

of Christ which many will find informative and stimulating. There can be little doubt of the need for more serious theological writing at this level, and both the series (Contours of Christian Theology) and this volume in particular are to be welcomed for that reason.

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Atonement and Incarnation: an Essay in Universalism and Particularity

Vernon White

Cambridge: CUP, 1991, 134 pp., ISBN 0 521 40732 X

RÉSUMÉ

White souligne le caractère universel de l'oeuvre salvatrice de Christ. L'expérience que Dieu lui-même fait de la souffrance et de la mort lui donne l'autorité pour remporter la victoire sur elles en faveur de l'humanité. L'auteur considère la différence entre la fonction rétributive et la fonction re-créatrice du châtiement, et il montre comment les deux sont impliquées ensemble dans l'expiation. L'auteur de la recension met en question la manière dont l'auteur défend sa position doctrinale au moyen d'argument philosophiques, de même que sa façon d'assimiler la doctrine de l'expiation à des prétendues intuitions morales naturelles.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

White betont die Universalität des rettenden Handelns Christi. Gottes eigene Erfahrungen von Leid und Tod begründen seine Autorität, sie stellvertretend für die Menschheit zu überwinden. Der Unterschied zwischen den vergeltenden und wiederherstellenden Funktionen der Strafe wird behandelt. Beide Aspekte werden im Sühnetod Christi vereint. Der Rezensent hinterfragt sowohl die Verteidigung der Lehrmeinung durch philosophische Argumente als auch die Assimilation der Lehre von der Sühne mit angeblich natürlichen moralischen Intuitionen.

In this work, the author defends the claim that what Jesus Christ accomplished in particular space and time has universal effect. The strategy is simple and the presentation succinct. After sketching out the relevant traditional claims, White indicates why such belief has come under pressure. The dimensions of our world in time

and space make traditional christological and soteriological belief implausible for many. While White sympathizes with those who react in this way to the restrictions on saving *knowledge*, he wants to emphasize instead the universal dimension of saving *action*. Having surveyed thinkers on the different sides of the debate, White sets out his own proposals in three central chapters (5–7). These expound the claim announced thus on page 39:

The heart of the model to be proposed rests on what might be called the criterion of moral authenticity, and goes something like this: *unless and until God himself has experienced suffering, death and the temptation to sin, and overcome them, as a human individual, he has no moral authority to overcome them in and with the rest of humanity.*

White makes much of the moral dimension. On the basis of our 'natural moral intuitions' he expounds the difference between retributive and recreative functions in punishment. In personal relations, only action with recreative intent is unimpeachably moral. But although this is directed against traditional notions of penal substitution, White wants to incorporate the biblical elements of that doctrine (the reality of divine wrath and justice) into his own claims. Hence in the end: 'Moral intuition here meets theological claim, and sends it on its way rejoicing' (p. 106). This elaborates the argument for the way what God has done in Christ is constitutive of salvation.

A particular act could constitute universal redeeming possibilities because it equips the agent with certain qualities or experiences which 'qualify' him to relate more effectively to the objects of his action (p. 53).

The conceptual requirements for this set of convictions can be fulfilled. The doctrine of incarnation is conceptually coherent and here the author avails himself of work on the brain and the person to buttress coherence. Particular attention is given to the question of divine eternity. Here White believes that an account of God's relation to time can embrace both divine transcendence of temporal sequence and temporality within divine experience. The book ends with a postscript defending the author against the charge of anthropocentric (rather than cosmocentric) theology and warning against imperialistic evangelism.

This is a brief and economically-written account which covers a great deal of ground. It is a good, succinct, introduction to the *status quaestionis* in British theology. His proposal has much to commend it, maintaining, as it does, incarnation and reconciliation in history on an intentionally biblical foundation. But two aspects of his work call

for comment—each on the subject of theological method.

Firstly, White consciously follows the pattern established in analytic theology of defending the coherence of his doctrinal position at a conceptual (loosely 'philosophical') level. The difficulty here is that the plausibility of belief in incarnation seems excessively dependent on the philosophical success of conceptual construction. On the one hand, it is true that questions of conceptual coherence can not be dodged if claims are to be intelligible. On the other hand, claims can be both intelligible and plausible without needing to be so demonstrated at a sophisticated conceptual level. It would be quite unfair to expect the author to address the question of theological method involved here but, equally, the point needs to be made.

Secondly, White assimilated the doctrine of the atonement to alleged natural moral intuitions. But those who seriously encounter the love and holiness of God in Christ crucified must ever after humbly conform any moral intuitions to what they have now learned. Moral sense can not stand in judgement! Yet this essay conjures up the picture of an intellectually balanced, morally composed theologian, shaping the biblical matter according to the canons of his judgement. Now it may indeed be the case that cardinal features of a proper doctrine of the atonement can be expounded in the light of moral experience; with serious qualifications one might even allow talk of some natural moral intuitions. But moral, as intellectual, wisdom must allow its countenance to pale in the light of the cross, just as far as the cross and its foolishness require.

It would be unjust, however, to overstate these points. Conclusions that are similar could, I think, be argued in a different way to quite convincing effect. But although one could have discussed the issues of substance that arise here, it is important also to attend to theological method and, indeed, mood, which can not leave substance unaltered. It is just that I miss Luther.

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The Gospel According to Matthew

Leon Morris

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Leicester: IVP,
1992, 781 pp., ISBN 0 85111 338–9

The New American Commentary Vol. 22 Matthew

Craig L. Blomberg

Nashville: Broadman, 1992, 464 pp.,
ISBN 0 8054 0122 9

RÉSUMÉ

Ce sont là deux nouveaux commentaires sur l'Évangile de Matthieu par deux spécialistes évangéliques. Morris a un souci strictement exégétique, tandis que Blomberg s'attache plus à la structure de l'Évangile et à son application. Blomberg manifeste une plus grande familiarité avec les publications récentes.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dies sind zwei neue Kommentare zum Matthäusevangelium von evangelikalen Wissenschaftlern. Morris' Anliegen ist ausschließlich exegetischer Natur, während Blomberg seinen Schwerpunkt auf die Struktur des Evangeliums und seine Anwendung legt. Blomberg ist mit der neueren Literatur besser vertraut.

These two commentaries have much in common: both are middle level one volume commentaries written by leading, well-informed evangelical scholars. Both are based on the English text of the gospel, though referring to Greek in the footnotes. Both cautiously recommend the traditional view that Matthew the tax-collector was in some sense author of the gospel, and both respect Matthew as a historical source, while interacting to a greater or lesser extent with critical issues. Both have a useful introduction to Matthew's themes at the start of the commentary.

Morris provides his own English translation of the gospel; Blomberg comments on the NIV. Morris's commentary is almost twice as long as Blomberg's, and Morris is able to offer a verse by verse treatment of the gospel (with the advantages that a more detailed approach brings), whereas Blomberg works more in sections (with the advantages that a less fragmented approach brings). Morris is a veteran scholar, who is most familiar with the older literature and whose main interaction with recent literature is with some other recent commentaries (including Gundry, Carson and France). Blomberg is a younger scholar who