

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.

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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

yeux, seule une faible proportion des paroles attribuées à Jésus dans nos quatre Évangiles et dans l'Évangile de Thomas (auquel ils accordent pas mal de crédit) est authentique. L'ouvrage contient une traduction nouvelle des Évangiles, et des commentaires qui sont bien écrits. Mais il manifeste un point de vue sceptique et peu satisfaisant, qui se fonde plus particulièrement sur des paroles de la source 'Q' et de l'Évangile de Thomas. Pour les auteurs, Jésus n'est qu'un sage, mais pas le héraut du Royaume de Dieu eschatologique. Les arguments avancés pour défendre nos quatre Évangiles comme des documents historiquement fiables sur la vie et l'enseignement de Jésus de Nazareth ne sont pas pris en considération.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses Buch faßt die Arbeit und die Ergebnisse einer Gruppe amerikanischer Wissenschaftler zusammen, die sich das "Jesus-Seminar" nennen. Sie fanden heraus, daß nur ein kleiner Prozentsatz der Aussprüche Jesu in unseren Evangelien (und im Evangelium des Thomas, das von ihnen sehr hoch bewertet wird) tatsächlich auf Jesus zurückgehen. Das Buch enthält eine Übersetzung der Evangelien in Romanform und bietet einige wohlformulierte Kommentare. Es repräsentiert jedoch einen unbefriedigenden und skeptischen Standpunkt (der sich hauptsächlich auf die Aussprüche aus 'Q' und dem Thomas-Evangelium gründet): Jesus ist ein weiser Mann, jedoch nicht der Verkündiger des eschatologischen Reiches Gottes. Die Annahme, daß die Evangelien historisch glaubwürdige Aufzeichnungen über Jesus von Nazareth und seine Lehren sind, wird nicht ernsthaft berücksichtigt.

The 'Jesus Seminar' is a group of American scholars who began to meet in 1985 to reassess the historical evidence for the teaching of Jesus. This book explains their methods and assumptions, and summarizes their results. Their results are presented in the form of a new translation ('the scholars' version') of each of the canonical gospels and also of the gospel of Thomas, with the sayings of Jesus in each of the gospels being colour-coded according to the votes of the scholars in the Seminar—red for what is thought definitely to go back to Jesus, pink for less certain material, gray for possible material, black for material that does not go back to Jesus. The translation is accompanied by a brief explanatory commentary.

The Seminar puts most of the gospel sayings

into the black category, very very little indeed into the red category. To quote: 'Eighty-two percent of the words ascribed to Jesus in the gospels were not actually spoken by him, according to the Jesus Seminar.' (p. 5). John's gospel has nothing red, and hardly anything pink or gray; Mark does a bit better, though not very well; the so-called 'Q' sayings of Matthew/Luke and the sayings of the Gospel of Thomas score considerably better.

The book has some value: the 'scholars' version' is novel, sometimes lively, sometimes tendentious, sometimes very American; the 'kingdom of God' becomes 'God's imperial rule', 'Son of man' is 'son of Adam'. The explanatory sections of the book are succinct, non-technical and well-written; anyone looking for an introduction to gospel criticism and a brief critical commentary on the gospel texts could do worse than start here.

However, despite the number of scholars involved, no one should suppose that this book represents anything like a consensus among scholars generally, or that majority voting among the Seminar means balanced opinions or objectivity of approach. On the contrary, the book presents the views of one generally sceptical group of American scholars, whose assumptions (whether about source criticism, about the historical worthlessness of John's gospel, or the unreliability of oral tradition) and conclusions (e.g. the last supper narrative gets a feeble gray rating in Mark, but is for some reason black in Matthew and Luke) are repeatedly questionable.

The book reflects some of the views of the co-chairman of the Seminar, J. D. Crossan, who in his brilliant but (I would say) misguided book on *The Historical Jesus* relies heavily on the hypothetical source 'Q' and on the historically very dubious gospel of Thomas, to reconstruct a Jesus who was a wise teacher, but who did not preach an eschatological message about God's kingdom breaking into history. The eschatological emphasis of the New Testament came from the church, who got it in part from John the Baptist. This reconstruction of Jesus is quite different from that offered by E. P. Sanders, one of the most brilliant American interpreters of the historical Jesus: Sanders is as sceptical as many in the Seminar, but his interpretation of Jesus' message as 'restoration eschatology' is much more plausible than the Seminar's interpretation; it is in any case important to realise that the views of the Seminar are not shared by many of the most able New Testament scholars and that the book does not give a balanced presentation of

differing views, but the sort of view favoured by the majority of the Seminar.

Further to this point: the Seminar's book is quite unashamedly sceptical in its method, and there is no attempt to engage seriously with more conservative gospel scholarship (except to cast doubt on the value of concepts such as inspiration and inerrancy). (For a good conservative discussion see C. Blomberg's *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*; see also N. T. Wright's new *Jesus and the Victory of God*.) The possibility—even probability—of a strong eyewitness testimony lying behind the gospels and of the early Christians having a great interest in preserving accurately the stories and sayings of Jesus (see, e.g., Luke 1:1–4) is not reckoned with; the early church's ascription of the gospels to people closely in touch with the events (like Mark and Luke) is much too rapidly dismissed. If the Seminar had been less wedded to their methodical scepticism (reminiscent of Rudolf Bultmann) and had taken more seriously the evangelists' claim to be giving us historical information about Jesus, they might have come to very different and historically sounder conclusions.

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Introduction to Biblical Interpretation

W. W. Klein, C. L. Blomberg, R. L. Hubbard

Dallas: Word, 1993, 518 pp. ISBN 0—8499—0774—8

RÉSUMÉ

Ce livre, écrit par trois professeurs de la Faculté de Théologie de Denver, aux États-Unis, sera un manuel très utile pour les étudiant et ceux qui s'intéressent au traitement de toutes sortes de questions relatives à l'interprétation biblique. Les chapitres sur la nécessité de l'herméneutique, l'histoire de l'interprétation, le canon, les présupposés, le but de l'interprétation et la sémantique sont suivis par un examen de genres particuliers dans l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament, et finalement par une étude sur l'usage de la Bible de nos jours. Il y a un appendice traitant des approches modernes

comme le structuralisme, la théologie de la libération et le féminisme, ainsi qu'une bibliographie annotée.

Le livre est instructif, lisible, sérieux et évangélique. Il y a certains points avec lesquels on peut ne pas être d'accord (comme dans tout livre), mais l'ensemble forme un guide très utile et accessible sur un sujet d'importance capitale.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses Buch, deren Verfasser Mitglieder der Fakultät des Denver Seminary in den USA sind, ist ein sehr brauchbares Handbuch für Studenten und andere Leser, die eine weitreichende Betrachtung aller möglichen Themen im Zusammenhang mit Bibelauslegung suchen. Auf Kapitel über die Notwendigkeit der Hermeneutik, die Geschichte der Bibelauslegung, den Kanon, Voraussetzungen, das Ziel der Auslegung und Semantik folgt zunächst eine Abhandlung über bestimmte Materialtypen im AT und NT und schließlich einige Überlegungen zum heutigen Gebrauch der Bibel. Das Buch enthält einen Anhang über moderne Ansätze, einschließlich Strukturalismus, Befreiungstheologie und Feminismus, sowie eine kommentierte Bibliographie.

Das Buch ist informativ, leicht verdaulich, einfühlsam und evangelikal. Wie in jedem Buch gibt es einige Punkte, denen man nicht unbedingt zustimmt, jedoch ist es insgesamt ein wertvoller und zugänglicher Leitfaden für ein Thema von großer Wichtigkeit.

This book, written by three of the faculty of Denver Seminary in the USA, will be a very useful handbook to students and others wanting a wide-ranging discussion of all sorts of issues relating to biblical interpretation. Chapters on the need for hermeneutics, the history of interpretation, the canon, presuppositions, the goal of interpretation and semantics are followed by discussion of particular types of material in OT and NT, and finally by a consideration of using the Bible today. There is an appendix on modern approaches, including structuralism, liberation theology and feminism, and an annotated bibliography.

The book is informative, digestible, sensible and evangelical. There are points to disagree with (as in any book), but the whole is an extraordinarily useful and accessible guide to a vitally important subject.

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