

developing a truly trinitarian understanding of creation. It begins with a study of relevant biblical passages. This section could be strengthened by making more use of the implications of Job 38–42 (dismissed in one short sentence) and the O.T. visions of a new heaven and a new earth (e.g. in Isa. 65 and 66). It is also possible to present a stronger defence of Gen. 1:26–28 against the criticism of it by environmentalists than that which Osborn gives. Surprisingly, there is no discussion of the favourite text of Christian anti-environmentalists, 2 Peter 3:10.

I am not at all convinced by the definition of the role of the Father in creation in terms of the giving of a promise to creation (pp. 85, 133ff). This seems to rest on a semantic sleight of hand. It is true that some (not all) of the commands in Gen. 1 are expressed by jussive forms in Hebrew (translated as 'let . . .'). This is taken to mean that the Father gives the creation 'permission to be'. This 'permission' is then mysteriously transformed into a promise of 'a future with God'. However, the jussive is the normal form used for third-person commands in Hebrew and the context of Gen. 1 makes it clear that that is the force of the jussives here. The statement that Gen. 1:26–28 does not impose any ontological distinction between the human and non-human (p. 136) is at least questionable. Clearly, like the non-human creation, humans are also ontologically creatures, with all that that implies. However, it does seem possible that being in the image of God implies an ontological distinction of another kind.

There are some points where I would like clarification. For example, what is meant by the statement that 'through Christ, creation is enabled to resist entropy and, hence, disorder' (p. 121)? Does this simply mean that the consummation of God's purpose for the universe will come about before its 'heat death' (which is billions of years off anyway), or is Dr. Osborn saying that God is working against the Second Law of Thermodynamics, a Law which he brought into being and sustains?

These criticisms and comments are not meant to detract from the book; rather they indicate its thought-provoking nature, which makes it valuable reading on this important topic.

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Garden of Eden

James Barr

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RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur essaie de montrer que les idées de résurrection et d'immortalité ne sont pas opposées l'une à l'autre dans la pensée biblique. Les chapitres deux et trois de la Genèse n'enseigneraient pas la doctrine de la chute de l'homme, mais la perte de la chance d'obtenir l'immortalité. La pensée biblique sur la vie et la mort serait plus proche de la pensée grecque qu'on ne le pense parfois. L'auteur de la recension met en question la façon dont les parallèles extra-bibliques sont utilisés pour comprendre la pensée 'hébraïque' et pour expliquer le sens du texte biblique.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Hier wird behauptet, die Vorstellungen von Auferstehung und Unsterblichkeit stünden im biblischen Denken in keinem Gegensatz zueinander. Genesis 2–3 unterstütze nicht die Lehre des Sündenfalls, sondern zeige eine verlorengegangene Chance der Unsterblichkeit auf. Biblisches Denken über Leben und Tod sei dem griechischen Denken näher als manchmal angenommen wird. Der Rezensent stellt die Methodik in Frage, wobei außerbiblische Parallelbeispiele herangezogen werden, um das 'hebräische' Denken zu erleuchten und die Bedeutung des biblischen Textes zu erklären.

The book is based on the Read-Tuckwell lectures, given in the University of Bristol on the subject of Human Immortality. Professor Barr uses the opportunity to reassess the ideas of immortality and resurrection as they have been understood in Christian theology. The book has some of the marks of its origins as lectures, with asides and digressions, and some of the author's impatience with views he regards as untenable. But it is always interesting, often engaging, and reveals a little more of the author's own piety than some of his other works.

The main thesis of the book is that the ideas of immortality and resurrection are not in opposition to each other. Certain strands in Christian theology have tended to overstress resurrection, in the belief that immortality (especially 'immortality of the soul') is Greek and therefore unbiblical. This position has been informed in recent decades by the postulate of so-called 'totality thinking' in the Old Testament (i.e.

denying the division of the person into 'soul' and 'body'), a view which has been reinforced by certain trends in modern psychology.

In pursuing his argument, Professor Barr brings his formidable exegetical powers to bear on a range of biblical and apocryphal texts, not least Genesis 2–3. This text is not about a 'fall of man', that is, a loss of immortality due to a first sin; there is in his view no such idea in the Old Testament. Rather, the text, which has 'comic' features, tells about a missed chance of gaining immortality. The 'knowledge of good and evil' concerns a 'god-likeness' which is permitted to mortals, but which brings out an awareness of unpleasantness and trouble. It is not a primeval act of rebellion.

This is true of other stories in this part of Genesis; the Noah story too, as may be discerned on the basis of its similarities with the Gilgamesh epic, is really another creation account, which also has the missed chance of immortality as its theme. The Old Testament as a whole, in fact, regards death as perfectly natural, and does not attribute it to sin. Barr's array of evidence for this (pp. 21ff.) includes the Old Testament's well-known celebration of long life and interest in leaving a good 'name', as well as an extended discussion of Sheol, and a study of the term 'nephesh' in the context of a treatment of 'totality thinking'.

A conclusion of these reflections is that Hebrew thinking about death is not so different from Greek ideas as is often claimed. The point emerges particularly from the treatment of 'nephesh', in which Barr makes the point that Genesis 2:7, often quoted as evidence of 'totality thinking' in Hebrew anthropology, need not be normative for the Old Testament's understanding of 'nephesh'. In other instances, the term seems to indicate something distinguishable from the 'flesh', and may well lie close to the concept of 'soul' (pp. 37ff.). It is not possible, therefore, to speak of a systematic difference between Hebrew and Greek concepts; indeed ancient Hebrew ideas and pre-Platonic Greek ones show important similarities. It seems to me that Barr has made an important corrective point here.

The Greek connection emerges also in the late biblical period. In fact, the immediate antecedent of Paul's understanding that the first sin incurred the loss of immortality for all is the Hellenistic Wisdom of Solomon (pp. 16f.). The point is made in deliberate opposition to the attempts of Cullmann and Stendahl to remove the taint of Hellenism from Paul in respect of his view of immortality (pp. 94ff.). Paul, indeed, seems to have presupposed the immortality of the soul (1 Corinthians 15:53; against Stendahl; p. 111).

The argument concludes by showing the complementarity of immortality and resurrection, as they developed in the late biblical and apocryphal literature and in the New Testament. Immortality, indeed, may have preceded and led to resurrection in biblical thought. With the realization that the general resurrection was not imminent, immortality became particularly important. This remained the case in Christianity, both in Roman Catholicism, with its idea of Purgatory, and in Protestantism, conversely, because of its insistence on immediate judgment (Barr cites the Westminster Confession).

The book's final note puts together a connection between Paul and Genesis, which it had been at pains to sever, albeit newly expressed. If Genesis spoke of a lost chance of immortality, Paul knew of a re-opening of that opportunity: 'Later one came to redeem the defect of humanity. Immortality was brought to light' (p. 116). It is in this connection that an interesting pastoral angle is brought to bear on the subject, for example with the report that Cullmann encountered hostility from readers of his book because he had undermined a crucial element in their faith. There is an element of personal confession too, as in the final lines of the book, just quoted.

My questions about the book concern biblical interpretation. The interpretation of Genesis is obviously crucial to the argument. Yet Barr's treatment reveals certain hesitations about methods. On one hand, he attaches much importance to reconstructed antecedents of the present biblical text. This is most notable in the case of the flood narrative, where his comparison with Gilgamesh is the dominant factor in the interpretation. Barr admits that the story has been transformed within Israel, yet says: '... it seems hardly possible to explicate the story without recourse to the sort of mythological hinterground which we have discussed' (p. 83). The discovery that the narrative is fundamentally a creation myth is then taken to confirm the conclusion gained from the study of Genesis 2–3 (which incidentally involved the speculation that the encounter of Eve and the serpent reflected a story about a snake-goddess who tempted the first man (p. 65)). Barr's espousal of views of this sort is related to his readiness to suppose that Israel imbibed rather freely of the ideas of other nations and their religions, which is actually one of his general concluding reflections on his investigations (p. 108). But a major issue of interpretation is raised by this, without a systematic treatment of it.

The search for 'previous' meanings sits in some tension with the 'canonical' reading which he adopts (with some self-conscious irony, in view of

his well-known altercation with B. S. Childs) for Genesis 2–3 in its final form (p. 60), and with his recognition that Israel did in fact transform certain ideas of the other nations. The need to read Genesis 2–3 in its 'final form' is argued cogently: whoever put the original stories into their present form did so consciously, and with a definite purpose. Barr's insistence on this, however, may prove too much for his general view, for it begs the question of the significance of the broader context of Genesis 2–3, namely its immediate juxtaposition with Genesis 1, and more generally its position within Genesis 1–11.

If, in fact, the relationship between Genesis 1 and chapters 2–3 were taken as seriously as the one between the hypothetical constituent parts of the latter, the conclusions of the investigation might be quite different. For the progression from chapters 1 to 3 arguably implies a strong sense of 'loss'. And if this is not explicitly in terms of immortality, nevertheless a context is provided for chapters 2–3 which shows that the issues there are essentially about a created purpose that has been frustrated. The same kind of consideration applies to chapter 4, which Barr calls a 'different story' (p. 66), but which can be fruitfully interpreted as an extension of the infections of sin and death which have entered the human world (with D. J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, Sheffield, 1979, pp. 61ff., building in part on von Rad, *Genesis*, though more orientated towards the final text). So in turn the flood-narrative may be seen, not as a further creation account, but as a deliberate sequel to the first, expressly introducing the question, how may Yahweh continue with his created humanity in view of its utter sinfulness, and answering in terms of covenant.

Now it may be replied that such a scenario is a very late rationalization, a figment of the 'P' writer. But in this kind of argument 'lateness' is rather relative, and as I have noted, the work of the editorial hand is accepted without demur at other points. In any case, is not the issue, as Barr himself has introduced it, what is a biblical, or possibly a Hebraic, understanding of human destiny? By what criterion is the P writer disqualified from representing such an understanding—while the mythological streams are permitted to flow in and occupy places of honour?

At the very least it will be acknowledged that Paul was reading Genesis as a whole, the mysteries of Pentateuchal criticism presumably remaining hidden from him. This should be given due weight in reading Paul, and suggests, I think, that he was closer to the mark than Barr would have us believe. This is not to say that Paul might not also have been influenced by the Wisdom of Solomon; a complete account of the

influences on any human mind is likely to be impossible, and there is no reason why such influence should be ruled out of court. Indeed, the presence of Hellenistic ideas in the New Testament, especially in connection with the anthropological concepts which are in view, seems to me to be demonstrated here. But such influence on Paul is hardly incompatible with his reasoned and intelligent interpretation of Genesis.

The book is likely to be a landmark in studies of immortality in the Bible, and rightly. There is a wealth of perceptive comment, together with the author's customary readiness to slaughter the sacred cow. It will be clear that the book is not just a work of Biblical Studies in the narrow sense, but has implications for Systematics, and perhaps most importantly, Pastoral Theology.

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The Doctrine of God

Gerald Bray

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RÉSUMÉ

L'ouvrage est paru dans une nouvelle série sur la théologie chrétienne. L'auteur fait une présentation évangélique de la doctrine de Dieu, en s'appuyant beaucoup sur la théologie patristique. Dans la connaissance de Dieu, la rencontre personnelle est centrale; le caractère autre de Dieu est affirmé contre l'immanentisme; la distinction entre la nature et les personnes divines joue généralement un rôle important dans l'argumentation. L'auteur établit, d'une manière nouvelle, un dialogue fertile entre la théologie protestante et la théologie orientale.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Als Teil einer neuen theologischen Reihe entwickelt der Autor eine evangelikale Sicht der Lehre von Gott, indem er sich stark auf patristische Theologie gründet. Bei der Erkenntnis Gottes ist die persönliche Begegnung von zentraler Bedeutung. Die Andersartigkeit Gottes im Gegensatz zur Diesseitigkeit wird bekräftigt. Der Unterschied zwischen der Natur und den Personen Gottes ist bei dieser Auseinandersetzung bedeutsam. Dieses Buch ermöglicht eine neuartige gegenseitige Bereicherung der evangelischen und orthodoxen Theologie.