Vortragsreihe über führende deutsche Theologen der letzten zwei Jahrhunderte. Der Verfasser vertritt die Meinung, daß philosophische Überlegungen dem deutschen Liberalismus zwar zugrunde liegen, aber daß es diesen mit der Bibel aufgewachsenen Männern unmöglich war, diese als Quelle ihrer religiösen Überzeugungen abzulehnen. Die philosophische Neigung des Buches führt dazu, daß Denker wie Kant, Hegel und Nietzsche vertreten sind, jedoch Theologen wie Weiss und Hengstenberg unerwähnt bleiben. Die neuere deutsche Theologiegeschichte wird ebenfalls nicht berücksichtigt und dadurch ist das Buch von zweifelhaftem Nutzen als Einführung in die gegenwärtige deutsche Bibelwissenschaft.

Anglo-German relations have always been a curious mixture of admiration and revulsion; in the British case, of admiration for the intellectual prowess and prodigious achievements of the German mind combined with revulsion at what is perceived to be the inhumanity and anti-democratic spirit in which these achievements have been applied to real life. This book, which started as a series of lectures in the University of Cambridge, is the latest in a long series of works which maintain this double prejudice. On the one hand, the author states that no-one but a German (understood in the wider sense of 'German-speaking person') has written anything of lasting value in theology in the last two hundred years, and he confines his study to 21 leading 'German' scholars. On the other hand, he concludes by saying that their methods and general approach have been seriously flawed, and will not stand the test of time as Biblical and theological scholarship. How is this double-think possible?

Dr. O'Neill takes as his starting-point the view that philosophical considerations lie at the heart of classical German Biblical scholarship. It was because most German intellectuals have been reared in a Protestant Bible-reading tradition that they have found it so hard to emancipate themselves from the sacred text, even when their ideas have been anything but Christian. He demonstrates how, time and again, scholars used the Bible as a means of expressing their own philosophical and political ideas, distancing themselves in the process from all that was conservative or orthodox in the old Germany. For some, this break with the past was an intellectual but not an emotional possibility, and so we find