

transcendental, not a mark of all being, it yet generates transcendentals, ways of looking at universal features of the world of which we are a part and in which we live. The expectation is that if the triune God is the source of all being, meaning and truth we must suppose that all being will in some way reflect the being of the one who made it and holds it in being (p. 145).

To see how Gunton teases this out, the reader should perhaps turn to the final chapter of the work, where he explores the notion of sociality. We are all too used to social or political theories either of individualism or a form of collectivism which negates the particular. So in response we bring in an idea of sociality, derived from the Trinity, with its affirmation of hypostatic particularities but refusal of hypostatic individualities. And as we look around the social (and, for that matter, non-social) world we find that things exist in their genuine particularity in mutual relatedness. While Gunton never alludes to Calvin's metaphor of Scripture as the spectacles through which we view creation, it would be fruitful to compare this with his own rather different way of using Trinity to apprehend created order. There are at least faint resonances.

This work has two important merits. Firstly, it shows the continuity of ancient and modern intellectual preoccupations and solutions regarding the one and the many. Secondly, it is a conceptual exploration seriously committed to a biblically-based trinitarianism. This latter point is important. Contemporary theology revels in ideas *ad nauseam* when the world is crying out for reality that issues in action. We have in this work something approaching a *philosophia christiana* anxious to tackle the intellectual malaise of modern culture in a practically effective way.

Yet the reverse side of this latter strength is also the weakness of the book. Concepts of particularity and relationality may lodge inevitably in the theologian's armoury in the course of theological reflection. But what they contribute to the healing of culture is a different matter. Gunton gives the appearance of vastly over-estimating the importance of conceptualisation of the kind in which he engages. One misses signs that a *theologia crucis* must mould the theological conscience. Further, there is a weakness corresponding to the first merit mentioned. The analysis of intellectual history is controversial. Generally, one gets the impression that the modern will turned against Christianity not because humans are perennially disposed to resist God

but because Augustine and some successors made an intellectual mistake in their understanding of God and humanity. Particularly, the claim that 'the theological voluntarism and absolutism of the late Middle Ages generates a rejection of God and the transfer of his powers to man' (p. 57) has been contested by a figure like Pannenberg who believes that the later Middle Ages *modified* not *intensified* what when on before in this respect.

Colin Gunton is amongst the most important theologians on the British scene these days and one cannot but welcome his rejection of radical theologies. Nevertheless, we must still strive for a different theological project that combines the statesmanship and conceptual rigour which has often characterized the Reformed tradition with the sensitivity to genuine *existentia* that has often characterized the Lutheran tradition. Meanwhile, we can and should be genuinely grateful for this distinguished contribution.

Stephen Williams
Belfast, Northern Ireland

EuroJTh (1995) 4:1, 105-106

0906-2720

The Hastening That Waits

N. Biggar

Oxford University Press 1993, Oxford
£25.00 h.b. 194 pp. ISBN 0 19 826457 7

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage est une présentation critique mais sympathisante de l'éthique théologique de Karl Barth. L'auteur soutient que Barth ne doit être considéré, ni comme un irrationaliste, ni comme un partisan de l'éthique de situation. Il a une théorie du commandement divin qui distingue sa pensée de ces deux points de vue. Biggar souligne l'évolution de la pensée barthienne depuis les causeries données en 1928 jusqu'à la Dogmatique Ecclésiastique. On aurait apprécié une évaluation plus poussée de l'éthique de Barth. Mais telle qu'elle est, cette présentation est utile et importante.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses Werk ist eine wohlwollende und kritische Beurteilung von Barths theologischer Ethik. Es vertritt den Standpunkt, daß Barth weder als Irrationalist noch als Situations-

ethiker verstanden werden sollte. Er hat eine Theorie des göttlichen Gebotes, die sich von diesen unterscheidet. Biggar zeigt Entwicklungen im Denken Barths von den Vorlesungen von 1928 bis hin zur Kirchlichen Dogmatik auf. Obwohl eine detailliertere Bewertung der Ethik Barths hilfreich gewesen wäre, ist dies eine wertvolle und wichtige Abhandlung.

Barth remains an important theologian for the world Church, crucially because he insists that the theological enterprise must submit itself to the judgment of Christ, the Son, as pointed to by the written word. The sombre commemoration of the bomb plot against Hitler, including Bonhoeffer's participation, reminds the Church today of the radical significance of the Christocentric theology of Barth and the Barmen Declaration. To seek to ignore this theological effort is a major mistake, and especially surprising among evangelicals. Therefore this book on Barth's ethics claims our attention as more than just an exercise in historical theology.

The work is the result of a doctoral thesis, but refined and shortened so as to be accessible to a wide readership. The author writes sympathetically but also critically, and does seek to draw out the wider significance and application of Barth's work at the end of each chapter. The appendices include a discussion of the theology of the nation state, particularly the Swiss constitution and the Nazi state.

The thesis running through the book is that Barth is not simply a Kierkegaardian ethicist, despite evidence to the contrary both from the texts and from the critical literature. The 'command of God' to me now is of the utmost importance to Barth's ethical outlook, but he is no mere situation ethicist nor is he an irrationalist, argues Biggar. The command of God cannot indeed be identified with propositions, for Barth, but his ethics do go beyond an extreme 'voluntarism' in God and a word event to the creature in the unrepeatable moment here and now.

Biggar explains, using the full range of sources, notably Barth's Münster lectures on ethics and the *Dogmatics*, that Barth taught a 'general ethics', considering these from objective side of God, and 'special ethics' from the side of the obedient human recipient and his concrete life situation. 'Ethics stands to moral deliberation as dogmatics to proclamation', says Biggar, endorsing Yoder's pithy phrase. Ethics plays a modest role of giving reasons for action. Barth, it is argued, shows an awareness of human ethical development and reason since we are corrected by the Word of

God as we live in time. Biggar's argument is really that Barth's practice is better than much of his apparently Kierkegaardian ethical theory.

The command of God is that of the triune God, creator reconciler and redeemer, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Biggar shows shifts in Barth's thought from the 1928 lectures to the Church Dogmatics in several ways; from the focus on 'the command of life' to that of 'freedom' as the command of the Father, for example. Barth uses the Lord's Prayer to develop his understanding of the command of the reconciler, and the concepts of vocation and invocation. The theme of promise controls the exposition of the command of the Spirit. This chapter ends with the example of war as a practical issue. Barth teaches that while we cannot be pacifists in principle, we will be so in practice but will endorse the use of violence to protect others.

Barth's use of scripture as the key authority, within the theological framework deriving from scripture, is discussed in the next chapter and is well done. A consideration of the world and its behaviour as relevant to the Church forms the topic for the final chapter which finds Barth more appreciative of the world than has been assumed, and even finds him teaching something akin to Rahner's 'anonymous Christian'.

This is a useful explanation of Barth's ethics, certainly necessary for theological education. It omits some theological appraisal of Barth's ethics such as that made by Pannenberg and Moltmann, and Gutteridge's work on Barth in the Nazi era might have merited some mention.

Tim Bradshaw
Oxford, England

EuroJTh (1995) 4:1, 106-108

0906-2720

The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus

Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover and the Jesus Seminar

New York: Polebridge, 1993, 553pp., \$30, ISBN 0-02-541949-8

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage résume les conclusions auxquelles est arrivé un groupe de théologiens américains qui s'appelle 'le séminaire sur Jésus'. A leurs