

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

Leicester: IVP, 1993, 281 pp., ISBN 0 8511 890 9

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.

The new series launched by IVP entitled 'contours in Christian theology' has Gerald Bray as the series editor, and his own book falls within the series. The series intends to cater for theological students at all levels, from Bible college to University department, and aims to present the evangelical theological perspective in a fresh and creative way, 'top priority has been given to contemporary issues'. The writing style aims at being accessible to as wide a range of reader as possible. Such are the criteria laid down for the volumes in the series, and clearly they should meet a need if they can meet these standards.

The Doctrine of God attempts to meet the challenge valiantly and with an impressive range of scholarship. We are taken through an initial chapter on evidence for faith in God, through consideration of God's nature, trinitarian persons and characteristics of a specifically evangelical doctrine.

The classical theistic arguments for the existence of God are felt to be not compelling and the evangelical approach of encounter with the living God, a revelation controlled by the Biblical testimony, remains the authentically christian view. But Barth, who upheld this tradition, is held to be vague in his understanding of revelation. The author reveals his own predilection for patristic theology early in his book, drawing on discussions of Plato and Aristotle and their influence on early christian thought, to elaborate his theme.

The second chapter on God's nature affirms the utter otherness of God, and defends the notion of God as 'a being' in the face of process theology which regards God as an immanent life behind and through the created reality. This debate might have had more space and attention devoted to it, as it is a critical area of controversy today. It is argued that the distinction between the nature and the persons of the triune god has not been observed by modern immanentists, who accordingly posit a developing God. We learn also that to absolutise 'God is love' fails to keep in tension the wrath of God visited on sin, although the fusion of these two concepts christologically is not explored. God is not vulnerable to the world, following Calvin, and the majesty of the sovereign Lord gains much emphasis; it is a pity that there is no dialogue with P Fiddes' influential work, *The Creative Suffering of God* at this point. The patristic approach that the divine person of the Son suffered in human nature, not in divine nature, holds sway, God suffers in the economic, not the essential, Trinity.

The third chapter, 'One God in Trinity', provides some excellent patristic discussion of the development of the trinitarian understanding of God, and the book is well worth buying for this. Like-

wise with the fourth chapter, 'The Persons and the Nature of God', which stresses the distinction again of nature and person, the former unknowable, the latter encountered in revelation. Calvin and Eastern Orthodox theologians are brought into an unusual creative relationship to forge an Eastern style synthesis. The Reformation led to a new type of christianity, more than a mere reform of the old, in its stress on the utter equality of the persons as *autotheos*. This seems to be approaching the influential thesis of John Zizioulas of 'being as communion'.

Bray wrestles with the issue of election using once again his normative distinction between nature and persons; will, he argues, relates to nature rather than person, and God does not deal with us at the level of nature. Rather it is personal encounter that is decisive and which means that election is not a matter of a grid of divine will but of mutual trinitarian encounter in God extended to humanity by the Son and Spirit.

This gives the flavour of the creativity of the book which comes from the interface of eastern and Calvinist traditions. No doubt more space could have been devoted to a greater range of modern thinkers and the pressing question of the feminist critiques of God-talk in particular, but hopefully the volumes on creation and providence will do this. Even so Bray manages to include some consideration of Barth, Moltmann and Jüngel in his discussion, as well some remarks on Islam, which is interestingly compared with Mormonism. Here is a learned and highly trinitarian interpretation, cross-fertilising Eastern and Protestant theology, itself a new event in theology.

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Biblische Hermeneutik **Gerhard Maier**

R. Brockhaus Verlag, 2. überarb. Aufl.,
Wuppertal 1991, 404 S., DM 49, 80

SUMMARY

In accordance with Reformation principles, Maier wants to understand the Bible not only as a human witness to God, but also as God's word. He therefore seeks to establish the essential priority of Scripture vis-a-vis the expositor. In contrast, for example, to Luther, Maier bases the revelatory authority of the Bible formally only on its 'inspiration', and not