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Gordon McConville

• Editorial: Gospel Hope and Public Morality

In the months before a general election in the UK, morality has overtaken the economy as the leading issue. The overwhelming concern is the increasing level of violence in society. In the past months a headmaster was stabbed to death outside his school in London as he tried to defend a pupil from attack by a gang of youths. A school in Yorkshire has been closed because of a breakdown in discipline which resulted in attacks on staff by pupils. The shadow of Dunblane, where sixteen children and their teacher were gunned down in their classroom, still hangs over the country. Now an incident involving the footballer Paul Gascoigne, who allegedly assaulted his wife, has been added to the catalogue of woe. The UK is not alone in this sense of an alarming decline in social standards, as readers well know.

All this has sparked a public debate of unprecedented intensity, with the immediate victims leading the way (the parents of Dunblane, who have agitated for a total ban on handguns; the wife of the murdered headmaster, who wants a reform of the education curriculum, to include the teaching of social responsibility; women's groups, who have argued that Gascoigne should not be picked to play football for England!). There is a feeling that a permissive age has gone too far, a clamour for the reaffirmation of the simple issue of right and wrong; and a widespread perception that those in authority have a responsibility for standards of behaviour in the community.

If the issue of the private morality of public figures was largely kept out of the recent American election, the opposite looks like happening in the UK. Remarkably for this country, the leaders of the three largest political parties have proclaimed their loyalty to Christian stand-

ards, and two of them to Christian belief. They have jostled for the 'moral high ground'.

The old question about the role of the Christian churches in public affairs, and conversely about the moral responsibilities of public figures, has therefore raised its head again. And it is fundamentally a theological question. Much of the present issue is based on the conference of FEET/GEET/AETE held at the Neues Leben Zentrum, Wölmersen, Germany in August, 1996. Its subject was 'Hope for Europe'. And one of its recurring themes, as it seemed to me, was the relationship between Christian hope and the Christian commitment to doing right in and for society broadly understood. The point is widely accepted, of course, though its finer points need careful thought (see S. Williams on Moltmann in EuroJTh 5.2). What can the Christian churches say and do in a society in crisis over right and wrong?

The question of the relationship between the political authority and ethics is elusive. How far can government enforce right behaviour? The way of theocratic totalitarianism is a false trail, with its own degrading consequences, and impossible in Europe. The real problem, however, is not so much the theoretical question of the limits of government, as the breakdown of a concept of right. In the matter of what is right and what is wrong, Christians and non-Christians, theologians and other public figures, share common ground. And quite apart from the proper limits of legal jurisdiction, people in public life may underestimate their responsibility in these areas.

Where abdication of proper responsibility is concerned, the kind of corruption that is currently tormenting Belgium is at an extreme. Politicians sometimes plead that

morality is not their affair. And yet it is plain that the affairs of any society cannot be conducted apart from trust. There are other kinds of abuse of responsibility, however, and it is not only politicians who come under scrutiny. The medical establishment, for example, plays a role in leading public values. How many abortions take place week by week in our hospitals because of a popular perception that the practice is now morally acceptable? And what is at the root of that perception if not an ideology that, though often unspoken, is nevertheless projected and reinforced by its association in people's minds with publicly esteemed bodies and practitioners? The trivializing of human life in our society is nowhere more evident than in the massive, systematic, daily, legalized destruction of it by people in positions of public trust. It is not an accident that a society that tolerates this also suffers violence at the hands of those who recognize no limits.

How does the proclamation of the Christian hope relate to these things? If it has any bearing on the world we live in, it

follows from what we have said that hope requires intellectual, theological, practical engagement. There are no neutral areas of life. This is argued in the present issue by Pastor Kofod-Svendson, from his experience as a Christian politician in Denmark. It was known by the prophet Amos, whose forging of a link between social responsibility and the hope of salvation is expressed in the marvellous ninth chapter of his book, here shown by Karl Möller to be the true climax of his work, though this is often questioned. It is based ultimately on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (so Professors Austad and Fazekas in our issue), who has thus initiated an order that transcends all our present societies. While the idea of an inexorable improvement in society because of the Gospel is illusory (Williams, 5.2), the Resurrection is no more a mandate for quietistic mysticism, for this can bring its own evil results (see Dr. Sannikov). The hope in the Resurrection is falsely understood if it does not motivate us to an active love, that embraces every kind of human endeavour and responsibility.

• Éditorial: L'Espérance Apportée par l'Évangile et la Moralité Publique

Dans les mois qui ont précédé les élections législatives en Grande Bretagne, les questions morales ont davantage retenu l'attention que les questions économiques. Le souci dominant est causé par l'extension de la violence dans la société. Ces derniers mois, un directeur d'école a été tué d'un coup de couteau à la porte de son école à Londres, alors qu'il tentait de défendre un élève attaqué par une bande de jeunes. Une école du Yorkshire a été fermée car, aucune discipline n'y étant plus maintenue, le personnel avait été attaqué par des élèves à diverses reprises. L'ombre de Dunblane, où seize enfants et leur professeur ont été tués à coups de fusil dans leur classe, plane

encore sur tout le pays. Maintenant, c'est une affaire dans laquelle est impliqué un joueur de football, Paul Gascoigne, accusé d'avoir commis des actes de violence contre sa femme, qui vient s'ajouter à la liste. Le Royaume-Uni n'est pas le seul pays où l'on constate un déclin effrayant des valeurs de la société, comme les lecteurs le savent bien.

Tout cela a suscité un débat public d'une intensité sans précédent, dans lequel les proches des victimes ont joué un rôle important: les parents des enfants de Dublane ont fait campagne pour l'interdiction totale des armes individuelles; la veuve du Directeur d'école assassiné a demandé une réforme des programmes de

l'éducation nationale pour qu'y soit inclus l'enseignement de la responsabilité sociale; des groupements féminins ont revendiqué que Gascoigne ne soit pas sélectionné pour jouer dans l'équipe de football d'Angleterre. On a l'impression qu'une époque de permissivité est allée trop loin et on réclame que la notion du bien et du mal soit réaffirmée. L'idée que les dirigeants ont une part de responsabilité quant aux normes du comportement social se répand. Si la question de la moralité personnelle des personnages publics a été largement écartée des débats lors des récentes élections américaines, il semble que le contraire va se produire dans le Royaume-Uni. Il faut remarquer que, dans ce pays, les chefs des trois grands partis politiques ont proclamé leur fidélité aux valeurs chrétiennes et deux d'entre eux ont affiché une foi chrétienne. Ils se sont fait les promoteurs d'un 'haut niveau moral'.

Le vieux problème du rôle des Églises chrétiennes dans les affaires publiques, et, parallèlement, celui des responsabilités morales des personnalités publiques, ont donc été de nouveau soulevés. Et c'est au fond une question théologique. Une grande partie de la présente livraison de ce journal utilise les travaux de la conférence de l'AETE qui s'est tenue au Neues Leben Zentrum à Wölmersen en Allemagne, en Août 1996. Le thème en était: 'Espérance pour l'Europe'. Et une question qui est revenue sans cesse, à ce qu'il m'a semblé, fut celle de la relation entre l'espérance chrétienne et l'engagement des chrétiens à faire ce qui est juste dans et pour la société dans son ensemble. Le principe en est largement accepté, naturellement, bien que les points les plus délicats demandent une réflexion solide (voir S. Williams sur Moltmann dans *JET* 5.2). Que peuvent dire et faire les Églises chrétiennes dans une société qui a perdu ses repères pour ce qui est du bien et du mal?

La question de la relation entre l'autorité politique et l'éthique est difficile à cerner. Jusqu'à quel point un gouvernement peut-il contraindre l'adoption d'un comportement bon? La voie du totalitarisme

théocratique est une fausse piste, avec ses conséquences dégradantes, et elle est impossible en Europe. Le vrai problème, cependant, n'est pas tellement la question théorique des limites du gouvernement que de la perte du sens de ce qui est juste. Pour ce qui est du bien et du mal, les chrétiens et les non chrétiens, les théologiens et les autres personnalités publiques ont beaucoup en commun. Et tout en restant à l'intérieur des justes limites de la juridiction légale, on peut considérer que ceux qui sont engagés dans la vie publique peuvent sous-estimer leur responsabilité dans ce domaine.

Là où l'on démissionne face à ses responsabilités, le genre de corruption qui se révèle actuellement en Belgique atteint un degré extrême. Parfois, les hommes politiques se défendent en prétendant que la morale n'est pas leur affaire. Et pourtant, il est évident que les affaires de toute société ne peuvent être conduites sans qu'une certaine confiance soit accordée à ses dirigeants. Il y a encore d'autres façons d'abuser de sa responsabilité, et ce ne sont pas seulement les hommes politiques qui sont sur la sellette. Le corps médical, par exemple, joue un rôle par l'influence qu'il exerce sur la société. Combien d'avortements sont pratiqués semaine après semaine dans nos hôpitaux à cause du sentiment populaire que cette pratique est maintenant acceptable? Et qu'y a-t-il à la base de cette manière de voir, si ce n'est une idéologie qui, bien que non exprimée la plupart du temps, s'impose dans notre société par son association, dans l'esprit des gens, avec des praticiens jouissant d'un prestige considérable? Le peu d'importance accordée à la vie humaine dans notre société n'est nulle part plus évident que dans sa destruction massive, systématique, quotidienne et légalisée, par des personnes jouissant de la confiance générale. Ce n'est pas un effet du hasard si une société qui tolère cela doit aussi subir la violence de la part de ceux qui ne reconnaissent aucune limite.

Qu'apporte, par rapport à ces problèmes, la proclamation de l'espérance chrétienne?

Si elle a une quelconque pertinence pour le monde dans lequel nous vivons, cela découle de ce que nous avons déjà dit, à savoir que l'espérance conduit à un engagement intellectuel, théologique et pratique. Il n'y a pas de zones de neutralité dans la vie. Ceci est démontré dans ce numéro par le Pasteur Kofod-Svendson, à partir de son expérience d'homme politique chrétien au Danemark. Cela a été mis en avant par le prophète Amos, qui, dans le chapitre 9 de son livre, établit un lien entre la responsabilité sociale et l'espérance du salut, comme le montre Karl Möller, qui considère ce texte comme le véritable aboutissement de l'oeuvre d'Amos, bien que son authenticité soit souvent mise en question. L'espérance chrétienne se fonde sur la

Résurrection de Jésus-Christ qui a fait naître un ordre nouveau qui transcende toutes nos sociétés actuelles, comme le soulignent les professeurs Austad et Fazekas. Alors que l'idée d'une amélioration définitive de la société par l'Évangile est illusoire (Williams, 5.2), la Résurrection ne constitue cependant pas un encouragement à un mysticisme quiétiste, car ceci peut produire des résultats pernicieux comme l'a relevé Sannikov. L'espérance de la Résurrection est mal comprise si elle ne nous pousse pas à un amour actif qui se manifestera de diverses manières, au travers de toutes les tâches que nous entreprendrons et de toutes les responsabilités que nous assumerons.

• Editorial: Die Hoffnung des Evangeliums und öffentliche Moral

In den Monaten vor der Parlamentswahl in Großbritannien hat die moralische Frage die Wirtschaft als bedeutendstes Thema verdrängt. Das herausragende Anliegen ist der steigende Gewaltpegel in der Gesellschaft. In den vergangenen Monaten ist ein Schuldirektor vor seiner Schule in London erstochen worden, als er versuchte, einen Schüler vor einer Attacke durch eine Bande Jugendlicher zu verteidigen. Eine Schule in Yorkshire ist geschlossen worden aufgrund eines disziplinären Debakels, das zu Attacken der Belegschaft durch einzelne Schüler geführt hat. Der Schatten Dunblanes, wo sechzehn Kinder und ihre Lehrerin in ihrem Klassenraum niedergeschossen worden sind, hängt noch immer über dem Land. Und jetzt ist dem Katalog von Übeln noch ein Ereignis hinzugefügt worden, in das der Fußballer Paul Gascoigne verstrickt ist, der seine Frau attackiert haben soll. Doch Großbritannien steht in bezug

auf diesen alarmierenden Niedergang sozialer Werte nicht alleine da, wie Sie als Leser nur zu gut wissen.

All dies hat eine in dieser Intensität einmalige öffentliche Debatte entzündet, die von den unmittelbaren Opfern (den Eltern von Dunblane, die sich für einen totalen Bann aller Handschußwaffen einsetzen; der Frau des ermordeten Schuldirektors, die eine Reform des Lehrplans anstrebt, die das Vermitteln sozialer Verantwortlichkeit beinhaltet; sowie Frauenverbänden, die gefordert haben, daß Gascoigne nicht mehr als englischer Nationalspieler berücksichtigt werden soll) angeführt wird. Es herrscht der Eindruck vor, daß man in einer nachsichtigen Zeit zu weit gegangen ist. Folglich wird die Forderung laut, die simple Unterscheidung von richtig und falsch wieder neu zu bekräftigen. Diese Forderung geht einher mit der weitverbreiteten Auffassung, daß die gesellschaftlichen Autoritäten eine Ver-

antwortung haben für die öffentlichen Verhaltensnormen.

Während die Frage der privaten Moral öffentlicher Personen aus der letzten amerikanischen Wahl größtenteils herausgehalten worden ist, scheint in Großbritannien das Gegenteil der Fall zu sein. In für dieses Land bemerkenswerter Weise haben die Führer der drei größten politischen Parteien ihre Loyalität zu den christlichen Werten proklamiert, zwei von ihnen sogar zum christlichen Glauben an sich. Sie haben sich dabei quasi um den 'moralischen Spitzenplatz' gedrängelt.

Die alte Frage bezüglich der Rolle der christlichen Kirchen in öffentlichen Angelegenheiten sowie der moralischen Verantwortung öffentlicher Personen ist also erneut aufgekommen. Und dies ist wesentlich eine theologische Frage. Große Teile dieser Ausgabe basieren auf der Konferenz der GeeT/FEET/AETE, die im August im Neues Leben Zentrum in Wölmersen (Deutschland) abgehalten wurde. Der Leitgedanke war 'Hoffnung für Europa'. Eines der wiederholt aufgegriffenen Themen war, wie mir schien, die Beziehung zwischen christlicher Hoffnung und der christlichen Verpflichtung, Gutes zu tun in der und für die Gesellschaft im allgemeinen. Dies wird selbstverständlich in weiten Kreisen als einleuchtend angesehen, doch die Einzelheiten bedürfen sorgfältiger Überlegungen (vgl. S. Williams' Artikel zu Moltmann in EuroJTh 5.2). Was können die christlichen Kirchen in einer Gesellschaft, die bezüglich der Problematik, was richtig und was falsch ist, in einer Krise steckt, sagen und tun?

Die Frage der Beziehung von politischer Autorität und Ethik ist schwer zu beantworten. Inwieweit kann die Regierung richtiges Verhalten erzwingen? Der Weg des theokratischen Totalitarismus mit seinen ihm eigenen degradierenden Konsequenzen ist ein Irrweg und in Europa nicht durchführbar. Das eigentliche Problem ist jedoch nicht so sehr die theoretische Frage nach den Grenzen der Regierung als vielmehr der Zusammenbruch des Konzepts von richtig und falsch.

Doch die Frage betreffend, was richtig und was falsch ist, herrscht unter Christen und Nichtchristen, Theologen und Personen des öffentlichen Lebens eine weitgehende Übereinstimmung. Ganz abgesehen von der Frage um die legitimen Grenzen gesetzlicher Jurisdiktion scheint es jedoch, daß Personen, die im öffentlichen Leben stehen, ihre Verantwortung in diesen Bereichen unterschätzen.

Was die Verleugnung angemessener Verantwortlichkeit anbelangt, ist die Art von Korruption, wie sie zur Zeit Belgien beunruhigt, von extremem Ausmaß. Politiker plädieren manchmal dafür, daß die Frage der Moral nicht ihre Angelegenheit sei. Und doch ist es offensichtlich, daß die gesellschaftlichen Belange ohne Vertrauen nicht durchführbar sind. Aber es gibt noch andere Arten des Mißbrauchs von Verantwortung; und es sind keineswegs nur die Politiker, die der gewissenhaften Prüfung bedürfen. Der medizinische Apparat spielt beispielsweise ebenfalls eine Rolle im Zusammenhang mit den vorherrschenden öffentlichen Werten. Wie viele Abtreibungen werden Woche für Woche in unseren Krankenhäusern durchgeführt aufgrund der weitverbreiteten Meinung, diese Praxis sei nun moralisch vertretbar? Und was liegt dieser Auffassung zugrunde, wenn nicht eine Ideologie, die man sich, häufig unausgesprochen, zurechtlegt und die besonderen Nachdruck erhält, da sie in den Köpfen der Menschen in Verbindung gebracht wird mit in der Öffentlichkeit geschätzten Gremien und praktizierenden Ärzten? Die in unserer Gesellschaft anzutreffende Trivialisierung des menschlichen Lebens ist nirgends offensichtlicher als in der massiven und systematischen sich täglich abspielenden legalisierten Vernichtung desselben, vorgenommen von Leuten, die in öffentlichen Vertrauenspositionen stehen. Es ist kein Zufall, daß eine Gesellschaft, die dies toleriert, Gewalt zu erleiden hat, verübt von denen, die keine Grenzen mehr kennen.

Wie ist die Verkündigung der christlichen Hoffnung zu diesen Angelegenheiten in Beziehung zu setzen? Wenn sie irgende-

inen Einfluß auf die Welt haben soll, in der wir leben, dann folgt aus dem bisher Gesagten, daß Hoffnung intellektuelles, theologisches und praktisches Engagement erfordert. Unser Leben kennt keine neutralen Bereiche. Genau dies wird in der vorliegenden Ausgabe von Pastor Kofod-Svendson auf der Grundlage seiner Erfahrung als christlicher Politiker in Dänemark vertreten. Bereits Amos wußte darum. Er stellt im bemerkenswerten neunten Kapitel seines Buches – das, obwohl oft bestritten, hier von Karl Möller als der eigentliche Höhepunkt seines Werkes akzentuiert wird – eine Verbindung zwischen sozialer Verantwortung und Heilshoffnung her. Letztere gründet sich im Endeffekt auf die Auferstehung Jesu

Christi (s. Prof. Austad und Fazekas in dieser Ausgabe), der aufgrund derselben eine Realität initiiert hat, die all unsere gegenwärtigen Gesellschaften transzendiert. Zwar ist die Vorstellung einer unausbleiblichen Vervollkommenung der Gesellschaft durch das Evangelium eine Illusion (Williams, 5.2), doch die Auferstehung ist auch kein Mandat für einen quietistischen Mystizismus, der seine eigenen verheerenden Ergebnisse mit sich bringen kann (s. Dr. Sannikov). Die in der Auferstehung verankerte Hoffnung wird falsch verstanden, wenn sie uns nicht zu einer aktiven Liebe motiviert, die jegliche Art von menschlicher Bemühung und Verantwortlichkeit einschließt.

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CONFERENCE REPORT, Gerald Bray, Cambridge

RÉSUMÉ

La onzième conférence bisannuelle de l'Association Européenne de Théologiens Évangéliques a eu lieu au centre "Neues Leben" à Altenkirchen en Allemagne, du 16 au 20 août 1996. Les participants ont eu le privilège d'entendre, entre autres orateurs, les représentants de trois pays européens très différents. Le pasteur Flemming Kofod-Svendsen, qui a fait partie du gouvernement danois, nous a entretenu de son expérience politique. Il a dit comment il envisage, en tant que chrétien, l'avenir de la démocratie et de l'Union Européenne. Il a rappelé que les valeurs partagées par les pays d'Europe, comme le respect de la dignité de la personne, la solidarité sociale et la démocratie elle-même, étaient dues au christianisme. Il a souligné l'importance de la doctrine du sacerdoce de tous les croyants et a insisté sur le fait que là où les Églises ont confié des responsabilités aux laïcs, elles ont eu un impact sur le développement social.

Ludovit Fazekas, de Slovaquie, a soumis à la réflexion théologique de la conférence les expé-

iences faites au cours de bien des années de souffrance, ainsi que dans le contexte de l'indépendance nouvellement acquise (et parfois non désirée). Il a montré que l'espérance chrétienne se fonde sur la résurrection de Christ. Cela appelle un accomplissement final, encore à venir. Mais nous trouvons par exemple dans la communion fraternelle et dans le repas du Seigneur des anticipations importantes de cet avenir.

Enfin, Serge Sannikov, d'Odessa en Ukraine, a apporté son éclairage sur la manière dont les chrétiens évangéliques font face au double héritage laissé par le communisme et par l'orthodoxie orientale, alors qu'ils cherchent à construire une société nouvelle sur les ruines de l'ex-Union Soviétique. Les Églises d'Orient ont souffert de l'héritage laissé par l'hésychiasme byzantin, qui sépare radicalement l'espérance chrétienne et l'activité humaine en ce monde. Le communisme a pu remplir ce vide dû à l'absence d'une espérance chrétienne authentique. Il est vital de cultiver cette espérance à une époque marquée par beaucoup de désespérance.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die elfte, im zweijährigen Turnus stattfindende, Konferenz der "Gemeinschaft europäischer evangelikaler Theologen" (GeeT) wurde vom 16.-20. August 1996 im Neues Leben-Zentrum in Altenkirchen (Deutschland) abgehalten. Die Konferenz hatte das besondere Vorrecht, unter ihren Rednern drei Repräsentanten aus sehr unterschiedlichen europäischen Ländern zu haben. Pastor Flemming Kofod-Svendsen, ein früheres Mitglied des dänischen Kabinetts, legte auf der Grundlage seiner Erfahrung des politischen Lebens in Dänemark dar, wie er als Christ die Zukunft der Demokratie und der Europäischen Union sieht.

Er stellte die Behauptung auf, daß die in Europa gültigen Werte, wie der Respekt vor der Würde des Menschen, die Sozialfürsorge sowie die Demokratie selbst, dem Christentum zuzuschreiben seien. Er hob die Bedeutung der Lehre vom "Priestertum aller Gläubigen" hervor und betonte mit Nachdruck, daß die Kirchen dort, wo sie den Laien Verantwortung zugestanden haben, einen bedeutenden Beitrag zur sozialen Entwicklung geleistet haben.

Dr. Ludovit Fazekas (Slowakische Republik) brachte die Erfahrung vieler Jahre des Leidens sowie der neuen (und eher ungesuchten) Eigenstaatlichkeit in die theologische Reflexion der Konferenz ein. Er zeigte auf, daß die christliche Hoffnung in Christi Auferstehung gegründet

ist, die auf eine noch zukünftige Vollendung verweist. Doch diese Zukunft ist auf bedeutende Weise vorweggenommen, z.B. in der christlichen Gemeinschaft und im Abendmahl.

Schließlich verhalf Dr. Sergei Sannikov aus Odessa (Ukraine) der Konferenz zu einem Einblick, wie evangelikale Christen bei dem Versuch, aus den Trümmern der früheren Sowjetunion eine neue Gesellschaft zu bilden, mit dem doppelten Erbe des Kommunismus

und der östlichen Orthodoxie konfrontiert sind. Die östliche Christenheit litt unter der Erbschaft des byzantinischen Hesychasmus mit seiner strikten Trennung von christlicher Hoffnung und menschlicher Aktivität. Der Kommunismus konnte dieses Vakuum füllen, das durch den Mangel an echter christlicher Hoffnung entstanden war. In einer Situation, die von viel Verzweiflung geprägt war, war dies unabdingbar.

The eleventh biennial Conference of the Federation of European Evangelical Theologians (FEET) was held at the Neues-Leben-Zentrum in Altenkirchen (Germany) from 16 to 20 August 1996. The conference was especially privileged to have among its speakers three representatives of very different European countries. Pastor Flemming Kofod-Svendsen, a former member of the Danish cabinet, spoke from his experience of political life in Denmark, and of how he, as a Christian, sees the future of democracy and the European Union. He argued that the shared values in Europe, such as respect for the dignity of the person, social care, and democracy itself, are attributable to Christianity. He stressed the importance of the doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers', and urged that where churches have allowed responsibility to the laity they have had an impact on social development.

Dr Ludovit Fazekas, from Slovakia, brought the experience of many years of suffering, as well as of new (and somewhat undesired) statehood to the Conference's theological reflection. He showed how Christian hope is rooted in Christ's resurrection. This still points forward to a future consummation. But that future is anticipated in important ways, for example, in the Christian community and in the Lord's Supper.

Finally, Dr Sergei Sannikov, from Odessa (Ukraine) gave the Conference an insight into the way Evangelical Christians are facing the double legacy of Communism and of Eastern Orthodoxy, as they seek to build a new society out of the wreckage of

the former Soviet Union. Eastern Christianity has suffered from the legacy of Byzantine hesychasm, with its divorce between Christian hope and human activity. Communism was able to fill this vacuum left by the absence of genuine Christian hope. It was vital to cultivate this in a situation where there was much despair.

Pastor Kofod-Svendsen spoke as follows: In Acts we read how the Gospel reached Europe. From Church history we know how Christianity advanced from country to country. We also know what huge socio-political consequences Christianity had in the different European countries and among its peoples. If the gospel had not reached Europe and penetrated the different European countries, we would have had quite a different history.

It is not my task to explain what Christianity has meant for Europe. But we shall try to learn from history regarding the future of Europe. The first question we ask is: What is the identity of Europe? If we look at culture, it is rightly said that Europe is characterised by a cultural multiplicity. Here Europe stands in sharp contrast to the USA. The reason is the different historical background. I hope the multiplicity of European culture will continue in Denmark, Sweden, Germany etc., and also in different regions within these countries.

What then will keep European identity together? I think it is important that we have a kind of spiritual fellowship. When I try to look for the basis of European identity, I find it in one word: Christianity.

When we look at European values, we find the same things everywhere: belief in personal responsibility, love of freedom, solidarity with the poor, etc. These are values which are common and a natural part of our view of society. But all these values have their roots in Christianity. And I think that without the inspiration of Christianity these values will fall into decay or be de-railed.

Let us look more thoroughly at the notion of democracy. What role has Christianity played in the development of representative democracy? Let me first emphasize that a country's form of government is not a divine arrangement. History has known the most varied forms of government. There have been those who have tried to show that a particular form of government is prescribed by the Bible. The Emperor Napoleon, for example, made catechisms in which he stressed the necessity of obedience to the Emperor.

In this century several people have tried to show that democracy is the form of government which corresponds most closely to the will of God. Of particular interest here is the attempt made by the famous theologian Karl Barth. He said that Scripture gives us a basis for solving social and political problems, even though these answers are not found directly in the Biblical texts. Barth draws an analogy between the Church and the state. From this he tries to prove that democracy is the right form of government. But it is not the purpose of the Bible to give concrete instructions on how to organise the form of government.

Even though the Bible does not say that democracy is the form of rule which best corresponds to the will of God, there is no doubt that Christianity has been of great importance for its development. If we go back to the New Testament we see that the early Church was a fellowship of individuals. The main thing was not the building or the hierarchy. There was one body, but it was made up of many parts (1 Cor 12:12). Each person was known to God the Father by name, each was accountable to his or her Creator, along with the rest of mankind, for

everything he or she said and did.

Indeed, we have only a few examples which show that confessing Christians have taken an active part in working for democratic reforms. We have them, but it is easier to find confessing Christians who were against democratic reforms. I think the role which Christianity has played in the development of democracy has been mainly due to important cultural impulses which have arisen from Christian preaching and teaching. In particular I might mention beliefs about human worth, personal responsibility, multiculturalism, charity, the belief that all young people should have a minimum level of education, and the belief that everyone has a right to help and care in danger, distress, suffering and illness.

Perhaps the most important thing is the impulse towards social care as it developed in Western countries. If we compare this with the situation in countries where Christianity has not prepared the ground, we will find that the care which we know in Western countries is not given automatically as a matter of course.

Next I would underline that although the Christian Church has been organised in a hierarchical way for centuries, some of the most important theological thinking of the reformer Martin Luther concerned his teaching about laymen. Every person who is baptized and believes in Jesus Christ is a pastor with the right to preach and make decisions in the Church. We call it the priesthood of all believers. In many Protestant churches and church- organisations during the past two centuries this teaching about laymen has had an enormous influence, and it has created links with the political fight for democratic reforms and demands from the people to participate in decision making as of right.

In the Calvinist tradition there arose congregations which were totally independent. These, I believe, created an understanding of minority rights. And when you have an understanding of minority rights, an understanding of the importance of free schools follows. It is in

countries with an independent church tradition that we find free schools. Denmark is the only Lutheran country with a long tradition of free schools, thanks to the work of Grundtvig, the famous pastor, poet and politician.

Among Lutherans it has been common to stress obedience to the Authorities, with no changes to the existing system. We know it in Denmark from the orthodox period in our Church history, when we had an absolute monarchy. In the last century, when we had thinking about free constitutions in Denmark, we had examples of pastors, who were conservative in both the theological and the political sense of the word, who wanted to keep the existing set-up.

Generally we can say that where there has been a Church hierarchy with power, and where laypeople had very little spiritual or organisational influence, Christianity has had little importance in social-political development and progress in Europe. On the other hand, when you have spiritually mature laypeople with spiritual responsibility, and where the bishops and the pastors emphasise the priesthood of all believers and are willing to give laypeople responsibility, there Christianity has had great importance in the social-political development of the countries concerned.

If we believe in democracy, we should do all we can to preserve it. In 1939, the countries of Western Europe were ready to go to war to preserve a free Poland. Half a century later, that freedom has been achieved. The task now is to do all we can to ensure that democracy lasts more than ten years in central Europe and Russia. If we look at the key countries in central Europe, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, they have together a population of 64 million compared with the Union's 340 million, so that task alone should stretch us a good deal less than the Marshall Plan stretched the United States.

Not only will there be a risk of dictatorship in those countries in five years' time if such help is not provided, but also there will be a real risk of Western Europe's

being swamped by economic refugees long before then. We need to help Eastern Europe for the same reason that the West Germans had to help the East Germans. The rise of a tiny neo-Nazi group in the former East Germany is directly related to the pressure of immigrants from Poland. If economic refugees arrive in Poland from the former Soviet Union, the former President Lech Walesa told the Union: 'We will have to pass them straight on to you'.

We who are Christians should, above all, remember our fellow Christians in these countries. For years we have prayed for their freedom. Now, surely in answer to our prayers, there is freedom of religion right across Europe for the first time in history—and indeed as far as the Pacific coast of Russia. We should do what we can to help establish an economic base to undergird this political and religious freedom. We have the peace dividend, and even if the aid also costs a fraction more in VAT, it is an investment in peace and freedom which we may never be able to make again.

If we look at the former Communist countries, we realise that they do not want to be seen as 'ex-Communist countries'. The Hungarians have reminded us that they are an ancient European nation 'who spent four hundred years defending you against the Turks'. Prague was a famous European city when many of our cities were mere villages. Poland was a great nation when Russia had never been heard of. High on our agenda for the Inter-Government Conference over the next few years therefore, should be the economic recovery of our near neighbours, and preparation for their membership of the European Union.

If the European peoples can avoid nationalism and create a union of free and democratic states based on the values of Christianity, then I think Europe will have an important role to play in the future. At the moment, unfortunately, I see the beginning of several tendencies towards nationalism, intolerance and xenophobia. If we are to avoid these risks, we need the spirit of the Council at Jerusalem, where multi-racial thinking was created.

In my opinion, the European Union is a gift to Europe. Yet I admit that there are many weaknesses in it. We need more democracy, more openness, more willingness to share both with the former Communist world and with the Third World. In this situation we have to rethink and reformulate our teaching about the priesthood of all believers. This is the best way to create a new generation of Christians working with socio-political challenges and issues and at the same time thinking biblically.

Taking up the challenge to think biblically about the question of hope in today's world, Dr Fazekas addressed the Conference with the following reflection:

The foundation of the hope in the OT is the Exodus from Egypt and the covenant the Lord made on Sinai with Israel, to which he has added the promises.¹ This hope goes together with the confidence that the Lord is faithful and strong enough to fulfil the promises. It embraces land, health, family, protection and resurrection.² 'This hope must not be condemned as egoistic and earthly, because it relates to the Lord as the granting God.'³ In addition, hope is connected with the loyalty of the nation. The prophets who preached hope apart from the obedience of Israel were found to be false. The true prophets proclaimed 'deliverance through judgement'.⁴ Hope in the OT relates not only to Israel but also to the pagan nations. They will come to Zion and worship the Lord; they will become God's people, like Israel. It is a 'centripetal mission', but this hope does exist.⁵

After its conquest of the land, Israel put its hope in its king. The kingship functioned for some time but then, at the end of the monarchical period the Lord said: 'So in my anger I gave you a king, and in my wrath I took him away.'⁶ Under the hard knocks of history, Israel began to wait for a deliverer. He might be 'a prophet like Moses' or the prophet Elijah. But more and more, Israel started looking for an anointed king along the lines of Nathan's prophecy.⁷ This Messiah would be born as a child, sit on the throne of David and

establish an empire of peace. But he might come in the guise of the Servant of the Lord, who dies for the sins of God's people, or as a Son of Man, who transforms the kingdoms of wild beasts.⁸ In Jewish Apocalyptic this figure appears more and more often. But here, the coming of the Messiah was made dependent on obedience to the Law,⁹ which made this hope very uncertain.

In the NT the word *elpis* (hope) can refer to trust in God or to the object of this trust,¹⁰ but it has its basis in 'the historical manifestation of God in (the resurrection of) Christ'.¹¹ He was proclaimed as a winner in a cause (1 Tim 3:16). 'In the resurrection of Jesus the victory of God in the person of his Son for the good of man has been won already. Of course, Easter is only a foretaste of our hope but in the Easter testimony this future is already present... The battle is over. Practically speaking, (the adversary) is check-mated.'¹² It has a paradoxical character because it is not the hero but the Crucified One who was betrayed by men and forsaken by God himself (Mk 9:31; Mt 27:46), who has won. It is also paradoxical because the battle has been won, but not yet the war. In the meantime, we must endure the 'unresolved exigencies of the present'¹³ and wait for the time when Jesus will become Lord not only *de jure*, but *de facto* also.

The beginning of God's Kingdom was given in Jesus; its consummation lies in the future. But in some realms, its anticipation has already dawned. The man who is reconciled to God is a new creation in whom the saying of Jesus: 'I am making everything new' has already been anticipated (Rev 21:5, cf. 'The old has gone, the new has come' 2 Cor 5:17). Christian love is also a value which 'remains' (*menei* 1 Cor 13:13) beyond the limit of history, and it is 'eternity in temporality'.¹⁴ Christian community is also an anticipation of the eschatological gathering to Jesus. For both of these terms the Apostle uses the same word (Heb 10:25: *Me egkatalaipontes ten episy-nagogen heauton*; 2 Th 2:1: *Hyper tes hemon episynagogen ep' auton*). In our wor-

ship we anticipate the heavenly worship: Our confession of the Lordship of Christ is the future confession of the universe (Ph 2:11). The Lord's Supper is an anticipation of the wedding of the Lamb (Rev 19:7; Mt 26:29).

Jesus sent his disciples out into the world with the instructions: 'The Kingdom of God is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons' (Mt 10:7f). With every restoration of man in body, soul and spirit, ground is taken from Satan and Jesus is proved to be the true Lord. The substantiation of the 'Great Commission' ('All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me', Mt 28:18f) makes it clear that their mission is a real conquest of the earth for the new Lord of the world.¹⁵ The first Christians, just after their baptism in the Spirit, promptly did such an 'unspiritual' thing as to adopt a communalism in relation to material goods (Acts 2 and 4). Some old structures remained, but they were soon made obsolete in the Church: Onesimus was a slave socially but at the same time he was also a 'beloved brother' in the Lord (Pm 16). Masters and slaves were made equal by the fact that both of them had the same Lord in heaven (Ep 6:9).

There is confusion in theology over apocalyptic. It is a pre-Christian current which not only 'uncovered' the situation (mostly in symbols), but also tried to make a 'railway timetable' for the future. The NT used it but made an 'anti apocalyptic apocalypse' as far as time scheduling was concerned. God remains sovereign! Those who ignore these facts have created the puzzle of Millennialism,¹⁶ those who do not frequently fall into the trap of eschatophobia. Our hope is not *when* but *that* Jesus is coming again. The meaning of his parousia is that he who is Lord *de jure* will then become Lord of the Universe *de facto*, and will give his Church the absolute satisfaction of reigning with him.¹⁷ After the resurrection of the dead he will judge all beings and put a final end to Satan and all evil. He will lead his Church into the Kingdom of God, in which his people in their

totality and in all respects will come to *shalom* – the 'normal conditions' of their Father's home.

In recent years, some philosophers have tried to grapple with the problems of the modern world by a process of what they call 'deconstruction'. This approach, which is now generally known as 'postmodernism', Dr Fazekas criticised as follows:

Postmodern critics come with the notion of 'deconstruction'. We float in a stream of scientific, technical, philosophical, political and theological constructions. We can escape the danger of totalization only if we deconstruct them.¹⁸ In fact, not only the extreme of totalitarian régimes, but all affirmations about 'great news' which claim to be absolute must be rejected. 'A war on the whole' has to be declared in order that the individual may not be regimented from outside.¹⁹

From this it follows logically that postmodernism puts its hope in pluralism. As J.M. Lochman has shown, Immanuel Kant opened up a new path in the eighteenth century with his idea of egoism over against pluralism. He distinguished a logical egoist who does not need the opinions of others, an aesthetic egoist who is satisfied with his own taste, a moral egoist who wants what is useful to him. The pluralist thinks that everyone of us is one among many and an independent citizen.²⁰ This principle was successfully applied in the western democracies and postmodernism extends the principle of plurality to the consequent relativism of a new worldview. "We understand postmodernism as a state of radical plurality... Truth, righteousness, humanity will appear next time in the plural."²¹ Some postmodernists trust in the motto: Anything goes. "A communal organisation or just a solidarity with the less able is not required. It is a hobby of some specialists."²²

Jacques Derrida entertains the idea of the Apocalypse.²³ He affirms that modernism tried to win absolute superiority by means of the outlook of the Apocalypse the unveiling of the end. Postmodernism says

that there is no such end: the end of the class struggle, of philosophy, of God, of subjects, of the world. Derrida wants to prove this by using the Apocalypse of John itself. 'The Apocalypse', he says, 'is an empty broadcasting, a broadcasting without a message. There is no last judgement, there is no truth. The Apocalypse is the unveiling of the unveiling. The Apocalypse was not, is not and will not be. Apocalypse now? Not now nor ever.'²⁴ Of course, we must consider that Derrida wants to deconstruct the complexity of the concept 'Apocalypse'.²⁵ Otherwise one can perceive with even minimal theological knowledge that he has turned the Apocalypse of John upside down. It is precisely 'the book about the end'.

Postmodernism sees many faults of modernism very clearly and it advances new solutions. One of them is pluralism. It sees that the ideology of totalization was pernicious, especially when the particular information was connected through political power to a 'scientific worldview', which had to be accepted under the threat of punishment. In this, postmodernism is right. But we cannot jump from one extreme to the other. Life in society is life in an organism. In this organism we must stress the differences among the particular members, but also the unity of the whole. True, modernism in its many forms stressed a kind of unity which led to much violence. We are individuals and have our God-given differences. But we are also members of an organism. To spoil the organism in the name of pluralism would be fatal. The care of the whole cannot be simply the hobby of some experts. It is a matter for all its members.

Postmodernism sees very well that the truth cannot be expressed by a single word. The truth is many-sided and many-coloured. We in the Church must also see that the truth is too great for our limited vision.²⁶ It is dangerous to make particular truth into a universal truth. This was the way chosen by all the heresies. Of course, this does not mean that we may look for the solution in relativism. *De gustibus non est disputandum*, but the truth is more than a

gustus. There is no hope for us if we do not see that somebody 'was vindicated by the Spirit' and won the cause by giving his life for others. He has become the Lord of the Universe – first of all *de jure* and finally *de facto*. His resurrection cannot be erased. There is no hope for those who see the solution in "polytheism".²⁷ That is a step backward into the pre-Christian era. Jesus has won the battle for all mankind. He who rejects that victory scorns his own life.

We have shown that atheism, especially in its political form, created a vacuum which sucks up everything with the label of 'spirit'. Postmodernism says that this is acceptable because there is no difference between the gods. Everybody should have his own idol. True, we do not want to force faith on anyone. But from our perspective we must say that there is no hope in this view of spirituality. In our times we are again concerned with the gnostic spirituality of the first century, which was preaching the seductive teaching: *Physei sozomenoi* – saved by nature. According to this way of thinking, we have in our spirit the spark of eternal life. It is under the ashes but can be inflamed and become a source of energy for us. We must reject this idea because experience proves that it does not work. It is the same as if a man were to try to reach the moon by using his legs to jump. No! God has prepared for us a 'rocket' in his Spirit, who takes up all who are weak but who have entered into the life of the Spirit of God (Ro 8:1ff).

Finally, the Conference was addressed by Dr Sannikov, who outlined some of the ways in which secular hope had tried and failed in the Soviet Union, and how Evangelical Christians are called to respond to the crisis which its collapse has created:

The end of the 1980s found Christian theology standing before the challenge of a new reality. The Berlin wall had collapsed and western Christianity suddenly discovered that the huge and hitherto unexplored world behind the wall was not only a mission field, but it also contained a defined theological culture with deep roots and its

own unique character.

This theological culture, belonging to the Evangelical churches of Eastern Europe, is still only weakly reflected in published materials. It is, more than anything else, a theology of practice as opposed to theory, and can be summed up by using the expression of early Christians: 'We don't engage in mental exercises, we just live.' The church in the West has been awaiting this rich, dynamic reality of theological experience for a long time.

For any person 'hope' is a basic concept of existence. Human beings cannot live without hope. It is not for nothing that we say 'hope dies last of all'. Psychologists confirm that if a man were deprived of hope, his life would come to an end regardless of whether or not that occurred in actual fact. Hope, as is well known, determines personality to be what it is and is its distinguishing feature. Erich Fromm defines man as *homo sperans*, a person who hopes, and attempts to show that 'to hope is the basic condition for being a human being'.²⁸ But only religious content makes hope the clear and sure basis of existence. For an unbelieving man hope is connected to the instinct for self-preservation because it is based on the values, the motivating factors and resources of this material life alone. An irreligious man can depend on himself, on other people, on the laws of nature, but he understands very well the limitations of the subject and object of his hope. Hope without religion is in essence 'horizontal', while at the same time the eschatological hope of the Old Testament prophets, having become the personal hope of every Christian, is the 'vertical' idea of salvation.²⁹

For the Christian, Christ crucified, risen and ascended into heaven as a forerunner for us all in the Kingdom of Heaven is the object of a hope which 'enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain' as 'an anchor for the soul, firm and secure' (Heb 6:19). That means that hope for the Christian is a special firm foundation for faith which manifests itself in love (1 Cor 13:13). It is no wonder that in the Hebrew text of

the Old Testament these various concepts (faith, hope and love) are frequently expressed in words which come from a common root. This same combination can be observed in Greek and Latin as well. Therefore hope, being the foundation for the existence of the personality, particularly manifests itself in the life, practice and theology of religious consciousness.³⁰

But for people living in a post-Communist society, the category of hope has a special meaning. In comparison with Western society, all those living in our countries live by hope. This is true not only of Evangelical Christians, Russian Orthodox, Catholics and other believers, but of non-religious people as well. What exactly do I have in mind here?

First of all, the East has always set itself apart by its emphasis on meditation, mysticism and transcendence in its approach to life and by its eschatological expectation of a beautiful, mysterious and unknowable 'tomorrow' than the more practical West. The Western consciousness, based on Roman business mindedness, strictness and order, was always more susceptible to today's problems. This has been evident in all spheres of the development of Western and Eastern civilizations.³¹

The victory of hesychasm in Byzantium, which was 'automatically' transplanted to Russia, curtailed the development not only of scholastic and rational theology in our countries for many years, but tragically influenced the development of socio-political relationships and slowed down the development of capitalism and market relationships, because it concentrated the attention of the individual and society on the eschatological hope of the coming kingdom of God tearing him away from the reality of this life.³² Western theology, in the form of it developed by medieval thinkers, gave no less attention to hope in the kingdom of God than the apophaticism of the East, but it did not divorce this hope from concrete effort and practical activity. It is sufficient, in this regard, to recall the progressive activity of the Franciscans and other Mendicant orders.³³

The heirs of the eastern emphasis on meditation were the Marxists and especially the Marxists of Russia, who in a distorted mirror reflected the dreams of the people for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven in their teaching on the creation of an earthly paradise here and now and at any cost. They wanted to build a kingdom of hope with violence and bloodshed, redistributing the wealth of the country as they themselves saw fit. Marx believed that a highly industrialized society could be transformed into a humanistic one, in which the goal of all social effort would be man and not things and Russian communists decided to try this out in practice.

In actual fact, communism, even though it rejected theism and religion, was at its base religious and sacral. The dream of building a communist society where all would be well for everyone became the driving force motivating the use of violence. Hope in a 'shining future' became an artificial substitute for genuine Christian hope.³⁴ Of course, this hope could not lead to anything except disappointment and disillusionment, because in its essence it was objectless and utopian in nature, yet nevertheless it entered into the consciousness of the masses to such a degree that today it is very easy for the most simple of average citizens to comprehend eschatological hope, despite the fact that in the aftermath of the disappointment with communism it is very difficult to believe that such a hope could possibly exist. Consequently the soil for the development of a theology of hope in post-communist countries was quite well prepared beforehand.

But there is another aspect to this problem. The contemporary political condition of our society is leading almost everyone to despair and is forcing them to live by hope. In the political arena of almost every country of the former Soviet Union no real centristic power is evident which is capable of balancing the polarized political forces and of keeping society from the extreme of limitless freedom and 'anything goes' or from the opposite extreme of authoritarianism and dictatorship.

On the other hand, the economy is so shattered that people, having lost faith in the possibility of finding a stable solution and at times even experiencing literal feelings of starvation, live with the hope of a miracle. For example, when I turn the tap on in the kitchen I can never be sure whether water will flow from it or not. Picking up the telephone receiver, I can never be sure that I will hear a dial tone, waking up in the morning I can never be sure that the same government system will be in place in the evening when I go to bed. And so it has been for five years in all areas of life. This is the ideal environment for a life of hope. Here in practice one can discover whether or not despair becomes the stimulus for hope.³⁵

But the hope of Christians who know their Lord is something quite different. It is akin to the hope of Abraham, which is based on the unwavering revelation of God (Gen 12:1-3). Therefore the Evangelical churches in post-communist countries have always ascribed great importance, and even more so today, to the understanding of the Bible as 'inerrant'. For if the foundation of Biblical inerrancy is destroyed, then Christian hope will become nothing better than a ephemeral communist utopia. But having come through years of persecution and ridicule on account of their assurance in the inerrancy of the Bible, Christians of the former Soviet Union are equipped to offer their society 'a better Hope' (Heb 7:19). This is not the hope of the Old Testament which promised goodness and blessing in the land (Gen 49; Ex 23:27-33; Dt 28 etc.), but this is a real hope in the resurrection of the dead (2 Cor 5:1), in the just judgment of God (2 Th 1:5), and in the eternal Kingdom of Heaven (2 Peter 1:11) even though here on earth, we have more goodness and blessing than people who are of this world (Mt 19:28-29). Taking all this into consideration earthly suffering, deprivations and lack are accepted as means from the Lord to mold every believer for the eternity which is ahead (1 Peter 1:6-9).

Such an understanding of the foundation

and object of hope for Christianity in post-communist society which lies beyond the boundaries of life on this earth none the less gives direction to that life; it leads to cleansing from sin and sanctification (1 Jn 3:3), binds people together through love (Col 1:4-5), produces maturity in the midst of suffering (Rom 5:1-5), strengthens in the unflinching achievement of goals (Heb 6:11), and increases joy (Rom 5:1-2) and boldness (2 Cor 3:12-18). It is hope which serves as the foundation for fruitful labour in God's harvest field (1 Cor 15:58).

Therefore theological hope for post-communist society does not rest on a theoretical base made up of the philosophical reasoning of Moltmann or Bloch, but on the divine source, on the Bible as the irreproachable revelation of God, and on the immutable reality of life, which had snatched away from the Church all possible hope in life here on earth. Therefore our Evangelical movement discovered Moltmann's ideas for itself at the beginning of the thirty year period leading up to the 1960s, and put them into practice by firmly placing their hope in Christ.

The experience of history and the life experience of many individual people testifies to the advantage of Christianity over other religions even from the position of humanistic civilization, i.e. from the point of view of the development of economics and technology. In addition, Evangelical Christianity offers assurance of salvation through the indwelling witness of the Holy Spirit. Christ said, 'I came that they might have life, and have it to the full.' (Jn 10:10). In this and only in this lies hope for the countries of the post-communist world.

Therefore our present task is to develop and to put down in written form the theology of hope³⁶ which exists in our churches and at the same time to continue actively to labour to spread the good news of hope for 'the time is near' (Rev 1:3; 22:10).

Notes

1 Petr Pokorný, Josef Vesell, *The Perspective of Faith* (in Czech), 1991, p. 13ff.

- 2 Ps 73:3; Jer 12:1f.; Job 13:15. A rare instance of resurrection is found in Dn 12:1-3.
- 3 H. Bardtke, *Hoffnung*, RGG III, p. 416.
- 4 Am 2:13-16; Is 2:6-21. Cf Bardtke, RGG III, p. 416.
- 5 Is 2:1ff.; 19: 19-25. In addition, the future Messiah will be 'a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth', Is 49:6.
- 6 1 Sam 8:5ff.; Ps 118:8; 146:3; Hos 13:10.
- 7 Dt 18:18; 2 Sam 7:12f.
- 8 Is 9:1-7; 11:9; Dn 7:13f.
- 9 'God's kingdom could only come when Israel was completely obedient to the Law', E. Hoffmann in *Dictionary of NT Theology*, 2, 1986, p. 241.
- 10 Rom 4:18; 1 Cor 9:10; 1 Peter 3:15; Rom 8:24; Col 1:5; Titus 2:13; Heb 6:18.
- 11 H. Conzelmann, *Hoffnung*, in RGG III, 1959, p. 418.
- 12 K. Barth, *Dogmatik in Grundriss*, 1947, p. 142.
- 13 E. Stauffer, *Die Theologie des NTs*, 1945, p. 120.
- 14 'Love is the anticipation of the perfection of the Kingdom of God, which does not need any change.', J Souk, *Vyklad Epistoly Kolosenskym*, 1947, p. 72. Some say that the term *menei* has to be understood only in relation to charismatic phenomena, e.g. H. Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 1969, p. 272f.) but the context shows clearly the eschatological line: in part, perfection (v. 9) and in part, fully (v. 13). Cf. H. D. Wendland, *Die Briefe an die Korinther*, 1954, p. 107. Cf. D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 1987, p. 75: 'It appears then that faith, hope and love, these three, all remain. They are eternal, permanent virtues.'
- 15 It is like the deed of Abraham, who bought some property for a burial site before the conquest of the land (Gn 23:4).
- 16 Out of a couple of verses in Rev 20 the whole theory of the Millennium was developed, and all the OT prophecies about the new earth were pressed into this framework. But how do we get the right to put them here, and not in Re 21-22? The great puzzle is whether the parousia will occur before or after the Millennium, and whether the rapture of the Church will be before or after the parousia. And when will the Petrine conflagration (2 Pe 3:10ff.) happen? I agree with D. A. Carson that 'one should distinguish between historic premillenarianism and dispensational premillenarianism. The latter is much more given to dates.' But as to time-scheduling, the NT differs substantially from Jewish apocalyptic, and we must not see the main message of NT eschatology as time-scheduling.
- 17 Some theologians think that in the Millennium an empire of peace in earthly conditions will be established (H. Ott, G. Fritzsche, IV, p. 419) and they evaluate it very positively. But such an evaluation lacks any exegetical foundation.
- 18 J. Derrida, quoted by Lochman, p. 66.

- 19 P. Lyotard, *Was ist postmodern?*, quoted by Lochman, p. 66.
- 20 *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, quoted by Lochman, p. 67.
- 21 Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, 1994, p. 12f.
- 22 D. Sölle, op. cit., quoted in Lochman, p. 67.
- 23 In his book *Apokalypse*, Graz-Wien, 1985.
- 24 According to W. Welsch, op. cit., p. 65f.
- 25 Ibid. p. 66.
- 26 'We must use at least two words if we want to speak the truth accurately', A. Köberle, *Die Rechtfertigung und Heiligung*, 1929, p. 282.
- 27 Max Weber in W. Welsch, op. cit. p. 102f. : 'The opposite of the rationalism of the ethical kind of life is this polytheism... Our task is to train in polytheism, in spite of the wishes of monotheism.'
- 28 Erich Fromm, *Revolution of Hope*. In this work the well-known psychologist defines and analyses in detail the phenomenon of 'hope', and shows that hope is the main condition of being. 'It is an internal readiness, which while under tension still is characterised by an undissipated, internal activeness.' (p. 228).
- 29 These terms were used by Leo Baeck in *Judaism and Christianity* and developed by Teilhard de Chardin in *The Future of Man*.
- 30 The superiority of Christian hope was rediscovered in our time by Jürgen Moltmann who relied on the works of Ernst Bloch (e.g. *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*) and others who defended the common Christian understanding of hope as the main driving force of life and thought for the individual person and for the Church as a whole. See J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, New York, 1964; *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, New York, 1969, etc.
- 31 For a more detailed discussion of these ideas, see Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, London, 1957 and A. Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*.
- 32 The fruitful influence of Christianity, and especially of Protestantism, on the development of market relationships which has guaranteed the steady progress of Western countries was clearly demonstrated by Max Weber in his classical works, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and *The Economic Ethics of World Religions*.
- 33 See Antonio Sosini, *Portrety svjatykh*, 1-2, Milano, 1987.
- 34 An analysis of Marxist theory from this point of view was made by the well-known Russian philosopher D. Gorky, in his last work, *Oshibki genii samiye opasniye* (*The Mistakes of a Genius are the Most Dangerous*), Moskva, 1995. More than anyone else, it was Ernst Bloch who, in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, tried to infuse Marxism with the principle of hope.
- 35 On the role of despair, cf. S. Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*.
- 36 *The Christian Calling in the Modern World*, Paper No 1 at the Theological Consultation of the World Evangelical Fellowship, 09-14 April 1996 on *Faith and Hope for the Future*.

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- **The Biblical Vision of Hope in Today's World**
- **La Vision biblique de l'Espérance dans le Monde d'aujourd'hui**
- **Die Biblische Hoffnung in der Welt von Heute**

Torleiv Austad, Oslo

RÉSUMÉ

1) L'espérance chrétienne est paradoxale. Elle se définit face à des situations de souffrance. Elle ressemble à un pendule qui oscillerait entre la mort et la vie. En effet, l'espérance chrétienne est fondée sur la résurrection de Jésus-Christ d'entre les morts. Et l'espérance de la vie éternelle à la fin des temps admet qu'il y aura des gens exclus du royaume de Dieu.

2) L'espérance chrétienne ne nous fournit pas d'idéologie ou de programme politique capables de créer un monde meilleur. Créés par Dieu cependant, les hommes et les femmes ont pour mission de s'occuper du monde entier et d'améliorer les conditions de vie sur cette terre. Mais face à la mort, ce que nous pouvons espérer en ce monde est très limité. Seul Christ nous donne l'espérance d'une vie au-delà de la mort.

3) L'espérance chrétienne est contestée. Comme Feuerbach au XIX^e siècle, il y a aujourd'hui des gens pour déclarer que l'Évangile de la victoire de Jésus-Christ sur la mort n'est qu'une manière pour l'homme de se projeter dans un ciel imaginaire. Quand nous proclamons l'espérance chrétienne dans un contexte de doute et d'indifférence, nous devons entendre de la Bible que cette espérance a tou-

jours été controversée. Elle rencontre en tout temps des adversaires. Notre espérance est donc une espérance militante.

4) Nous sommes appelés par Dieu à vivre notre espérance chrétienne en encourageant les personnes qui ont perdu espoir. Cette espérance ne se limite pas à notre vie spirituelle intérieure et au monde à venir. Elle est d'abord une espérance vivante pour ce monde où les gens souffrent. Si nous qui proclamons l'espérance chrétienne refusons de relever les défis que nous lance notre situation, particulièrement à l'égard des opprimés, des pauvres, des exclus, des malades et des personnes qui connaissent la solitude, notre témoignage n'est pas crédible. D'après l'Écriture, l'espérance implique à la fois la promesse du salut et le respect de la dignité humaine.

5) Les nouveaux cieux et la nouvelle terre que Dieu nous a promis ne sont pas présentés comme le prolongement de l'univers actuel : celui-ci va au-devant de sa fin. Notre lutte pour une société plus humaine et notre combat contre la haine, l'injustice et la guerre ne font pas partie du salut et de la vie éternelle qui nous sont donnés par le baptême et qui sont alimentés dans la foi. Nous sommes appelés à aimer notre prochain parce que c'est la volonté de Dieu. Mais nous ne contribuons pas en cela à la délivrance finale.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

01. Die biblische Hoffnung ist ein Paradox. Sie findet ihre Ausprägung in Situationen des Leidens und des Schmerzes. Hoffnung ist wie ein Pendel, das ausschwingt vom Tod zum Leben. Die spezifisch christliche Hoffnung ist in der Auferstehung Jesu Christi von den Toten verankert. Selbst die Hoffnung auf ein ewiges Leben bei der Vollendung aller Dinge weiß jedoch, daß es Menschen geben wird, die vom Königreich Gottes ausgeschlossen sein werden.

02. Die christliche Hoffnung liefert weder eine Ideologie noch ein politisches Programm zur Erschaffung einer besseren Welt. Als Geschöpf Gottes ist jeder Mann und jede Frau damit beauftragt, sich um die Welt zu kümmern und die Bedingungen für ein dauerhaftes Leben auf dieser Erde zu verbessern. Doch angesichts des Todes sind unsere Hoffnungen für diese Welt begrenzt. Nur Christus bietet uns die Hoffnung eines Lebens jenseits des Todes.

03. Die christliche Hoffnung ist Angriffen ausgesetzt. Analog zu Ludwig Feuerbach im

neunzehnten Jahrhundert gibt es auch heute Leute, die behaupten, das Evangelium des Sieges Jesu Christi über die Macht des Todes sei die Projektion des dem Menschen eigenen Seins in einen imaginären Himmel. Wenn wir die christliche Hoffnung in einem von Zweifel und Gleichgültigkeit geprägten Kontext predigen, gilt es, von der Bibel zu lernen, daß diese Hoffnung immer schon kontrovers war. Es wird immer solche geben, die sich dagegen aussprechen. Unsere Hoffnung ist demgemäß eine militante Hoffnung.

04. Wir sind von Gott dazu berufen, die christliche Hoffnung auszuleben und Menschen, die deprimiert sind, zu ermutigen. Diese Hoffnung ist nicht lediglich eine Verheißung, die unserem inneren, geistlichen Leben und der kommenden Welt gilt, sondern sie ist vor allem eine lebendige Hoffnung für eine Welt, in der Menschen in Schwierigkeiten sind. Wenn wir, die wir über

die christliche Hoffnung reden, vor den Anforderungen unserer Situation (vor allem den Unterdrückten, den Armen, den Vergessenen, den Kranken und den Einsamen) davonlaufen, dann ist unser Zeugnis nicht glaubwürdig. Hoffnung im biblischen Sinn umfaßt beides, die Verheißung des Heils und die Würde des Menschen.

05. Der neue Himmel und die neue Erde, die Gott uns verheißt hat, sind nicht als Fortbestand dieses Universums zu verstehen. Dieses strebt, trotz all seiner Ambiguitäten, dem Ende zu. Die Humanisierung unserer Gesellschaft sowie unser Kampf gegen Haß, Ungerechtigkeit und Krieg sind nicht Teil des Heils oder des ewigen Lebens, das uns in der Taufe gegeben ist und durch den Glauben genährt wird. Wir sind dazu berufen, unseren Nächsten zu lieben, weil es Gottes Wille ist. Dies jedoch ist kein Beitrag zur Vollendung aller Dinge.

Children without Hope

Have you ever seen children without any expectations for the future? There are many such children, especially in big cities. You can watch them hanging about in the streets. You can see these street children sitting on doorsteps, in back gardens and in parks. Many of them have no parents, no relatives, no homes, no food and only ragged clothes. With few exceptions, nobody cares about them. They are abandoned. Their eyes are dim. They have no hope for the future.

Let these abandoned children symbolize the brokenness of the world. There are millions of young people all around us who are suffering under the pressure of hopelessness. They are driven to despair for different reasons, whether oppression, hatred, crime, family breakdown and sexual abuse, poverty and disease. If nobody will try to help them, every glimmer of hope will fade away.

Can we dare to say that the Bible can give these badly treated children a vision of hope? How can the Christian faith be an instrument for bringing hope to those who do not see any in their daily life?

I shall deal with the question of hope from

two angles: 1. our God-given commission to create hope for people who do not have any, and 2. the specific Christological understanding of hope based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Religion of hope

From its very beginning, Christianity has been a religion of hope. We can already see it quite clearly in the Old Testament. In the history of Israel we recognise how God's blessing was always oriented towards the future. It was in faith and hope that Abraham left his homeland and began his pilgrimage towards the land which God had promised him. When the people of Israel left Egypt, God promised them 'a land flowing with milk and honey' (Ex 3:8). Despite their disobedience and idolatry, which led them into punishment and condemnation, exile and dispersion, God always remained and remains faithful to his calling of Israel. His plans have always been to give his people 'a future and a hope' (Je 29:11). This God is the only true God.

The central point in the hope of the chosen people of Israel was the coming of the Kingdom of the Messiah (cf. Is 11:1-9). When Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,

came, he opened up a new future for everybody. He invited every kind of person to enter the Kingdom of God (Mk 1:14). Through his proclamation of the Gospel, the poor and oppressed, the outcasts and strangers, the sinners and the sick received a new hope, which was one of restoration and salvation. The disciples of Jesus experienced that 'the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them' (Mt 11:5). Jesus of Nazareth promised people forgiveness of sins in the Name of God. Through his suffering, crucifixion and resurrection he conquered the power of death and extended the hope of a general resurrection of the dead at the end of human history. We therefore hope for eternal life. In fact, the ultimate ground of Christian hope can only be found in Jesus Christ, who is the One who will raise up believers to eternal life on the last day.¹

The Biblical vision of hope does not deal only with our individual attitude towards God. It has a collective dimension as well. In addition to the special hope for the people of Israel as a whole (Ro 11:25-27), we can look forward to the renewal of fallen humanity. By his grace alone, the loving and redeeming God will restore the human community. Even the creation waits with eager longing to be set free from its bondage to decay, when it will 'obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God' (Ro 8:19-21).

For those of us who are confident and healthy, protected by a good family and a just society, it may be easy to proclaim that the Christian faith is a religion of hope. We can declare that from the very beginning man and woman were created with full expectations for both earthly and eternal life. To those who are in difficulties we point to the goal of history which is described as a paradise where there is no mourning, crying or pain (Rev 21:4). I have heard many such speeches in the Western culture to which I belong. Their weakness is obvious. It lies in what is missing. Often, this can be described as a sympathy with those who

are suffering. We should have combined pain with hope, suffering with renewal, and night with dawn. In the history of the people of Israel, that dark shadow-side to hope is always there. We know how the hope of the Promised Land encouraged them in the desert, in the exile and in the diaspora. This paradox of hope is very clear in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian hope, which goes back to him, comes out of humiliation, emptiness, crucifixion and death.² In his life hope is reached through suffering defeat. This aspect of the matter is particularly relevant today, when we are speaking to people who are in trouble.

Promise and Prayer

Hope relies on God's promises. A person or a community which can rely on a promise has something to look forward to. When I raise my eyes and fix them on a goal ahead, it gives inspiration to my everyday life. In an oppressive situation, a good promise can be of great help in keeping up one's courage. "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" says the Apostle Paul (Ro 12:12).

Whatever one's expectations, people can break their promises. A child who continually experiences that his or her parents do not keep their promises will eventually lose confidence in them. But when God has made a promise it is quite different. Then we can count on it, because God is faithful (1 Co 1:9). He cannot deny himself. In Jesus Christ, writes Paul, each of God's promises is a Yes (1 Co 1:20). This means that they are gathered up, confirmed and fulfilled in him who is God's Son.

Promises are the necessary precondition not only for hope, but also for prayer. As a result, hope can be seen in the context of prayer also. Prayer is our response to God's love. It is our report back to him that his message has been received. Prayer is therefore our reaction to his action. God has given us prayer in order that we may abandon ourselves to him, acknowledge him as Lord, and call on him in our hour of need

(Ps 50:15). In praying to God, we do homage to him as our God, the one true God. God is always present, and attentive to our prayers. In the Bible, God's promise to hear our prayers can be found in many variations, e.g. Jer 29:12: 'When you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you'. God answers our prayers, but he does so in his time and in his way (cf. Heb 5:7-9). There is a response from him even in the promise of a response! God's promises are always faithful; they are fulfilled, even if it is not necessarily as we imagine. In every prayer there is a hope, a hope for an answer. We do not see this hope, but we may be convinced that it is there. Hope is the motivating power behind our prayers. Because of God's promises, we can hope that God will give us signs of his gracious and saving presence.

Interpreting the Bible

Talking about the Christian vision of hope in today's world, it is desirable and relevant for us to reflect on the way in which we use the Bible. We cannot simply read the texts 'as they are'. Every translation is an interpretation. When we use Biblical texts for preaching and teaching, we are at the same time interpreting them. How then do we approach these texts? I would emphasize three points:

1. First, it is of great importance that we read the Biblical texts in their historical setting. From that perspective, the main question is: What is the text's original meaning? In order to answer that question, I am obliged to use the so-called historical-critical method of interpretation. There is no alternative to this.
2. Secondly, I approach the Biblical texts with questions thrown up by our own age. I have to try to discover whether the Bible lays down any principles for solving the problems I am dealing with. In some cases there are relevant texts which give us an immediate answer. But in other cases, we have to search hard to find appropriate Biblical guidance.
3. Thirdly, I read the Biblical texts spiri-

tually. That means that I try to listen to what God is telling me through the texts. The object of the exercise is to absorb the Word of God and allow it to work like leaven inside me.

These three approaches are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. So our next question is: What does this combined reading of the Biblical passages about hope mean to us today? With this question I have opened the door of hermeneutical debate, a burning issue from which no serious theologian can run away. The main point is how we can hear God's Word in our context today. This is a matter of finding a way to bridge the gap of 2000-4000 years of history. In order to be able to proclaim the living and active sword of the Word of God to our culture, we need to analyze the Biblical texts in their historical setting, as well as with respect to their relevance for people in our own time. This is not just an academic exercise, but also a matter of spiritual listening in faith. When, in our hermeneutical reflections, we pray that we may be guided by the Holy Spirit, we are not introducing a specific theological method. Rather, we are opening up our minds to the reality of God and confessing our devotion to him.

Karl Barth may have been right when, at the end of his long years of service to the University of Basel, he said: 'The first and most fundamental act of theological work is prayer'.³ The theologian who prays comes before God in order to seek a new clarity about what it means to say that God is the One who rules. We can only speak truly about God when we respond to his word to us. At a deep level therefore, theological work is a liturgical act, both an invocation of God and prayer to God. This prayer is the grammar of faith and the proper perspective from which to approach God.

A prayerful attitude does not excuse us from scholarly study of the Biblical texts and serious analysis of the conditions under which people struggle with their lives in real-life situations. The hermeneutical key is the dramatic encounter the fusion of

horizons between past text and present context.

Participating in the Christian Hope

We have already said that the Christian hope is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and is directed towards the consummation of all things. How do we receive this hope in personal terms? Let me answer this question by quoting 1 Peter 1:3, a text which in the Church of Norway, at least, is used both in the baptismal and in the burial service: 'Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'. Here the living hope is based on a fact (the resurrection of Christ) and on a promise (our future rebirth). It is a hope given to us by the grace of God. It is not a result of our religious piety or of our moral life. Although the hope of salvation refers to a historical event, we are nevertheless unable to prove its truth by purely empirical research. Our hope always dwells upon the promise of what God wants to do.

As we have already emphasized, Christian hope arises from the victory of life over death. By his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ has opened up the door of everlasting life and delivered us from the guilt of sin, distress and sorrow. The way towards trust in this hope lies through baptism and faith. As biological death approaches, our only hope is that we shall participate in the resurrection. Those who believe in Jesus Christ may bear witness to this by saying: 'For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom 8:38-39). Christians could give their testimony in the same way as the Apostle Paul: '... whether we live or whether we die, we are the LORD's' (Rom 14:8).

Since that unique and decisive event, the

Christian hope has been inextricably connected with the resurrection. Jesus Christ is alive today! That is what we are called to preach. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our preaching is in vain and our faith is in vain (1 Co 15:14). 'But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep' (1 Cor 15:20). When Christ finally comes again, 'all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgement' (Jn 5:28f.). We therefore believe in the resurrection of the dead and in the transformation of the body.

The Christian hope does not mean that believers are protected against danger or disease. This hope is in no sense geared to a happy ending to world history. 'False comfort is just as dangerous as general despair', says Jürgen Moltmann.⁴ We cannot say that Christians will automatically be happy, healthy and successful. None of us is free from the trivialities of everyday life. Instead of promising us a life without problems, the Bible speaks of a God who can give the oppressed a new vision, and the suffering another future. The Holy Spirit can lead us to look beyond the threat of war, poverty, pollution and nuclear catastrophe to the Kingdom of God. In Jesus Christ we catch a glimpse of the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13). What we receive in baptism is a foretaste of our future life in communion with God. In other words, it is an anticipation of the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. The renewed world of which the Bible speaks is not a continuation of this life. Nor is it a restoration of our civilisation. Wolfhart Pannenberg puts it like this: The life of the future 'will unfold its dynamic through growth in the vertical dimension of our present life'.⁵ We are waiting for a final action by God, the Creator of heaven and earth, not for a progressive process within time and space.

The Christian Hope and Secular Hopes

Having now defined the Christian hope in Christological terms, I return to the question of the relationship between it and the many different kinds of hope which we encounter in the everyday life of the world. Before going any further, I would like to emphasise two points:

1. Man and woman are both created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27). 'He endowed them with strength like his own', as Sirach has it (Sir 17:3). As creatures made in God's image, we are given the blessing of the divine commission: 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish and the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth' (Gen 1:28). This challenge is based on the hope that God will continue to preserve his creation and give it further growth. It is our prayer that he will continue to care for the life which he has created. At the same time we have to develop, train and exercise our God-given abilities in order to make the world a better place for people to live in. We are simply created in order to live out this hope. It lies within us. From this perspective, it is perfectly legitimate to dream of forging a better world.

2. We are destined to die. None of us can prolong his or her biological life into eternity. Life on earth has its limits, which are insurmountable. In spite of advanced medical techniques, like the transplanting of living organs, it is impossible for us to overcome death. We can delay it to some extent, but we can never overcome it. Whatever hopes we may have for our own lives, for our family, for our society and for the world as a whole disappear the moment death overtakes us. This does not mean that our lives are without significance for future generations. What we have accumulated can be handed on to our children and grandchildren. They will be able to preserve, improve or destroy our culture. Although we are all mortal, it is still possible

for us to work for a better world. As our temporary place of residence, there is a relative potential for change and development in the world. But it will never become a paradise. In our efforts to change structures and to humanise power, we run into a boundary line which points in the opposite direction. Heaven and earth will pass away (Mk 13:31). With Paul, we can say: 'For the form of this world is passing away' (1 Co 7:31).

Now if these two points indicate the character of our hopes within the secular realm, what is the relationship between them and the specific hope which is based on Christ's death and resurrection? In terms of shaping a better world for oppressed, hungry, handicapped and suffering people, it is right and good to say to ourselves: we can do it! God has instructed us to love our neighbours and he has equipped us with creativity and responsibility for building up our society. From this perspective we can pray, work and hope for improvement in social conditions. But the Christian hope has no programme for changing the structures of this world, or for developing a strategy for building a better society based on social justice and human rights. The Gospel of the Living Christ does not contain any ideology of how this world can become a paradise. But as God's creatures, we have abilities and resources for renewing the external framework of daily life, even though arrogance, selfishness and greed are always causing trouble and setting us back.

In the face of death, the Christian hope is a message which is quite different from the many hopes which we find in this world. Christ's victory over the power of death on Easter Sunday is unique. There is no parallel to this event in the history of science or of humanity. As the only hope for overcoming death, the Christian hope is not compatible with any hope in this world.

The outcome of these considerations is not a total separation between the Christian hope, on the one hand, and the many hopes of the world on the other. The Christian hope is woven together with faith and

love (1 Cor 13:13). Faith inspires us to realise God's purpose in caring for man and nature in this world. The call to love my neighbour as myself is motivated by the great commandment to love the Lord my God with all my heart (Mt 22:37-40). My whole life is to be shaped by my belief in God. There is no area of human life which is irrelevant to God and my Christian life. All our hopes have to be seen in the light of faith. This is the decisive, overall perspective from which we operate.

Being created in the image of God, man and woman have a special dignity, which is different from that of other living creatures like animals and plants. Because every person is a candidate for the Kingdom of God, believers are called to witness to and to care for them. We must support one another with hope. Also, those people who, according to medical and social standards of life, seem to have no hope, are to be embraced by social welfare and service. Faith sees hope, even where there is little or no hope to be seen. Therefore, every man and woman should be treated with dignity, without cost-benefit calculations. That means that we have a special responsibility for the weakest among us: the unborn child, the street children, the incurably ill, the disabled, the mentally handicapped, the senile and the dying. Where life seems to be meaningless, it is the Christian's duty and privilege to spread hope.

Hope in Everyday Life

I now return to the question which I asked at the beginning: What do street children with dim eyes see in the Biblical vision of hope? Like the sick and rejected people who once met Jesus of Nazareth, I think the street children of today would give one answer: mercy! That means care. If we can change the conditions of life for one of these unhappy children, a whole family may get a new future. In the world today there are thousands of possibilities for giving people a new hope.

Christian hope does not allow us to escape from the problems of everyday life. It

is in this world that we are called to live out our hope. The test is whether this hope is active in love or not.⁶ We are under the judgement of God not only as individuals, but also as congregations and as members of the wider society. Therefore, Christian hope does not give us any reason for triumphalism, but reminds us constantly that we are called to repentance.

We live in a competitive culture which is geared towards results. People around us are asking for a visible outcome in production and politics, in art and scholarship, in education and welfare. Sometimes you may feel strongly that your religion and faith have to bear fruit. If Christian hope does not fulfill its promises in the expected way, it may be evaluated as a bad advertisement for Christianity. There is no doubt that in today's society, our hope is under pressure from the demands of efficiency.

Now, Jesus tells us that 'every sound tree bears good fruit' (Mt 7:17). Living faith yields good works. It is a creative process which is initiated by the Holy Spirit. But that does not mean that we are never able to test the truth of our faith. We can never use good works or concrete results as a reliable standard for measuring the existence of faith.

The reality of Christian hope cannot be tested by its fulfillment either. Hope is not visible. When the Apostle Paul talks about the hope by which we are saved, he claims that 'hope that is seen is not hope'. He confirms this understanding of hope with a rhetorical question: 'For who hopes for what he sees?' (Rom 8:24). We hope for what we do not see. That is the distinctive character of hope. In the New Testament hope is a patient and confident waiting for the Lord. When we hope, we are set on course towards the final goal, the consummation.

The Challenge of Atheism

The Christian vision of hope is under constant attack in today's world. Like the fool in the Old Testament psalms, there are still people today who say in their hearts:

'There is no God' (Ps 14:1). If they are right, then there is no hope at all.

Today we are challenged by atheism on different levels. First, let me mention intellectual atheism. This is an attitude mainly based in a rational world view without any openness towards divine revelation. Secondly, in our century the world has experienced how atheism can be transformed into an ideological system, e.g. communism. Where the state authorities have monopolised an ideological atheism, the consequences seem to be a very restricted religious freedom and an attempt to prohibit the worship of God. Thirdly, atheism comes about as a result of secularisation. Some people in what was once Christian Europe are now so secularised that they know almost nothing about the God of the Bible. Fourthly, there are people all around us who act like atheists, even though they have heard about God and may have been baptised as infants. But in their everyday life God is simply not taken into account. For them, God is (practically speaking) dead.

Over against these different types of atheism, the Christian faith may have opportunities to witness in favour of its hope. With the help of good arguments, we may be able to reject false accusations which are levelled against it. But we shall never be able to give logical reasons or present rational evidence for the truth of our hope. Lastly, it is a question of confidence in the Word of God. Therefore, in many cases the challenge is to be prepared to give a credible testimony.

Let us look at people's attitudes in situations of terminal illness. I am not the only one who has experienced a big gap between a funeral conducted in a purely secular setting and one which is surrounded by the hope of resurrection when Christ comes again. The ultimate ground of our hope is the word of Jesus given to Martha when he raised Lazarus from the dead: "I am the resurrection and the life. he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn 11:25-26). The promise of

Jesus Christ himself, that on the last day he will raise the dead to life and take believers up into his eternal Kingdom, is the core of the Christian hope.

Summary

If I try to summarise my reflections on the Biblical vision of hope in today's world, I would highlight the following points:

1. The Biblical hope is paradoxical. It is shaped in situations of suffering and pain. We can illustrate this by a pendulum, swinging from death to life. Specifically Christian hope is anchored in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Even in the hope of eternal life in the consummation of all things, there will still be people who will be expelled from the Kingdom of God.

2. Christian hope does not provide any ideology or political programme for creating a better world. As God's creatures, every man and woman has been commissioned to care for the whole world, and to improve the conditions for ongoing life on this earth. But in the face of death, our hopes for this world are limited. Only Christ offers us the hope of a life beyond death.

3. The Christian hope is under attack. Like Ludwig Feuerbach in the nineteenth century, there are people today who claim that the Gospel of the victory of Jesus Christ over the power of death is a projection of man's own being into an imaginary heaven. In preaching the Christian hope in a context of doubt and indifference, we need to learn from the Bible that this hope has always been controversial. Somebody is always against it. Our hope is therefore a militant hope.

4. We are called by God to live out the Christian hope and to encourage people who are depressed. This hope is not just a promise for our inner spiritual life and for the world to come; first of all, it is a living hope for the world in which people are in trouble. If we who talk about the Christian hope run away from the challenges of our situation, particularly from the oppressed,

the poor, the forgotten, the sick and the lonely, our testimony is not credible. In Biblical terms, hope means both the promise of salvation and human dignity.

5. The new heaven and the new earth which God has promised to us is not to be seen as a continuation of this universe. In spite of all its ambiguity, it moves towards an end. The humanisation of our society and our struggle against hatred, injustice and war is not a part of salvation or of eternal life, which is given to us in baptism and nourished through faith. We are called to love our neighbours because it is God's will. It is not a contribution towards the consummation of all things.

Finally, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Ro 15:13).

Notes

- 1 Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: the Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, New York, OUP, 1980, p. 448.
- 2 Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *In troens fylde*, tr. Gunnar Wickland-Hansen, Oslo, St. Olav Forlag, 1995, 283-287
- 3 Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: an Introduction*, tr. Grover Foley, New York, Holt, Reinhardt and Winston, 1963, p. 160
- 4 J. Moltmann, *Creating a Just Future*, London, SCM, 1989, p. 37
- 5 W. Pannenberg, *The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions*, tr. Margaret Kohl, London, SCM, 1972, p. 175.
- 6 Cf. *Confessing the One Faith: an Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic faith as it is confessed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, Faith and Order paper No. 153, Geneva: WCC Publications 1991, 102-103

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- **Hope for the Jews I**
- **Espérance pour les Israélites I**
- **Hoffnung für die Juden I**

Sylvain Romerowski, Saints, France

The following abstracts relate to the whole article, of which only the first part appears here. The second and final part will appear in the next issue of *EuroJTh*.

RÉSUMÉ

La première section de cet article traite du rôle d'Israël dans l'histoire de la rédemption. Israël a été choisi en vue de la bénédiction de toutes les nations. A cause de ses désobéissances, ce peuple a dû subir le jugement qui a pris la forme d'une destruction des deux royaumes israélites, et de l'exil. Les prophètes de l'AT ont promis de la part de Dieu un salut qui devait comporter deux aspects correspondant à deux étapes distinctes: le retour de l'exil et la conclusion d'une nouvelle alliance qui lui apporterait le pardon de ses fautes et une transformation intérieure. Ce n'est pas tout Israël qui devait bénéficier de ce salut, mais seulement un reste d'Israélites convertis. Dieu opèrerait un tri au sein de son peuple pour en éliminer les rebelles. Par contre, des gens des nations se tourneraient vers lui, et il les incorporerait au peuple de Dieu: ainsi, ceux-ci bénéficieraient des promesses faites à Israël.

Lorsque Jean-Baptiste annonce un baptême d'Esprit et de feu, il le présente comme l'oeuvre du Messie par laquelle il va opérer ce tri au sein du peuple d'Israël. Par conséquent, depuis la Pentecôte, le peuple de Dieu est Israël, dont les Juifs incrédules ont été retranchés, et dans lequel les non Juifs qui croient en Jésus-Christ ont été incorporés.

La deuxième section est consacrée à la question du rôle du pays d'Israël dans l'histoire du salut. Elle présente la thèse selon laquelle ce pays a joué un rôle semblable à celui du peuple: de même qu'Israël a été choisi en vue de la bénédiction de toutes les nations, son pays a été choisi en vue de la bénédiction de la terre entière. Car d'après les prophètes (et le NT reprend cette ligne de pensée), le pays du peuple de Dieu devait être agrandi, jusqu'à s'étendre à la terre entière. Par conséquent, ce n'est pas par la pos-

session d'un pays particulier que s'accomplissent les prophéties de l'AT, car le territoire qui revient à Israël ne se limite pas au pays de Canaan. Le rôle du pays d'Israël dans l'histoire du salut, et plus particulièrement de Jérusalem, s'est achevé lorsque les événements du salut se sont produits en ce lieu. L'espérance des croyants Israélites aujourd'hui, qu'ils partagent avec les croyants d'origine non-juive, est celle de régner avec Christ sur la terre entière renouvelée.

La troisième section aborde le sujet de l'espérance pour les Israélites à partir de l'épître aux Romains. L'ensemble du NT, et Paul en particulier, enseignent que les Israélites incroyants ne font plus partie du véritable Israël, le peuple de Dieu. L'auteur étudie le chapitre 11 de l'épître aux Romains, qui a pour but de répondre à la question de savoir si Dieu a rejeté son peuple. Aux yeux de l'auteur, la réponse de Paul comporte trois éléments : 1. Dieu n'a pas rejeté son peuple car il s'est conservé un reste d'Israélites pour les sauver. Dieu a seulement purifié son peuple en retranchant les Israélites incroyants. 2. La porte demeurerait ouverte au temps de Paul (et l'est encore actuellement) pour les Israélites inconvertis : s'ils se tournent vers Christ avec foi, ils peuvent encore être sauvés et être réintégrés dans le peuple de Dieu. 3. Un jour, 'tout Israël sera sauvé'. Par là, il faut comprendre que Dieu va faire quelque chose de spécial pour le peuple d'Israël à la fin de l'ère présente : les Israélites qui seront alors en vie se tourneront vers Christ en tant que peuple et recevront le salut. Dieu agira de la sorte, non pas parce que les Israélites inconvertis auraient conservé un droit quelconque, mais en vertu de sa grâce envers un peuple qui a perdu tout droit à un quelconque privilège.

Dans la dernière section, l'auteur répond à ceux qui pensent que l'on ne devrait plus annoncer l'Évangile aux Juifs et affirme que cette activité demeure une obligation pour l'Église aujourd'hui.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der erste Teil dieses Artikels behandelt die Rolle Israels in der Heilsgeschichte. Israel ist im Hinblick auf die Segnung aller Nationen auserwählt worden. Aufgrund seines Ungehorsams mußte das Volk das Gericht erdulden, das in der Vernichtung der beiden israelitischen Königreiche sowie im Exil bestand. Die Propheten des AT haben im Auftrag Gottes eine Rettung verheißen, die zwei Aspekte, mit zwei verschiedenen Etappen korrespondierend, aufweisen sollte: die Rückkehr aus dem Exil und den Schluß eines neuen Bundes, der den Israeliten die Vergebung ihrer Schuld und eine innerliche Umwandlung bringen werde. Doch nicht ganz Israel sollte von diesem Heil profitieren, sondern nur ein Rest bekehrter Israeliten. Gott wird im Innersten seines Volkes eine Auswahl vornehmen, um die Rebellen unter ihnen auszulöschen. Demgegenüber werden sich Leute aus den Nationen zu ihm wenden, und er wird sie dem Volk Gottes einverleiben, so daß erstere von den Verheißungen, die an Israel ergangen sind, profitieren werden.

Als Johannes der Täufer eine Taufe des Geistes und des Feuers ankündigte, präsentierte er sie als Werk des Messias, wodurch dieser die Auswahl im Innersten seines Volkes Israel vornehmen wird. Deshalb ist das Volk Gottes seit Pfingsten ein Israel, aus dem die ungläubigen Juden herausgeschnitten und in das die Nichtjuden, die an Jesus Christus glauben, einverleibt worden sind.

Der zweite Teil ist der Frage gewidmet, welche Rolle das Land Israels in der Heilsgeschichte spielt. Er unterbreitet die These, daß das Land eine ähnliche Rolle spielt wie das Volk: wie Israel im Hinblick auf die Segnung aller Nationen erwählt worden ist, so ist auch sein Land im Hinblick auf die Segnung der ganzen Erde erwählt worden. Denn nach den Propheten (und das NT nimmt diesen Gedankengang auf) sollte das Land des Volkes Gottes vergrößert werden, bis es sich über die gesamte Erde erstreckt. Aus diesem Grund bedeutet die Inbesitznahme eines bestimmten Landes nicht die Erfüllung der alttestamentlichen Weissagun-

gen, denn das Gebiet, das Israel zurückerhalten soll, ist nicht auf das Land Kanaan begrenzt. Die Rolle des Landes Israels, und vor allem Jerusalems, in der Heilsgeschichte ist vollendet, sobald sich die Heilsereignisse an diesem Ort vollzogen haben. Die heutige Hoffnung der gläubigen Israeliten, die sie mit den Gläubigen nicht-jüdischen Ursprungs teilen, besteht darin, daß sie mit Christus über die gesamte erneuerte Erde herrschen werden.

Der dritte Teil erörtert das Thema der den Israeliten sich bietenden Hoffnung ausgehend vom Römerbrief. Die Gesamtheit des NT, und vor allem Paulus, lehren, daß die ungläubigen Israeliten keinen Anteil mehr am wahren Israel, dem Volk Gottes, haben. Der Autor untersucht das 11. Kapitel des Römerbriefes, das eine Antwort auf die Frage geben will, ob Gott sein Volk verstoßen hat. Aus der Sicht des Autors enthält die Antwort des Paulus drei Elemente: 1.) Gott hat sein Volk nicht verworfen, da er sich einen Rest der Israeliten erhält, um sie zu retten. Gott hat sein Volk lediglich gereinigt, indem er die ungläubigen Israeliten herausgeschnitten hat. 2.) Die Tür blieb zur Zeit des Paulus für die unbekehrten Israeliten offen (und ist es auch noch heute): wenn sie im Glauben zu Christus umkehren, können sie noch gerettet und wieder in das Volk Gottes integriert werden. 3.) Eines Tages "wird ganz Israel gerettet werden". In diesem Zusammenhang gilt es zu verstehen, daß Gott am Ende der gegenwärtigen Ära etwas besonderes für das Volk Israel tun wird: die Israeliten, die dann noch am Leben sein werden, werden sich als Volk zu Christus wenden und das Heil empfangen. Gott wird auf diese Weise handeln, doch nicht, weil die unbekehrten Israeliten irgendein Anrecht darauf hätten, sondern aufgrund seiner Gnade einem Volk gegenüber, das jegliches Recht auf jedwede Begünstigung verloren hat.

Im letzten Teil antwortet der Autor denen, die meinen, daß man den Juden das Evangelium nicht mehr verkünden solle, und bekräftigt, daß diese Tätigkeit ein Auftrag der heutigen Kirche bleibt.

The subject of hope for the Jews would not be dealt with uniformly by all Evangelicals. On the one hand, dispensationalists maintain that two peoples of God coexist up to the present time, namely Israel and

the Church, each of which has its own destiny. On the other hand, there are those who think that Israel as a nation or people no longer has a role to play in redemptive history that is any different from that of

other nations. There are also various viewpoints that fall between these two extremes.

Connected with these issues is the question whether the modern state of Israel has anything to do with biblical prophecies, especially those in the OT.

The terms in which one formulates the hope that lies in store for the Jews today depends on how one views the place and role of Israel in the history of salvation, the identity of the people of God in the Christian era, the interpretation of OT prophecies and the meaning of Romans 11.

Another set of problems is of immediate consequence for us, for they relate to our responsibility to preach the Gospel. Should we preach the Gospel to the Jews today? Some deny that we should, and appeal to specific Scriptures to justify their position. Conversely, others insist that the Gospel should be preached first to the Jews by today's Church, in obedience to Rom 1:16.

These questions must be addressed on a biblical basis, in order to attempt to assess correctly what kind of hope there is for the Jews today.

The first part of this paper deals with the role of Israel and its land in the history of salvation. A second part will raise various issues concerning what hope may be entertained concerning the Jewish people today and what responsibilities Christians have towards them.

I. The people of God in redemptive history

1) The purpose of Israel's election

The purpose of Israel's election was the blessing of all the nations. This is stated at the outset, in the context of God's call to Abram (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18)¹. Israel was not chosen for its own sake, but with a view to the salvation of all nations.

2) The Abrahamic promise and its fulfilment in the old covenant

God made a twofold promise to Abraham, which He sealed by a covenant: that of a numerous people descended from Abra-

ham through Isaac (Gen 12; 15; 17), and that of a land which would extend from the River Nile to the Euphrates (Gen 15:18-21).

The Mosaic covenant proceeded from the Abrahamic. For at Mount Sinai God took Israel, the people descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, as His own people, and He became their God. Furthermore, by this covenant, Yahweh the suzerain granted to His vassal people the land promised to Abraham.

The Chronicler highlighted the complete fulfilment of the twofold promise to Abraham under the reign of Solomon: concerning the people (2 Chr 1:9) and the land (2 Chr 9:26).

3) Israel's failure as a holy people

The Sinaitic covenant also conferred upon Israel the status of a holy people, that is, a people whose vocation was to worship Yahweh in an appropriate cultic service (Ex 19:6).

In order to approach God for cultic service, Israel had to fulfil a number of conditions, both moral and ritual. The Lord gave them His law, which defined these holiness conditions. Israel was required to be holy, in the sense of meeting the holiness conditions defined by the law: this is the intent of the summons to 'be holy for the Lord is holy' in the book of Leviticus.

The law was not beyond the Israelites' reach: it was known, understandable and not beyond man's human capacities to obey it (Dt 30:11-14). But Moses foresaw that the people of God would not meet their obligations (Dt 31:16ff). For Israel was a 'stiff-necked people' (Dt 9:6,13), God had not yet given Israelites a mind that understands, eyes which see and ears that hear (Dt 29:4).

The first generation, which had experienced the Exodus, had been rebellious, unbelieving and idolatrous (Ps 106; cf. Acts 7:39-43), and the Lord revealed to Moses that the Israelites would break the covenant again after his death (Dt 31:16-18). Joshua was not any more optimistic about his people (Jos 24:19).

Moses predicted the Exile as a result of Israel's unfaithfulness to his God. But God would not forsake His people. He would bring them back to his land. At the same time, He was not to leave Israel in their state of corruption: after the exile, He would circumcise the hearts of the Israelites so that they would obey His laws (Dt 30:1-10).

Israel's life in the promised land was a long history of unfaithfulness and disobedience to Yahweh. It is summarized in terms of idol worship and innocent blood shedding in Psalm 106. Stephen stated that Israelites had always resisted the Holy Spirit, persecuted the prophets, and that they never obeyed the law (Acts 7:51-53).

The sombre period of the so called 'judges' illustrates the fact that movements of repentance were not long lasting and probably superficial. Under the monarchy, the people always exhibited a deplorable moral and spiritual condition, even under the reign of the few good kings who occupied the throne of the united Kingdom and subsequently that of the kingdom of Judah. Even David's reign was tarnished by the rebellions of some of his sons as well as by the strong influence of wretched men, such as Joab, whom he could not restrain; this witnesses to a poor moral condition of the people. Solomon's life ended in grave sins. The Northern Kingdom did not produce one good king. In Judah, the reforms initiated by such kings as Hezekiah or Josiah had no lasting effect and remained superficial as far as the nation as a whole was concerned. And Judah is finally said to have been worse than Samaria (Ezek 16:47-52).

Jeremiah gives the reason for this: while the law was written on tablets of stone, sin was engraved on the hearts of the Israelites (Jer 17:1). Other prophets state that Israel was corrupt from its origins (Am 5:25; Ezek 16; 20) and Stephen later developed the same analysis (Acts 7).

Therefore, the preexilic prophets foretold first the destruction of Northern Israel, and then that of Judah and its temple, in accordance with the curses contained in

the sanction sections of the covenant treaty. And the Lord brought these words to fulfilment: the Northern kingdom disappeared in 722 B.C., its population was deported by the Assyrians; and Judah was destroyed in 587 B.C., its population exiled in Babylonia or scattered among neighbouring peoples as well as Egypt.

Such a failure on the part of Israel, such a failure of the old covenant, had been announced in advance by God, as we saw (Dt 30). Indeed, it was willed by God who made it happen (Is 6:10-12), for it had a function in His plan. God wanted to show by this means the incapacity of mankind to obey His laws, due to the presence of sin, and therefore its need of salvation. The law was intended to lead to Christ by revealing man's sinful state, his inability to attain justification by obedience to it. The law led to Christ by showing that we need a different *régime* from that of the law if we are to be justified (Gal 3). God's purpose was to provide a powerful and telling demonstration of these truths in the history of Israel.

4) *The restoration announced by the prophets*

The prophets did not simply bring the message of the coming fulfilment of the covenant curses. They also envisaged a restoration which was to follow the judgement of the Exile. God would work in favor of the exiles, and reconstitute His people with them. He would bring them salvation.

The salvation announced by the prophets contained two elements: 1) The return of the Israelites to their land, and 2) the concluding of a new covenant which would bring forgiveness of sins (Jer 31:34; Mic 7:19) as well as inner transformation of the members of the people by the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29; Is 32:15ff; 59:21; Jer 31:31-33; Ezek 36:25-27; 37:9f,14; 39:29...). This would happen under the rule of the messianic king, a neo-David (Ezek 34:23-25).

These two elements of salvation are often associated in the prophetic oracles. However, as the history of revelation progresses, it is made known to prophets that time will elapse between the two.

Ezekiel, in his famous 'dry bones' vision (ch. 37), distinguishes between two stages: first, the bones come together, tendons and flesh appear and skin covers them, but there is yet no breath in them (vv. 7f.). This is explained as the return from the Babylonian exile to the land of Israel (v. 12). Secondly, as Ezekiel prophesies again, breath enters the bodies and they come to life (vv. 9-10). This second stage is interpreted as the gift of the Spirit and parallels such passages as Ezek 36:25-27; 39:29, and also Jer 31:31-34 and Joel 2:28-29.

In the same way, at the end of the seventy years of the Babylonian exile, Daniel prays for the fulfilment of God's promises through the prophets (Dn 9:1-20). Though the return from exile is imminent, God reveals to His beloved servant that it will take some seventy times seven more years for the hope expressed by the prophets to be realized. Only then will an end be put to sin, wickedness be atoned for and everlasting righteousness be brought in (v. 24). We recognize in these the second aspect of the salvation envisaged by the prophets. Only then will the new covenant be concluded by the Messiah (v. 27).²

We conclude therefore that the first aspect of the salvation promised in the oracles of the prophets was fulfilled from 538 B.C. on, when Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Judeans to reestablish themselves in the land of Judah and to rebuild their temple.

Subsequently, in accordance with the extensive witness of the NT, the new covenant was established on the basis of Christ's work, his expiatory death, and His renewing of the people of God as a result of the gift of the Spirit He poured out at Pentecost.

5) The beneficiaries of salvation according to the prophets

Here another question arises in relation to our previous point: for whom did the prophets envisage salvation?

The remnant concept is a key to the answer. For the prophets' uniform message is that not all Israelites would be saved, but

only a small remnant of Israel.

According to Isaiah, the remnant principle was already operating in his time, for he mentions it in connection with the crisis of 701 B.C. The Assyrians had destroyed the Northern kingdom of Israel some twenty years before. Now, Sennacherib's armies have invaded the territory of Judah and the whole country is laid waste (Is 1:7). Only Jerusalem is left, like a hut in a melon field (1:8). The city is under siege but will be miraculously delivered. The survivors who have found refuge within her walls constitute a mere remnant of the people of Israel at that time and only this remnant will escape extermination and deportation (1:9).

Over a century later, according to the message of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, most of the population of Judah would perish either in warfare, or famine under siege, or pestilence, and the Babylonians would put an end to the Southern kingdom. Only a remnant of this population, those that had been or would be exiled, would return to their land (Jer 24; Ezek 11).

The eschatological salvation (the second aspect of salvation mentioned above) was also to benefit only a remnant of Israel (Is 10:22; Mi 2:12; 4:6f; 5:6f; 7:18; Zech 2:7,9; 3:12f...). God would sift His people: His judgement would eliminate some from Israel and He would purify the small remnant that would be left (Mic 2:12; 4:6f; 5:7; 7:18; Is 65:1-16; 66; Ezek 34:17-22).

After the return from the Babylonian exile, Zechariah and Malachi expose once again the double theme of judgement and purification. The Judeans who came back from Babylonia, or their descendants, are not yet the remnant that will share in the eschatological salvation. A sifting of Israel still is to take place and there will be a remnant of the remnant that returned from the exile (Zech 13:7-9; Mal 3:3-5; in my opinion, Zech 11:14 depicts this sorting process by recalling the schism under Rehoboam: a new schism will take place, while some of the Israelites will reject the son of David, the good Shepherd, and others will follow Him).

This sifting of the people is presented in connection with the messianic rule. Indeed, this was to be the work of the messianic king (Mi 4:6; 5:2,7-8; Eze 34:17-24; Zech 11; Mal 3:1ff).

The purpose of the Lord in that operation was to create a new people, whose members would all be His true disciples, forgiven and truly knowing Him, righteous (Is 54:13; Jer 31:34), in contrast to the Israel of old, unregenerate and unfaithful in its great majority.

We can even go one step further. Isaiah depicts the eschatological remnant of Israel as reduced to one individual, the Servant of the Lord, whom he calls 'Israel', and whom he identifies with Immanuel, the Messiah.³ Israel's history therefore is that of a progressive narrowing of the People of God until it is reduced to a single individual. (This also sheds light on Paul's reduction of Abraham's offspring to the one Christ in Gal 3:16). However, the movement is then reversed. For the Servant of the Lord gathers around himself a community, which will benefit from his redemptive work. And not only will he gather a small remnant of Israelites, but also people from other nations, who will also benefit from his work of salvation (Is 42:6; 49:6), and who will be fully integrated into God's people.⁴

According to the OT prophets, whereas not all Israelites will have a part in eschatological salvation, some Gentiles will. There will also be a remnant of the nations which will be saved alongside the remnant of Israel.

Some people of the nations will receive the Spirit of the Lord (Is 44:3,5). The fact that those mentioned in v. 5 *take the name Israel* suggests that they did not previously bear it, thus testifying to their foreign origin. They are Gentiles who will join the people of Israel and receive the Spirit with him. They will also undergo the same kind of inner transformation as the eschatological remnant of Israel (Zeph 3:9 where the Hebrew stem *hpk* denotes radical change) and be converted to Yahweh so that they will bring their lives into conformity with

His law (Is 2:2-4; Mi 4:1-3). They will know the Lord (Is 19:21). These are the same promises as those addressed to Israel (Jer 31:31-33; Eze 36:25-27).

Other texts envision the entrance of these Gentiles into the people of God. Particularly strong and clear are Is 56:1-8 and Zech 2:11. But see Am 9:12; Is 19:24f; 65:1; 66:18-24; Zech 8:23; 9:7 as well.

The Isaianic imagery of Zion's posterity deserves special mention here (Is 49; 54). The children whom God gives her seem to be not all natural children directly born to her. This is suggested by the expression of amazement on the lips of Zion: 'Who bore me these?' (49:21). They are like adopted children. Furthermore, the image of the banner in verse 22 had been used in 11:10 to evoke the participation of gentiles in the new exodus led by the Messiah. The proximity of 56:1-8 also leads to think these adopted children of Zion are of gentile origin. The apostle Paul seems to have understood the text in this way. For quoting the parallel passage about Zion's child bearing in 54:1, he includes the Galatian Christians among the children of Zion (Gal 4:25)⁵.

The same theme was also found in Psalm 87, where people from all nations were said to be born in Zion.

To summarize then, the eschatological people who will benefit from salvation, according to the OT prophets, is Israel, but an Israel from which rebellious members will have been cut off, and into which a significant number of Gentiles will have been incorporated. It is a new Israel, exclusively composed of authentic disciples of the Lord, made up of a converted remnant of Israelites as well as converted Gentiles.

6) *When the time was fully come...*

When the time was fully come, John the Baptist appeared, the forerunner announced in Mal 3:1. John baptized with water and announced a baptism with Spirit and fire, which would be administered by the Messiah (Lk 3:16). The language of the Baptist echoes Mal 3, where we met the dual theme of judgement and purification. The metaphor of Spirit baptism also echoes

the prophets' imagery in Is 44:3 and Ezek 36:25-27 where the Lord's Spirit effects a purifying work. Fire also was a purifying agent in the OT (Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2-3). At the same time, both the Spirit (or wind, or breath: Hebrew *ruah*) and the fire were images evocative of judgement in the OT (Is 27:8; 30:28; Jer 51:1; Hos 3:15; Zech 6:5,8 and Is 31:9; Am 7:4; Mal 3:19; 4:1), a theme present in Lk 3:17. Isaiah had spoken of the Spirit of judgement and the Spirit of fire by which the Lord would bring judgement upon His people, but also purify them and cleanse them from their sins (Is 4:4 undoubtedly a text lying in the background of Lk 3).

The theme of a sifting of the people is present in the comment of John the Baptist in v. 17.

Therefore, Baptism with Spirit and fire is that work of the Messiah by which he effects the eschatological sifting of Israel, by bringing judgement upon unbelieving Jews and cutting them off from the people of God, and by purifying the Jewish remnant, thereby bringing to fulfilment the OT prophecies. According to Luke, this event happened at Pentecost (Acts 1-2).

What follows the account of the Pentecost event in the rest of the book of Acts is the story of the formation of the messianic community. The Gospel is preached first to the Jews. Even Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, always turns to the Jews first. Some of them are converted. Yet, it gradually appears that most Jews reject the Messiah and thereby exclude themselves from the messianic community. On the other hand, The community progressively opens its doors to the Samaritans, then more broadly to the Gentiles; the Gospel is preached in a large part of the Roman empire and finally reaches Rome, the capital city of the pagan world.

The messianic community is constituted in response to the apostolic preaching of the Gospel. It is also by rejecting this proclamation that Israelites exclude themselves from the community. It is to be noticed that the foremost aspect of the work of the Spirit in the book of Acts'

presentation of Spirit Baptism is the equipping of the apostles for the task of witnessing to Christ (Acts 1:8; cf. Lk 24:46-49). Spirit baptism is given to the apostles to enable them to proclaim the Gospel of salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ, of which they are witnesses. Therefore, the book of Acts demonstrates the fact that Christ's baptizing with the Spirit at Pentecost resulted in a sifting of Israel, in accordance with the words of John the Baptist. It also resulted in the constitution of the new people of God, with the remnant of Israel at its kernel and with the addition of Gentile converts.⁶

7) Conclusion : Israel and the Church

This presentation of the historical development of the people of God and of the nature of this people is in full agreement with the theology of the NT, and especially with Pauline theology.

The allegory of the good shepherd in Jn 10 borrows from the books of Micah, Ezekiel and Zechariah. In Micah, the eschatological people of God, who will benefit from eschatological salvation, is represented by the figure of sheep. The sheep are the remnant of Israel, gathered by the messianic king (Mic 2:12; 4:6f; 5:7; 7:18). In Ezek 34, the neo-David sorts out the Israelite sheep. As previously stated, the same theme is found in Zech 11. By presenting himself as the good shepherd, Jesus claimed to be fulfilling these prophecies. The theme of the sifting of Israel is present in the allegory, for among Israelites there are those who are his sheep and those who are not. Jesus also announces the inclusion of Gentiles in the flock in such a manner as that there will be only one flock (Jn 10:16). The oracle of Mic 4:1-4 had already announced such inclusion.

In Romans, the remnant concept operates in chapters 9 and 11. For Paul, faith makes Gentile believers become Israelites (Rom 2:26ff.). The theme of the inclusion of the Gentiles is clearly stated in Rom 4:9ff; 11:17 and Gal 3:29; Eph 2:12ff. The point is well stated in the image of the olive tree (Rom 11). The tree represents the

people of God, Israel, from which unbelieving Jews have been cut off. And Gentile believers are like branches grafted upon the tree.

There is therefore historical continuity between Israel and the Church. As a matter of fact, the Church is Israel. The application of Israel's titles (Ex 19:5-6) to NT Churches in 1 Peter 2:9 also implies it. And Paul can call the Church 'the Israel of God'.⁷

What we are saying here, is not that the Church has replaced Israel. But that the Church is Israel, the ancient people of God which has now been sifted, since unbelieving Jews have excluded themselves from it by rejecting Christ; and it is Israel into which Gentile believers have been incorporated. This does not mean that the Church has replaced Israel, but, as Henri Blocher states, that Gentile believers have replaced Jewish unbelievers within Israel (Rom 11:17ff.).⁸

Having stressed the Church's continuity with Israel, we must also point to a certain discontinuity. The Church is Israel, but baptism with the Holy Spirit has not left Israel in its former condition. A profound change has taken place, to the point that Jesus could even speak of *another nation* (Mt 21:43).

The nature of the people of God has become fundamentally different. Isaiah even could present this change as the making of a new creation (chs 40-66) and of a new Jerusalem, newly created (65:17). For Israel was a nation, whereas the Church is not properly speaking a nation, but rather international. Israel, when considered as a whole, was an unregenerate people (only a remnant was regenerate among Israelites under the old covenant) whereas the people of God in the new covenant is exclusively composed of regenerate members.

When Peter applies to the Church the old covenant titles of Israel (1 Peter 2:9), they no longer have the same meaning: the Church is not a nation in the sense that Israel was; and it is holy in a deeper sense than Israel was. We have argued elsewhere that Israel was a typological people of God,

offering a typological worship to Yahweh (according to Hebrews 8-10), whereas the Church is the true people of God, offering true worship in the Spirit (Jn 4:21,23), just as circumcision in the flesh was a type of heart circumcision (Rom 2:28f).⁹

To conclude this point, we will make one last remark. Our analysis diverges from both dispensationalism and covenant theology. It differs from the former because dispensationalism denies the continuity between Israel and the Church, and maintains that there are still today two peoples of God, with two distinct destinies. Such a view is in blatant contradiction to the message of OT prophets and with Pauline theology. And it differs from the latter because it tends to deny the discontinuity between Israel and the Church, as if old covenant Israel were already the Church. According to the NT, the Church was founded at Pentecost by the baptism in the Holy Spirit which radically altered the nature of Israel.¹⁰ Covenant theologians tend to ignore that the sifting of Israel has taken place so that only true disciples of the Lord have a place in the Church.¹¹

Notes

- 1 Some would translate : 'all nations will bless themselves through you', i.e. they will use such blessing formulae as: 'May God bless you as He blessed Abraham/the descendants of Abraham'. The translation problem is not easy to settle. Without entering into the discussion here, we simply note that the NT understands these texts, or at least some of them, as meaning that all nations shall be blessed through Abraham's offspring. In my view, the NT interpretation of the OT is to be received as normative.
- 2 This interpretation is not accepted by all, to say the least. It is favoured by two considerations. First, as we said, v. 25 mentions the double theme of forgiveness of sin and inner purification associated with the new covenant, for instance in Jer 31:31-34. Second, this interpretation is required by the structure of vv. 25-27. Each of these verses consists of two parts. In each verse, the first part is about an anointed person and mentions a number of sevens, whereas the second part is about the town and the sanctuary and uses the Hebrew root *hws*. These elements manifest an intended parallelism between the three verses and imply that the one who concludes the cove-

nant in the first part of v. 27 is to be identified with the anointed one, the Messiah, of the previous verses.

- 3 See my *L'oeuvre du Saint-Esprit ancienne et nouvelle*, Mulhouse, 1989, pp. 48ff for a demonstration of this.
- 4 On this point, see also Klaas Runia, *Reformation Today*, London, Banner of Truth, 1968, pp. 93-94.
- 5 Despite first impressions, Paul's exegesis was not in the least arbitrary, but based on the data we have just pointed to in the book of Isaiah.
- 6 See *L'oeuvre du Saint-Esprit ancienne et nouvelle*, pp. 69-90 for a fuller development of this argument.
- 7 One could take the Israel of God as referring to Jewish believers only. The immediate context does not permit us to determine whether it is to be taken as the whole Church or as the Jewish

part of it only. However, what Paul wrote in Gal3:28-29; 4:26-31, and in the above passages in Romans, makes his intent in Gal 6:16 clear.

- 8 'Israel is not replaced by the Church, since believing Jews form the kernel of the Church and since there is only one olive tree; but the branches which have been cut off are replaced by the ingrafted branches (the Christians of pagan origin, Rom 11.19)'. See 'L'oecuménisme et les Juifs', Review of *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People, Statements of the World Council of Churches and its Member Churches, Fac Réflexion* 13 (July 1989), p. 30.
- 9 See *L'oeuvre du Saint-Esprit ancienne et nouvelle*, pp. 103-108.
- 10 Some more about this point in *ibid.*, pp. 109-129.
- 11 See *L'oeuvre du Saint-Esprit ancienne et nouvelle*, chs. 5-6.

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- **Rehabilitation eines Propheten: Die Botschaft des Amos aus rhetorischer Perspektive unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Am. 9,7-15**
- *Rehabilitation of a Prophet: The Message of Amos from a Rhetorical Perspective With Special Emphasis on Am. 9:7-15*
- *Réhabilitation d'un prophète: Le message d'Amos selon la perspective rhétorique avec un examen particulier d'Am. 9,7-15*

Karl Möller, Cheltenham

SUMMARY

Ever since Wellhausen's 1892 commentary on the Minor Prophets, Amos has been regarded by many scholars exclusively as a preacher of doom. This position was defended very powerfully by Smend some thirty-five years ago. According to him, Amos voices an unequivocal 'No' concerning the future existence of Israel. However, the ending of the book paints a quite different picture. But the majority of scholars regard it as a later appendix to the book, added during exilic or even post-exilic times. While this has been done on literary-critical and historical grounds as well, the main reasons seem to have been a pre-conceived understanding of prophecy in general and the message of Amos in particular. Those who understand the prophets as messengers of doom or preachers of an 'ethical monotheism' regard the seemingly unconditional promise of salvation in ch. 9 as foreign to the message of Amos.

The major fault of the traditional interpretation of Amos' message, however, is its 'literalistic' approach to the prophetic oracles. Thus far-reaching conclusions have been reached without paying attention to the rhetorical func-

tion of the prophet's words. In the present article, I therefore propose a fresh investigation of Amos' message that makes up for this neglected constituent. The examination at hand builds on insights gained by the application of Speech Act Theory and Rhetorics (in the classical Aristotelian sense of the term). Thus it is acknowledged that Amos is not just delivering a certain message, but in doing so is performing an interpersonal act. In order to define this act, particular attention is paid to the Aristotelian category of ethos and the general concept of 'motivation'.

As a result, the complexity of the message and rhetoric of the prophet Amos comes into focus and it becomes clear that it is not appropriate to reduce Amos to a mere messenger of doom. Though he indeed reckons with the end of Israel, this does not necessarily imply a total annihilation of all the people. We cannot be sure of the intention of the message of Amos, but in addition to the simple announcement of the coming end, the prophet's words allow for two more options: the deliberate hardening of many as well as the attempt to move others to repentance. In the context of this complexity, the ending of the book is no longer to be seen as inconsistent with the rest of Amos' words.

RÉSUMÉ

Depuis que Wellhausen a publié son commentaire sur les petits prophètes, en 1892, Amos a été considéré par beaucoup exclusivement comme un prophète de malheur. Il y a environ trente-cinq ans, Smend a encore défendu cette thèse avec brio. Selon lui, Amos nierait catégoriquement toute existence future pour Israël. Cependant, la fin du livre nous brosse un tableau tout différent. La majorité des critiques considèrent qu'il s'agit d'un appendice surajouté au temps de l'exil, ou même après l'exil. Bien que cette conclusion se fonde en partie sur l'analyse critique historique et littéraire, la raison majeure de cette opinion semble avoir été un *a priori* concernant le message des prophètes en général et celui d'Amos en particulier. Ceux qui considèrent les prophètes comme des messagers de malédiction, ou comme les champions d'un "monothéisme éthique" estiment la promesse d'un salut apparemment inconditionnel du chapitre 9 comme incompatible avec le message d'Amos.

Le défaut majeur de cette interprétation courante réside dans une approche "littéraliste" des oracles prophétiques. On a tiré des conclusions lourdes de conséquences sans prêter atten-

tion à la fonction rhétorique du langage des prophètes. Le présent article propose un nouvel examen du message d'Amos tenant compte de cet aspect négligé. Il applique les principes de la théorie des actes de parole, ainsi que de la rhétorique (dans le sens aristotélicien classique du terme). Ainsi, on constate qu'Amos ne se borne pas à délivrer un message, mais que, ce faisant, il accomplit un acte interpersonnel. Pour éclairer cet acte, l'auteur prend en compte la catégorie de l'éthos selon Aristote, et le concept général de "motivation".

La complexité du message et de la rhétorique d'Amos est ainsi mise en lumière, et il apparaît qu'il ne convient pas de réduire le rôle d'Amos à celui d'un prophète de malheur. Il envisage certainement la fin d'Israël, mais cela n'implique pas nécessairement l'annihilation totale du peuple.

Nous ne pouvons pas être certains de l'intention d'Amos, mais, à côté de l'annonce d'une fin imminente, ses paroles laissent la porte ouverte à deux autres options: l'endurcissement délibéré de la plupart des Israélites et la tentative d'en amener d'autres à la repentance. À la lumière de cette complexité, la fin du livre d'Amos n'a plus lieu d'être considérée comme incompatible avec le reste du livre.

Nein! Mit dieser schlichten und zugleich radikalen Formel hat vor mehr als 35 Jahren Rudolf Smend die Zukunftsbotschaft des Amos zusammengefaßt: für Israel wird es keine Zukunft geben!¹

Damit folgt er einer Auslegungstradition, die in dieser Radikalität auf Julius Wellhausens Kommentar *Die Kleinen Propheten* (1892) zurückgeht.² Smend sah sich genötigt, diese Sicht gegenüber diversen "Abschwächungsversuchen" zu verteidigen, die von verschiedenen Seiten unternommen worden waren.³ Nach Smend betrifft das Nein des Amos vier Bereiche: (1.) das soziale Verhalten des Volkes, (2.) sein Geschichtsverständnis, (3.) den Kultus sowie (4.) die "Existenz Israels überhaupt". Im vorliegenden Zusammenhang wollen wir uns jedoch ausschließlich dem vierten Aspekt widmen, der, wie ich meine, revisionsbedürftig ist.

Zwar kann und soll die Schärfe der

amosianischen Gerichtspredigt nicht grundsätzlich bestritten werden, doch ist es durchaus angebracht, die weitverbreitete Annahme, Amos habe im Blick auf die Zukunft nicht die Spur einer Hoffnung gesehen, einer erneuten Prüfung zu unterziehen.

Es ist offensichtlich, daß die Frage, ob man den Schluß des Amosbuches als amosianisch ansieht oder als eine exilische bzw. nachexilische redaktionelle Ergänzung versteht, in diesem Zusammenhang von wesentlicher Bedeutung ist. Zwar wird immer wieder der Eindruck erweckt, dieser Punkt sei bereits eindeutig – und zwar negativ – entschieden,⁴ doch entspricht das kaum den Tatsachen.⁵

Die Gründe, die für eine Spätdatierung des Amoschlusses angeführt worden sind, lassen sich folgendermaßen klassifizieren: (1.) literarkritische Ergebnisse, (2.) der angenommene historische Hintergrund, und (3.) das generelle Prophetieverständ-

nis in Verbindung mit dem spezifischen Verständnis der Botschaft des Amos. Wir werden uns hier jedoch lediglich auf den dritten Punkt konzentrieren, da dieser, wie wir noch sehen werden, mit guten Gründen als ausschlaggebend angesehen werden kann.⁶

1. Zur Botschaft des Amos

Amos gilt – weitgehend zu Recht – als der Gerichtsprophet *par excellence*. Die Radikalität seiner Botschaft ist in der Tat außergewöhnlich. Schließlich hat es mit ihm zum ersten Mal jemand gewagt, ein derartig kompromißloses Gericht Gottes anzukündigen, welches sogar die Exilierung Israels beinhaltet. Im Rahmen einer solch radikalen Botschaft, die darüber hinaus gar vom *Ende* Israels spricht (8,2), so haben viele Exegeten gefolgert, muß der Amossschluß als ein Fremdkörper betrachtet werden. Die hier zu findende Heilsverheißung kann kaum vom selben Propheten stammen.

Eine Übersicht über die Kommentare und Artikel zu Am. 9,(8)11-15 zeigt, daß Sabine Nägele die Forschungsgeschichte des Abschnitts zutreffend wiedergibt, wenn sie bemerkt, daß Wellhausen “die meisten Exegeten stark beeinflusst hat”.⁷ So ist z.B. sein Kommentar zu V. 13-15 – “Rosen und Lavendel statt Blut und Eisen” – der wohl am häufigsten zitierte Satz in der Sekundärliteratur zum Amosbuch überhaupt. Um aber Wellhausens Argumentation nachvollziehen zu können, soll er hier ausführlicher zu Wort kommen. Er bemerkt:

Ich glaube nicht, dass 9,8-15 von Amos herrührt. Nach 9,1-4.7 kann er nicht auf einmal sagen, *es sei nicht so schlimm gemeint*, es werde noch alles wunderschön werden ... Nachdem er gerade vorher all seine früheren Drohungen weit überboten hat, kann er ihnen nicht plötzlich die Spitze abbrechen, nicht aus dem Becher des Zornes Jahves zum Schlusse Milch und Honig fließen lassen. Er ist einzig darin, dass er dem Verhängnis klar ins Auge

sieht und es begreift, dass ihm der Untergang Israels den Sieg Jahves bedeutet – und nach dem kühnsten Aufschwung seines Glaubens soll er lahm zurücksinken in den Wahn den er bekämpft? Die *Illusion* soll triumphieren über ihren Zerstörer, der *Gott der Wünsche* über den Gott der geschichtlichen Notwendigkeit?⁸ [meine Hervorhebungen]

Wellhausens Worte machen deutlich, daß es keineswegs vor allem literarkritische oder historische Gründe waren, die ihn an der Authentizität des Abschnitts haben zweifeln lassen.⁹ Vielmehr ist es die angenommene *mangelnde inhaltlich-thematische Kongruenz* mit dem Rest des Buches, die ihn und z.B. auch Richard Cripps zu ihren Folgerungen veranlaßt haben. Letzterer stellt fest:

A promise of restoration such as is outlined in vv. 11-15 is quite incongruous after the threat of absolute destruction which is characteristic of the main body of the prophecy of Amos.¹⁰

In einigen Fällen ist man zu einem – vorsichtig gesagt – recht eigenwilligen Verständnis der Botschaft des Amos gelangt, wie Smends Bemerkungen in dem bereits eingangs erwähnten Artikel verdeutlichen, der den Propheten wie folgt charakterisiert:

Er ist ... nicht nur ... kein Mann des Bewahrens, sondern auch kein Revolutionär. ... Amos [hat] *kein Programm*, will die Welt nicht verbessern, ja vielleicht *nicht einmal Wirkung erzielen*. [...] Der Ort des Mannes aus Thekoa ist jenseits der uns geläufigen Möglichkeiten, er bleibt *der schlechthinnige Außenseiter*.¹¹ [meine Hervorhebungen]

Er ist nicht der landläufige Nonkonformist, sein Standpunkt ist eigentlich gar keiner, ein Ort jenseits noch von aller Utopie und absurder als sie.¹²

Folgerichtig versteht Smend die, wie er meint, von Redaktoren vorgenommenen

Ergänzungen (wie z.B. dem Amossschluß) als einen "Verrat an Amos",¹³ da sie dessen kompromißlose Botschaft abzumildern bemüht sind.

Dieser knappe Überblick hat gezeigt, daß es, wie Nägele zutreffend bemerkt, wesentlich – wenn auch nicht ausschließlich – um die Frage geht, "ob aus dem Munde des Amos Heilsworte überhaupt denkbar sind."¹⁴ Dies wird interessanterweise auch von Peter Weimar bestätigt, der sich in seinem Artikel "Der Schluß des Amos-Buches"¹⁵ in erster Linie mit den literarkritischen Problemen des Abschnitts auseinandersetzt. Auch er kommt jedoch zu dem Ergebnis:

Hinter der Kontroverse um den Schluß des Amos-Buches steht dabei letztlich die Frage nach dem Selbstverständnis [bzw. *unserem* Verständnis – der Verf.] der Prophetie des Amos.¹⁶

Zuletzt sei noch auf Hans-Joachim Kraus verwiesen, der die Entscheidung, den Schluß des Buches dem Amos abzusprechen, bezeichnenderweise als "literarkritische – besser: *ideenkritische* Maßnahme" (meine Hervorh.) bezeichnet.¹⁷

Um es noch einmal zu betonen: die Botschaft des Amos sucht in ihrer Radikalität zweifellos ihresgleichen. Dennoch meine ich, daß anhand des Buches keineswegs gefolgert werden kann, die Heilsverheißung in Kap. 9 könne nicht auf Amos zurückgehen.¹⁸ Diese Folgerung beruht vielmehr, wie wir noch sehen werden, auf einem grundlegenden Mißverständnis der amosianischen Botschaft.

Außerdem ist an dieser Stelle darauf hinzuweisen, daß neben dem Verständnis der Botschaft des Amos sowie dem vermeintlichen Selbstverständnis des Propheten auch das in der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft grundsätzlich vorherrschende Prophetieverständnis eine wesentliche Rolle gespielt hat. Der Amossschluß paßte schlichtweg nicht in das Bild eines Propheten, das von Duhm, Wellhausen und ihren Nachfolgern gezeichnet worden war.

2. Amos und das Prophetieverständnis

Eine ausführliche Darstellung des Prophetieverständnisses, das die vielfältigen Entwicklungen in diesem Jahrhundert berücksichtigt, ist an dieser Stelle nicht möglich und auch nicht erforderlich, da sich hierzu bereits eine Fülle von Literatur findet.¹⁹

Es ist außerdem schon darauf hingewiesen worden, daß Duhm und Wellhausen die vorexilischen Propheten als "Unheilsspropheten" gesehen und mit diesem Entwurf die nachfolgende Forschung nachdrücklich geprägt haben. Ein weiteres besonders einflußreiches Konzept war das des sogenannten "ethischen Monotheismus".²⁰ Grundlegend hierfür war u.a. die Erkenntnis, daß die Propheten Israels ein hohes Maß an ethischem Bewußtsein auszeichnete. Werner Schmidt drückt exakt dies aus, wenn er davon spricht, daß die Propheten "weithin als Gewissen der Nation"²¹ gelten.

Vertreter dieser Sicht nehmen nun an einer vermeintlich unkonditionellen Heilsverheißung, wie wir sie in Am. 9,11-15 finden, Anstoß.²² So versteht z.B. Cripps den Abschnitt als "a bad anti-climax", die nicht so recht zur Botschaft eines Amos paßt; denn "Amos was above all things an enthusiast for ethics."²³ Besonders prägnant formuliert dies G.A. Smith, wenn er feststellt:

To me it is impossible to hear the voice that cried *Let justice roll on like waters and righteousness like a perennial stream*, in a peroration which is content to tell of mountains dripping with must and of a people satisfied with vineyards and gardens.²⁴

Allerdings ist das sich hier ausdrückende Prophetieverständnis in der Folgezeit mancherlei Revisionsversuchen unterzogen worden, wie z.B. Walter Brueggemann hervorhebt:

The conventional interpretation of Amos as a preacher of judgment and doom is

under challenge, so that now he is placed either in a context of covenant worship or wisdom teaching.²⁵

Doch während diese Ansätze fraglos zu einigen Korrekturen und Präzisierungen unseres Prophetieverständnisses geführt haben, hat sich keiner tatsächlich durchsetzen können, da sie alle darum bemüht waren, Amos fest in einer bestimmten Tradition zu verankern, was sich aber so eindeutig nicht nachweisen ließ.²⁶ Dies gilt auch für Brueggemanns eigenen Versuch, Amos im Kontext von Bundesliturgie und Bundesrechtsstreit (*rib*) zu verstehen.²⁷

In seinen späteren Arbeiten geht Brueggemann das Problem der Heilsorakel von einer anderen Seite an, indem er betont, daß Exegeten, die in der Predigt eines Micha (oder Amos) keinen Platz finden für einen Hoffnungsschimmer, den soziologischen Kontext nicht gebührend berücksichtigen:

... the tacit assumption informing such a critical judgment is that hope belongs to times of trouble, that is, exile. The negative counterpart is that hope is unnecessary (or impossible) in times of prosperity. And so hope is banished from situations of well-being.²⁸

Demgegenüber betont Brueggemann, daß auch in einer wirtschaftlichen Blütezeit ein "Bedarf an Hoffnung" besteht, nämlich – wie gerade auch das Amosbuch deutlich zeigt – für die Armen und Unterdrückten.²⁹

Zwar ist dies kaum zu bestreiten, doch scheint mir Brueggemanns Ansatz dennoch nicht die Lösung unserer Frage zu sein. Die Beobachtung, daß die soziologische Situation eine Heilsbotschaft angemessen erscheinen läßt, sagt noch nichts darüber aus, ob ein Amos (oder Micha) tatsächlich von einem zukünftigen Heil gesprochen hat.³⁰

In jedem Fall läßt sich zusammenfassend festhalten, daß der Amossschluß unverändert von der Mehrheit der Exegeten als sekundär betrachtet wird. Und als unmit-

telbare Konsequenz dieser Auffassung gilt die Theologie des Amos nach wie vor als "hoffnungslos" und "ohne jede Zukunft".³¹ Beides jedoch ist es an der Zeit, neu zu hinterfragen.

3. Die Botschaft des Amos aus rhetorischer Perspektive

Die Exegese des Amosbuches ist in weiten Teilen von einem regelrechten "Literalismus" geprägt, der sich vor allem darin äußert, daß man anhand der im Amosbuch vorfindlichen Aussagen unmittelbare Folgerungen bezüglich der Botschaft des Propheten ableitet, ohne nach der *rhetorischen Funktion* der jeweiligen Aussagen zu fragen. Dies aber hat, wie im folgenden gezeigt werden soll, zu einer weitgehenden Mißinterpretation geführt.

Wird hingegen die *rhetorische Strategie* des Amos (wie wir sie im Buch dargestellt finden)³² berücksichtigt, so ist die Folgerung, der Amossschluß sei aufgrund seiner vom Rest des Buches divergierenden Thematik ein Fremdkörper und könne somit kaum von Amos stammen, nicht haltbar. Vielmehr fügt er sich, wie wir sehen werden, durchaus in die rhetorische Strategie des Propheten ein.³³

Da rhetorische Untersuchungen, wie David Howard zu Recht kritisiert hat, in der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft häufig auf rein stilistische Analysen beschränkt waren,³⁴ ist darauf hinzuweisen, daß der Begriff "Rhetorik" nachfolgend im aristotelischen Sinn verstanden ist als die "Kunst der Überzeugung".³⁵ Eine detaillierte Darstellung des aristotelischen Modells ist hier jedoch weder möglich noch erforderlich;³⁶ es sollen lediglich diejenigen Aspekte hervorgehoben werden, die es uns ermöglichen, zu einem besseren Verständnis der Botschaft des Amos zu gelangen.

Dale Patrick und Allen Scult definieren Rhetorik als "the means by which a text establishes and manages its relationship to its audience in order to achieve a particular effect".³⁷ Ganz ähnlich formuliert James Watts, der die rhetorische Funktion des

Gesetzes in Israel anhand der Komposition des Pentateuch zu erhellen sucht. Er konstatiert als wesentliche Funktion die folgende: "influencing the audience's thoughts and persuading them to alter their behaviour."³⁸

Wie im folgenden herausgearbeitet werden soll, ist dies eine exzellente Zusammenfassung der Funktion, die auch den prophetischen Orakeln des Amos zukommt. Zudem sollen die nachstehenden Beobachtungen aufzeigen, daß die Botschaft des Propheten in einem völlig anderen Licht erscheint, wenn die zugrundeliegende rhetorische Strategie beachtet wird.

A. Beobachtungen zur Rhetorik im Amosbuch

Wenn zuvor von einem häufig anzutreffenden "Literalismus" die Rede war, so ist damit auf die Ansicht vieler Kommentatoren angespielt, wonach Aussagen, die zu anderen Äußerungen im Kontrast stehen, nicht von Amos stammen können.³⁹ Ein rhetorischer Ansatz wird hier jedoch zu völlig anderen Ergebnissen kommen.

Zur Illustration soll zunächst mit Am. 3,9-11 ein leicht greifbares Beispiel herangezogen werden. In dieser Stelle geht es – wie allgemein gesehen wird – kaum um ein tatsächliches Herbeizitieren von ausländischen Gutachtern. Vielmehr haben wir es mit einem rhetorischen Stilmittel zu tun, das der Aussage des Amos – Israels Schuld sei so schwerwiegend, daß Gottes Gericht berechtigt und folglich mit Sicherheit zu erwarten ist – Nachdruck verleihen soll.

Georg Fohrer nennt ein vergleichbares Beispiel, wenn er auf die prophetische Verwendung des Leichenklageliedes verweist (vgl. Am. 5,1-3). Wie wir wissen, beklagten die Propheten damit nicht den tatsächlichen Tod eines Menschen. Vielmehr hatte die prophetische Imitation der Leichenklage, wie Fohrer treffend feststellt, "die Funktion der schärfsten Drohung".⁴⁰

Er folgert deshalb zu Recht, daß zwischen der "ursprünglichen Bedeutung einer

Redeform" und ihrer Funktion zu unterscheiden ist.⁴¹ Nun sind dies keineswegs neue Erkenntnisse. Sie sollen hier auch lediglich das Prinzip illustrieren, daß grundsätzlich nach der *rhetorischen Funktion* einer Aussage zu fragen ist.

Doch was war die Funktion des Leichenklageliedes in Am. 5? War es tatsächlich eine Drohung? Sicherlich, doch war es *ausschließlich* eine Drohung? Erneut sind hier Fohrers Überlegungen von Interesse:

Ebenso stellt sich die Frage, ob die prophetische Drohung mit dem bevorstehenden Unheil wirklich nicht mehr als eine Drohung war oder ob sie nicht in Zusammenhang mit der Aufforderung zur Umkehr [Fohrer bezieht sich hier u.a. auf Am. 5,4-5.14-15 – der Verf.] eine andere Funktion besaß – die Funktion einer *Warnung im allerletzten Augenblick*: Der Untergang steht bevor und ist unabwendbar, wenn ihr nicht umkehrt! [meine Hervorh.]⁴²

Exakt diese Sicht jedoch stößt häufig auf größten Widerstand. So kritisiert z.B. Smend die Annahme Martin Bubers, daß die Unheilsverkündigung des Amos zur Umkehr aufrütteln sollte.⁴³ Eine solche Auffassung, so Smend, lasse "sich aus den Worten des Amos nicht belegen".⁴⁴ Smends Bemerkung ist bezeichnend: Amos kann keine Umkehr beabsichtigt haben, wenn er nicht ausdrücklich von "Umkehr" spricht. Doch ist dies zutreffend?

Um diese Frage zu beantworten, wollen wir auf die von J.L. Austin und J.R. Searle entwickelte "Sprechaktheorie" zurückgreifen.⁴⁵ Ein wesentlicher Aspekt dieses sprachphilosophischen Ansatzes besteht in der Erkenntnis, daß Sprache, wie Norbert Lohfink hervorhebt, nicht nur Inhalte mitteilt, sondern "interpersonelles Handeln" ist.⁴⁶

Vertreter der Sprechaktheorie unterscheiden zwischen "illokutionären" und "perlokutionären" Akten. Während der erste Begriff die Art des betreffenden Sprechaktes beschreibt (z.B. Versprechen, Warnung, Verbot etc.), fragt der zweite

nach dem Zweck bzw. intendierten Effekt der Worte (überzeugen, überraschen, beruhigen etc.).

Eine Anwendung der Sprechakttheorie auf die Gerichtsankündigungen der Propheten ist von Walter Houston durchgeführt worden.⁴⁷ Er weist darauf hin, daß diese Gerichtsworte im illokutionären Sinne zunächst einmal deklarativ sind, d.h. sie kündigen das kommende Gericht schlichtweg an.

Doch, wie Houston anhand von Stellen, an denen das Alte Testament die Reaktion der Zuhörer auf solche unkonditionellen Gerichtsankündigungen berichtet (z.B. 2. Sam. 12,13-14.22; Jona 3,4-9), zeigt, haben diese auf die Hörer noch eine andere Wirkung. Die Adressaten solcher Ankündigungen nehmen nämlich offensichtlich nicht an, daß das Gericht unausweichlich ist, sondern fassen die Gerichtsworte als Warnung auf.⁴⁸ Dementsprechend stellt Terry Eagleton in seiner Untersuchung zum Jonabuch, "J.L. Austin and the Book of Jonah", fest:

In the terms of J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, prophetic utterances of Jonah's sort are "constative" (descriptive of some real or possible state of affairs) only in what one might call their surface grammar; as far as their "deep structure" goes they actually belong to Austin's class of "performatives", linguistic acts which get something done. What they get done is to produce a state of affairs in which the state of affairs they describe won't be the case. Effective declarations of imminent catastrophe cancel themselves out, containing as they do a contradiction between what they say and what they do.⁴⁹

Wichtig ist an dieser Stelle Houstons Betonung, daß es im Rahmen einer Untersuchung der prophetischen Gerichtsankündigungen weder relevant ist, was der Prophet beabsichtigte (dies ist nicht mehr feststellbar), noch, welchen perlokutionären Effekt die prophetische Predigt tatsächlich hatte (d.h., ob das Ver-

halten der Zuhörer erkennen läßt, daß sie diese z.B. als Warnung verstanden haben). Er hält jedoch fest:

If a type of response is indicated in the literature which was certainly familiar with prophecy, that is because it is appropriate to the type of utterance as such.⁵⁰

Eine solche Reaktion der Hörer, wie wir sie in den oben angeführten Stellen finden, ist vor allem deshalb angemessen, da die Gerichtsankündigungen sehr häufig von Schuld aufweisen begleitet waren. Im Kontext einer Theologie, die Jahwe als einen Gott präsentiert, der bereit ist, Schuld zu vergeben, ist es somit nicht verwunderlich, daß die Zuhörer der Propheten eine (von einem Schuld aufweis begleitete) Gerichtsandrohung als Aufforderung zur Umkehr verstanden haben. Houston jedenfalls folgert:

The possibilities of inexorable doom and of mercy evoked by repentance were always implicit in the use of the genre of the oracle of doom.

[...] The question whether the intention of judgement prophecy is to condemn absolutely or to awaken repentance is transcended. Both possibilities exist within the single form of the judgement oracle ...⁵¹

Wir können also zusammenfassen, daß, selbst wenn ein Prophet ausschließlich Gericht predigte, nicht ausgeschlossen werden darf, daß dies von den Hörern als Aufforderung zur Umkehr verstanden worden ist.

Wie Houston deutlich macht, wird die Frage nach der Intention des Propheten aus Sicht der "Sprechakttheorie" transzendiert. Sie soll an diesem Punkt auch nicht wieder durch die Hintertür hereingeschleust werden. Es ist nur darauf hinzuweisen, daß der soeben in bezug auf die Zuhörer festgehaltene Sachverhalt auch auf den Propheten angewendet werden muß. Folglich gilt, daß, selbst wenn ein Prophet ausschließlich Gericht predigt,

nicht ausgeschlossen werden darf, daß er dies als Aufforderung zur Umkehr meint. Zwar wissen wir nicht, *was* er beabsichtigt hat (Umkehr oder unabänderliches Gericht), doch beides ist *möglich*.

Nach diesen "sprechakttheoretischen" Überlegungen wollen wir nun auf das Amosbuch selbst zurückkommen. In den Kommentaren wird – vollkommen zu Recht – immer wieder darauf hingewiesen, daß bestimmte Aussagen des Amos am besten erklärlich sind, wenn man sie als Reaktion auf Einwände versteht, die von den Zuhörern gegen seine Botschaft geltend gemacht worden sind.⁵² Bedauerlicherweise ist dieser Aspekt meines Wissens nie konsequent zu Ende gedacht worden. Doch gerade hier haben wir einen Anhaltspunkt dafür, warum wir im Amosbuch nahezu ausschließlich Gericht-sankündigungen finden.

Um das Ergebnis vorwegzunehmen: das Buch liefert eine Reihe von Indizien, die deutlich machen, daß Amos mit einer erheblichen Schwierigkeit konfrontiert war, der Tatsache nämlich, daß seine Zuhörer ihm schlichtweg nicht glaubten. Ein Gericht Gottes, wie Amos es ankündigte, würde, davon waren sie überzeugt, niemals stattfinden. Einige Beispiele sollen dies verdeutlichen.

Zunächst sei hier die Exodus-Tradition genannt, auf die Amos mehrmals anspielt, um die mit ihr verbundenen falschen Vorstellungen zu korrigieren: So wird in 3,1-2 betont, daß gerade die Erwählung, für die der Exodus steht, zu besonderer Verantwortung vor Gott führt und also im konkreten Fall aufgrund der schwerwiegenden Schuld Israels das Gericht Gottes geradezu erfordert. Eine noch radikalere These findet sich in 9,7, wo – erneut angesichts der Schuld Israels – der aus dem Exodus abgeleitete besondere Status des Volkes sogar grundsätzlich bestritten wird.⁵³

In 5,18-20 schließlich wird mit dem "Tag des Herrn" eine weitere populäre Tradition erwähnt. Dieser vom Volk herbeigesehnte Augenblick wird für Israel – entgegen allen Erwartungen – ein

"schwarzer Tag" sein. Außerdem zeigen sowohl 6,3 als auch 9,10 die fatale, weil falsche, Überzeugung, es werde kein Gericht geben.

Wir haben bereits auf 3,9-11 hingewiesen, wo Zeugen herbeizitiert werden, die Israels Schuld und die folglich gerechte Strafe Gottes bestätigen sollen. Selbst die Heiden geben also dem Propheten Recht: Israels Strafe ist in der Tat verdient!

Außerdem ist offensichtlich auch die Amazja-Erzählung (Am. 7,10-17) in diesem Zusammenhang zu sehen, demonstriert sie doch an einem konkreten Beispiel den Widerstand, der Amos entgegengesetzt wurde.⁵⁴

All dies macht deutlich, daß die in 2,11-12 erwähnte Schuld nicht nur für die vergangenen Generationen charakteristisch ist, sondern gerade auch für die momentanen Zuhörer des Amos. Oder, wie Daniel Carroll R. festhält:

... the difficulty at 2:11-12 that God's people do not often listen to his words is reconfirmed in the following chapters. False readings of history and national realities (4:6-11; 6:13), hollow hopes (5:18-20), self-deluding confidence (6:1-3; 9:10), and politico-religious ambitions and jealousies (7:10-17) as well as abuses at the cult and in society, all blind the mind and make it impossible to comprehend what God is like and to discern where he is in history and where history itself is going.⁵⁵

Die oben angeführten Beispiele zeigen auf, daß die Zuhörer des Amos weit davon entfernt waren, an Umkehr zu denken.⁵⁶ Sie wähten Gott auf ihrer Seite, schätzten das Ausmaß ihrer Schuld völlig falsch ein und waren nicht bereit, auf Amos (bzw. Gott) zu hören.

Im Kontext dieser Ergebnisse fällt sowohl auf die rhetorische Strategie als auch die Botschaft des Amos ein neues Licht. Wenn Amos nahezu ausschließlich – noch dazu in äußerst radikaler Weise – vom kommenden Gericht Gottes spricht und dieses immer wieder anhand von drastischen Schilderungen der Schuld Israels (vgl.

2,6-8; 3,10; 4,1; 5,7.10-12; 8,4-6) rechtfertigt, so hat dies einen guten Grund. Er kämpft ganz offensichtlich darum, seine Zuhörer davon zu überzeugen, daß ihre Schuld die der eingangs erwähnten Nationen noch übersteigt, und daß folglich – ungeachtet all der Traditionen, die sie anführen mögen – Gott für sie nicht mehr Schutz sondern vielmehr höchste Gefahr bedeutet.

Es ist hier jedoch nicht beabsichtigt, die Gerichtsbotschaft des Propheten mit geschickten Kunstgriffen zu "zähmen". Amos rechnet ohne Zweifel, wie nicht nur im bekannten Wort vom Ende (8,2), sondern auch in 9,8-10 deutlich wird, mit dem Ende Israels. Darüber hinaus wird an verschiedenen Stellen deutlich, daß er auch von der *Unvermeidbarkeit* des Gerichts überzeugt ist (vgl. z.B. 2,6). Doch die Folgerung, Amos habe impliziert, daß diesem Gericht absolut niemand entgehen wird, läßt sich aus dem Buch nicht ableiten. Dies ist vielmehr eine m.E. unerlaubte Zuspitzung der amosianischen Botschaft, die sich zudem im Laufe der Zeit fast zu einem dogmatischen Standpunkt entwickelt hat. Wir sollten aber vorsichtig sein, diesen zum Ausgangspunkt für Entscheidungen bezüglich der Authentizität bestimmter Passagen des Buches zu machen.⁵⁷

Die – lediglich skizzenhaft – vorgenommene Untersuchung der Rhetorik des Amos verbietet es somit, das Konzept einer Umkehr für die Predigt dieses Propheten grundsätzlich auszuschließen. Zugleich ist aber auch festzuhalten, daß Amos vom Gericht Gottes, ja vom Ende Israels, überzeugt war. Diese Ambiguität stimmt mit den bereits erwähnten Ergebnissen Houstons überein, die dieser anhand der "Sprechakttheorie" herausgearbeitet hatte.

Eine zusätzliche Unterstützung erfährt unsere These der Ambivalenz, sobald wir das aristotelische Konzept des *Ethos* in die Untersuchung einführen. Aristoteles hatte erkannt, daß im Rahmen einer erfolgreichen, d.h. überzeugenden, Rhetorik alle drei Komponenten des Kommunikationsprozesses zu berücksichtigen sind: der Redner, die Zuhörer sowie die Rede an

sich. Diesen Komponenten entsprechen die von Aristoteles eingeführten Konzepte des *Ethos*, *Pathos* und *Logos*. Hierbei steht *Ethos* für den persönlichen Charakter des Rhetors, *Pathos* für die zu adressierenden bzw. zu verursachenden Emotionen der Zuhörer und *Logos* für die eigentlichen Argumente der Rede.⁵⁸ Uns kommt es im vorliegenden Zusammenhang jedoch zunächst nur auf das Konzept des *Ethos* an, das, wie Rodney Duke zu Recht bemerkt, als Bestandteil des Kommunikationsprozesses eine wesentliche Rolle spielt:

Every rhetor "invents" a strategy of communicating his/her message in such a way that the audience, hopefully, will be persuaded to receive the message and act on it.⁵⁹

Aristoteles hatte konkret darauf hingewiesen, daß der Redner über eine realistische Einschätzung der Situation und seiner Zuhörer, einen integeren Charakter sowie eine positive Einstellung zu seinen Zuhörern verfügen muß.⁶⁰

In der Predigt des Amos haben, so scheint mir, z.B. der Visionenzyklus in 7,1-8,3 und die rhetorischen Fragen in 3,3-8 u.a. die Funktion, den "guten Willen" des Propheten zu veranschaulichen. Während Amos in 3,3-8 deutlich macht, daß er einfach keine andere Wahl hat, als Gottes Gericht anzukündigen, zeigt er durch die Wiedergabe seiner Visionen auf, daß er auch keineswegs am Untergang des Volkes interessiert ist, wie seine harsche Botschaft nahelegen könnte. Vielmehr, so stellt er klar, ist er selbst vor Gott fürbitend für Israel eingetreten (7,2.5). Dies demonstriert seinen "guten Willen" eindrucksvoll und eröffnet somit die Möglichkeit einer Identifikation der Zuhörer mit dem Propheten und seiner Botschaft. Wird dies einzelne zur Umkehr bewegt haben?

Zugleich ist Amos in den Visionen aber erneut unmißverständlich klargemacht worden, daß das Gericht Gottes kommen wird. Aufgrund der gewaltigen Schuld Is-

raels wird Jahwe nun nicht mehr an seinem Volk vorübergehen (7,8; 8,2), sondern zur Vollstreckung der Strafe erscheinen (vgl. 4,13; 5,17). Neben der positiven Einstellung des Amos zum Volk Israel demonstrieren die Visionen somit zugleich auch die Gewißheit des Endes im grundsätzlichen – nicht jedoch notwendigerweise zugleich ausnahmslosen – Sinne.

Doch die Ambivalenz der amosianischen Botschaft ist damit noch nicht vollkommen erfaßt. Die Anwendung des aristotelischen Konzepts des *Ethos* läßt vielmehr angesichts solcher Passagen wie z.B. 4,1-3 den Verdacht aufkommen, Amos' Dienst erfülle streckenweise geradezu den Verstockungsauftrag eines Jesaja (vgl. Jes. 6,9-10). Die weitreichende Verwendung satirischer,⁶¹ ja zuweilen sogar eindeutig sarkastischer, Rede legt die Annahme nahe, Amos habe gegenüber bestimmten Personengruppen durchaus keinen "guten Willen" demonstrieren wollen. Insofern gilt es, Eagletons Bemerkung "[e]ffective declarations of imminent catastrophe cancel themselves out" zu präzisieren; denn eine effektive Gerichtsankündigung führt durchaus nicht grundsätzlich zur Umkehr der Zuhörer. Im Gegenteil: Provokationen der Art, wie wir sie bei Amos finden, können durchaus das Schicksal der Hörer dadurch endgültig besiegelt haben, daß sie diese geradezu zur Rebellion und Verstockung animierten.⁶²

Zusammenfassend gilt es deshalb an dieser Stelle die Komplexität der Botschaft und Rhetorik des Amos festzuhalten, die in der bisherigen Diskussion nicht gebührend berücksichtigt worden ist. Wesentlich ist dabei die Erkenntnis, daß die Aussagen eines Amos im Kontext der Auseinandersetzung mit seinen Zuhörern zu verstehen sind.⁶³ Diese bestimmte nicht nur die Wahl der Themen (Aufzählung der Vergehen und Gerichtspredigt), sondern führte auch dazu, daß vieles extrem zugespitzt formuliert worden ist, um – beides ist denkbar und steht im Einklang mit den Worten des Amos – einige zur Umkehr, andere jedoch zur endgültigen und für sie fatalen Rebellion zu bewegen.

B. Die rhetorische Funktion von Am. 9,7-15

Bevor wir nun unsere Untersuchung mit einigen Erwägungen zur rhetorischen Funktion des Amoschlusses abschließen, ist zu betonen, daß man den Abschnitt kaum als ein "lahmes Zurücksinken in den zu bekämpfenden Wahn"⁶⁴ bezeichnen kann. Diese Aussage Wellhausens ist nicht nur eine unzulässige Übertreibung, sondern zeugt zudem von einem grundlegenden Mißverständnis, da die Gerichtsbotschaft des Amos durch die Heilsverheißung in V. 11-15 in keinsten Weise abgemildert wird. Immerhin setzen 9,8-10 den Untergang Israels eindeutig voraus. Amos sagt also nicht, wie Wellhausen glaubte, "es sei nicht so schlimm gemeint"⁶⁵.

Wie wir gesehen haben, erwartete Amos offensichtlich tatsächlich ein so schwerwiegendes Gericht Gottes, daß es durchaus angemessen war, von einem Ende Israels zu sprechen. Anstatt nun jedoch eine Aussage wie in 8,2 gegen den Schluß des Buches auszuspielen, erscheint es mir angemessener, in 9,8-10 eine Konkretisierung derselben zu sehen. Somit wird hier klargestellt, wie wir uns das Ende Israels vorzustellen haben. Alle *Sünder* – und das, so macht die Gerichtsbotschaft des Amos unmißverständlich deutlich, ist der Großteil des Volkes – werden vom Gericht Gottes betroffen sein.⁶⁶

Doch nun zu Am. 9,11-15: Wenn die oben dargebotene Analyse, wonach die Radikalität der amosianischen Botschaft im Kontext der (erfolglosen) Auseinandersetzung mit den Zuhörern – d.h. als der verzweifelte Versuch, zumindest einige doch noch zu überzeugen – zu erklären ist, dann ist die Annahme, Amos habe grundsätzlich keine Zukunftsperspektive gesehen, nicht haltbar. Es kann also anhand von Am. 1,1-9,6(7) nicht gefolgert werden, daß der Amoschluß aufgrund seines Inhalts (bzw. seiner ideologischen Ausrichtung) auf spätere Redaktoren zurückgehen muß. Vielmehr fügt er sich, wie im folgenden gezeigt werden soll, in die rhetorische Strategie des Amos durchaus ein.

An dieser Stelle wollen wir erneut kurz auf Watts' Untersuchung zur rhetorischen Strategie im Pentateuch zurückkommen. Teil seiner Analyse sind die Aufzählungen von Fluch und Segen, die Watts als "rhetoric of divine sanction" bezeichnet⁶⁷ und bezüglich derer er hervorhebt, daß damit quasi "göttliche Unterstützung" für die eigene These angeführt wird: "Ancient Texts frequently invoke divine powers to strengthen their persuasive appeal ..." ⁶⁸ Die Parallele zur prophetischen Predigt ist offensichtlich, weisen Amos, Jesaja und ihre Gefolgsleute doch immer wieder darauf hin, daß sie in erster Linie Botschafter Jahwes sind. Doch von besonderem Interesse ist im vorliegenden Zusammenhang ein weiterer von Watts angesprochener Aspekt. Im Rahmen seiner Bemühung, die rhetorische Funktion der "divine sanction" zu konkretisieren, bemerkt er: "appeals to divine authorizations and threats aim at *motivation* [meine Hervorh.]" ⁶⁹ Meines Erachtens ist es exakt dieses Konzept der "Motivation", das es uns ermöglicht, die Funktion des Amossschlusses präziser in den Blick zu bekommen.

Dabei ist zu beachten, daß die im Pentateuch anzutreffenden Aufzählungen von Fluch und Segen nicht auf dieselbe Weise "funktionieren". Während die Flüche eine "negative Motivation" darstellen, da sie die Hörer unter Androhung harter Strafen vor bestimmten Handlungen warnen, sind die Segensverheißungen das positive Gegenstück, eine "positive Motivation" also, indem sie denjenigen, die bestimmten (z.B. ethischen) Vorgaben folgen, eine "segensreiche" Zukunft in Aussicht stellen.

Hier liegt, so meine ich, eine weitere Parallele zur prophetischen Botschaft vor, wo wir neben der negativen Motivation der Gerichtsbotschaft die Heilsverheißungen als "positives" Gegenstück vorfinden. Seiner konkreten Situation entsprechend setzte Amos vor allem das Mittel der negativen Motivation ein. Daraus jedoch folgt nicht, daß die in V. 11-15 angewandte Strategie derart unpassend sei, daß sie im

Munde eines Amos unwahrscheinlich oder gar undenkbar wäre.⁷⁰ Wenn er schon nicht mit einer Umkehr im großen Stil rechnen konnte,⁷¹ so ist doch nicht ausgeschlossen, daß einzelne seiner Predigt-Glauben geschenkt haben. Außerdem setzen V. 8-10 offenbar voraus, daß es unter seinen Zuhörern auch solche gab, auf die die Gerichtsbotschaft nicht gemünzt war, da sie sich nicht der von Amos angeprangerten Vergehen schuldig gemacht hatten. Ihnen zeigt Amos mit der Heilsverheißung in V. 11-15 eine Zukunftsperspektive auf.⁷²

Abschließend noch ein Wort zur Couleur der im Amossschluß sich ausdrückenden positiven Motivation. Besonders treffend läßt sich diese mit Brueggemanns Konzept der "Imagination" charakterisieren, das beispielsweise in seinem Aufsatz "Vine and Fig Tree" folgendermaßen umrissen ist:

... the speech of Israel's poets did play upon the imagination of Israel, both to bring old worlds to an end and to initiate new worlds into their awareness.⁷³

Noch prägnanter formuliert Carroll R., wenn er von einem "brief picture of another world, another reality built up by Yahweh himself"⁷⁴ spricht. Exakt darum geht es im Amossschluß: denen, die nicht zu den in 9,10 genannten Sündern zu rechnen sind, bzw. denen, die sich vielleicht doch noch von der Gerichtsbotschaft haben warnen und zur Umkehr bewegen lassen, wird die Option einer ganz anderen Realität vor Augen geführt. Dabei ist gerade der – für manche irritierende – Kontrast zur unmittelbar vorausgegangenen Radikalisierung der Gerichtsbotschaft (vgl. 9,1-6) besonders effektiv.⁷⁵

4. Botschaft und Rhetorik des Amos im Überblick

Zusammenfassend lassen sich somit die folgende Ergebnisse festhalten:

- Amos rechnet mit dem Ende des Nordreichs, doch kann aus seiner Botschaft nicht die Ankündigung des

totalen Endes aller Bewohner abgeleitet werden.

- Sowohl die fast ausschließliche Fokussierung auf Schuld und Gericht als auch deren drastische Schilderung erklären sich aus der Auseinandersetzung mit seinen Zuhörern, die in ihrer Selbstsicherheit kaum zu erschüttern waren und somit dieser krassen Maßnahmen bedurften.
- Die eigentliche Intention der amosianischen Predigt ist nicht eindeutig und endgültig zu bestimmen, doch ist deutlich geworden, daß anhand der im Amosbuch zusammengestellten Orakel neben der simplen Ankündigung des Gerichts auch mit dem Versuch, einige zur Umkehr, andere jedoch zur endgültigen Rebellion zu bewegen, gerechnet werden muß.
- Berücksichtigt man diese Komplexität von Botschaft und Rhetorik, so ist die Heilsverheißung am Ende des Buches durchaus nicht so unpassend, wie vielfach angenommen worden ist. Sie trägt vielmehr der Tatsache Rechnung, daß es im so korrupten Israel zur Zeit des Amos offensichtlich auch Menschen gegeben hat, die sich nicht der angeprangerten Verfehlungen schuldig gemacht haben, und denen Amos mit dem Heilswort eine Zukunftsperspektive aufzeigt. Zugleich gilt es, den möglichen imaginativ-motivierenden Effekt auch dieses Abschnitts zu beachten.

Notes

- 1 R. Smend, "Das Nein des Amos", *EvTh* 23 (1963): 404-423 (bes. 415f). B.A. Asen, "No, Yes and Perhaps in Amos and the Yahwist", *VT* 43 (1993): 433, bemerkt: "While some scholars since Smend have tempered Amos' 'No', the general consensus still seems to be that Amos' 'No' was unequivocal and final."
- 2 J. Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963). S. Nägele, *Laubhütte Davids und Wolkensohn* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 175, bezeichnet Wellhausens Sicht als "Wendemarke".

- 3 Er reagierte dabei vor allem auf den Versuch, Amos als "Kultbeamten" zu verstehen, eine Ansicht, die u.a. von E. Würthwein, "Amos-Studien", *ZAW* 62 (1950): 10-52; vor allem aber von H. Graf Reventlow, *Das Amt des Propheten bei Amos*, *FRLANT* 80 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) vertreten worden ist. Nach G. Pfeifer, "Das Ja des Amos", *VT* 39 (1989): 497-503, stellt die Sichtweise von H.M. Barstad, *The Religious Polemics of Amos*, *SVT* 34 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), der die Verkündigung des Amos als "Missionspredigt" versteht, einen weiteren Versuch der Erweichung der amosianischen Botschaft dar. Pfeifer bemerkt: "... der mit Mühe seiner Übernahme ins Beamtenverhältnis entgangene Prophet sieht sich als Missionar angestellt." Pfeifer, "Ja": 497.
- 4 Siehe z.B. E. Zenger, "Das Zwölfprophetenbuch" in: idem, G. Braulik et al., *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1995): 392: "Daß der 4. Teil 9,7-15 erst aus exilischer bzw. nachexilischer Zeit stammt, ist weitgehender Konsens der Forschung" (Hervorh. im Original). Auch T. Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah*, *BibSem* 20 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 70, setzt das voraus.
- 5 Vielmehr lassen sich neben den Vertretern der Unechtheit des Stückes (vgl. z.B. die Aufzählung bei Nägele, *Laubhütte*, 175 Anm. 37) auch eine ganze Reihe von Forschern nennen, die den Abschnitt als amosianisch betrachten (vgl. dazu die Listen bei U. Kellermann, "Der Amossschluß als Stimme deuteronomistischer Heilshoffnung", *EvTh* 29 [1969]: 175 Anm. 26; und M.D. Carroll R.: *Contexts for Amos*, *JSOTS* 132 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992], 318-319 Anm. 8).
- 6 Eine Auseinandersetzung mit den literarkritischen Argumenten bietet außerdem bereits S.M. Paul, *Amos, Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 282-295; zum historischen Kontext vgl. besonders J.H. Hayes, *Amos, the Eighth-Century Prophet* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 218-228.
- 7 Nägele, *Laubhütte*, 172 Anm. 30. H.-J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988⁴), 282, verweist in diesem Zusammenhang zudem auf B. Duhm, der die Propheten des 8. Jhs. als "Unheilspropheten" verstand. Folglich seien z.B. die Heilsverheißungen im Amosbuch dem Propheten Amos abzuschreiben. Bei Kraus wird jedoch nicht ganz deutlich, ob dies seine oder Duhms Folgerung ist. Zumindest in *Die Theologie der Propheten als Grundlage für die innere Entwicklungsgeschichte der israelitischen Religion* (Bonn: A. Marcus, 1875) zieht Duhm diesen Schluß ausdrücklich nicht (vgl. S. 117, 122).
- 8 Wellhausen, *Propheten*, 96.
- 9 Es erstaunt deshalb, daß P. Weimar, "Der Schluß des Amos-Buches", *BN* 16 (1981): 60, Well-

- hausens Kommentar als eine Zusammenfassung der "literarischen Problematik" der Stelle versteht. Allerdings soll hier nicht verschwiegen werden, daß Wellhausen auch literarkritische Argumente (nämlich die Begriffe *š'ērit 'edōm* und *šūb š'ēbūt*) anführt, um seine Sicht zu untermauern.
- 10 R.S. Cripps, *A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos* (London: SPCK, 1929), 67. Vgl. auch A.G. Auld, *Amos*, OTG (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 81.
- 11 Smend, "Nein": 404.
- 12 Ibid.: 422.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Nägele, *Laubhütte*, 172.
- 15 BN 16 (1981): 60-100.
- 16 Ibid.: 60.
- 17 Kraus, *Geschichte*, 282.
- 18 Kellermann, "Amosschluß": 175 Anm. 27, hat ganz richtig erkannt, daß dies einer *petitio principii* gleichkäme.
- 19 S. z.B. P.H.A. Neumann, "Prophetenforschung seit Heinrich Ewald", in: idem (Hg.), *Das Prophetenverständnis in der deutschsprachigen Forschung seit Heinrich Ewald*, WdF 307 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979): 1-51 (er erwähnt etliche weitere Forschungsüberblicke) und R.P. Gordon, "A Story of Two Paradigm Shifts", in: idem (Hg.), *The Place Is Too Small for Us*, SBTS 5 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995): 3-26. Vgl. auch Kraus, *Geschichte*, § 53 (zu H. Ewald), § 65 (B. Duhm), § 82 (H. Gunkel) u. § 98 (zur neueren Forschung).
- 20 Zur Debatte um die Entstehung des Konzepts vgl. N. Lohfink, "Zur Geschichte der Diskussion über den Monotheismus im Alten Israel", in: *Gott, der einzige*, Hg. E. Haag (Freiburg: Herder, 1985): 9-25; sowie M.J. Mulder, "Kuenen und der 'ethische Monotheismus' der Propheten des 8. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.", in: *Abraham Kuenen (1828-1891)*, OTS 29, Hg. P.B. Dirksen u. A. van der Kooij (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993): 65-90.
- 21 W.H. Schmidt, "Die prophetische 'Grundgewißheit'", in: *Prophetenverständnis*, a.a.O.: 537. Er selbst weicht von der vielfach vorherrschenden Sicht, wonach die prophetische Gegenwartsanalyse zur Zeitkritik und letztlich zur radikalen Gerichtsbotschaft geführt hat, ab, indem er den Kausalzusammenhang umkehren will: "Eher führt umgekehrt die Ahnung des Kommenden den Propheten zur eindringlichen Analyse des Bestehenden" (S. 539).
- 22 Unter Berücksichtigung des Kontexts kann man jedoch kaum von einer unkonditionellen Verheißung sprechen, gilt sie doch immerhin ausschließlich denen, die nicht zu den in 9,8-10 erwähnten Sündern zu rechnen sind.
- 23 Cripps, *Amos*, 72.
- 24 G.A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Vol. 1, *Expositor's Bible* 8 (1896); zitiert in Cripps, *Amos*, 73.
- 25 W. Brueggemann, "Amos' Intercessory Formula", VT 19 (1969): 385. Die Vertreter der "Kultbeamten-Theorie" wurden bereits in Anm. 3 genannt. Im Zusammenhang mit der Verbindung von Prophetie und Weisheit ist vor allem auf die folgenden Arbeiten hinzuweisen: J. Lindblom, "Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East", Hg. M. Noth u. D.W. Thomas, SVT 3 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1955): 192-204; S. Terrien, "Amos and Wisdom", in: *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, Hg. B.W. Anderson u. W. Harrelson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962): 108-115; H.W. Wolff, *Amos' geistige Heimat*, WUNT 18 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964); J.L. Crenshaw, "The Influence of the Wise upon Amos", ZAW 79 (1967): 42-52; und R.N. Whybray, "Prophecy and Wisdom", in: *Israel's Prophetic Tradition*, Hg. R.J. Coggins u. A. Philipps (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1982): 181-199.
- 26 Daneben sind – m.E. zu Recht, aber dennoch ohne großen Erfolg – immer wieder theologische Argumente für die Authentizität des Amosschlusses geltend gemacht worden. Die Schwierigkeiten, denen sich diese Argumentation aber gegenüber sah, werden deutlich bei Kellermann, "Amosschluß", 175 Anm. 27, der bemerkt: "Theologisch bleibt die Freiheit Gottes [...] ein Gegenargument. Nur ist der Gedanke der Freiheit Gottes historisch-kritisch bei Amos nicht aus Texten direkt erhebbar und deshalb eigentlich im historisch-kritischen Gespräch nicht diskutierbar."
- 27 Brueggemann, "Formula": 385; vgl. auch idem, "Amos IV 4-13 and Israel's Covenant Worship", VT 15 (1965): 1-15.
- 28 Idem, "Vine and Fig Tree", in: *A Social Reading of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994): 105.
- 29 Ibid.: 106.
- 30 Zum Problem der Sozialkritik in Amos und der damit verbundenen Frage, wer die Schuldigen und folglich Angeklagten eigentlich sind, vgl. neuerdings die Arbeiten von M.D. Carroll R.: *Contexts* (a.a.O.); "Reflecting on War and Utopia in the Book of Amos", in: *The Bible in Human Society*, Hg. idem, D.J.A. Clines et al., JSOTS 200 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995): 105-121; "God and His People in the Nations' History", *TynBul* 47.1 (1996): 39-70; und "The Prophetic Text and the Literature of Dissent in Latin America", *BibInt* 4 (1996): 76-100. Carroll R. betrachtet diese Fragen im Kontext der (lateinamerikanischen) Befreiungstheologie und betont: "God's role within [history] cannot be reduced to a neat liberation paradigm" ("God and His People": 68). Er weist vor allem darauf hin, daß anhand des Amosbuches keineswegs der Schluß gezogen werden kann, die Schuldigen seien lediglich un-

ter den Herrschenden zu finden. Zur Bevölkerung als solcher bemerkt er: "Their complicity in the nationalistic cult and social sin make impossible simplistic categorizations of the larger populace as simply victims of an unjust system" ("Prophetic Text": 86). Er folgert: "Militarism is a national problem, although the leadership is particularly responsible for the fateful decisions" (ibid.: 91).

Darüber hinaus hebt Carroll R. die nicht zwischen arm und reich differenzierende Kultkritik hervor: "This superficial faith in a benevolent deity is not limited to an elite or to the monarchy and its propagandists. The prophetic text portrays this as a generalized belief and an integral part of the complex understanding of social life and of the divine" (ibid.: 92).

Diese Analyse (ähnlich urteilt im übrigen H.B. Huffmon, "The Social Role of Amos' Message", in: *The Quest For the Kingdom of God*, Hg. idem, F.A. Spina et al. [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983]: 109-116) wird der Botschaft des Amos wesentlich besser gerecht als das Urteil Schmidts, der einen Bruch in der Verkündigung des Propheten ausmacht: "Er droht das Ende des Gottesvolkes an, begründet diese Zukunftsansage in der Regel jedoch mit der Erpressung, die die Reichen an den Armen üben, obwohl dieser Tatbestand doch nur als Motiv für die Bestrafung der high society (vgl. Am. 4,1f.), aber nicht für die Unheilsdrohung über jedermann (5,2 u.a.) ausreicht" ("Grundgewißheit": 546).

31 Vgl. jüngst G. Pfeifer, *Die Theologie des Propheten Amos* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1995), 126-134, zum "Ende Israels": "Welche Zukunft hat das Volk Israel zu erwarten? Keine, denn das Ende ist gekommen ..." (S. 126).

32 Eine rhetorische Analyse kann auf verschiedenen Ebenen ansetzen, d.h. sie kann entweder das Amosbuch als Ganzes oder aber die Rhetorik des Propheten Amos anhand der im Buch zusammengestellten Orakel untersuchen. Für diese Unterscheidung vgl. auch N. Lohfink, "Bund als Vertrag im Deuteronomium", ZAW 107 (1995): 223, der von "Sprechaktverhältnisse[n] innerhalb jener Textwelt, die der Erzähler im Buch schafft" (Hervorh. im Original), spricht.

Im vorliegenden Zusammenhang sind wir an der eigentlichen Botschaft des Amos interessiert. Wir können sie jedoch nur aus der Textwelt des Buches erheben; denn eine andere Quelle steht uns nicht zur Verfügung. Daß es sich um eine Textwelt mit einem Erzähler handelt, wird am Erzählrahmen, wie er in 1,1 und der Amazja-Erzählung (7,10-17) hervortritt, deutlich.

33 Vgl. erneut Lohfink, "Bund", der ähnlich vorgeht, um zu zeigen, daß das Deuteronomium auch dort von einem Bundeschluß erzählt, wo der Begriff *b'rit* nicht fällt.

34 D.M. Howard, Jr., "Rhetorical Criticism in Old Testament Studies", BBR 4 (1994): 87-104. In

den letzten Jahren ist jedoch ein größeres Interesse an der "klassischen Rhetorik" aufgekommen. Vgl. z.B. W. Wuellner, "Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?", CBQ 49 (1987): 448-463; und D. Patrick u. A. Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation* JSOTS 82; BLS 26 (Sheffield Almond Press, 1990).

35 Vgl. Aristoteles, *Rhetorik*, Übs. F.G. Sieveke (München: Fink, 1987²).

36 Vgl. dazu Patrick/Scult, *Rhetoric*; R.K. Duke, *The Persuasive Appeal of the Chronicler*, JSOTS 88; BLS 25 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 29-46; Howard, "Rhetorical Criticism": 92-95; und P. Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, GBS (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 5-9; sowie die in diesen Arbeiten erwähnte Sekundärliteratur.

37 Patrick/Scult, *Rhetoric*, 12 (im Original kursiv gesetzt). Sie verweisen auf G. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1980).

38 J.W. Watts, "Rhetorical Strategy in the Composition of the Pentateuch", JSOT 68 (1995): 3.

39 Als klassisches Beispiel wird immer wieder 8,2 angeführt, wo vom Ende Israels die Rede ist. Besonders radikal ist der literarkritische Ansatz von Weimar, der, um nur ein Beispiel herauszugreifen, Am. 9,7+8 als zwei Aussagen betrachtet, "die aufgrund ihrer formalen Andersartigkeit nicht auf ein und dieselbe Hand zurückgehen können" ("Schluß": 71). Es ist offensichtlich, daß diese Folgerung fragwürdigen Voraussetzungen entspringt.

40 G. Fohrer, "Bemerkungen zum neueren Verständnis der Propheten", in: *Prophetenverständnis*, a.a.O.: 480-481.

41 Ibid.: 480. Vgl. auch idem, "Form und Funktion in der Hiobdichtung", ZDMG 109 (1959): 31-49.

42 Fohrer, "Bemerkungen": 480-481.

43 Vgl. M. Buber, *Der Glaube der Propheten* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1984²).

44 Smend, "Nein": 416.

45 Siehe J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975²; dt. *Zur Theorie der Sprechakte*, dt. Bearb. E. von Savigny [Stuttgart: Reclam, 1989²]); und J.R. Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1969; dt. *Sprechakte*, Übs. R. Wiggershaus [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994⁶]); idem, *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1979; dt. *Ausdruck und Bedeutung*, Übs. A. Kemmerling [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993³]).

Für eine ausführlichere Auseinandersetzung mit der "Speech Act Theory" sei neben den obengenannten Werken auf die Artikel in *Semeia* 41: *Speech Act Theory and Biblical Criticism* (1988) verwiesen.

46 Lohfink, "Bund": 221.

47 W. Houston, "What Did the Prophets Think They Were Doing?", BibInt 1 (1993): 167-188 (s. bes. 179-188).

- 48 Houston, "Prophets": 183. Diesem Aspekt trägt Lohfink Rechnung, wenn er festhält, daß "der jeweilige Sprechakt nicht allein durch Wörter und Syntax" bestimmt, sondern auch von "gesellschaftlich, situativ und textlich vorgegebenen Umständen" abhängig ist ("Bund": 221).
- 49 T. Eagleton, "J.L. Austin and the Book of Jonah", in: *The Book and the Text*, Hg. R.M. Schwartz (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 233.
- 50 Houston, "Prophets": 185.
- 51 Ibid.: 186, 187.
- 52 Besonders deutlich ist dies von W. Rudolph, *Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona*, KAT XIII/2 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1971) gesehen worden.
- 53 Der Exodus wird auch in 2,10 erwähnt, dort jedoch zu einem anderen Zweck. Vgl. auch Carroll R., "God and His People": 66, der noch weitere Anspielungen aufführt.
- 54 So auch K.J.A. Larkin, *The Eschatology of Second Zechariah* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 231.
- 55 Carroll R., "God and His People": 67-68.
- 56 Dies scheint mir auch der Grund dafür zu sein, daß, wie Schmidt bemerkt, der Bußruf in der Prophetie erst später "konstitutive Bedeutung" gewinnt (vgl. "Grundgewißheit": 542 Anm. 11).
- 57 Anders Pfeifer, *Theologie*, 136.
- 58 Vgl. Aristoteles, *Rhetorik*, I, 2, 1356a.
- 59 Duke, *Persuasive Appeal*, 105.
- 60 Vgl. Aristoteles, *Rhetorik*, I, 2, 1378a.
- 61 Zur Satire des Amos vgl. L. Ryken, "Amos", in: *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, Hg. idem u. T. Longman III. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993): 337-347.
- 62 An dieser Stelle konvergieren die beiden Konzepte vom *Ethos* und *Pathos*. Einerseits verdeutlichen Aussagen wie in 4,1-3, daß Amos gewissen Bevölkerungsgruppen eben nicht wohlgesonnen war, d.h. sein "guter Wille" wird bewußt in Frage gestellt. Zugleich aber handelt es sich um eine gezielte Provokation der Zuhörer, die auf deren Emotionen zielt und somit der Kategorie des *Pathos* zuzuordnen wäre.
- 63 A. Graffy, *A Prophet Confronts His People*, AnBib 104 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1984) hat gezeigt, daß sich in Amos keine "Disputationsworte" im Sinne der (von ihm präzierten) formkritischen Definition finden. Doch damit ist selbstverständlich nicht ausgeschlossen, daß das Material in Amos eine Auseinandersetzung zwischen dem Propheten und seinen Zuhörern widerspiegelt.
- 64 Wellhausen, *Propheten*, 96.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Zur Deutung des in 9,8-10 thematisierten Läuterungsgerichts vgl. die Kommentare. Viele Exegeten halten diesen Teil des Buches noch für authentisch, wobei sie jedoch in der Regel 8b als spätere Hinzufügung betrachten. Doch dieser Versteil spricht lediglich explizit aus, was auch das Bild des Siebens impliziert. Rudolph, Amos, 276, hat zudem gezeigt, daß die mit *kî* eingeleitete Aussage in V. 9-10 von 8b abhängig ist: "V. 9f. ist die Begründung von V. 8b, nicht von V. 8a (das 'denn' von V. 9, auf 8a bezogen, wäre sinnlos) ..."
- 67 Watts, "Strategy": 12-14.
- 68 Ibid.: 12.
- 69 Ibid.: 13.
- 70 Ein Einwand, der gegen diese Auslegung sowie den Vergleich mit den Segensverheißungen des Pentateuch erhoben werden könnte, wäre die Tatsache, daß Amos in 9,11-15 nicht zu einem anderen Verhalten aufruft, sondern lediglich die Alternative einer positiven Zukunft aufzeigt. Diesbezüglich wäre zu erwidern: V. 8-10 implizieren bereits, daß nur diejenigen, die nicht zu den Sündern zu rechnen sind, auf die in V. 11-15 umrissene Zukunft hoffen dürfen. Zudem hat Amos bereits überdeutlich aufgezeigt, wie die Zuhörer *nicht* handeln sollen, womit natürlich zugleich ein alternativer Lebensstil impliziert ist.
- 71 Dies geht m.E. aus 5,1-17 hervor. Zwar finden wir in 5,4-6.14+15 Aufforderungen zur Umkehr, doch die Rahmung dieser Aufforderungen mit Leichenklagen (V. 1-3 u. 16-17) zeigt, daß Amos keine unrealistischen Hoffnungen hegte. Besonders das "darum" (*lāken*) in V. 16 setzt die Nichtbeachtung der Umkehrrufe voraus.
- 72 In diesem Zusammenhang ist zu betonen, daß aufgrund der rhetorischen Konzentration des Amos auf sein eigentliches Anliegen nicht der Schluß gezogen werden sollte, es habe keine "Nicht-Sünder" gegeben. Dies würde den jeglicher Kommunikation anhaftenden Gelegenheitscharakter verkennen. Um außerdem einem möglichen Mißverständnis vorzubeugen: wenn Amos auch nach dem Ende Israels noch mit einer Zukunft für einige rechnet, so ist damit nicht an das später im Judentum zu findende Konzept einer kleinen "gläubigen Gemeinde" gedacht. Vielmehr zeigt das Wort vom "Wiederaufbau der Hütte Davids" (9,11), daß diese Zukunft der "Nicht-Sünder" nach dem Ende des Nordreichs im Zusammenhang mit Juda zu sehen ist. Dies wiederum hat weitreichende Implikationen, die hier jedoch bedauerlicherweise nicht mehr ausgeführt werden können.
- 73 Brueggemann, "Vine": 92.
- 74 Carroll R., "Prophetic Text": 97.
- 75 Vgl. Brueggemanns Beobachtungen zur Gegenüberstellung von Mi. 3,9-12 und 4,-15 ("Vine": 93).

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- **Why Christianity of All Religions?**¹
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Klaas Runia, Kampen

RÉSUMÉ

Le pluralisme religieux est une réalité bien connue dans notre culture occidentale. Au moins quatre vagues de syncrétisme ont eu un impact sur la vie de l'Église. Elles se sont toutes caractérisées par un trait commun : l'idée qu'il y aurait plusieurs chemins qui mènent à Dieu. Les chrétiens évangéliques ont tendance à rejeter ce point de vue en s'appuyant sur certains textes centraux de la Bible (comme Jn 14,6; Ac 4,12; etc.). Pour les adeptes d'autres religions, cette réponse n'est pas convaincante, car ils font appel à d'autres textes ou traditions qu'ils considèrent comme révélation. L'étude comparée des religions, qui recherche l'essence de chaque religion, ne peut pas non plus donner une réponse satisfaisante. Comment les chrétiens eux-mêmes considèrent-ils les autres religions ? On peut distinguer trois positions principales : les points-de-vue exclusiviste, inclusiviste, et pluraliste ou libéral.

Cette dernière approche se fonde largement sur la phénoménologie de l'expérience religieuse, mais ne fournit pas non plus de réelle solution. Pour les chrétiens, Jésus-Christ est le centre de toute révélation. Pourquoi ? Parce

qu'ils croient que Jésus-Christ est ressuscité d'entre les morts. Quand les disciples ont considéré sa vie rétrospectivement à partir de la perspective unique que donne la résurrection, ils ont découvert un double mystère : 1) le mystère de son oeuvre, en particulier de sa mort sur la croix pour réconcilier l'homme avec Dieu, et 2) le mystère de sa personne : il était, non pas un homme ordinaire, ni même un homme extraordinaire, mais bien plus qu'un homme : le Fils unique de Dieu incarné. Dans la seconde partie de l'article, ces deux mystères sont abordés de manière plus approfondie.

Tout ceci ne signifie pas qu'il n'y ait aucune parcelle de vérité dans les autres religions. Même les théologiens qui adoptent le point-de-vue exclusiviste ne veulent pas dire que les autres religions sont totalement et à tous égards erronées. Mais quoi qu'il en soit, nous devons maintenir que, s'il est possible que des adeptes d'autres religions soient sauvés, ils ne le seront certainement pas en vertu de leur propre religiosité, mais uniquement parce que l'Esprit de Christ est d'une façon ou d'une autre à l'oeuvre dans leur coeur, et parce que, par son action, le secret de Christ leur a été en quelque sorte révélé.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Religiöser Pluralismus ist eine bekannte Größe der westlichen Kultur. Es hat zumindest vier Wellen des Synkretismus gegeben, die einen Einfluß auf das Leben der Kirche hatten. Sie alle weisen eine gemeinsame Struktur auf, nämlich den Glauben, daß es viele Wege zu Gott gebe. Evangelikale Christen sind geneigt, diese Art des Denkens unter Berufung auf einige zentrale Texte der Bibel (Joh. 14,6; Apg. 4,12 usw.)

abzulehnen. Für Anhänger anderer Religionen ist eine solche Antwort jedoch nicht überzeugend, da sie sich auf ihre eigenen Offenbarungen berufen. Die vergleichende Religion, darum bemüht, das Wesen einer jeden Religion zu ermitteln, ist ebenfalls nicht in der Lage, eine definitive Antwort zu liefern. Wie sehen Christen selbst die anderen Religionen? Es gibt drei grundsätzliche Positionen: die exklusivistische, die inklusivistische und die pluralistische bzw. liberale Position. Der letztgenannte Ansatz baut

zu großen Teilen auf der Phänomenologie der religiösen Erfahrung auf, doch auch dies bietet keine Lösung. Für Christen ist Jesus Christus das Zentrum aller Offenbarung. Warum? Weil sie glauben, daß er von den Toten auferstanden ist. Als die Jünger aus der einzigartigen Perspektive seiner Auferstehung auf sein Leben zurückblickten, entdeckten sie ein doppeltes Mysterium: 1.) das Mysterium seiner Taten und der Notwendigkeit seines Kreuzestodes, nämlich die Versöhnung des Menschen mit Gott, und 2.) das Mysterium seiner Identität; denn er war kein normaler Mensch, nicht einmal ein außergewöhnlicher Mensch, sondern mehr als ein Mensch: Gottes eingeborener Sohn im Fleisch. Im zweiten Teil des Artikels werden

diese beiden Mysterien ausführlicher behandelt. All dies will nicht besagen, daß die anderen Religionen grundsätzlich keine Wahrheit beinhalten. Selbst Theologen, die die exklusivistische Position einnehmen, wollen nicht andeuten, daß die anderen Religionen in ihrer Gesamtheit und in jeglicher Hinsicht falsch sind. Doch wie dem auch sei, es gilt folgendes festzuhalten: wenn es möglich ist, daß Menschen anderer Religionen gerettet werden, so werden sie mit absoluter Sicherheit nicht aufgrund ihrer eigenen Religiosität gerettet, sondern nur, weil der Geist Christi in irgendeiner Weise in ihrem Leben aktiv war, und weil ihnen durch sein Wirken das Geheimnis Christi in irgendeiner Weise klar geworden ist.

1 One of the songs of George Harrison of Beatles' fame is called: 'My sweet Lord'. The refrain of the song is: 'I really want to know you, I really want to know you, Lord, but it takes so long'. These words give the impression that this is a Christian song, but this is a mistake. In the background we hear a choir singing 'Hallelujah', but half-way through the record the Hallelujah makes way to Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, and later on the names of other Indian deities are mentioned.

This song is typical of the thinking of many people in our day. They believe that all religions are pathways to God. They like to compare the various religions with the spokes of a wheel: they all run to the same centre, the axle. In a similar way all religions lead us to the same hidden centre of all reality: God. For this reason it does not really make any difference which deity one worships. It is also possible to insert aspects of other religions into one's own religion. In the past this approach was particularly characteristic of Asian religions. In his book *No Other Name* W. A. Visser 't Hooft, the first secretary-general of the WCC, quotes the following Sufi-hymn:

O God, in every temple I find people that seek thee.
In every language I hear spoken, people praise thee...

Sometimes I frequent the Christian cloister and sometimes the mosque,
But it is thou I search for from temple to temple.²

In recent years the same approach has become rather popular in the Western world too, largely due to the influence of Eastern religions and of the New Age movement. In some theological circles, especially in the English-speaking world, it has become the predominant view. It is therefore not surprising to see that common worship services of Christians, Jews and Moslems are becoming more frequent. In such services portions of the New Testament, of the Old Testament and of the Koran are read side by side, and together the worshippers pray to the heavenly Father of Jesus Christ, to Yahweh and to Allah, for they are all names for the One and Only God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

2. It is common to speak here of religious pluralism. One can also speak of syncretism. Visser 't Hooft gives the following definition of syncretism: 'It is the view which holds that there is no unique revelation in history, that there are many different ways to reach the divine reality, that all formulations of religious truth and experience are by their very nature inadequate expressions of that truth and that it is necessary to harmonize as much as possi-

ble all religious ideas and experiences so as to create one universal religion for mankind' (21).

According to Visser 't Hooft there have been four great waves of syncretism that had a bearing on the life of the church. The first one occurred in the days of King Manasseh, who lived in the century before the Jewish Exile. He introduced foreign cults into the temple and worshipped all the host of heaven, serving them next to Yahweh. The second wave occurred in the days of the Roman Empire. All kinds of religions found their way to Rome: from Asia Minor, from Syria, from Persia, from Egypt and from many other countries. Their gods were very welcome and each of them obtained his or her own place in the Pantheon, the famous temple at Rome, where the gods of all nations were worshipped together with the Emperor and his 'divine' predecessors. In a letter to the Emperor the Roman prefect Symmachus summarized the underlying concept: 'What does it matter how anyone seeks the truth? It is impossible that so great a mystery should be approached by one road only' (22). No wonder that the Christians who believed that there is only one God, the Father, and only one Lord, Jesus Christ (1 Cor 8:6), and who therefore refused to partake in the cult of the Emperor, were bitterly persecuted by the authorities.

The third wave broke over Europe in the 18th century, the age of the Enlightenment (22ff.). Thinkers and writers, such as Rousseau, Goethe and Lessing, believed that we should eagerly receive all the wealth of the varieties of religious experience without excluding any. Christianity was just one aspect of the wider religious synthesis. One of the best known examples of this limitless syncretism is Lessing's famous parable of the three rings. A father has three sons whom he loves equally. He can give his ring with magic power to only one of them. Since he does not want to offend any of his sons he has two perfect imitations of the true ring made, and before he dies he blesses each of his sons and gives him one of the rings. Each of the three believes he

possesses the true ring and considers the others false. So they all go to the wise judge Nathan who speaks for Lessing himself and for the whole Enlightenment when he offers the following judgment: 'Let each think that his own is the true ring' and in the mean time show forth 'gentleness, a heartfelt tolerance, good works and deep submission to God's will'.

The fourth great wave of syncretism is taking place in our own day. It is promoted by various factors, such as the science of comparative religion, the new schools of psychology, the end of the colonial period, the revival of the old religions of Asia, the vitalist philosophy, which is a marked feature of modern literature, etc. (28ff.). In recent years the wave has been strengthened by the ideas of New Age, which are based on the premise that all that exists is 'one'. Everything coheres and is connected with everything else; God, nature, the cosmos, the plant, the animal and man they are all 'one'. In addition, the soul or spirit of man is nothing but a spark from the divine fire or a droplet from the divine ocean, and every religion is nothing but the striving of this spark or droplet to return into the great and eternal fire or ocean.

All these various and varied forms of syncretism have one common structure. They all believe that there are many pathways to God, for God is 'too great, too unknowable to reveal himself in a single revelation and once for all' (48). Syncretism in all its forms is 'essentially a revolt against the uniqueness of revelation in history.' Syncretistic thinking abhors the idea 'that God has actually made himself definitely known in a particular person and event at a particular time.' In our own day this view is strongly and persuasively advocated by such theologians as William Cantwell Smith, John Hick and Paul Knitter. All three of them are of the opinion that we have to abandon the idea that Jesus Christ is the very centre of God's self-revelation. Our religious thinking should not be 'christocentric but 'theocentric'. Hick calls this the Copernican Revolution' that is taking place in our day. "We have to realize that

the universe of faiths centres upon *God*, and not upon Christianity or upon any other religion. God is the sun, the originative source of light and life, whom all the religions reflect in their own different ways'.³ Paul Knitter essentially agrees with Hick,⁴ although he himself prefers to speak of a 'salvation-centred' approach, for such a conception would call on the different religious believers to work for 'a shared liberative praxis'.⁵

3. What is our answer as Evangelical Christians? Almost instinctively we reject this kind of syncretism with an appeal to certain passages of Scripture, such as John 14:6, where Jesus says: 'I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me'; or the words of Peter in Acts 4:12, 'And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved'; or the words of Paul in 1 Tim 2:5, 'There is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'.

For my part, I wholeheartedly believe what is said in these passages. However, an appeal to them is not the correct starting point in a discussion with people of other faiths. For us who belong to the Christian Church, the Bible contains God's self-revelation to his chosen people. But an appeal to this revelation is valid only for those who believe in Jesus Christ and share the same faith with the Bible writers. The adherents of other religions also appeal to their own holy writings as revelations of God and they are convinced that these writings offer them the truth about God. In a discussion with people of other religions a simple appeal to revelation means that we arrive at a deadlock.

In addition, there is the fact that today these very same passages are interpreted in a different way by fellow-Christians. The Roman Catholic scholar Paul Knitter, for instance, believes that these passages apply to Christians only. When Christians see Jesus as the way, the life and the truth, they actually say no more than that this is the way they personally experience Jesus.

Knitter ranks it with the exclamation of a husband to his wife: 'You are the most beautiful woman in the world.'⁵ We have to do here with 'love' language, which means that the passages I quoted should not be taken in an absolute sense, but as confessions that hold true within the Christian community only.

Are there other ways to find an answer to our question?

4. Since the rise of the science of comparative religion, scholars have tried to discover the essence of the phenomenon of religion. The next step, naturally, was to determine which of the various religions met this criterion best. But this method did not provide an answer either.

In the first place there was the problem of the criterion itself. Often it was formulated in such a general and broad manner that every religion was covered by it. Take, for instance, the idea of the holy. This idea, in one form or another, is present in all religions. We encounter it in both the so-called primitive religions (e.g., animism) and the higher religions (such as Buddhism and Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam).

A second problem is that nearly always the scholar uses his own view of the essence of religion as the criterion for determining which is the highest religion. The natural result is that one finds what one is looking for. One's own religion appears to be the highest form of religion.

A third problem is that in essence all religions are unique. All religions have their own characteristic features and even when they use the same word (e.g. God, or revelation, or salvation), this word appears to have its own inalienable and non-transferable content.⁶ Christianity, Judaism and Islam all use the word God, but their conceptions of God differ in various respects, e.g. in the idea of the Fatherhood of God. Both Christianity and Islam claim to be based on revelation, which was written down in the Holy Book. However, there is a decisive difference. For Moslems the Koran is the written transcript of an eternal tablet in heaven, the 'Mother of the Book',

and it was transmitted to Mohammed through the angel Gabriel. For Christians the self-revelation of God is to be sought primarily in the person of Jesus and only secondarily in the Bible. Both Christianity and Buddhism are religions of redemption, but in Buddhism it is a redemption from desire and suffering, while in Christianity redemption means the liberation from sin and guilt, from the powers of evil and from death.

When H.M.Kuitert states, in his last book, that the three great monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) share the idea of transcendence, for they all believe in God as The Creator who can never be confused with his creatures⁷, he makes a similar mistake. Using a philosophical and rather abstract idea of transcendence he regards these three religions as the guardians of transcendence. Consequently, he goes on to argue for the rehabilitation of 'theism'. In the second last sentence of his book he writes: 'The churches, the synagogue, the mosque they are able, better than hitherto, to teach their people that they do not have to be anybody's servant, if they believe in God' (202). However true this statement may be in itself, it is based on the faulty presupposition that these three religions have the same view of divine transcendence. Kuitert, too, works with a criterion that he has first devised (namely 'theism'). But the fact that it applies equally to three quite different religions is proof that in this way we shall never find an answer to the question: Why Christianity of all religions? On the basis of theism there appear to be three candidates!

5. The next question that we encounter in this context is: How do Christians regard the other religions? Can the answer to this question provide a solution? When we look back at the history of the Christian Church there appear to be two main views.

The first is to regard all other religions as false religions. This was the view of Tertullian and many Church Fathers. It was also the view of the medieval church. It adopted the formula, first introduced by Cyprian,

'*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*' (there is no salvation outside the church). In his bull *Unam Sanctam*, issued in 1302, Pope Boniface VIII reaffirmed it and stated: 'That there is only one holy, catholic and apostolic Church we are compelled by faith to believe and hold; we firmly believe in her and simply confess her; outside her there is neither salvation nor remission of sins'.⁸ The Council of Florence (1438-1445) repeated and confirmed this view when it said: 'Outside the Catholic Church no one, neither pagans nor Jews nor heretics nor schismatics, can obtain eternal life, but will go to the everlasting fire..., unless before the end of life they are received into the Church'.⁹ Basically this was also the view of the Reformers. Luther spoke for the entire Protestant tradition when he called Christianity the *vera et unica religio* (the true and unique religion). According to Calvin Scripture condemns 'as falsehood and lying whatever of divinity had formerly been celebrated among the heathen'.¹⁰

The second view regards the other religions as a mixture of truth and error, the latter obscuring the former. Yet, because of those elements of truth, the non-Christian religion may function as a *praeparatio evangelica* (an evangelical preparation) for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Since the 19th century this view has become predominant in Roman Catholic teaching and theology. The *lumen naturale* (the light of nature), by which the adherents of other religions live, is the antechamber to the true Church of God, the Roman Catholic Church. In the documents of the Second Vatican Council in particular we encounter this 'fulfilment' theory. Thus we read in section 16 of *Lumen Gentium*: 'Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them, through the dictates of conscience. Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who

strive to live a good life, thanks to his grace. Whatever goodness or truth is found among them is looked upon by the Church as preparation for the gospel. She regards such qualities as given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life'.¹¹

In our own day we still encounter these differing attitudes toward other religions. In fact, today it is customary to make a threefold distinction: the exclusivist, the inclusivist and the pluralist or liberal approach. Since time does not allow me to deal with them extensively I will make a few short comments on each position.¹²

6. The exclusivist view was generally held by the Church up to the Middle Ages, and by the Reformers. In our century it was strongly advocated by Karl Barth and Hendrik Kraemer. Barth rejected all divine self-revelation outside Christ and declared every form of religion (including the Christian 'religion', which he distinguished from the Christian Gospel) to be sheer unbelief.¹³ Likewise Kraemer regarded all religion, all philosophy and all moralism as constituting various 'endeavours for self-redemption'.¹⁴ In one of his last books he repeated this same view and wrote that in the light of Christ (and not in that of Christianity!) 'the first thing we have to say *point-blank* about the "other" religions is that in their deepest and most essential intentions all of them are errors'.¹⁵

In my own Reformed tradition we encounter a rather similar view in the works of J.H. Bavinck and J. Verkuyl. They differ from Barth in that they both believe that there is, in addition to the revelation in Christ, also a general self-revelation of God in creation, in the work of the law written on the heart of every human being and in the human conscience. But they also believe with Paul that fallen man suppresses the truth of this general revelation by his wickedness (Rom 1:18). Bavinck sees behind all idolatry 'rebellion against God, vain illusion, and self-deceit'.¹⁶ J. Verkuyl, Bavinck's successor to the chair of missiology in the Free University of Amsterdam, is of the opinion that at no point are the

religions of this world identical. 'They differ deeply in the wells from which they draw and in their contents and in their aims'.¹⁷ He also agrees with Kraemer that self-redemption is the hidden motive of all the non-Christian religions (116). Therefore, he cannot possibly agree with the view, rather popular in some Roman Catholic circles, that all religious systems are ways of salvation, as long as they have not yet met Christ.¹⁸

The exclusivist view is also held by the great majority of evangelical theologians. In the famous Lausanne Covenant (1974) evangelicals from all over the world professed: 'We affirm that there is only one Saviour and only one Gospel... We recognize that all men have some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for men suppress the truth by their unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which we must be saved'.¹⁹

7. The inclusivist view, though never universally adopted, has quite a long pedigree, too. We find traces of it already in the writings of Justin Martyr, one of the early Apologists (c. 100 – c.165). In one of his writings he affirms: 'It is our belief that those men who strive to do the good which is enjoined upon us have a share in God; according to our traditional belief they will by God's grace share his dwelling. And it is our conviction that this holds good in principle for all men'. Behind this affirmation lies the idea of the eternal divine Logos, which as the philosophical principle of coherent rationality permeates the basic reality of the universe as a whole. Because Justin identifies this Logos with Christ he can write: 'Christ is the divine Word in whom the whole human race share, and those who live according to the light of their knowledge are Christians, even if

they are considered as being godless'.²⁰

As stated before, in recent Roman Catholic teaching and theology the inclusivist approach takes on the form of the 'fulfilment' theory, meaning that the qualities of goodness and truth which non-Christian religions may possess come from Christ and reflect rays of that Truth that enlightens all men (cf. John 1:19).²¹ The Vatican II *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity* (*Ad Gentes*) seems to go even further when it says that 'whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God, this (missionary activity) frees from all taint of evil and restores to Christ its Maker' (595/6). Individual Roman Catholic theologians have moved even beyond this cautious approach of their church. Karl Rahner, for instance, believes that, even though creation may not be identified with grace, grace always accompanies it. For this reason the faithful adherents of other religions can be saved through the faithful practice of their religion. Rahner calls these people 'anonymous' Christians.²² The Asian theologian Raymond Pannikar takes a big step further, when he states: 'The good and *bona fide* Hindu is saved by Christ and not by Hinduism, but it is through the Sacraments of Hinduism, through the *Mysterium* that comes to him through Hinduism, that *Christ* saves the Hindu normally'.²³ Some Eastern Orthodox theologians move in the same direction. Metropolitan Georges Khodt speaks of the hidden Christ within other religious traditions. 'Christ is hidden everywhere in the mystery of his lowliness. Any reading of religions is a reading of Christ. It is Christ alone who is received as light when grace visits a Brahmin, a Buddhist or a Mohammadan reading his own scriptures'.²⁴

Even though the inclusivists show very considerable appreciation of the non-Christian religions, they refrain from saying that those religions themselves can save a person. It is always *Christ* who saves by his hidden presence in the other religion.

8. The third approach, which is often called the pluralist or liberal approach, moves beyond this, no longer having a place for the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. In the early decades of this century the German theologian and philosopher Ernst Troeltsch already disclaimed Christianity as the supreme expression of religious life. All evidence we have for such a claim is 'the evidence of a profound experience', but this kind of evidence is valid only for those who share this experience. Christianity, therefore, is no more than one faith among many others.²⁵

In preparation for the World Conference at Tambaram (1938) W.E. Hocking, a liberal Harvard professor, wrote the report *Re-Thinking Mission* (1932). In it he wrote: 'The missionary will look forward, not to the destruction of these religions, but to their continued existence with Christianity, each stimulating the other in growth toward the ultimate goal, unity in the completest religious truth' (443/4). Some twenty years later he advocated the idea of one universal world religion. His premise was that all religions contain an alienable core of truth. 'In proportion as any religion grows in self-understanding through grasping its own essence, it grasps the essence of all religion'.²⁶ Hence there is no need to relinquish one's own religion and convert to another religion, but staying in his own religion the believer should aim at 'reconception', that is, a new conception of his own religion, complemented and enriched by his contact with other religions.

In our own day the pluralist approach is strongly advocated and defended by such theologians as William Cantwell Smith, John Hick and Paul Knitter.²⁷ Cantwell Smith is of the opinion that the adherents of other religions are also 'people of the faith'.²⁸ In his contribution to the 1988 issue of the *International Review of Missions* which commemorated Tambaram 1938 he wrote that in the one world in which we live today we realize that the great religions are 'great movements of the human spirit', each 'of great spiritual

depth, and many would now add, of salvific force' (361). What began in Bethlehem is not God's only mission, but just part of it. 'Few of us Christians know much about God's mission in the Islamic venture; God's mission to India, and nowadays ... to the world through the Hindu complex; God's mission to East Asia, and nowadays to the world, in the Buddhist movement' (366). This entire mission is the work of the Holy Spirit. Every one who denies this is disloyal to Christ and is blaspheming God (367)!²⁹

John Hick, who wrote many books on the subject, states in one of his last publications: God is 'the sun, the originative source of light and life, whom all the religions reflect in their own different ways'.³⁰ The title of his very last book speaks for itself: *The Rainbow of Faiths* (1995). The title of the last chapter reads: 'A Christianity That Sees Itself as One True Religion among Others' (125). In the last part of this chapter he offers a 'spirituality in a pluralistic age', which is drawn from a number of non-Christian writings, Talmudic, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Taoist, Moslem, etc. (139ff.).

Paul F. Knitter who is another spokesman for the pluralist view wrote the book *No Other Name?* (1986). The question mark in the title is telling and indicates where his problem lies. He rejects the mainline Protestant model that ties salvation to the Christ event (119), because Christ does not limit his working to the Christian faith; one can encounter him in other religions as well. The Catholic model (many ways, one norm) is better, for it recognizes that grace (which is of Christ) also operates through non-Christian religions (123) and that authentic religious experience also takes place in them (14). Knitter himself prefers the theocentric model (many ways to God) or better still, the salvation-centred model (many ways of salvation). There is no reason to believe that God's full offer of grace was given only once (191). Incarnation was not a unique event that took place literally and historically, but we should see it as a meaningful myth, indicating that in the encounter with

Jesus Christ we encounter God himself. The final bar of religious truth is 'an authentic experience of the divine that gives one a secure place to stand and from which to carry on the frightening and fascinating journey, with other religions, into the inexhaustible fullness of divine truth' (220).

9. The pluralist approach is largely built on the phenomenology of religious experience. Hick does not deny that there are differences in the mode of experience, but he regards such differences as consequences of the fact that the Ultimate exceeds all our thoughts and speculations and is indefinable.³¹ Our image of God is always a 'human' image and therefore inadequate and incomplete. For that same reason the various experiences are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. This, however, is not a conclusion based on the factual data that came to light in his investigation of the various experiences, but it already served as the premise of his phenomenological investigation and at the end of the investigation it is simply repeated. Rightly Ninian Smart observes that 'from a phenomenological point of view it is not possible to base the judgment that all religions point to the same truth upon religious experience'.³² The great 'phenomenologist' G. van der Leeuw already observed: 'Vor der Offenbarung macht die Phänomenologie halt'. (Phenomenology comes to a halt when it encounters revelation.)

It is obvious that in this approach there is no place for the idea of a real Incarnation. One may still use the term, but it no longer describes factual history. It now belongs in the same group of categories of language as parable, story or image.³³ 'It is not, strictly speaking, descriptive language, but language designed to evoke a response of faith and commitment in the person who hears or reads it.' It is no longer possible to believe that at a certain point of time in the history of this world the Second Person of the Divine Trinity came to earth in order to live here as a human being, for the salvation of the world, but the story of the Incarnation is a religious story that tells us

that the encounter with the man Jesus was and is, in some sense, an encounter with God. Here the idea of the Incarnation as one of the criteria for the truth of revelation has been discarded and abandoned.

As we all know, the Christian faith does not say that the revelation in Jesus Christ is the only revelation. With a few exceptions (for instance, Karl Barth) Christian theology has always recognized a general self-revelation of God in nature and in man's morality and conscience, but it also recognized that this revelation is always suppressed by man's wickedness (Rom 1:18), the result being that all religions are a mixture of truth and error, of true and false trails. For this reason a new revelation was necessary, a revelation that started immediately after the Fall and had its culmination in the appearance of Jesus Christ. This new revelation, however, does not negate the reality of the general revelation. Most Christians believe that to some extent the general revelation still shines through the various religions. The norm for the evaluation of all religious knowledge and experience, however, is the revelation in Jesus Christ.

I accept that what I have just said is a statement of faith that cannot be proved at the bar of pure science, including the science of the phenomenology of religion. But for a Christian who through the work of the Holy Spirit has been touched and reached by the gospel, Jesus Christ is the central revelation of the only true God who is the Creator of heaven and earth. As Hendrikus Berkhof has put it: 'for the Christian the divine revelation in Christ is not exclusive, but it is normative'.³⁴

10. So the question 'Why Christianity of all religions?' cannot be answered by means of comparative religion or the phenomenology of religion. That way leads to a dead end. Therefore we have to start somewhere else and ask another question, namely, what is the unique character of the Christian Gospel. I use the term 'the Christian Gospel', and not 'Christianity', deliberately. Christianity is the particular religious and/or cultural form of a society

or a segment of society that was addressed and touched by the Christian Gospel. Such a Christian society is always a mixture of Christian and non-Christian elements. This was also the reason why both Barth and Kraemer in their critique of the phenomenon of religion included the Christian religion.³⁵

Therefore, if we want to find an answer to our question, we cannot take Christianity or the Christian religion as our starting point. Not even Christian theology or the Christian faith can serve as a starting point. Even the latter is not an absolute norm, for it is the human response to the Gospel and therefore always incomplete and imperfect. There is only one correct starting point, namely the Person of Him who is the spring and the object of the Christian Gospel and the Christian faith.

It is precisely here that we find an essential difference between the Christian faith and the other religions. At the centre of every other religion is, not the founder, but his teaching or doctrine. Gautama Buddha told his followers that only his teaching was important. Mohammed called himself the last of the prophets. But Jesus, the man of Nazareth, not only claimed that his teaching came from God, but also that *He Himself* came from God (cf. Matt 21:37; Mark 12:6; Luke 20:13). We observe this claim not only in the Fourth Gospel, but in the Synoptic Gospels as well. In all the Gospels Jesus made his own person the decisive and final criterion, both for this life and for the life to come. 'Every one who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven' (Matt 10:32; cf. Luke 12:8). 'He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me' (Matt 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 10:16). 'Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it' (Matt. 16:25). According to the Gospel of John Jesus says to Thomas and the other apostles: 'I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me. If you had known Me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know Him

and have seen Him' (14:6, 7).

11. But how do we know that such statements are really true? In today's theological climate it is not enough to say: 'Well, that's what I read in the Bible and the Bible is God's Word for me'. Undoubtedly this is a good Christian answer and yet it is not enough. We all know of the historical-critical research of the Bible that has been going on since the end of the 18th century and has boomed in this 20th century. Many of the leading theologians are of the opinion that we can no longer read the Gospels as if they present us with a truly historical picture of the real, historical Jesus, that is, Jesus as He lived his life here on earth, at the beginning of the Christian era. These questions are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this essay, but we cannot pretend that they do not exist.

This is the reason why I take my starting point in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This, in my opinion, is the only proper point of departure for obtaining a good and reliable picture of the real Jesus. The Gospels themselves were written from this perspective. I know, of course, that according to historical-critical research into the New Testament the fact of the resurrection itself is by no means certain. Most of the theologians and historians involved in this research do believe that after Jesus' death on the cross something must have happened that evoked the idea of a resurrection in the minds and hearts of the disciples, but whether it was a real resurrection we do not and cannot know on the basis of the evidence available. The data we find in the Gospels are scant and contradictory. The only thing we really know is that a few days after Jesus' death on the cross the idea that Jesus was raised from the dead was present and alive in the minds and hearts of the disciples.

For a Reformed church and a Reformed theologian this view is utterly unacceptable. The resurrection of Jesus on the third day after his death is not an 'idea' that one can accept or reject. Jesus' resurrection is the very centre of the entire New Testament. All four Gospels mention it. It is also

the foundation and heart of the apostolic preaching as reported in the book of Acts. All the letters in the New Testament presuppose it. In other words, all the early witnesses speak of it as a truly factual event. All four Gospels mention several witnesses who met the risen Lord. Paul, whose letter to the Corinthians was written much earlier than the Gospels, mentions quite a list of witnesses. 'He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me' (1 Cor 15:5-8). Very intriguing is the reference to an appearance to five hundred brethren at one time. This appearance is not mentioned in the Gospels, but there is no reason to doubt its factuality. Paul's formulation is quite striking. It is as if he is saying: 'If you don't believe me, go to Palestine and talk to those brethren, for most of them are still alive'. All the writers of the New Testament are absolutely certain that the same Jesus who in the late afternoon of (what we call) Good Friday died on the cross was raised from the dead by God Himself on the first day of the following week. As a matter of fact, God is the only One who can do this. The resurrection is a divine miracle. Yes, we may say: it is the greatest miracle of all times. It is a pure *novum*. It is also different from all the other raisings mentioned in both the Old and the New Testament. The son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17) and the son of the wealthy woman of Shunem (2 Kings 4), the little daughter of Jairus, the young man of Nain and Jesus' friend Lazarus were also raised from the dead, but they all returned to this life and therefore had to die again. Their resurrections were strictly personal and had no consequences for the fate and future of other people. They were at most a signal that death does not have the last word. Jesus' resurrection was quite different and unique. He did not return to this world and this life, even though He did appear to his disciples dur-

ing the forty days between his resurrection and ascension, but He went, so to speak, right through death and arrived at the other end of it in order so to enter into the eternal life with his Father in heaven. His resurrection was also unique in that it had consequences for other people. Paul says that He was raised as the 'first fruits of those that have fallen asleep' (1 Cor 15:20). A little further he says: 'As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive' (22). Jesus' resurrection is the anticipation of the great eschatological resurrection that shall take place at the end of history.

10. From the unique perspective of Jesus' resurrection the disciples of Jesus looked back at Jesus' life and discovered things they had never seen or understood before. From this perspective they realized there was a mystery in Jesus' life, even a double mystery. First, there was a mystery in what He did and why He had to die. Second, there was a mystery in who He was: not an ordinary man, not even an extra-ordinary man, but more than man.

During the years that the disciples followed Jesus, while He travelled around the country and preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, they were deeply impressed by what He did and said. With their own ears they heard that the Kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:15; Matt 3:17; Luke 10:9, 11). With their own eyes they saw the signs of the Kingdom. But they had little idea of what this kingdom was and who this Jesus who announced it was. A very clear example of this lack of understanding is the story of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God (Matt 16:16). This must have been a high point in Jesus' life. At long last some one recognized Him as the Messiah sent by God. But He also realized that Peter, and the other disciples as well, still had an entirely wrong conception of his messiahhood and of his messianic task. This becomes apparent when Jesus immediately after Peter's confession begins to speak about his suffering and death. Peter at once rebukes Him, saying: 'God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you' (Matt 16:22). In turn, Jesus rebukes

Peter and even calls him 'satan': 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me'.

During those years of close companionship the disciples did love Jesus I think that this also holds true of Judas, most certainly in the early years but they understood very little of Him and his work. And when Jesus' words about his suffering and death come true, they all abandon Jesus and flee. When a few days after Jesus death some women tell them that they have met Jesus again, none of the disciples believes them. They regard this story as an 'idle tale' (Luke 24:11). Even during the last appearance they still see the promised kingdom in earthly and Jewish-national terms, as appears from their question: 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' (Acts 1:6). Jesus waves this question aside and commands them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit who will make them his witnesses (1:8).

After the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost we see that they gradually begin to understand the meaning of Jesus' life and death. It is a step-by-step process of enlightenment. In his first sermon on the day of Pentecost Peter does proclaim that Jesus' death was according to the plan of God (2:23) and that it was God who had raised Jesus (2:24), but he is not yet able to say what the full import of this death and resurrection is. Due to the illumination of the Spirit the disciples progressively discover that the cross was much more than a judiciary mistake or a judicial murder. No, God Himself was involved in this death. On the cross the great miracle of the reconciliation of man with God took place. Jesus Himself had already intimated this in those mysterious words spoken at the Last Supper: 'This bread is my body for you. This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for you' (cf. Matt 26:26-29). At that time these words must have been rather obscure for the disciples, but afterwards they began to understand them. Already in one of the earliest documents of the New Testament, Paul's letter to the Galatians, written in the early fifties, we read that 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having

become a curse for us' (3:13). In all his other letters we again and again encounter the idea that Christ died for our sins. We also encounter it in the letters of Peter and John and the letter to the Hebrews. They all express it in their own way, but the refrain is the same: He died for our sins.

According to the authors of the New Testament this meaning of Jesus' death was not something that in retrospect was added to the messianic life of Jesus, but from the very beginning this was God's plan with his Messiah. John writes: 'God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son' (3:16), and Paul writes to the Romans that 'God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us' (5:8). According to Luke Jesus Himself, during one of his last appearances, says to his disciples 'that everything written about Me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled'. We do not know why God chose this way. We can only say that sin is apparently so awful that it has to be 'burnt away'. The church has always believed that this happened in particular when during the three hours of darkness that enveloped Calvary and the cross Jesus cried out: 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?'

At times I have a feeling that poets understand this better than many theologians. I am thinking of the poem 'You have broken the high secret', by the Dutch poet Gerrit Achterberg. I render it here in my own translation:

You have broken the high secret, Lord Jesus,
between us and the Father; according to
your Word,
we may be without sin and new beings,
whatever may have happened in our life.

I did, of all that could be done,
the most criminal... and was damned.
But you, God, have named a new name
together with mine. Now it has become
quiet,
like a summer blooming around the
villages.

And even though the flowers will wither
again:

my loins will be girded; my feet are shod.
Born once again from your hand,
I stride to You out of the darkness.

This is no cheap poetic language; Achterberg speaks about the 'most criminal thing' – he had shot and killed his landlady, an act that could never be redressed. The guilt of this act pressed as a heavy burden on his soul 'I was damned'. But Jesus entered into his life and gave him a new name. Then his life began to bloom 'like a summer around the villages'. The poet does realize that one day he will have to die ('the flowers will wither again'), but he also knows: 'out of the darkness I stride to You'.

13. But there is still another mystery about Jesus. The resurrection shed new light not only on his work, but also on his person. Already during his lifetime people wondered who He was. They gave various answers. They said: He is a rabbi (e.g., John 3:2) or a miracle worker (Luke 9:43; Acts 2:22) or a prophet (Luke 7:16; John 6:14). Some even called Him Elijah, of whom it was generally believed that he would return before the coming of the Messiah. As we have already seen, the majority of today's critical theologians also believe that Jesus was a miracle worker and a prophet. But the New Testament itself goes much further. In several passages Jesus is called the Son of God and that in a very special sense. In Gal 4:4 Paul writes that 'when the time had fully come God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law'. The expression 'his Son' occurs ten times in Paul's writings. In the letter to the Romans he twice calls Jesus God's own Son (8:3, 32). Eight times we encounter the expression 'his Son' in the letters of John. In his Gospel he even calls Jesus the only or only-begotten Son of the Father (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; cf. also 1 John 4:9).

Admittedly, this is hard to imagine. We are speaking about a human being, a man of flesh and blood, as Paul says: 'born of woman'. And of this man we believe that at the same time He is God's only or only-be-

gotten Son. It is no wonder that it took the church a very, very long time to reflect on this and to understand some of its ramifications. The first traces of this understanding we find in the early baptismal creeds, in which Jesus was professed as the one Lord and as the only-begotten Son of the Father. However, it was not before the year 325 that the Eastern Church, represented by all its bishops, confessed in the Nicene Creed:

'We believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.'

He is *vere Deus* truly God! But immediately after these words we read:

'Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.'

He was also *vere homo* truly man.³⁶

Naturally, the mystery of Jesus Christ is not unveiled in these words, but merely indicated. It is not surprising either that after Nicea and Constantinople the question arose: How is this possible? How can one person be God and man at the same time? In the decision of the Council of Chalcedon (451) the church made an attempt to say a little more about this unfathomable mystery. It spoke of one Person having two natures, a divine and a human nature. In the one Person these two natures are so conjoined that there is no confusion or change, neither division nor separation of the two natures.

The final step in this confessional development was the confession that God is triune in his innermost being. To say it in the words of the Heidelberg Catechism: We speak of three: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, 'because that is how God has revealed Himself in his Word: these three distinct persons are one, true eternal God' (Lord's Day 8). This is a mystery beyond all our com-

prehension, but it also means riches beyond all comprehension, for as the Father God is our Creator, as the Son He is our Redeemer and as the Holy Spirit He is our Renewer. As the Triune God He is God-above-me, God-with-me and God-in-me! And I may confess this, because I have come to know Jesus as my divine Redeemer.

14. In our day, it is true, many leading theologians no longer accept this classical Christology. Many Roman Catholic theologians (e.g., P. Schoonenberg, E. Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng) and Protestant theologians as well (e.g., E. Flesseman, H. Berkhof, H.M. Kuitert, C.J. den Heyer and S. Schoon),³⁷ no longer believe that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God. They know, of course, that in the New Testament Jesus is called the Son of God, even God's own or only or only-begotten Son. Most of them interpret the term 'Son of God' entirely within the context of the Old Testament. There it is used of Israel (e.g. in Hosea 11:1) and is indicative of a very special covenant-relationship between God and Israel. Jesus' sonship must be seen within this same covenantal tradition. Berkhof says: 'He is pre-eminently the obedient and therefore beloved covenant partner'. He is man, the perfected covenant man, the new man, the eschatological man.³⁸ He is not God the Son, but a human being whose 'human "I" is, out of free will, fully and exhaustively permeated by the "I" of God.'³⁹ H.M. Kuitert says it in his own way. The expression 'Son of God' means that Jesus is 'occupied, "possessed", filled to the brim by God'.⁴⁰

Anglo-Saxon theologians often say that in expressions such as Son of God or Incarnation we have to do with 'mythological' language. To quote Alan Race once more: 'It is not, strictly speaking, descriptive language, but language designed to evoke a response of faith and commitment in the person who hears or reads it'.⁴¹ It indicates that encountering Jesus is, in some sense, encountering God. Frances Young believes that the 'symbolical model' of incarnational language conveys a twofold meaning. First, it is the story of a man who lived

as the 'archetypal believer', living and dying in trust in God. Secondly, it is the story of God involved in the reality of human existence with its compromises, its temptations, its suffering, its pain, its injustice, its cruelty, its death.⁴²

Undeniably, all these theologians also want to maintain the uniqueness of Christ, but this uniqueness is of a different kind or order from what the Church always meant in its 'classical' Christology. Jesus' divine Sonship is no longer of an 'ontological' order, but must be understood 'functionally'. On the one hand, God uses this particular human being, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary and Joseph, to achieve his divine purpose, namely, the liberation of this world from the forces of evil, including death; on the other hand, this man Jesus allows himself to be used by God. I recognize that this functional Christology still allows for the possibility of reconciliation and redemption, but this reconciliation and redemption is now the fruit of the cooperation between God and man.

This new Christology is quite different from that of the ancient church. This church fought the Christological battle because it believed that the Gospel itself was at stake. They were deeply convinced that we can be saved only by God Himself! When later on the church became divided all the divided churches adhered to the ancient Christology. It is still the confessional stance of the Roman Catholic Church, of the Eastern Orthodox Churches and of the Churches of the Reformation. It is the faith of the Younger Churches and of the Evangelical Movement, of the Pentecostal Churches and the Charismatic Movement.

15. I believe that this twofold mystery of Jesus Christ, both of his work and of his person, is the answer to the question: 'Why Christianity of all religions?' We can also formulate it in the famous *solas* of the Reformation: we are saved by God's grace alone (*sola gratia*) as it was manifested in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (*solus Christus*), and this salvation is ours only by faith (*sola fide*). No other religion knows of this mystery of a God who

sends his own Son, sharing in his own divine being, to the world in order to redeem this world. It is an unfathomable mystery of which we can actually speak only in doxological terms, as Paul did in the hymn he quotes in Philippians 2. The hymn speaks of 'Jesus Christ, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Phil 2:5-11). This early Christian hymn expresses in all clarity the uniqueness and finality of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

16. Does this mean that there is no truth in all the other religions and that all the adherents of the other religions will be lost for ever? Some of the 'exclusivists' do take this position. The Congress on World Mission at Chicago in 1960 stated: 'In the years since the war, more than one billion souls have passed into eternity and more than half of these went to the torment of hell fire without even hearing of Jesus Christ, who he was, or why he died on the cross of Calvary'.⁴³ When in 1968 I attended the World Congress on Evangelism in Singapore we had a special conference hymn that spoke of the billions that were lost. I believe such statements go beyond what we are allowed to say. In his *Reformed Dogmatics* Herman Bavinck rightly wrote: 'With regard to the salvation of the heathen and of children dying in infancy, we can, on the basis of Scripture, only refrain from a definite judgment, in either a positive or a negative sense'.⁴⁴

Bavinck's nephew, the missiologist J.H. Bavinck, who was a firm exclusivist and refused to regard the other religions as ways to God or ways of salvation alongside

the way of Christ, nevertheless also wrote: 'No-one can say what is going on in the heart of the individual, no-one can imagine what the endless patience and goodness of God may work in such a heart'.⁴⁵ In another book he approvingly quotes the words of a missionary who for many years worked in a prison in Pretoria, South Africa: 'I have frequently found God in the soul of the South African Bantu. Certainly, it is not the full revelation of the Father. But nevertheless, God himself is the one who lies hidden behind a curtain, as a shadowy figure, but the main outline is visible. A surprising and glorious experience! And when I experienced the moment that a soul surrenders, I understood that the Master had been there earlier'.⁴⁶ Even Hendrik Kraemer, who regarded all other religions as 'endeavours for self-redemption', wrote in his last book that he did not mean to say that 'the other religions are erroneous in their totality and in every respect'.⁴⁷

It is evident that Bavinck and Kraemer are rather circumspect in what they say. J. Verkuyl is more outspoken. He, too, is an exclusivist. He fully maintains the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ, as appears from the following statement: 'Jesus Christ is unique, incomparable, irreplaceable and decisive for all ages and peoples'.⁴⁸ At the same time he tries as much as possible to do justice to the other religions. He prefers to approach these religions within a trinitarian framework. At times he goes rather far in his positive appreciation of what he finds in them. I give a quotation from each part of his trinitarian approach. From the part about God the Father: 'How was God involved when the Vedas were being transmitted? What went on between God and Gautama Buddha when the latter received the Bodhi? What transpired between God and Mohammed when he meditated in the grotto?' (356) From the section on Christ: 'A theologian of religions who remembers this christological dimension will keep looking for evidences of this Christ who is ceaselessly active; he will be alert for signs of the messianic kingdom in the religious life of mankind both inside

and outside the church' (359). From the section on the Spirit: The convert need not leave everything of his former life behind. 'His manner of being, living, and thinking may well contain much that stems from God himself, which, when placed within the context of a Christocentric universalism and directed toward Christ, can shoot forth in new blossom' (360). After these quotations it does not surprise us anymore that Verkuyl agrees with Max Warren, when the latter says that 'the Holy Spirit is latently active in so many ways among those people who live within the context of other religious traditions'. Verkuyl even asks the question: 'Is it really possible for any one of us to believe that human beings can be found somewhere who have *not* been touched by the hand of Jesus Christ who goes out to them in reconciliation?'⁴⁹

I am not sure whether we have the right to be so expansive, but I do know that if it is possible that people of other faiths may be saved, they most certainly will not be saved by their own religiosity, by their own religious experiences and rites⁵⁰, but only because the Spirit of Christ was active in their lives and because by his work the secret of Christ became manifest to and in them, too. For it remains true for all times and all people: 'There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

Notes

- 1 This is the text of a paper read at the Theological Conference of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, held at Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, on June 4 1996.
- 2 W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *No Other Name*, 1963, 84.
- 3 J. Hick, *God Has Many Faces*, 1980, 52.
- 4 In his book *No Other Name?*, 1986, he also speaks of a 'theocentric' approach.
- 5 Paul Knitter, 'Theocentric Christology: Defended and Transcended', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 24 (Winter, 1987), 47.
- 6 Paul Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 187.
- 7 Cf. Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices. Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth*, 1991, especially chapters II and III about 'Conflicting Truth Claims'.
- 8 H.M. Kuitert, *Zeker weten*, 1994, 201.

- 9 *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* (ed. Karl Rahner), 1967, 203. No. 872 in Denziger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum*.
- 10 *Op. cit.*, 342.
- 11 John Calvin, *Institutes* I, v, 13. In another place he calls the human heart a 'fabricator of all kinds of idols'.
- 12 *The Documents of Vatican II* (ed. Walter M. Abbott), 1966, 35.
- 13 For a more comprehensive discussion, see my article 'The Gospel and Religious Pluralism' in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, vol. 14, no. 4 (October 1990), 341-379.
- 14 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. I 2, 299ff.
- 15 H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 1938, 70.
- 16 H. Kraemer, *Waarom nu juist het Christendom?*, 1960, 84.
- 17 J.H. Bavinck, *Introduction to the Science of Missions*, 1960, 228.
- 18 J. Verkuyl, *Zijn alle godsdiensten gelijk?*, 1981, 41.
- 19 J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology. An Introduction*, 1978, 480.
- 20 *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* (ed. J.D. Douglas), 1975, 3/4. John Stott, who was the principal drafter of the Lausanne Covenant, advocates the same view in his book *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 1975.
- 21 Cf. Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, 1983, 42f.
- 22 Cf. Abbott, *op. cit.*, 662 (from the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions* (Nostra Aetate).
- 23 Cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, 1966, 131, and vol. 6, 1969, 393ff. Cf. also Race, *op. cit.*, 45ff.
- 24 Raymond Pannikar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, 1964, 54.
- 25 Georges Khodr, 'Christianity in a Pluralistic World', in *Sobornost*, The Journal of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, Series 6, No. 3, Summer 1971, 171.
- 26 Cf. Race, *op. cit.*, 78ff.
- 27 W.E. Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, 1940, 198.
- 28 Cf. *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (ed. John Hick and Paul F. Knitter), 1987.
- 29 Cf. W. Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief*, 1979.
- 30 For a systematic account of his view, see Edward J. Hughes, *Wilfred Cantwell Smith. A Theology for the World*, 1986, with a Preface by John Hick.
- 31 John Hick, *God has Many Names*, 1980, 52.
- 32 Cf. J. Hick, 'The Outcome: Dialogue into Truth', in J. Hick, ed., *Truth and Dialogue*, 1974.
- 33 N. Smart, 'Truth and Religions', in *Truth and Dialogue*, 50.
- 34 Cf. Alan Race, *op. cit.*, 118.
- 35 Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, 1979, 48.
- 36 Cf. H. Kraemer, *Waarom nu juist het Christendom?*, 70, 82, 100ff. Even seen as a religion Christianity is not the best of all religions in the sense that in comparison with the other major religions it presents the 'best and noblest' expression of divine truth and experience. During his many travels Kraemer noticed that certain religious feelings and attitudes are much better expressed in other major religions than in Christianity, *op. cit.*, 104/5.
- 37 The original Nicene Creed dates from the Council of Nicea, 325, and was revised and reaffirmed by the Council of Constantinople, 381.
- 38 Cf. my book *The Present-day Christological Debate*, 1984, 47ff. and 66ff.
- 39 *Christian Faith*, 283.
- 40 *Op. cit.*, 287.
- 41 H.M. Kuitert, *Het algemeen betwijfeld christelijk geloof*, 1992, 140.
- 42 Alan Race, *op. cit.*, 118. Cf. also J. Hick (ed) *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 1977. In the Preface the expression 'God incarnate' is called 'a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us' (5).
- 43 *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 37.
- 44 *Facing the Unfinished Task* (ed. J.O. Percy), 1961, 9.
- 45 Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, vol. 4, 708.
- 46 J.H. Bavinck, *Religieus besef en christelijk geloof*, 1949, 100.
- 47 J.H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, 227.
- 48 H. Kraemer, *Waarom nu juist het Christendom?*, 69.
- 49 J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 358.
- 50 *Op. cit.*, 359.
- 51 It is striking that the theologians who see the other religions as ways of salvation usually refer to the many good and pious people they find among the adherents of these religions. In doing so, they actually introduce the principle of meritorious good works, which is quite foreign to the Bible. In his book *The Open Secret* (1978, 196) Lesslie Newbigin rightly says: 'It is the "men of good will", the "sincere" followers of other religions, the "observers of the law" who are informed in advance that their seats in heaven are securely booked. This is the exact opposite of the teaching of the New Testament. Here emphasis is always on surprise. It is the sinners who will be welcomed and those who were confident that their place was secure who will find themselves outside'. Such confidence, of course, is quite contrary to the biblical doctrine of the justification of the ungodly.

• Book Reviews/Recensions/Buchbesprechungen

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A Noble Task: Eldership and Ministry in the Local Church

Neil Summerton

Revised edition (1. Ed. 1986)

Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994, 208pp., £9.99, paperback, ISBN 0 85364 515 9

RÉSUMÉ

Summerton porte le regard d'un initié sur les assemblées de frères et montre comment la décadence, liée à la faiblesse des dirigeants, peut être évitée par des progrès quant à la qualité spirituelle des anciens et à l'exercice de leur fonction. L'ouvrage fait des suggestions bibliques, intelligentes et pratiques, et appelle avec compassion et compréhension à des changements fondamentaux et vivifiants. Il concerne toutes les dénominations dans lesquelles les anciens jouent un rôle de dirigeant. L'auteur traite des principes de la fonction d'ancien et de son exercice dans les communautés, ainsi que des principes, des objectifs et des divers types de ministère à plein temps. Ce livre est un outil précieux et très pratique pour les anciens, pour ceux qui se préparent à assumer cette charge, pour ceux qui les forment, et aussi pour les pasteurs qui veulent mieux collaborer avec les anciens.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Summerton bietet eine Bestandsaufnahme der Brüderbewegung aus dem Blickwinkel eines Eingeweihten und zeigt, wie deren Niedergang, der mit dem Unvermögen der Leiter verbunden ist, eventuell vermieden werden kann, indem man die geistliche Qualität und die Funktion der Ältesten ausbaut. Dieser Band, der biblische, umsichtige und praktische Anregungen gibt, ruft mit Leidenschaft und Verständnis zu grundlegenden und erneuernden Veränderungen auf. Er geht alle Konfessionen an, in denen die Ältesten eine leitende Rolle einnehmen. Der Autor untersucht Prinzipien und Praxis des Ältestenamtes einer Gemeinde sowie die Grundsätze, Ziele und Formen des vollzeitlichen Dienstes. Das Buch stellt ein wertvolles und äußerst praktisches Werkzeug dar für Älteste, für diejenigen, die sich darauf vorbereiten, Älteste zu werden, für solche, die letztere ausbilden sowie für Pastoren, die besser mit den Ältesten zusammenarbeiten wollen.

Many would agree that the Brethren movement and its biblical leadership structure is far too good and still too young to die. The author of *A Noble Task* offers a pertinent survey and

appraisal of the (Open or Christian) Brethren movement (and former Brethren congregations) in Britain and shows how decline, related to deficiencies in leadership, can be averted, based on the firm conviction 'that it is essential to improve the elders' spirituality and practical performance' (p. 93). Most of what is said also applies to the situation of assemblies elsewhere and to other denominations where elders (or deacons) are involved in church leadership. Others are invited to study and learn from the Brethren experience and errors (10). Summerton (S), a civil servant, is himself an elder of an assembly in Highgate, London, and executive secretary of Partnership Ministries (cf. 205-06). In his assessment and proposal he sketches the biblical foundations and provides sensible and immensely practical suggestions, and present a compassionate and sympathetic call to a vital and revitalising change.

The introductory pages on the need for effective eldership with their brief historical survey and analysis of the current situation (15-19) set the agenda for the book: while the idea of collective leadership of the congregation is biblical and correct, the problem has been with its implementation: 'the spiritual state of many congregations can be traced to deficiencies in government, leadership and ministry in a phrase, to widespread default in the practice of eldership' (17). The weaknesses of this implementation, and how to improve it, are dealt with in two sections.

The first section is devoted to the 'Principles and practice of congregational eldership' (23-118). S begins with the calling to eldership, going through the personal, functional and practical qualification, namely 'observable matters of character and conduct, on the works which are the practical evidence of a living faith' (24). This section could be more detailed; for *mias gunaikos aner* (1 Tim 3,2,12) cf. S. Page, 'Marital Expectations of Church Leaders in the Pastoral Epistles', *JSNT* 50, 1993, 105-20). Then comes the appointment, recognition and retirement(!) of elders. As eldership is not a status but a responsibility, the idea 'once an elder, always an elder' does not apply: 'Wise elders, whatever their age but particularly after the age of 70, will regard their positions as continually at the Lord's disposal via their col-

leagues and the church as a whole' (36).

As men with the mere title 'elder' will be insufficient, S outlines and discusses the office and task of the elders: they are to pastor, teach and order the flock, i.e. all that relates to initiation, admission, discipline and *in extremis* withdrawal of fellowship, to steer, encourage and enable the flock, i.e. lead it and to pray, especially for the flock (43-44). Next S turns to the 'Dynamics of collective leadership', treating the effectiveness of the leadership group, the elders' need for assistance, the role of the deacons and the elders' relation to the deacons. One chapter is devoted to the elders' relation to the (rest of the) congregation including the rights of the congregation and how elders should and can build this relationship through good communication and consultation with the goal of winning the confidence of the congregation and conveying the necessary vision. One of the essentials for a functioning eldership is proper training. As elders do not drop from the clouds at the age of fifty-five, with grey hair and matching suits, S outlines what the preparation and development of elders implies. Arising from the material discussed so far, two digressions follow. The first appendix deals with the relationship of gift, ministry and office in the NT (119-32), the second considers the ministry and leadership of women (133-47), arguing that they should have 'a wide ambit for ministry of all kinds including ministries of a leadership character, in an appropriate biblical relationship with men' (144).

Though Brethren are at times described as not 'believing in ministers' (hardly advisable for any Christian!), S's second part is devoted to the principles, objectives and patterns of full-time congregational ministry (151-87). How can the ministry of the so-called 'resident full-time worker' be related to and integrated with a strong tradition of plural leadership and charismatic ministry? His role should be defined in the light of the needs of the congregation. S suggests various roles and tasks (from teaching to musical director/worship leader), recommends drawing up a job specification which should be open to adjustment, and discusses the impact of such ministry on the church and on the elders and how to manage them. 'To achieve an effective full-time ministry without impairing plural leadership and the exercise of charismatic gift would be at once a boon to the congregation and an example to the church at large' (9187). S's suggestions apply

also to situations where a lay eldership or a team ministry is to be developed or improved. A third appendix summarises the NT practice of supporting Christian workers.

Summerton argues for the need to train and equip future elders and to ensure that those who hold the office know what it involves and are able to fulfil the duties of a noble task. To foster this aim S adds twelve pages of slightly annotated bibliography (subdivided into eldership and plural leadership, ministry of women, pastoring [subdivisions for various areas of counselling], teaching and preaching, leadership, congregational strategy [including church planting and home groups] and worship; 193-204, English titles only). The book concludes with a listing of training opportunities for congregational elders (205-08), to 'whet the appetite for training which may expand horizons and challenge elders to more effective service'. It is encouraging to see the variety of training opportunities available in England (within the movement). Going through these pages may put the Brethren movement elsewhere to shame and encourage institutions often predominantly training 'full-timers' to offer similar courses and seminars for the elders (or lay-readership) of all denominations.

Altogether S offers a valuable, widely applicable tool for elders, those to be elders, those training elders and full-time elders, and ministers who want to co-operate with elders. It can be used for private study, in groups and as a basis for discussion. The comprehensive index allows its use for reference purposes. It is to be hoped that those with more conservative views on the ministry of women and full-time elders will not be put off right away, but study and put into practice what is to be learnt in other areas. A. Strauch's *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, 2. Ed. (Littleton, Colorado: Lewis & Roth, 1991) is helpful secondary reading.

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Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?

David Wenham

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, 452pp including indices.

RÉSUMÉ

D. Wenham affirme que c'est Jésus, et non Paul, qui doit être considéré comme le fondateur du christianisme. Il se fonde sur l'examen des traditions pauliniennes et de leur rapport avec les Évangiles. Il ne s'attache pas au problème du Jésus historique, mais à la date des traditions relatives à Jésus : celles-ci existaient-elles comme telles au moment où l'apôtre rédigeait ses épîtres ? La méthode de Wenham consiste à comparer des thèmes de la théologie de Paul avec l'enseignement de Jésus. Bien que Paul use d'un vocabulaire différent de celui de Jésus (par exemple, il parle de justification plutôt que du royaume de Dieu), Wenham montre que ses idées sont plus proches de celles de Jésus qu'on ne le croit souvent. Il reconnaît que les divers éléments de sa démonstration possèdent des degrés de probabilité plus ou moins élevés. Brower trouve cependant que la force cumulée des arguments avancés est impressionnante et que l'ensemble emporte la conviction.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In einer Untersuchung der paulinischen Traditionen, die deren Beziehungen zu den Evangelien beleuchtet, unterstreicht Wenham, daß Jesus (nicht Paulus) als der Gründer des Christentums zu gelten hat. Er konzentriert sich dabei nicht so sehr auf die Frage des historischen Jesus als vielmehr des Alters der Jesus-Traditionen und ob diese zu dem Zeitpunkt, als Paulus seine Schriften verfaßte, als Jesus-Traditionen verstanden wurden. Sein Ansatz besteht darin, Themen der paulinischen Theologie mit Jesu Lehre zu vergleichen. Obwohl Paulus eine andere Terminologie verwendet als Jesus (er spricht z.B. von "Gerechtigkeit" statt vom "Königreich Gottes"), stehen sich die zugrundeliegenden Konzepte näher, als häufig angenommen wird. Wenham gesteht zu, daß seine Argumente ein unterschiedliches Maß an Wahrscheinlichkeit aufweisen. Der Rezensent jedoch hält die resultierende Gesamtargumentation für ein-drucksvoll und überzeugend.

Was Jesus the founder of Christianity or was Paul? Well over two decades ago C H Dodd answered this question as does Wenham (W): Jesus was *The Founder of Christianity*. Dodd came to this conclusion, the capstone of his lifetime of Jesus scholarship and his considered verdict on the 'old' and 'new' quests for the historical Jesus, by concentrating on Jesus and the gospels; W arrives at his conclusion by an extensive examination of the Pauline epistles for possible connections with the Jesus-traditions as represented primarily in the synoptic gospels. Despite W's disclaimer that the book is a report on work in progress (32), the result is impressive, not only in its overall conclusions but in its detailed interaction with the work

of fellow scholars in a form readily available to the non-specialist.

After establishing the significance of the question which forms the subtitle of the book, W acknowledges the difficulties in the task he has set himself, not least in the 'scholarly confusion' (13) about what can be known about the historical Jesus on the one hand and the centre of Paul's thought on the other. Here W introduces an important caveat which helps him avoid some sterile discussion: the crucial issue in determining Jesus-traditions is not necessarily authenticity but rather the age of the traditions and whether they were regarded as Jesus-traditions when Paul wrote (20, note 39). By applying now-established criteria for identifying citations, allusions and echoes of the Jesus-traditions in the Pauline epistles, W believes that he can show clearly that Paul was indeed a follower of Jesus.

One of the crucial issues, of course, is the extent and availability of the Jesus-traditions to Paul. Although he accepts the standard solution to the synoptic problem as a working hypothesis, W does not adhere rigidly to the framework provided by source criticism. Oral tradition must be given full place in the equation; hence synoptic material which appears to be rather late may in fact be early even if it is only represented in one source and reflected in Paul's teaching. For example, W argues that the teaching of the Matthean Jesus on the Jewish and Gentile mission may well represent independent oral tradition which was available to Paul rather than a later reflection of the Matthean community as is commonly suggested.

Wenham is well aware of the real danger of circularity in such an argument here and elsewhere. But he builds up his case cautiously and cumulatively, comparing it to strands on a rope rather than links in a chain. Thus no single piece of evidence is decisive nor does the failure of one strand break the whole rope.

In the main part of the book, W has a chapter-by-chapter discussion of some of the major NT theological topics. Here the detailed exegesis supporting W's conclusions is found. It is also the section which will require the greatest perseverance from non-specialist readers. In each chapter, W asks two questions. First, is Paul's theological understanding and emphasis similar or dissimilar to that of Jesus? How are these topics understood in the Jesus-tradition as seen in the gospels and in Paul's thought

according to the epistles? Although W finds greater or lesser differences in nuance, there are clear similarities in each case. Second, is Paul dependent on the Jesus-traditions either directly or indirectly in his understanding of the topic? Here W embarks upon a series of detailed discussions of individual passages or themes which might demonstrate some connection between Jesus and Paul.

Wenham moves from less probable to more probable connections, addressing the Kingdom of God first in chapter 2. Clearly, in this instance contacts between the teaching of Jesus and of Paul are not immediately apparent. Paul scarcely uses Kingdom of God language while this is Jesus' prime way of expressing his mission. But although terminology differs (Paul prefers 'righteousness' and 'reconciliation' language), Paul shares Jesus' central conviction that God's new day had dawned. In Chapter 3, W argues that Paul and Jesus share belief in Jesus' filial relationship to God, demonstrated in Jesus' use of the word 'Abba' and Paul's use of the same term in a way which showed a connection to Jesus' own usage. W is particularly insightful in his linking of Jesus' Gethsemane prayer with Rom 8. When W comes to the question, 'Why the Crucifixion?' in Chapter 4, the connections between Paul and Jesus grow in strength demonstrated most clearly in the Last Supper / Lord's Supper narratives. The connection become stronger in the next chapters: 'Jesus and the Community', (Chapter 5), 'Living in Love' (Chapter 6) and 'The Future Coming of the Lord' (Chapter 7). In Chapter 8, he addressed the question of Jesus' Life and Ministry in the teaching of Paul. Here again, one is surprised that there may be more connection than is usually allowed. W admits that few scholars will agree with every detail of his argument all points are not equally convincing. But, piece-by-piece, one is slowly drawn forward to W's conclusion.

W ties all the threads together in chapter nine. In many ways this is the most valuable chapter. He begins by providing a useful summary of each of the previous seven chapters. Then he summarises his findings on the two major issues. First, he concludes that there is considerable overlap between the theologies of Jesus and of Paul. W admits that much of the overlap could stem from their common Jewish heritage but some of it is distinctly Christian. Differences between Jesus and Paul are also evident but never to the point of contradiction

(378). The differences can be explained almost entirely by their different contexts. Jesus lived and taught in Palestine before the resurrection and pentecost; Paul's ministry was carried out primarily in a Gentile context with his letters reflecting the realities of church life in the post-resurrection, post-pentecost era.

Paul's theology, then, is in continuity with Jesus' theology. W now addressed his second issue: How does this come about? He answers that 'directly or indirectly Paul must have been influenced by the teaching of Jesus' (380) concluding that there is 'massive evidence of Pauline knowledge of Jesus-traditions.' (381) He summarises these under three categories: highly probable connections and related material, other probable connections and plausible connections.

This is an excellent book. Obviously, minor points of exegetical dispute could be raised at any number of places in such a wide-ranging work; a short review is scarcely the place for that. Perhaps on more general if equally minor point could be raised. If, as W convincingly argues, Paul has been influenced directly or indirectly (emphasis mine) by Jesus-traditions, how is one to distinguish between 'indirectly influenced by the teaching of Jesus' and the shared common faith of the early Christian community? Most scholars agree that the Jesus-traditions were preserved in the early church and were the common property of the early church. If Paul is influenced indirectly, is it not perfectly plausible to argue that this is because the Jesus-tradition is part of the common stock of the community rather than specifically seen as Jesus-tradition?

But this is a minor criticism which does not vitiate W's overall point in any material way. His major thesis that Paul is a faithful interpreter of the Jesus rather than the arch innovator still stands on either reading of 'indirectly influenced'. As such his book will be essential reading for all Pauline students. Those who persist in viewing Paul as the perverter of Jesus' simple Galilean Christianity must refute the arguments in this book. Those who consider Paul to be Jesus' greatest interpreter will find much to encourage their beliefs here. And those who wish simply to understand Jesus and Paul better will find themselves, not for the first time, in W's debt.

The book is well produced including the welcome use of footnotes. Slightly annoying, however, is the American spellings in the work of a

British author. Must the exigencies of the market always dictate?

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An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (New edition)

Brian Davies

Oxford University Press, 1993, £8.99

ISBN 0-19-289235-5 Paperback, 0-19-219253-1

An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

B.R. Tilghman

Blackwell 1994,

ISBN 0-631-18937-8, 0-631-18938-6 (Paperback).

RÉSUMÉ

L'ouvrage de Davies est une édition revue de l'ouvrage de 1982. Il aborde successivement plusieurs sujets : le problème du langage sur Dieu, le mal, les miracles, l'éternité et la vie après la mort. Il présente un Dieu éloigné et atemporel. L'ouvrage est assez difficile à suivre et l'auteur, un dominicain, laisse souvent au lecteur le soin de se faire sa propre idée. Les lecteurs évangéliques trouveront sans doute que des arguments plus positifs auraient dû être développés de manière plus complète.

L'ouvrage de Tilghman se veut une introduction, mais se trouve être plutôt une histoire de la pensée. Il se montre souvent hostile au théisme traditionnel. La façon dont les croyances sont exposées est souvent simplifiée à l'excès. L'auteur doit beaucoup à L. Wittgenstein et à D.Z. Philips. Le sens de la religion se réduirait, selon lui, à une certaine manière de vivre, de se comprendre soi-même et de considérer ses relations avec autrui.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bei Davies' Buch handelt es sich um eine Revision der Ausgabe von 1982. Es ist thematisch angelegt und behandelt z.B. das Problem einer Sprache über Gott, das Böse, Wunder, die Ewigkeit und das Leben nach dem Tod. Gott erscheint als fern und zeitlos. Das Buch ist recht schwer verständlich, und der Autor (ein Dominikaner) überläßt es häufig dem Leser, sich sein eigenes Urteil zu bilden. Evangelikale würden es wahrscheinlich begrüßen, wenn vorteilhafte Argumente ausführlicher entfaltet worden wären.

Tilghmans Buch ist eigentlich als Einleitung konzipiert, geht jedoch eher wie eine Ideengeschichte vor, die dem traditionellen Theismus ausgesprochen feindlich begegnet. Glaubensdarstellungen werden

häufig übermäßig vereinfacht wiedergegeben. Tilghman ist stark von Wittgenstein und D.Z. Phillips geprägt. Folglich gilt Religion nur dann als sinnvoll, wenn sie verstanden wird als "eine Art der Lebensgestaltung, des Verständnisses seiner selbst sowie seiner Beziehungen zu anderen Menschen".

When two text books share the same transparent but unimaginative title we might expect them to take a similar, rather predictable treatment of the subject they discuss. In this case, the contrast between the authors' approach to the philosophy of religion could not be more marked. Brian Davies' work is a revision of his very successful first edition first published in 1982. The book still consists of a series of chapters each of which deals with a particular argument or topic although there are links in reasoning behind the sequence in which they come. The order is basically the same, although the original first chapter, *Verification and Falsification*, has become part of a larger discussion entitled *Philosophy and Religious Belief*, and the chapter on omniscience has been absorbed into the new chapter on eternity. The material has been extensively rewritten to take account of more recent developments and discussion and the result is a longer book.

Davies begins by asking: 'What is the role of philosophy with respect to religious belief?' His answer briefly considers the attacks of logical positivism and its successors, together with the work of Karl Barth, D.Z. Phillips and Alvin Plantinga. He concludes that it is meaningful to consider the existence of God and that belief in God can be defended by 'means of argument, reasons, evidence or the like.' Next he considers problems associated with talking about God and moves on to examine arguments that the problem of evil either counts as strong evidence against the existence of God or demonstrates that his existence is impossible. He considers that a further line of defence is to show that, in spite of the existence of evil we can show that it is reasonable to believe in God and moves the discussion to consider the various classical arguments for the existence of God. The last three chapters deal with miracles, eternity and life after death.

In spite of his claim that the book is 'a basic introduction for those who are approaching the philosophy or religion for the first time' and his attempt to 'write on the assumption that readers have little or no theological background', Davies' work is reasonably demanding and would really need some philosophical back-

ground to make it fully accessible. Many Christians might like to see favourable arguments developed more forcefully, whereas Davies often prefers to let readers decide for themselves. The influence of his Dominican background is more muted in the revised edition, but the book tends to present God as a remote timeless first cause whom it is senseless to describe as a morally good agent. I think that evangelical Christianity must ask for more. However Davies' *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* remains a well organised, up to date contribution to the subject and an excellent teaching resource.

R. Tilghman's Introduction is obviously presented as a text book with a Preface: *Addressed to the Instructor* and attempts to be much more of a general introduction to philosophy within the context of the history of ideas. Thus the introductory chapter *Philosophy and Religion: Tracing our origins* offers potted accounts of Greek science, mathematics and philosophy, the history and thought of the Old Testament and the interaction of Christianity and philosophy. As with many such brief introductions the accounts are often over simplified, partial and contentious. For example: 'There is little, if any, suggestion of monotheism in the first five books of the Bible.' The other chapters are entitled *The existence of God, The Bible, Truth and History, Religion and Science, Religion and Ethics and Religion, Life and Philosophy*. In contrast with Davies' cautious defence this book is openly hostile to traditional theism. The author offers 'suggestions about how religious life and belief may be understood when it is stripped of the hindrance of shabby intellectual baggage.' Such baggage includes 'fundamentalist' views of the Bible, Creationism as 'fraudulent science', and the mythological features of Christianity as argued for by Bultmann, together with Bultmann's own appeal to existentialism. The arguments of Aquinas are explained entirely within the shortcomings of Aristotelian science and the standard Kantian objections are held to destroy the Ontological Argument. Miracles are discussed within the wider area of religion and science and once again we are treated to a brief history of scientific development. However, some useful conclusions are drawn about the role of religious commitment in the concept of miracle.

Tilghman concludes that religious life and belief can survive only when it is understood to be 'a way of living, as a way of understanding

oneself and one's relations with other people.' He stands firmly within a tradition of thought stemming from the work of Wittgenstein and represented on this side of the Atlantic by philosophers like D.Z. Phillips. Thus religions are self-contained ways of understanding the world so that 'religion and science are very different kinds of things and it would be a mistake to insist that the one adopt the practice of the other or risk being a failure.' It is the task of the philosopher merely to observe 'what religious people say and do, how they think of the world, themselves, and other people. We can note, for example, that from within the practice of religion believers do not ask for evidence to confirm their belief.'

Tilghman's book reads as if much of the philosophy of religion developed over the last twenty five years had never been written. At the same time it might have a place as an articulate and influential expression of views that students need to understand as well as answer.

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***Theologie und Frömmigkeit im
Zeitalter des Barock: Gesammelte
Aufsätze***

Johannes Wallmann

Tübingen: Mohr, 1995, 439 S., DM 178,-, Hb.,
ISBN 3-16-146351-X

SUMMARY

This collection of essays, based mainly on lectures by Wallmann, well-known for his studies of Spener, comprises detailed studies in Lutheran Orthodoxy and in Pietism in the baroque period. In individual essays, Wallmann considers, among other things, the adoption of mystical literature by Johann Arndt, millennialism and the 'primitive Christians' claimed as disciples by Spener. Further essays address particular aspects of the life and work of Spener. In addition there are studies of the reciprocal influence of German and European Pietism, and of topics in the localities of Erfurt and Helmstedt. An analysis of the library of Johann Sebastian Bach shows that he was an orthodox Lutheran.

The essays published here not only add certain contributions of a historical-theological nature to research into Lutheran Orthodoxy and Pietism, but also demonstrate the author's concern, by means of detailed studies of the origins of Pietism, to

illuminate the nuanced relationship and mutual influence of the spiritual streams of Orthodoxy and Pietism, and thus to document the beginnings of Lutheran Pietism.

RÉSUMÉ

Voici une collection d'articles et de conférences de Johannes Wallmann, bien connu par ses recherches relatives à Spener. En prenant pour limite temporelle l'époque baroque, l'auteur fait des recherches détaillées sur l'orthodoxie luthérienne et le piétisme. Il aborde entre autre la question de la littérature mystique chez J. Arnt, celle du millénarisme, les rassemblements de croyants imités du christianisme primitif et préconisés par Philipp Spener. D'autres articles traitent de la théologie et de la vie de Spener. D'autres essais sont consacrés à l'influence mutuelle du piétisme européen et du piétisme allemand. Diverses études concernent les villes d'Erfurt et de Helmstedt. Une analyse de la bibliothèque de J.S. Bach prouve que celui-ci était un luthérien orthodoxe. Les articles de Wallmann n'enrichissent pas seulement les recherches sur l'orthodoxie et le piétisme du point de vue historique et théologique, mais attestent le désir de l'auteur d'insister toujours à nouveau, par des recherches détaillées, sur la nécessité d'avoir, dans les discussions sur les origines du piétisme, une attitude différenciée qui tienne compte de l'influence mutuelle des deux courants spirituels, orthodoxe et piétiste, et susceptible d'éclairer la formation d'un piétisme luthérien.

Die Aufsatzsammlung des nunmehr emeritierten Bochumer Kirchenhistorikers Johannes Wallmann befaßt sich nicht nur schlechthin mit dem "Zeitalter des Barock", sondern der Autor wählte bewußt diesen Titel, um damit neben der zeitlichen Eingrenzung seiner Forschungsbeiträge eine programmatische Umklammerung des Zeitraums von lutherischer Orthodoxie und Pietismus auszudrücken. Programmatisch ist diese Verknüpfung insofern, als Wallmann in seinen Forschungen zur Orthodoxie und dem frühen Pietismus immer wieder beide Epochen der Kirchengeschichte zu verbinden sucht, d.h. auf die lutherischen Wurzeln des Pietismus und die bereits im Luthertum vorhandenen Ansätze zum Pietismus hinzuweisen pflegt. Diese Bemühungen manifestieren sich u.a. in seiner Spenerbiographie und der kritischen Spenerbriefedition in der von ihm begründeten und geleiteten Spenerarbeitsstelle in Bochum.

Die im vorliegenden Sammelband veröffentlichten siebzehn Beiträge sind zum Teil bereits als Aufsätze in theologischen Zeitschriften erschienen. Der Großteil entstammt verschiedenen Vorträgen, welche in den letzten

zwanzig Jahren vor allem in Deutschland, aber auch in den Niederlanden, Straßburg, Helsinki und Warschau gehalten wurden.

Im ersten Kapitel wendet sich Wallmann der "einflußreichsten Gestalt der lutherischen Christenheit seit den Tagen der Reformation" und dem bedeutenden Wegbereiter des Pietismus Johann Arndt zu, indem er dessen lutherische Rezeption mystischer Literatur eingehend untersucht und zu dem Schluß kommt: "Arndts Tauler istsit venia verboein lutherisch kastrierter Tauler" (S. 17). Das folgende Kapitel würdigt Herzog August zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg als Schutzherrn Arndt'scher Theologie und Schriften, ohne dessen Beistand die innerkirchliche Entfaltung der durch Arndt angeregten Frömmigkeitsbewegung schwer vorstellbar gewesen wäre.

Ein Großteil der weiteren Beiträge befaßt sich mit der Person Philipp Jakob Speners und dessen Theologie. Zunächst sei auf jene vier Aufsätze verwiesen, welche der neuen eschatologischen Orientierung Speners, der "Hoffnung künftig besserer Zeiten" nachgehen. Während der Aufsatz zum Straßburger Johann Conrad Dannhauer den starken Gegensatz Speners zur Eschatologie seines lutherisch orthodoxen Lehrers hervorhebt, zeigt ein weiterer Beitrag zum Chiliasmus, daß die Vorstellung eines irdischen Gottesreiches vor dem Jüngsten Tag durchaus auch vor Spener in der Orthodoxiewenngleich sehr zurückhaltend zu verifizieren ist. Schließlich ist Wallmann auch in den beiden letzten Aufsätzen bemüht, in Auseinandersetzung mit Kurt Aland Speners chiliastische Eschatologie näher zu charakterisieren, wobei auch Speners Anliegen der Aufrichtung urchristlicher Kirchenversammlungen Erörterung findet. Diesem Thema und der damit in Verbindung stehenden Fragen nach Separation und ekstatischen Geisterfahrungen geht Wallmann außerdem in einem eigenen Beitrag nach. Weitere Speneraufsätze befassen sich mit Detailuntersuchungen zum ersten pietistischen Streit Speners mit dem Nordhäuser Prediger Georg Conrad Dilsfeld, mit Speners antisozinianischen Schriften und dessen Berlinaufenthalt 1691-1705. Aufschlußreich ist die Darstellung zur Bedeutung lutherischer Bekenntnisschriften für Lehrentscheidungen, welche herausstellt, daß die Maßnahme theologischer Schriften an der Elle der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften keiner verbreiteten Praxis der lutherischen Or-

thodoxie entsprach, sondern erst mit dem Aufkommen synkretistischer und pietistischer Streitigkeiten zu beobachten ist. Zwei Beiträge sind den Einflüssen der Schweiz und der Niederlande auf den deutschen Pietismus gewidmet, ein weiterer untersucht die Beziehungen deutscher Pietisten zum Baltikum und nach Finnland. Abschließend ist noch auf drei Lokalstudien hinzuweisen, in welchen Wallmann den frühen Pietismus in Erfurt, die Entwicklung der Helmstedter Theologie, insbesondere von Georg Calixt und die geistliche Bibliothek Johann Sebastian Bachs näher untersucht. Letzterer Beitrag weist Bach als Vertreter der lutherischen Orthodoxie und nichtwie die bisherige marxistische Bachforschung vertratals Frühaufklärer aus.

Die hier veröffentlichten Aufsätze Johannes Wallmanns bereichern nicht nur die Orthodoxie- und Pietismusforschung um einige Beiträge vor allem theologiegeschichtlicher Natur, sondern belegen das Bemühen des Autors, durch detaillierte Untersuchungen in der Diskussion um die Anfänge des Pietismus immer wieder auf eine differenzierte Verhältnisbestimmung und die gegenseitige Einflußnahme der geistigen Strömungen von lutherischer Orthodoxie und Pietismus hinzuweisen und somit die Genese eines lutherischen Pietismus zu dokumentieren.

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Erkenntnis und Gebet: Die pneumatologische Grundstruktur von Karl Barths dogmatischer Arbeit
Stefan Peter Becker

Basler und Berner Studien zur historischen und systematischen Theologie, Bd. 65.
Bern: P. Lang, 1995, 276 S., SFr 64.-, Pb., ISBN 3-906753-45-X

SUMMARY

This book traces correctly the thinking of Karl Barth and voices a few critical questions starting with those of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The author thinks, though, that Karl Barth's work in the end cancelled itself out by becoming an intellectual movement in the service of a life-movement ("Denkbewegung im Dienste der Lebensbewegung") that can avoid the weaknesses that he criticises. The danger of the narrowing-down of the intellect ("intellectualistische Verengung") as

well as self-sufficiency can be overcome in that the fides quaerens intellectum, be de facto continued by means of a strong stress on the ethical questions. Thus, a new scientific understanding which begins with Barth comes into being and could be termed oratio quaerens opus. The undersigned, however is of the opinion that Becker's book proves once more that Karl Barth's work as such cannot objectively and pertinently be continued as long as one does not take critically into consideration the fact that he replaced the reformed Scripture principle with a theological epistemology.

RÉSUMÉ

L'ouvrage suit d'une manière objective et exacte la pensée de Karl Barth. En partant de remarques faites par Dietrich Bonhoeffer, il pose à son sujet quelques questions critiques. Cependant il pense que l'oeuvre de Barth s'est dépassée pour devenir 'un mouvement de la pensée au service de la vie', ce qui permet d'échapper à ces questions critiques. Le danger d'un rétrécissement intellectualiste et de l'autosuffisance est surmonté par une forte insistance sur la problématique éthique. La fides quaerens intellectum (la foi à la recherche de la compréhension) aboutit ainsi à une nouvelle conception de la science qui s'annonce chez Barth, et qu'on pourrait définir par la formule oratio quaerens opus (la prière à la recherche de l'oeuvre). L'auteur de cette recension estime au contraire que l'oeuvre de Barth ne peut pas être poursuivie avec une liberté objective, tant qu'on n'aura pas réfléchi d'une manière critique à ce qui est impliqué dans l'abandon par Barth du principe scripturaire de la Réforme au profit d'une épistémologie théologique.

Eine Basler Dissertation, die unter der Anleitung J.M.Lochmans entstanden ist, liegt vor uns: Mit den zentralen Stichworten "Erkenntnis und Gebet" geht Stefan Peter Becker fleißig und aufmerksam durch das Werk Karl Barths. Er erklärt sachlich richtig das Werden und den inneren Zusammenhang dieser wohl wirkmächtigsten theologischen Denkbewegung unseres Jahrhunderts aus dem kleinen Büchlein über Anselm mit dem Programm der *fides quaerens intellectum*. Neben Karl Barth ist ihm Dietrich Bonhoeffer ein Vergil, dessen Führung er sich anvertraut. Es ist ungewöhnlich, einen jungen Schweizer Theologen in einem solchen Bemühen um zentrale dogmatische Fragen anzutreffen und erinnert etwas wehmütig an vergangene Zeiten, da schneidend scharfe Diskussionen mit den Begriffen der paulinischen Dialektik, der idealistischen Philosophie und dem existentialistischen Weltempfinden das Feld in Kirche und Theologie beherrschten. Feministische Theolo-

gie, Drewermann und die neue religiöse Welle in der westlichen Welt haben das gründlich verändert. Becker wird kaum Leser finden unter Pfarrern und denkenden Kirchengliedern-leider? Würde eine erneute Beschäftigung mit Barth uns weiterführen? Becker ist dieser Meinung: Trotz aller Kritik bewegt ihn die Überzeugung, daß Barths Werk einmündet in eine Wendung, die es noch einmal aufheben und "im Dienste der Lebensbewegung" (272) positiv weiterführen kann. Barths Theologie eignet eine Überzeugungskraft, "der man sich schlecht entziehen kann" (212). Wird "das Gebet in der Kraft der Liebe" als "die Nahtstelle von Dogmatik und Ethik" richtig gesehen, verspricht das Werk den Weg zu weisen, wie der "Verkehr Gottes mit dem Menschen und des Menschen mit Gott" "in unserer Lebensgeschichte nachgebildet werden soll" (270).

Mehrfach benennt Becker die Probleme der barth'schen Theologie: "Die fast stereotyp anmutende Wendung 'je und je'" zeigt an, wie sich für Barth (mit Bonhoeffer formuliert) "das Gott-Mensch-Verhältnis in reine Akte auflöst" (40f.). Dieser "Aktualismus", kritisiert Bonhoeffer, bringt das Natürliche in Mißkredit und verhindert, daß sich das Denken den konkreten Formfragen stellt. "Vor allem die Sicht für institutionelle Probleme" bekommt so keinen Raum (263), was sich bei den Neuregelungen in allen Kirchen bitter bemerkbar gemacht hat. Das Denken Barths droht als reine Innenwelt dazustehen: Es bleibt "für jene verschlossen, die sich nicht in dem hermeneutischen Zirkel von Erkenntnis und Gebet befinden", eine Selbstsetzung, "bei der es keine Beunruhigung durch Anfragen von außen mehr gibt", wie Peter L. Berger formuliert (212). Zwar bewegt diesen Zirkel keine "Verachtung gegenüber den 'niederen' weltlichen Phänomenen", er ist vielmehr "ein imposanter Versuch, Gott als souveränen Herrn und den Menschen gleichzeitig als freies Subjekt zu denken" (174f.). Aber er führt doch dazu, daß Barths Theologie oft "als ein Sprachspiel mißverstanden worden [ist], das mit stoischer Selbstgenügsamkeit in sich selber kreist" (273). Ein "ekklesiologischer Positivismus" bringt es mit sich, daß "Selbstaussage und Selbstanspruch" bei Barths für ihn selber schmerzlich auseinandertreten: seine Theologie hat gegen seinen Willen eine neue Schule gebildet (232f.).

Diese tiefgreifende Kritik am Denken Barths begleitet die Ausführungen Beckers aber nur in der Form von Randbemerkungen und einem

beständig zurückgedrängten Unbehagen. Es führt nicht zu einem ausgreifenden eigenen kritischen Bemühen und sucht nicht die Fehler in den Grundlagen näher zu benennen; vielmehr steht von Anfang an die Hoffnung da, daß Barths Ausgangspunkt in etwas anderes noch münde (16).

Spannender wird das Buch deshalb nur in dem kurzen Abschnitt, in dem Becker Barths Lehre mit den Aussagen zweier Bultmannschüler vergleicht, die er "in der Linie Schleiermacher-Ritschl-Troeltsch" verortet (111). Vor allem der Vergleich mit Ebeling führt noch einmal die zwei dominanten gegensätzlichen Positionen in der protestantischen deutschsprachigen Theologie dieses Jahrhunderts vor Augen: Während Barth mit seinem Denken "bei dem exklusiven Ereignis der Offenbarung" einsetzt, nimmt Ebeling seinen Ausgangspunkt "im Horizont der Anthropologie" (114). Ebeling geht mit Heiler aus vom Gebet als einer "Urgegebenheit des Menschen" (117), die durch das Evangelium zu ihrem Bewußtsein kommt: das Wort schafft nicht, sondern interpretiert nur "die Grundsituation des Menschen" (119). Damit hat Ebeling den Vorteil, daß sein Denken von Anfang an frei ist von einer "offenbarungspositivistischen Einführung" (124); er muß aber in Kauf nehmen, daß eine philosophisch erschlossene Hermeneutik, letztlich simpel das liberal-bürgerliche Menschenbild, die Offenbarung Gottes normiert und eingrenzt: "Die Erkenntnisordnung bestimmt die Seinsordnung" (123). An Ebelings Zürcher Kollegen W. Bernet wird noch deutlicher, welche Kritiklosigkeit gegenüber dem "modernen Denken" das begünstigt: souverän wird der "Mensch der Moderne" und seine Erfahrung definiert (126), die Tradition wird historisiert, das eigene Denken aber unhistorisch absolut gesetzt, bis schließlich das persönliche atheistische Weltverständnis ihre "religiöse Weihe" verpaßt bekommt (130f.). Kurz: Die Erfahrungstheologie ist im Kern ebenso dogmatisch wie diejenige, die bei der Offenbarung einsetzen will, betont Geyer (134f.). Demgegenüber löst Barth die Fragen von Offenheit und Exklusivität viel souveräner mit seiner Prädestinationslehre: Er postuliert, das die Inkarnation "uns legitimiert, jeden Menschen als Christen anzusprechen" (173), "weil Gott in der humanitas Jesu die ganze Menschheit in seinen Gnadenbund aufgenommen" hat (271).

Der Vergleich der theologischen Positionen

ist instruktiv, bohrender und angespannter geschrieben und zeigt am Ende deutlich, daß mit den Entgegenstellungen, die das deutsche theologische Denken dieses Jahrhunderts bestimmt haben, wenig gewonnen ist: Ob ich "von unten" oder "von oben" her denke, in beiden Fällen postuliere zuerst ich das Recht einer Denkbewegung und habe mich so einen Augenblick lang intellektuell distanziert von dem Wort der Apostel, das uns nahegekommen ist (Rom 10,6ff.). Keine äußere Realität bedrängt und hält und treibt mich, auch die Rede von der Externität des Wortes (84) wird im Ersten und Letzten zu einem bloßen Gedanken, und das Bibelwort löst sich auf in einen "inneren Text" (39), den meine gläubige Vernunft so oder so konstruiert.

Beckers Arbeit zeigt aufschlußreich, wohin das Werk Barths einen jungen Theologen führt, der es sich kritisch anzueignen versucht. Noch einmal geht Becker den Weg, den die protestantische Theologie in unserem Jahrhundert in so vielfältiger Gestalt gegangen ist: Mit Hans Küng streicht er heraus, daß Barth seine Lehre nicht entfalten könnte, wenn er nicht mit Hegel das Denken "lebendig-dynamisch" verflüssigen würde (bis hin zur Notwendigkeit, sprachlich schwebend und grammatikalisch unklar zu formulieren, wie es im Zitat von Hans Küng geschieht [155]). Das macht das Wunder möglich, daß "die Subjekt-Objekt-Spaltung nach allen Seiten hin überwunden" wird (154), so daß der Theologe fähig wird, "Gott als Gegenstand, als Objekt des menschlichen Erkenntnissubjekts zu denken, ohne daß er selbst sein Subjektsein verliert" (159). Wer es nicht glaubt, bezahlt einen Taler: Die Begrenzung des Geschöpflichen und die Sünde und ihre Strafe, die Trennung von Gott, wird von der Dialektik des tüchtigen Theologen überwunden! Der idealistische Intellektualismus feiert seinen Triumph. Das darf aber natürlich nicht sein, so viel haben Barth und Becker bei Paulus und den Reformatoren gelernt. Deshalb muß etwas diese hermeneutische Selbstherrlichkeit stören. Und so plaudert Becker am Schluß aus, was viele ernsthafte Barthschüler zu verbergen versucht haben: Am Ende des langen Weges steht "ein starkes Drängen auf die ethische Problematik" (273), weil nur sie eine Selbstgenügsamkeit der Kirchlichen Dogmatik verhindern kann. "Barths Setzung der Kirche erhält dieselbe axiomatische Würde wie die Setzung Gottes in der ewigen Erwählung seines Sohnes" (208).

Wer möchte da der christlichen Selbstherrlichkeit Schranken setzen? Und doch muß das Selbstherrliche gebrochen werden. Deshalb betont Barth so eindringlich, daß das Gebet zum Tun führt, daß die Bitte um Gerechtigkeit nicht möglich ist ohne einen eigenen "Einsatz für die, die Gerechtigkeit suchen" (267). Von Barth führt tatsächlich ein sehr direkter Weg zur Befreiungstheologie. Seine Schüler haben zu recht empfunden, daß ohne einen "starken Zug nach vorne" im sozialen Engagement (268) die Gnade, von der Barth redet, billig sein müsste. Darum dürfen auch die Sakramente keine Heilsgaben sein, sondern müssen "ausschließlich ethisch" verstanden werden (240): Die Taufe ist nur Bitte, das Abendmahl nur Dank für die Gnade. Sonst wäre die Sicherheit materiell begründet. Was Barth am Ende seines Lebens schmerzlich geahnt hat, ist wohl wirklich eingetroffen: Wo man seine Lehre genommen hat ohne den Abschluß, das Nein zur Säuglingstaufe, hat sie letztlich im kirchlichen Leben "mit blutleeren dogmatischen Sätzen" selbstgenügsam stabilisierend gewirkt (273ff.). Wo man dieser Gefahr aber zu entgehen versuchte, hat man den Weg gewählt, den Barth selber vorzeichnet: Den Weg in ein sozialpolitisches Engagement, in dem die Grenzen zwischen der Zukunft Gottes und der Zukunft der Erde verschwimmen.

Becker bezieht sich auf ein Gespräch, das er mit dem Sohn Karl Barths, Markus Barth, geführt hat, und meint, daß eine letzte Wendung im Denken Barths sich ankündigt habe. Diese Wendung versucht er am Schluß seines Buches knapp zu benennen mit der programmatischen Formel: *oratio quaerens opus*, eine Formulierung, die "einen neuen Wissenschaftsbegriff" bezeichne, "den Barth am Ende seines Lebens geschaut hat wie Mose das gelobte Land" (276).

Beckers Buch scheint mir aber der beste Beweis zu sein, daß diese Wendung nicht weiterführt: Auch Beckers Ausführungen bleiben intellektualistisch abstrakt, zeichnen eine in sich geschlossene Denkbewegung nach, die sich nicht auftut für die drängenden praktischen Fragen: "Der einzelne, empirische Mensch" mit seinem persönlichen Weg interessiert Barth "von seinem Ansatz her überhaupt nicht" (172). Becker kann bei Barth zwar negativ viel Konkretes finden, was das Gebet bedroht und zerstört, vor allem die mögliche subjektivistische und psychologisierende "Verlotterung" (191f.). Hier liest man Klärendes

und Hilfreiches! Was das aber positiv heißt für unser Beten, unseren Umgang mit dem Psalter, dem Unservater, den liturgischen Formen der Tradition und den Kirchengesangbüchern, die allerorts nun revidiert werden, darüber erfahren wir nur eben, daß wir uns um deren Richtigkeit und Reinheit zu kümmern haben (104). Die kulturelle, die Formfrage, bleibt wie belanglos.

Becker scheint nicht zu wissen, wo diese Abstraktheit des Denkens (und damit die kirchliche Alltagsferne der Theologie) ihre tiefsten Wurzeln hat: darin, daß das reformatorische Schriftprinzip ersetzt ist mit einer an Anselm gewonnenen und idealistisch dynamisierten Erkenntnislehre, die nolens volens aus Christus ein Denkprinzip macht und den "dezentralistischen" Umgang der Reformatoren mit der Schrift als "biblizistisch" beschimpft (KD IV/1,406). Die "Ablehnung aller natürlichen Theologie" (157) ist derart systematisch konsequent durchgeführt, daß sie am Ende auch zur Ablehnung der Reformatoren und zur wirklich "ganz anderen Grundlegung" der Theologie führt (Nachwort zu Schleiermacher, S. 294). Daß dieser ungeschichtlich steile Anspruch in einer spekulativen Sackgasse enden mußte, ist das Unglück, in das ein Großteil der protestantischen Kirchen und Theologen Barth gefolgt sind.

Für den Gebrauch bedauert der Leser, daß ein Personenregister fehlt und daß im Sachregister wesentliche Seitenzahlen nicht aufgeführt werden (so z.B. S. 164 unter "Erkenntnis" oder S. 112 unter "Mystik"). Ein typischer Computerfehler ist dem Verfasser in der Fußnote S. 227f. unterlaufen.

Bernhard Rothen
Basel, Schweiz

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Die Apostelgeschichte: übersetzt und erklärt

Josef Zmijewski

Reihe: Regensburger Neues Testament
Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1994, 971 S., DM 98.-, Ln.,
ISBN 3-79171421-X

SUMMARY

This is the most recent and most helpful German one volume scholarly commentary on Acts. Its strength for the English reader lies in its attempt to summarise (mainly German) scholarship on Acts, offering

summaries and quotations from the plethora of recent commentaries and studies, including also less well known and more popular contributions. The author's position (catholic, moderately historical-critical) is somewhere between Schneider and Pesch, with emphasis on Luke the theologian and less interest in historical questions. For each passage Zmijewski offers his own translation, a first section on literary, tradition and redaction critical and historical aspects, a main section with solid verse-by-verse exegesis, and a final section emphasising the theological and parenetic relevance which is packed with often great insights and suggestions, mainly with proclamation in mind. Well worth its money! More worthy of translation than some previous German commentaries on Acts. Not only scholars would benefit from its translation!

RÉSUMÉ

Voici le commentaire académique le plus récent et le plus utile sur le livre des Actes. Le lecteur francophone appréciera surtout l'effort de l'auteur pour résumer les résultats de la recherche récente sur le livre des Actes (principalement dans le monde germanophone). Une pléthore de commentaires et d'études sont passés en revue et cités, y compris des contributions peu connues, mais populaires. La position de l'auteur (catholique, modérément historico-critique) se situe entre celle de Schneider et celle de Pesch. Il s'intéresse surtout à l'oeuvre théologique de Luc plutôt qu'à son oeuvre d'historien. Pour chaque passage, Zmijewski offre sa propre traduction, puis une section sur les problèmes de critique littéraire et les problèmes historiques, une section principale avec une exégèse solide verset par verset, et enfin une section destinée à souligner l'actualité du texte au point-de-vue théologique et pratique, laquelle fourmille d'idées et de suggestions intéressantes pour la prédication.

Nach beinahe einem Jahrzehnt Ruhepause gesellt sich mit Zmijewskis (Z.) Neubearbeitung im Regensburger NT der wohl erste (und vielleicht letzte?) Neunziger zu der stattlichen Zahl deutschsprachiger Kommentare der achtziger Jahre zur Apostelgeschichte (Stählin, NTD 5, 80; Schneider, HThK V.1-2, 80/82; Roloff, J., NTD 5, 81; Schmithals, ZBK NT 3/2, 82; Mußner, NEB.NT 5, 84; Schille, ThHK V, 84; Haacker, BiAuPr 20, 84; Pesch, EKK V.1-2, 86; Weiser, ÖTBK V.1-2, 81/85; Kliesch, SKK.NT 5, 86; Lüdemann, 1987; Neudorfer, Edition CUnterr.B. 8-9, 86/90, von Z. übersehen, andere praxisorientiertere Kommentare werden gebührend berücksichtigt).

Der Autor, seit 1980 katholischer Ordinarius für NT in Fulda, ist Freunden des lukanischen Doppelwerkes dank seiner früheren Überlegungen zu den Eschatologiereden des Lukas-

Evangeliums (1972) kein Fremder. Im vorliegenden Band versucht Z. nun beinahe Unmögliches, nämlich nach der ausgiebigen 'Lukasdiskussion' seit den fünfziger Jahren und deren Niederschlag in einer Fülle von Aufsätzen, Monographien und Kommentaren, 'Bewährtes' (oder zumindest oft genug Wiederholtes, was deswegen noch lange nicht richtig sein muß!) darzustellen und zusammenzufassen, in der Auslegung des umfangreichsten ntl. Buches etwas Neues zu bringen, und das Ganze dann auch noch als Handreichung an die 'Arbeiter vor Ort' aufzubereiten.

Z. konzentriert sich dabei auf Lukas den Theologen, und seine Verkündigung in der Form geschichtlicher Darstellung (vgl. 'Geschichte und Verkündigung', 24-30, wesentliche Unterschiede zur griech.-hellenist. Historiographie, Theologie der Heilsgeschichte, Kontinuität zwischen der Zeit Jesu und der Zeit der Kirche durch den erhöhten Jesus, den heiligen Geist, die apostolischen Zeugen und kirche, ein Abschnitt mit erfrischenden Neuansätzen (z.B. gegenüber H. Conzelmann und G. Schille!). Lukas schreibt 'im Sinne einer auf dem Boden biblischer Tradition stehenden "theologischen" Geschichtsdarstellung mit erbaulichen und apologetischen Tendenzen' (17). Etwas knapp sind die Überlegungen zum sog. 'Geschichtswert' (Historizität, 29f. Daß Lukas der Historiker und der Theologe kein Widerspruch sein müssen und sich auch weder trennen noch gegeneinander ausspielen lassen, hat I.M. Marshall in *Luke: Historian and Theologian* überzeugend gezeigt). In den Einleitungsfragen folgt Z. dem gemäßigt-kritischen Konsens (13-16; 80-90 n. Chr.), Adressaten sind Heidenchristen der dritten Generation (vgl. die Anfragen von J. Jervell, *Theology of Acts*, 1996). Läßt Lukas wirklich 'mangelhafte Vorstellungen über die geographischen Verhältnisse Palästinas und die jüd. Bräuche erkennen'? (vgl. meine frühere Rezension in EThZ zu J. Ernst, *Das Evangelium des Lukas*).

Gemäß dem Aufbau des RNT wird nach der Einführung (13-33) jeder Textabschnitt in drei Teilen behandelt: Im I. *Analyse* behandelt Z. literarische, traditions- und redaktionsgeschichtl., sowie historische Aspekte. Somit bleibt die Einzelauslegung übersichtlich und schneller Zugang zum Wesentlichen ist auch den Lesern möglich, die die zugrundeliegenden Voraussetzungen nicht oder nur bedingt teilen oder den Wert solcher Überlegungen bezweifeln. Ob es dem lukanischen Anliegen

entspricht, historische Aspekte von der eigentlichen Exegese abzukoppeln, erscheint allerdings fraglich. Dann folgt ausführlich II. *Vers-für-Vers* Exegese und abschließend III. *Anwendung*. Diese versucht das theologisch und paränetisch Bedeutsame hervorzuheben und für die aktuelle Verkündigung zu erschließen. Prediger aller Schattierungen werden freilich bei manchem Sieben und Ergänzen je nach Gusto in Zs. oft hervorragenden Beobachtungen und praxis- und lebensnahen Überlegungen reichliche Anregung (z.B. zu 10.111.18, S. 434-37, dies gilt auch für die Exkurse, z.B. 748-52) für sich und ihre Hörer finden. Es gelingt dem Autor, die eigene Erfahrung mit der Apg 'da nämlich dieses lukanische Werk ein ungeheuer "modernes" Buch ist, das Christen von heute sehr viel zu sagen hat' (Vorwort) seinen Lesern zu vermitteln.

In allen drei Teilen wird (durch einzuweilen überhandnehmende und erdrückende Fülle von Zitaten) die neueste, meist deutschsprachige gemäßigt-kritische Lukasdiskussion zusammengefaßt und zugänglich gemacht. Aus konservativerer Sicht wäre freilich manches in der Diskussion und Bibliographie zu ergänzen. Nicht immer ist ganz klar, welche Positionen Z. selbst vertritt. Freilich wird nicht alles Material dem intendierten Leserkreis in gleicher Weise nützen. Drei- und zwanzig prägnante und gut gewählte Exkurse ergänzen die laufende Auslegung (z.B. Reden in Zungen, Bedeutung der Sammelberichte, Wunderverständnis der Apg, Handauflegung, Herkunft und Jugend des Paulus, Wachsen des Wortes Gottes). Abgerundet wird die Auslegung durch eine Übersicht zur paulinischen Chronologie, selektives Literaturverzeichnis (894917), biblisches Stellenregister (918-52, 8 Seiten AT!) und ein sehr hilfreiches Personen-, Sach- und Begriffsregister (953-71), das schnelles Auffinden von Einzelthemen ermöglicht.

Einige Positionen des Autors: Die Reden der Apg folgen einem heilsgeschichtlichen Credo, ergänzt durch andere Traditionen (christolog. Titel, AT Zitate und Anspielungen und vorgegebene Schriftauslegungen; Übernahme und Modifikation der These von K. Kliesch), sie sind Schöpfungen des Lk, auf der Grundlage verschiedener Traditionen geschaffen (20, 125-30); der Bericht der ersten Missionsreise gilt als historisch (552f); 'Man wird also an der *Historizität* der von der Tradition berichteten Beschneidung des Timotheus durch Paulus

festhalten dürfen' (gute Diskussion und Argumente, 586f); in der Areopagrede 'keine Synthese aus griechischem und biblischem Denken' (gegen Dibelius) ist das 'bibl.-christl. Credo eindeutig die Grundlage; die philosophischen Motive sind dagegen nur "Begleitmomente"' (648, die anthropologischen Überlegungen [649] gehen zu weit, vgl. z.B. B. Gärtner); Apg 13.48 beinhaltet eine "prädestinarianisch" klingende Wendung (519); 28.30f als 'Epilog für das ganze Werk, der in knappen Zügen dem Leser das erreichte Ziel vor Augen stellt' (887). Z. gliedert die Apg (5-10, 23f): Einleitung (Kap. 1), 1. Hauptteil (2.1-15.35, Der Weg des Christuszeugnisses in der apostolischen Zeit), 2. Hauptteil (15.36-Ende, ... in der nachapostolischen Zeit). Die in der Einführung auftauchenden Neuansätze hätten in allen Teilen der eigentlichen Auslegung stärker zum Tragen kommen und mehr mit anderen Ansätzen ins kritische Gespräch gebracht werden können und müssen im Detail und an den entscheidenden Stellen zu überzeugen. Bedauerlich, da Z. die eigenen wegweisenden Überlegungen nicht konsequenter verfolgt und vertreten hat.

Während man Bauers *Wörterbuch* auch nach der Neubearbeitung (6. Aufl., 1989) zitieren könnte (statt nach der 5., 1958, S. 894), sollte man Schürers Geschichte in der englischen Neubearbeitung zitieren, die ja nicht nur bemüht war, den Inhalt auf den neuesten Forschungsstand zu bringen bzw. zu ergänzen, sondern auch anderweitig Problematisches auszumerzen: 'the removal ... of purely polemical material incorporated in the course of the successive German editions' (Preface, unter Ziele der *Revised English Edition*, 1973).

Trotz Anfragen im Grundsätzlichen und in Einzelheiten, bietet Z. den vielseitigsten und wohl besten deutschen einbändigen Kommentar zur Apg. Ohne umfassende Neuansätze in Methode und Voraussetzungen wird sich von dem einen oder anderen Aspekt einmal abgesehen wohl nicht mehr viel Neues oder Aufregendes zur gegenwärtigen *historisch-kritischen* Auslegung der Apg beitragen lassen. Abzuwarten bleibt, wie die wohl nächsten größeren Kommentare zur Apg (z.B. J.B. Green in WBC, NIGTC, Pillar) aus evangelikaler Perspektive bzw. in konservativen Reihen Lukas den Historiker und Theologen, die Gattung der Apg, den sog. Paulinismus ihres Autors und ihre historische Zuverlässigkeit behandeln werden.

Papier, Druckbild, Bindearbeiten und Ein-

band sind hervorragend. Eine Faltkarte des östlichen Mittelmeerraumes mit den Reiserouten der Apg wäre bereichernd (vgl. z.B. die Beilage zu H. Conzelmann, HNT 7).

Christoph Stenschke
Aberdeen, Scotland

EuroJTh (1997) 6:1

Der Pietismus im achtzehnten Jahrhundert.

(Geschichte des Pietismus, Band 2.)

Brecht, Martin; Deppermann, Klaus (Herausgeber)

Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995, 826 S., DM 178,-, Ln., ISBN 3-525-55347-1

SUMMARY

The second volume of the four-part 'History of Pietism', edited by the Münster Church Historian Martin Brecht, may be regarded as as one of the high points of the whole project. The importance of this work lies above all in the eighteen articles on topics of local history and specific subject matter, written by fourteen Church Historians, some of them leaders in this area of research. They portray the worldwide development of the Pietistic movement in the 18th century, covering all the regions of Germany, apart from east Germany, mid- and northern Europe and North America. The wealth of individual, localized portrayals testifies to the serious attempt to do justice to the phenomenon of Pietism in all its dimensions, without unduly limiting the perception of this spiritual movement by a one-sided definition. Lacking here, however, is some connection between the individual studies and a summary of theological and spiritual characteristics of Pietism, and this awaits its appearance in the fourth volume.

The present volume on the Pietism of the 18th century offers not only a comprehensive survey of the manner of the spread of European Pietism in its most important areas of distribution, but also representatively develops the thesis of Pietism as an ecclesiastical reform movement, by means of detailed localized studies within a large-scale framework.

RÉSUMÉ

Le tome 2 de l'histoire du piétisme en quatre volumes, édité par l'historien Martin Brecht de Münster en Westphalie, peut constituer l'un des sommets de cette histoire du piétisme. La valeur de ce volume apparaît avant tout dans les dix-huit articles consacrés à des développements locaux et à des thèmes spécifiques. Ils ont été rédigés par quatorze historiens, parmi lesquels certains sont des autorités de premier ordre dans leur domaine. Ils décrivent le développement

mondial du mouvement piétiste au XVIII^e siècle dans les diverses régions de l'Allemagne, de l'Europe Centrale et Septentrionale, et de l'Amérique. L'abondance des monographies atteste un sérieux effort pour rendre compte du phénomène du piétisme dans toute son ampleur par des recherches spécifiquement locales, sans limiter l'examen de ce mouvement religieux par une définition unilatérale de son caractère. Le lien entre les études de détail et une nécessaire synthèse sur le piétisme dans son ensemble n'apparaîtra qu'au tome 4. Le présent tome 2 consacré au piétisme au XVIII^e siècle ne se borne pas à des renseignements sur la diffusion du piétisme européen dans les divers territoires où il s'est répandu, mais, à l'aide de recherches locales comme d'une présentation générale, il prouve que le mouvement piétiste a été un grand mouvement de réformation ecclésiastique.

Mit dem zweiten Band der "Geschichte des Pietismus" liegt zweifelsohne eine der bedeutendsten Veröffentlichungen der vierteiligen Gesamtdarstellung des Pietismus vor. (Zum Projekt und der Rezension des ersten Bandes vgl. EuroJTh (1996) 5: 1, 82-84). Wie bereits der erste Band und das Gesamtprojekt überhaupt stellt das Erscheinen dieser Fortsetzung vor allem das Verdienst des Münsteraner Kirchenhistorikers Martin Brecht dar, der nach dem Tode des für die Herausgabe verantwortlichen Klaus Deppermann die Veröffentlichung übernahm. In der Vielzahl von lokalgeschichtlichen und sachspezifischen Artikeln, welche z.T. von den für ihren Forschungsbereich führenden Kirchenhistorikern verfaßt wurden, liegt unbestritten die Bedeutung dieses zweiten Bandes. Die Fülle von Einzeldarstellungen zeugt von dem ernsthaften Bemühen, dem Phänomen Pietismus durch je lokalspezifische Untersuchungen in seiner gesamten Breite gerecht zu werden, ohne durch eine einseitige Definition des Gegenstandes die Wahrnehmung dieser Frömmigkeitsbewegung einzuschränken. Andererseits macht die fehlende Bezugnahme der einzelnen Beiträge aufeinander die Problematik der vorliegenden Konzeption deutlich, welche dem vierten und letzten Band die diffizile Aufgabe zuweist, Verbindungslinien und übergreifende Motive in der Fülle pietistischer Frömmigkeit und Theologie herauszuarbeiten. Die Schwierigkeiten des geplanten Projektes spiegeln dabei jedoch die gegenwärtige Forschungssituation wieder, in welcher sich noch kein Konsens in der Beurteilung des Pietismus abzeichnet, sondern die Fülle neuerer Einzeluntersuchungen das Bild beherrscht.

Die achtzehn Kapitel, welche von vierzehn

Mitherausgebern verfaßt und mitverantwortet wurden, beschreiben den Pietismus des 18. Jahrhunderts vor allem nach lokalgeschichtlichen Aspekten, wobei überregionale Gemeinschaftsbildungen in ihrer Eigenart berücksichtigt und gesondert dargestellt wurden.

So widmen sich gleich die ersten beiden Kapitel dem Herrnhuter und dem radikalen Pietismus. Dietrich Meyer, Düsseldorfer Kirchenarchivar und u.a. durch seine Bibliographie zur Zinzendorfforschung als Kirchengeschichtler auf diesem Gebiet renommierter, faßt im ersten Kapitel die Entstehung, Entwicklung und vielfältigen Wirkungen von der durch Zinzendorf gegründeten Gemeinschaft bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts dar. Daß dabei kein wesentlich neues Bild gezeichnet wurde, erklärt sich u.a. aus dem Umstand, daß in den letzten Jahrzehnten keine umfassenden Archivaufarbeitungen in Herrnhut möglich waren, ein Mißstand, welchem 1996 durch die Wiedereinsetzung eines Archivars in Herrnhut, Dr. Paul Martin Peucker, für die Zukunft Rechnung getragen wurde. Die Darstellung des radikalen Pietismus im zweiten Kapitel durch den Marburger Hans Schneider stellt dagegen Ergebnisse dar, welche aus dem in den letzten Jahren erwachten Forschungsinteresse erwachsen sind. Schneider, als Pietismusforscher auf den Bereich des radikalen Pietismus in Hessen spezialisiert, konnte auf neueste Detailuntersuchungen seiner Schüler, z.B. über das Ehepaar Petersen, die Schwarzenauer Neutäufer, Johann Konrad Dippel u.a. zurückgreifen, was seinem Beitrag forschungsgeschichtliche Relevanz verleiht. Wenngleich Schneider auf zahlreiche Einzelpersonen in ganz Deutschland Bezug nimmt, so täuscht die Kapitelüberschrift "radikaler Pietismus" darüber hinweg, daß der Verfasser sich im Grunde nur auf die Schwerpunkte seines eigenen Interesses am Radikalpietismus in Hessen begrenzt. Über die verschiedenen lokalen Phänomene desselben an anderen Orten muß sich der Leser in den entsprechenden territorialgeschichtlichen Abhandlungen kundig machen.

Die einzelnen Lokaluntersuchungen tragen unterschiedlichen Charakter. Zentral und entsprechend ausführlich sind die Darstellungen von M. Brecht zum württembergischen Pietismus, von Johann Friedrich Gerhard Goeters (vgl. Rezension zum 1. Bd.) zum Pietismus in Bremen und am Niederrhein, von Johannes

van den Berg (vgl. Rezension zum 1. Bd.) zum niederländischen Pietismus, vom Berner Kirchengeschichtler Rudolf Dellsperger zum Pietismus in der Schweiz, vom Lausanner Methodistenpfarrer Patrick Streiff zum Methodismus und vom Chicagoer Historikprofessor Gregg Roeber zum Pietismus in Nordamerika. Es spricht für den Herausgeber, daß es gelang, diese Beiträge zu den wesentlichen Verbreitungsgebieten des Pietismus der Autorschaft entsprechender Spezialisten anzuvertrauen, welche u.a. auch eigene Forschungsergebnisse verarbeiteten. Neben diesen umfassenderen Darstellungen stehen ergänzende lokalgeschichtliche Überblicke. Dies betrifft den Pietismus in Hessen, der Pfalz, im Elsaß und in Baden, Bayern, Westfalen, Niedersachsen, Schleswig-Holstein und Dänemark. Der Osloer Kirchenhistoriker Ingun Montgomery stellt die Entwicklung in Norwegen und Schweden dar, Pentti Laasonen aus Helsinki den finnischen Pietismus.

Der in den letzten Jahrzehnten vernachlässigten Territorialforschung in den neuen Bundesländern mag es zuzuschreiben sein, daß Darstellungen zum Pietismus in Sachsen, Thüringen, Mecklenburg, Preußen, Schlesien und insgesamt Ostund Südosteuropa im vorliegenden Band fehlen. Lediglich der Beitrag von Brecht über den Hallischen Pietismus mit seinen Einflüssen auf Preußen und Mitteleuropa versucht, ohne über die bestehenden Defizite hinwegzutäuschen, die Lücke zu schließen.

Trotz der Verschiedenheit der einzelnen Beiträge zeichnen sich bei der Lektüre des Bandes Gemeinsamkeiten in den Schwerpunkten der Betrachtung und der Beurteilung des Pietismus ab. Besonderes Augenmerk wurde auf die Entfaltung von Sozialaktivitäten und die Ausbreitung des Pietismus unter den jeweiligen kirchlichen und gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen gelegt. Die Spannung zwischen innerkirchlichem und radikalem Pietismus erscheint immer wieder als Unterscheidungskriterium, auch wenn z.B. Laasonen auf die Problematik einer derartigen Klassifizierung hinweist. Detaillierte theologiegeschichtliche Erörterungen, z.B. zu Fragen der Eschatologie oder Bekehrungslehre fehlen bisweilen ganz und treten als Gegenstandsdefinition in den Hintergrund. Statt dessen dienen Frömmigkeitsmerkmale und verstärkt soziologische Bezüge zur Klassifikation pietistischer Phänomene. So werden pietistische Erscheinungen,

z.B. in Bayern, Mitteleuropa und Westfalen, vornehmlich durch ihre Stellung zu Spener, Francke, Zinzendorf definiert.

Das Problem, den gesamten Zeitraum bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts im Blick zu behalten, konnte nicht endgültig gelöst werden. Nur wenige Darstellungen, wie von Meyer, van den Berg und Brecht zum Hallischen Pietismus, haben die Entwicklung bis in die Zeit der Aufklärung weiterverfolgt. Dem Erlanger Kirchenhistoriker Horst Weigelt fiel die Aufgabe zu, summarisch den Übergang zum 19. Jh. zu markieren. Er tat dies, indem er die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine und die Baseler Christentumsgesellschaft als zentralste Organisationsformen des Pietismus in dieser Epoche herausgriff, welche das Anliegen der pietistischen Bewegung in das neue Jahrhundert hineintrugen. Ergänzend untersuchte er daneben einflußreiche Einzelpersonlichkeiten wie J.K. Lavater, J.H. Jung-Stilling und Matthias Claudius.

Der vorliegende Band zum Pietismus im 18. Jahrhundert bietet nicht nur einen umfassenden Überblick zur Art und Weise der Ausbreitung des europäischen Pietismus in seinen wichtigsten Verbreitungsgebieten, sondern führt auch die These vom Pietismus als kirchlicher Reformbewegung anhand detaillierter lokalspezifischer Untersuchungen innerhalb einer Gesamtdarstellung in repräsentativer Weise aus.

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Vom Sinn moralischer Verantwortung

Zu den Grundlagen christlicher Ethik in komplexer Gesellschaft

Handbuch der Moraltheologie Bd. 1

Josef Römelt

Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1996, 192 S., DM 32,-, Pb., ISBN 3-7917-1506-2

SUMMARY

Römelt's foundation for ethics is an example of the way in which confessional boundaries in academic theology are becoming more and more unclear. The theology of the Reformation and Roman Catholic theology are cross-fertilizing to the point of unrecognizability. This general impression is justified not only by the exegetical part (at 30 pages very brief).

Typically Catholic elements of ethics are treated here (natural law, for example), but are played down and lose their significance. A victory for Reformation Ethics? Not at all, for properly reformational ethics will always be biblically based. The biblical data in R's hands become mere ciphers, which can no longer truly encounter a human being. Römelt's interest in actual problems is at once his strength and weakness (ecology, human beings' relation to the creation, social justice, pluralism in society etc.). However, in his concrete ethical decision-making and responsibility, man is finally left alone.

RÉSUMÉ

Le fondement de l'éthique présenté par Römelt montre combien les frontières confessionnelles tendent à s'estomper dans la théologie scientifique académique. La théologie issue de la Réforme et la théologie catholique sont en train de se féconder mutuellement au point de devenir méconnaissables. Cette impression ne se dégage pas seulement de la partie exégétique (très sommaire, une trentaine de pages). Des éléments typiques de l'éthique catholique (par exemple le droit naturel) sont il est vrai abordés, mais sont littéralement expédiés: ils ne font pas le poids. Est-ce une victoire pour l'éthique de la Réforme? Nullement, car l'éthique de la Réforme sera toujours une éthique fondée sur la Bible. Dans les mains de Römelt, subrepticement, les principes bibliques deviennent des abstractions qui ne peuvent plus interpeller l'homme d'aujourd'hui. La force, et en même temps la faiblesse, de Römelt est son intérêt pour les questions actuelles (l'écologie, le rapport de l'homme avec la création, la justice sociale, la société pluraliste). Mais dans les décisions et les responsabilités éthiques concrètes, l'homme est abandonné à lui-même.

Unsere Zeit ruft nach Ethik. Nach einer Ethik, die den Menschen beisteht, Entscheidungen zu treffen, von denen sie sich weitgehend überfordert fühlen. Nach überzeugenden Antworten aus einer begründbaren Gesamtorientierung heraus. Sie ruft nach christlicher Ethik. Der Erfurter katholische Moraltheologe Josef Römelt unternimmt den Versuch, angesichts der von ihm selbst dargestellten Komplexität nicht nur der Probleme, sondern auch der christlich-ethischen Überlegungen selbst eine Grundlegung der Ethik zu schreiben. Es handelt sich dabei um ein Fachbuch, das sich zuallererst an Fachgelehrte wendet, die in der Lage sind, R.s zum Teil recht langen, mit Adjektiven und Fachtermini gespickten Sätzen zu folgen. In drei großen Einheiten bietet der Vf. seine Überlegungen dar: Er bedenkt die geistesgeschichtliche Situation der Gegenwart (S. 17-34), die sich nach seiner Ansicht durch eine Problematisierung des Subjekts und des Frei-

heitsbegriffs sowie durch eine pluralistische Relativierung und eine biologisch-kosmische Marginalisierung des Menschen auszeichnet. Teil B ist "Strukturen biblischer Ethik" gewidmet und implizit nach dem lutherischem Schema von Gesetz und Evangelium angeordnet (38-66), während Teil C (65-178) in drei Kapiteln versucht, grundlegende Strukturelemente christlicher Ethik in den Horizont der Gegenwartsprobleme einzuordnen: das Gewissen, die Normen, die Schuld. R.s Überlegungen wollen letztlich "zeigen, daß der Weg unvertretbarer menschlicher Verantwortung trotz der vielfachen historischen, biologischen, psychischen und sozialen Bedingtheit menschlicher Kompetenz, trotz der symbiotischen Existenz des Menschen in kosmischer und gesellschaftlicher Evolution möglich ist. Menschliche Geschichte kann nach christlichem Verständnis auch heute, in komplexer sozialer Struktur und in Gemeinschaft mit der unzerstörbaren Natur ja in Relativität und Schuldverhaftetheit tatsächlich gelingen, eine sinnvolle Gestalt gewinnen unter dem Versprechen Gottes" (34).

Der evangelikale Theologe wird mit der Frage an R.s Buch herangehen, welchen materialien Beitrag die Bibel zu dieser Konzeption leistet und damit zusammenhängend welche Bedeutung ethische Normen angesichts des allgemeinen pluralistischen Relativismus noch haben. Nur Teilaspekte können hier zur Sprache kommen:

1. Der Dekalog, das Problem der Gottebenbildlichkeit, der sozialen Gerechtigkeit und das "Ethos des Vertrauens in das Leben" einerseits, die Heilserfahrung des Kreuzes angesichts von Schuld und Tod, Gottesreich und Gottesherrschaft, die Liebe sowie die "eschatologische Hoffnung für das Leben" sind die biblischen Elemente, an denen sich R. orientiert. Zum Exempel: "Am Beispiel des Dekalogs als zentralem Ausdruck der Ethik des Ersten Testaments" möchte R. die Sinnerfahrung zeigen, "die das ethische Engagement des Menschen innerhalb der Kultur des Ersten Testaments prägt und an dessen Wurzel die dialogisch-heilsgeschichtliche Erfahrung mit der ihr eigenen Struktur von Transzendenz-, Selbstund Realitätswahrnehmung des von Gott angesprochenen Menschen steht" (39). Ein Exkurs "Zur Geschichte der Dekalogforschung" soll die Tür zum Verständnis für die "heilsgeschichtliche Responsorik" öffnen. R. steigt mit der Feststellung ein, "ein naiv-unk-

ritisches Verständnis" habe aufgrund der biblischen Stellung und Darstellung "den Dekalog als unmittelbare Willensäußerung Gottes [verstanden], die durch Mose dem Volk Israel in der Wüste Sinai als Offenbarung im Zusammenhang mit dem Bundesschluß zuteil wurde ganz entsprechend der theologischen Komposition der Redaktoren, von denen die Dekalogüberlieferungen im Ersten Testament stammen (39). Dieses unangemessene Verständnis sei aber inzwischen aufgrund kritischer Forschung überwunden und durch verschiedene Hypothesen über Ursprung und Sinn des Dekalogs ersetzt worden, vor allem durch die Annahme seiner Verwurzelung im Kult bzw. in der Bundestheologie einerseits oder seiner Entstehung gleichsam 'von unten' aus dem Volksethos her (42). Wie dem auch immer sei: im Sinne des biblischen Gottesbildes eröffnet sich am Dekalog das grundlegende Ineinander von heilsgeschichtlicher Gotteserfahrung, menschlicher Freiheitserfahrung und zwischenmenschlicher sowie schöpfungsgerechter Ethik (43). Ich habe den Eindruck eines recht eklektizistischen Gebrauchs der Bibel gewonnen. Der Gott und auch der Jesus von Nazareth, der sein Volk ganz ausdrücklich und unumgebar an seinen Willen (und das heißt zugleich: an sein Wort) bindet und diese Forderung nach Gehorsam sogar mit dem Stichwort Liebe verbindet (Joh 14,15!), hat in R.s Ethik kaum eine Chance.

2. Im IV. Kapitel befaßt sich R. mit der Normtheorie (93ff.): Es geht darum, daß theologische Ethik nicht nur ein allgemeines Bekenntnis zur moralischen Gestaltungsfähigkeit des Menschen ablegt, sondern daß sie auch erklärt, wie denn in der Widersprüchlichkeit heutiger pluralistischer Perspektiven konkrete moralische Wertvorstellungen gefunden werden können (...) und wie die Gestaltung der ethischen Kultur im einzelnen aussehen soll, um den komplexen Problemen heutiger Wirklichkeitserfahrung gerecht zu werden (93). Dies hat zu geschehen vor dem Hintergrund der Tatsache, daß rückhaltlose Ehrlichkeit und Identität bis zum persönlichen Scheitern heute viel mehr Anerkennung finden als der Verweis auf vorgegebene ethische Normen. In diesem Kontext behandelt R. das für katholische Moraltheologie traditionell doch so wichtige Naturrecht in

einem ausführlichen Exkurs (101-118).

Neben allen neuzeitlichen Bedenken, die R. aufnimmt, besteht für ihn die bleibende Bedeutung des Naturrechts in dem Anliegen einer Synthese, einer Integration der gespaltenen Wirklichkeitserfahrung, die das Erleben der differenzierten Wirklichkeit moderner Kultur prägt und zwischen Freiheit und Unfreiheit hinund hergehen läßt (117). Die Frage nach verbindlichen Normen löst R. in Richtung auf die unvertretbare Berufung des einzelnen durch Gott und zur Erschließung einer den Wandlungen menschlicher Geschichte folgenden Entfaltung umfassender sinnorientierter Verantwortungserfahrung (130).

Nach all dem Gesagten dürfte deutlich sein, daß für Normen im traditionellen Sinn wenig Raum bleibt. Ethisches Handeln vollzieht sich vielmehr so: In der überrationalen Tiefe der Sinnerfahrung wächst eine ganzheitliche Grundentscheidung des Menschen im Horizont des Glaubens, die Voraussetzung für die begriffliche, sachlich fundierte, rational-diskursiv legitimierte und strukturell bewährte Gestaltung moralischer Verantwortung ist. Ethische Norm ist dabei ein Instrument der Bewältigung der geschichtlichen Dynamik der Moral, indem sie die menschliche Freiheit im voraus zur lebensweltlichen Erfahrung auf ein rationales Vorverständnis, auf eine Perspektive festlegt (133f.). Der Glaube ist es dabei, der trotz vielfältigen Scheiterns an der ethischen Aufgabe die Wahrnehmung konkreter moralischer Verantwortung möglich macht.

Was mir an Römelt's Buch gefällt, ist der Versuch, heutige Lebenserfahrung zu erfassen und sie bei der Konzipierung einer christlichen Ethik nicht einfach zu ignorieren. Der Leser gewinnt den Eindruck, daß R. sich der Grundströmungen gegenwärtigen Denkens und Fühlens intensiv angenommen, sie freilich nur teilweise auf ihre Richtigkeit und Angemessenheit befragt hat. Es wäre zu fragen, ob die Fremdheit des Wortes Gottes dabei nicht abgeschliffen und es süß auf der Zunge wird. Man darf gespannt sein, wie Römelt dann in der Konkretion die ethischen Fragen der Gegenwart beantwortet oder eben auch nicht!

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Tübingen, Deutschland

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

EuroJT (1997), 6:1,

Joseph Abraham: *Rereading the Old Testament A Study of Feminist Readings of Genesis 1-3*. PhD Dissertation, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford and Coventry University, 1996

Abstract

The proliferation of methods in biblical interpretation has become a notable trend in contemporary biblical scholarship. These trends have produced a climate that has been favourable to modern feminist readings of the Old Testament. The modern trends are mapped in Part One, along with the history of feminist readings and hermeneutical approaches.

Part Two, the main core of our thesis, analyses important feminist readings of the creation accounts (Gen.1-3). The readings of three major feminist biblical scholars, Phyllis Trible, Carol Meyers and Phyllis Bird, have been analysed, discussed and critiqued in detail, along with a few other shorter feminist readings of

Genesis 1-3. Broadly speaking, the feminist debate is centred around the main issue of whether the text is androcentric or egalitarian. Therefore, one's hermeneutical approach to the text basically determines the conclusion of her/his argument. In this discussion, approaches vary from hermeneutics of recuperation to hermeneutics of resistance. While some scholars try to bring about an engagement between the struggles reflected in the text and modern struggles, a few others attempt to establish a 'self-contained' feminist academy. For these, no outside critique is possible, resulting in socio-pragmatism rather than socio-criticism.

Contrary to many feminist readings, we argue that the text does not in fact address the question of egalitarianism or androcentrism, even though the context in which the text

emerged is patriarchal. A better question is whether the creation text is positive to woman in general or not. In our view, the biblical text can be made positive to woman if we recognise the effect on interpretation of cultural tendencies towards male domination, in the same way that we recognise and critique other cultural tendencies towards oppression, such as slavery and racism.

We also point out that feminist readings have no universal significance, as they cannot address many issues which fall outside gender and also because many of their presuppositions cannot hold true outside a Western setting. Even within a 'feminist framework' there are unresolved tensions between feminists and 'womanists'. Therefore, feminists have not succeeded in making their reading universal.

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• Time and the Millennium

Gordon McConville

When this issue of EJT is published we shall have entered the last 1000 days before the new millennium. That this should be thought a significant date in some quarters is no doubt extraordinary—but millennialism seems to be capable of taking on ever new forms! The expected flood of books from Christian publishing houses on the millennium and related topics has long begun to flow. Yet the most striking thing about planning for the new age, it seems to me, is its secularity. Spectacular events, provided with large budgets, are planned for the world's capitals, and time is short, the planners tell us, for the grandiose schemes to be realized. Whatever the new millennium might mean, the world is determined not to be late for it. Time indeed is of the essence. Organizers in the UK, which enjoys a rare advantage in symbolism with its possession of Greenwich, plan a celebration of time itself—an ultimate triumph, perhaps, of form over content, that well illustrates the dilemma of modern western societies over an event that cannot be ignored, but that takes as its reference point the birth of the founder of Christianity. A translation into the destructive false optimism of the *belle époque* is not far to seek.

And Christians participate in the general buzz. Might not something special be expected from God two millennia after the birth of Christ? There is inevitably no universal view. Perhaps the crude apocalypticism of a millennium ago may be avoided. Yet Christians can hardly escape a sense of anticipation, which in their case is informed by the promise of Christ's return. At the least there is a feeling that the churches ought to be able to make an impact on the celebrations, as an act of witness and a testimony to the true nature of hope.

Perhaps it is the right time to offer a word of sober caution. What after all is in

a number? The great turning-points tend to choose unmomentous-looking figures for their entrances—a 1095, 1453, or a 1517. Even 00 itself, in what might be thought an important precedent, has had to yield its glory to a 6 or 7 'BC'!—suitably enough for the birth of the carpenter from Nazareth in pointed obscurity.

And in truth the general excitement over the birth of the millennium has little to do with the thought of the next 1000 years. The popular mood is for a grand party. And if there is a kind of optimism in the air, that too does not necessarily take the long view. For the Christian, the connotations of this landmark take on a particular shape. The concept of another millennium is bound to suggest the question: how long can the present era last? Thoughts of the future are inextricably bound to thoughts of the decisive event in the past, which is yet to be completed and fulfilled. Apocalypticism can take crude forms, and be embarrassed by the passing of yet another auspicious date. But its search for the end of history is part and parcel of the Christian legacy.

Perhaps one should admit that there is value in the gigantic symbolic new beginnings, to the extent that it encourages any re-evaluation of commitments and objectives. There is an occasion here, no doubt, to appeal to our fellow human beings to embark on projects where together we have failed—to work for the healing of the gaping wounds of conflict between peoples, and of destructive ideologies. But more importantly there is a chance to put history in the perspective of eternity. Our grandest plans are put into perspective by the number 3000! Even the mighty project of the European Union is humbled by the thought of it.

How might this be done? There can hardly be a solemn announcement of the likely course of the next millennium. Nor can it be proclaimed that the world will

never see such a time as 3000 AD; that much we should learn from the last millennial alarm. And who can measure or comprehend the significance of a millennium? The true significance of a year past, or a decade, is hard enough to capture. Is it not foolish, or even dangerous pride, to raise our small voices in an attempt to herald the next 1000 years? Yet it would be wrong to retreat, even metaphorically, into our eremitical cells. What the world of 3000 AD might be like is beyond our comprehension. Yet a glance back at the last 1000 years teaches that that world will not be wholly unconnected with this. Lines were laid down then (1095 etc. etc.) that, astonishingly, still have an effect on our modern world. Memories are long! And why stop at the memories of a single millennium? The

formative events of our era are still working themselves out, as the Gospel is proclaimed to all the nations. And the seemingly passing actions of our day may have more reverberations than we would dream possible.

Nothing changes on 1, January, 2000, except the clocks, and the computers (if they can be fixed in time!). Nothing changes in the world unless church and world respond to God's call to repent, and to follow Jesus Christ in the building of his kingdom. That concept is unimpressed by numbers on the pages of a calendar. Thousands of years are like a passing day in the providence of the LORD. We do not know how long. The Christian challenge remains the same as ever: to go into all the world and make disciples of the all nations.

• Zeit und die Jahrtausendwende

Wenn diese Ausgabe der *ETZ* erschienen ist, werden wir in die Phase der letzten 1000 Tage vor der Jahrtausendwende eingetreten sein. Daß dies in einigen Kreisen als ein bedeutendes Datum angesehen wird, ist zweifellos außergewöhnlich, doch der Chiliasmus scheint in der Lage zu sein, immer neue Formen anzunehmen. Die erwartete Bücherflut von christlichen Verlagen zum tausendjährigen Reich und entsprechenden Themen hat längst eingesetzt. Doch die, aus meiner Sicht, erstaunlichste Tatsache in bezug auf die Planung für ein neues Zeitalter ist deren säkulare Ausprägung. Spektakuläre Veranstaltungen in den Metropolen der Welt, ausgestattet mit großen Etats, sind in der Planung, und die Frist zur Verwirklichung der grandiosen Entwürfe ist knapp, so sagen uns die Planer. Was auch immer das neue Jahrtausend bedeuten mag, die Welt ist entschlossen, rechtzeitig darauf vorbereitet zu sein. Zeit ist in der Tat essentiell. Die Organisatoren im

Vereinigten Königreich, das in Greenwich ein einzigartiges Plus hinsichtlich der Symbolik besitzt, planen eine Feier der Zeit selbst, den vielleicht ultimativen Triumph der Form über den Inhalt, der das Dilemma der modernen westlichen Gesellschaften eindrucksvoll illustriert, nämlich ein Ereignis betreffend, das nicht ignoriert werden kann, doch das seinen Ausgangspunkt hat in der Geburt des Gründers des Christentums. Eine Übertragung in den destruktiven falschen Optimismus der *belle époque* liegt nahe.

Und auch Christen beteiligen sich an dem allgemeinen Wirbel. Ist zweitausend Jahre nach der Geburt Christi nicht etwas besonderes von Gott zu erwarten? Diesbezüglich gehen die Meinungen natürlich auseinander. Vielleicht aber läßt sich der primitive Apokalyptizismus, der sich vor tausend Jahren abspielte, diesmal vermeiden. Doch Christen werden sich einer gewissen Erwartungshaltung kaum entziehen können, die gleichwohl in ihrem Fall von der

Verheißung der Wiederkunft Christi inspiriert ist. Zumindest herrscht die Empfindung vor, daß die Kirchen in der Lage sein sollten, einen Einfluß auf die Feiern auszuüben, indem sie als Zeugen auftreten und eine Aussage über die Beschaffenheit echter Hoffnung machen.

Vielleicht ist es an der Zeit, ein Wort der Vorsicht zu äußern. Worin besteht schon die Bedeutung einer Zahl? Die großen Wendepunkte tendieren dazu, unscheinbar wirkende Jahreszahlen für ihr Auftreten zu wählen, wie z. B. 1095, 1453, oder 1517. Selbst das Jahr 0, das als wichtiger Präzedenzfall angesehen werden mag, muß seinen Nimbus an die Zahl 6 oder 7 "v. Chr." abtreten! Dies jedoch mutet als überaus passend an für die bemerkenswert unbeachtete Geburt des Tischlers von Nazareth.

Doch in Wirklichkeit hat die allgemeine Aufregung über die Geburt des neuen Jahrtausends kaum etwas zu tun mit dem Gedanken an die nächsten 1000 Jahre. Die Öffentlichkeit erwartet einfach eine grandiose Feier. Und selbst wenn so etwas wie Optimismus in der Luft liegt, so ist auch dieser nicht notwendigerweise von einem solchen Weitblick geprägt. Für Christen nimmt dagegen die Tragweite dieses Wendepunkts ganz andere Formen an. Der Gedanke an ein weiteres Jahrtausend wirft notgedrungen die Frage auf, wie lange das gegenwärtige Zeitalter noch andauern mag. Alle Zukunftsgedanken sind also unlöslich verbunden mit der Erinnerung an das einschneidende Ereignis der Vergangenheit, dessen Vollen- dung und Erfüllung noch ausstehen. Der Apokalyptizismus mag zwar primitive Formen annehmen und in Verlegenheit geraten angesichts des Verstreichens eines weiteren erfolgversprechenden Datums, doch seine Erwartung des Endes aller Geschichte ist Teil des christlichen Vermächtnisses.

Vielleicht sollte man eingestehen, daß die gigantischen symbolischen Neuanfänge einen Wert haben, insofern als sie zu einer neuen Bewertung eigener Vorsätze und Ziele ermutigen. Dies ist ohne Zweifel ein Anlaß, an unsere

Mitmenschen zu appellieren, in Projekte zu investieren, wo wir gemeinsam versagt haben, d. h. an der Heilung der durch zwischenmenschliche Konflikte und destruktive Ideologien hervorgerufenen klaffenden Wunden zu arbeiten. Doch von weitaus größerer Bedeutung ist die sich hier bietende Chance, die Geschichte aus der Sicht der Ewigkeit zu betrachten. Unsere großartigsten Pläne erscheinen in einem neuen Licht anläßlich der Zahl 3000! Selbst das gewaltige Projekt der Europäischen Union wird im Gedanken daran in seine Schranken verwiesen.

Wie kann dies alles erreicht werden? Wohl kaum durch die feierliche Vorhersage des wahrscheinlichen Verlaufs des nächsten Jahrtausends. Es kann auch nicht behauptet werden, die Welt würde niemals ein Jahr 3000 n. Chr. erleben, so viel sollten wir von der Aufregung anläßlich der letzten Jahrtausendwende lernen. Wer könnte schon die Bedeutung eines Jahrtausends ermessen oder verstehen? Es ist bereits schwierig genug, die wahre Bedeutung eines vergangenen Jahres oder Jahrzehnts zu erfassen. Ist es nicht eine törichte, ja vielleicht sogar gefährliche Anmaßung, unsere schwachen Stimmen laut werden zu lassen beim Versuch, die nächsten 1000 Jahre anzukündigen? Und doch wäre es falsch, uns, und sei es auch nur in einem metaphorischen Sinn, in ein Eremitendasein zurückzuziehen. Wie die Welt des Jahres 3000 n. Chr. aussehen mag, liegt jenseits unseres Verstehens. Doch ein Blick zurück auf die letzten 1000 Jahre lehrt uns, daß jene Welt nicht vollkommen losgelöst sein wird von dieser. Damals (1095 usw.) wurden Richtungsvorgaben gemacht, die erstaunlicherweise noch immer einen Einfluß auf unsere moderne Welt ausüben. Erinnerungen halten lange vor! Doch warum sollten wir bei den Erinnerungen an ein einziges Jahrtausend haltmachen? Die unsere Zeitrechnung maßgeblich prägenden Ereignisse haben noch heute Auswirkungen, indem das Evangelium allen Nationen verkündigt wird. Und die scheinbar beiläufigen Ereignisse unserer Tage mögen mehr Resonanzen hervorrufen, als wir auch

nur im Traum für möglich halten würden.

Nichts verändert sich am 1. Januar 2000 abgesehen von den Uhren und den Computern (sofern sie rechtzeitig repariert werden können). Nichts verändert sich in der Welt, es sei denn die Kirche und die Welt reagieren auf Gottes Aufforderung, Buße zu tun und Jesus Christus zu folgen beim Bau seines Reiches. Dieser

Plan bleibt derselbe, unbeeindruckt von der Anzahl der Seiten eines Kalenders. Tausende von Jahren sind wie ein flüchtiger Tag in der Vorsehung des Herrn. Wir wissen nicht, wie lange noch. Die christliche Herausforderung jedoch bleibt dieselbe wie ehemals: in alle Welt zu gehen und alle Völker zu Jüngern zu machen.

• Le Temps et le III^e millénaire

Quand ce numéro du J.E.T. paraîtra, nous serons déjà entrés dans les mille derniers jours avant l'an 2000. Que cette date soit considérée comme importante par beaucoup, est, à la réflexion, un fait étonnant. Mais le millénarisme semble toujours capable de prendre de nouvelles formes. Comme on pouvait s'y attendre de la part des maisons chrétiennes d'édition, un flot abondant d'ouvrages consacrés au changement de millénaire et aux sujets s'y rapportant a commencé depuis longtemps à se déverser sur le marché. Pourtant, ce qui frappe le plus concernant les projets relatifs à la nouvelle période qui va s'ouvrir, c'est, à mon avis, leur caractère séculier. Des événements spectaculaires, couverts par d'importants budgets, sont prévus pour les capitales du monde, et le temps est court, à ce que nous disent les planificateurs, pour réaliser ces programmes grandioses. Quel que soit le sens du nouveau millénaire, le monde est déterminé à ne pas être en retard pour l'accueillir. Le temps est vraiment ici de première importance. Au Royaume Uni, les organisateurs des festivités jouissent d'un rare privilège symbolique, puisqu'ils disposent du méridien de Greenwich. Ils projettent donc une célébration du temps lui-même, ce qui représente peut-être le triomphe ultime de la forme sur le contenu. Ceci illustre bien le dilemme des sociétés occidentales modernes à propos d'un événement qui ne peut être ignoré, mais qui a pour point de référence la

naissance du fondateur du christianisme. On se croirait presque de retour à la Belle Époque avec son faux optimisme destructeur!

Les chrétiens prennent part à ce tintamarre général. Ne pourrait-on pas attendre quelque chose de spécial de la part de Dieu deux millénaires après la naissance de Jésus-Christ? Sans doute pourra-t-on éviter la crainte de l'apocalypse qui imprégnait les esprits il y a mille ans. Cependant les chrétiens peuvent difficilement échapper à un sentiment d'expectative qui, dans leur cas, est nourri par la promesse du retour de Christ. Pour le moins, on a le sentiment que les Églises devraient imprimer leur marque sur les festivités en proclamant la véritable espérance.

Peut-être est-ce la bonne occasion d'exhorter à une certaine sobriété. Après tout, qu'y a-t-il dans un nombre? Les grands changements ont tendance à choisir des chiffres apparemment insignifiants pour se manifester: 1095, 1453 ou 1517. Même le zéro lui-même, dans lequel on pourrait voir un important précédent, a dû abandonner sa gloire à l'an 6 ou 7 avant Jésus-Christ, — tout à fait approprié à la naissance du charpentier de Nazareth qui se produisit dans une relative obscurité.

En vérité, la fièvre générale que suscite l'avènement d'un nouveau millénaire a peu de rapport avec une réflexion sur les mille prochaines années. L'humeur est à la fête. Et s'il y a une sorte d'optimisme dans l'air, ce n'est pas nécessairement en

considérant le long terme. Pour le chrétien, la signification de cet événement prend des contours particuliers. L'idée d'un nouveau millénaire suggère naturellement cette question: quelle sera la durée de l'ère actuelle? Notre façon d'envisager l'avenir est indissolublement liée au souvenir de l'événement décisif qui a eu lieu dans le passé, et qui doit cependant encore être porté à son plein accomplissement. L'attente apocalyptique peut prendre des formes grossières et se trouver embarrassée par l'avènement d'une nouvelle époque favorable. Mais sa tension vers la fin de l'histoire fait partie intégrante de l'héritage chrétien.

Peut-être devrait-on accorder une certaine valeur aux grands commencements symboliques dans la mesure où cela peut encourager la réévaluation de nos engagements et de nos objectifs. Nous pouvons trouver là une occasion d'appeler nos contemporains à s'engager dans des projets où, ensemble, nous avons échoué: pour travailler à guérir les blessures causées par les conflits entre les peuples ou les idéologies destructrices. Mais plus important encore, c'est là l'occasion de replacer l'histoire dans la perspective de l'éternité. Nos projets les plus importants sont mis en perspective par le nombre 3000! Même le vaste projet de l'Union Européenne est ramené à une place modeste par cette pensée.

Comment cela pourrait-il se faire? Nous ne sommes pas en mesure de dire quel sera le cours probable des événements lors du prochain millénaire. On ne peut pas non plus proclamer que le monde ne verra jamais l'an 3000. Nous devrions au moins apprendre cela des peurs de l'an mil. Qui peut mesurer ou appréhender ce que représentera un millénaire de plus?

La signification véritable d'une année passée ou d'une dizaine d'années est déjà assez difficile à saisir. Ne serait-il pas présomptueux, et même insensé, de prétendre annoncer ce que seront les mille prochaines années? Pourtant il ne serait pas juste de nous retirer, même métaphoriquement, dans nos cellules d'ermite. Ce à quoi pourra éventuellement ressembler le monde de l'an 3000 dépasse notre compréhension. Néanmoins, un regard en arrière sur les mille dernières années nous enseigne que le monde d'alors ne sera pas totalement sans lien avec le monde d'aujourd'hui. Des lignes ont été tracées alors qui, de manière étonnante, ont encore des répercussions sur notre monde moderne. Les souvenirs ont la vie longue! Et pourquoi s'arrêter au souvenir d'un seul millénaire? Les événements qui ont façonné notre ère sont encore en cours, puisque l'Evangile est en train d'être annoncé à toutes les nations. Et les entreprises dans lesquelles nous nous lançons aujourd'hui et qui paraissent bien éphémères peuvent avoir des répercussions au-delà de tout ce que nous pourrions imaginer.

Rien ne changera le 1^{er} Janvier 2000, sinon les horloges et les ordinateurs (s'ils peuvent être réglés à temps). Rien ne changera dans le monde à moins que l'Eglise et le monde répondent à l'appel de Dieu à se repentir et à suivre Jésus-Christ dans l'établissement de son royaume. Cet appel n'est pas inscrit dans les chiffres du calendrier. Mille ans sont comme un jour dans la providence du Seigneur. Nous ne savons pas combien de temps l'ère présente durera. Mais la vocation chrétienne reste plus que jamais la même: aller dans le monde entier pour faire de toutes les nations des disciples.

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Editor: John R.W. Stott

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- ***Starker Gott oder schwacher Gott? Zur Theologie des Kreuzes***

Paul Wells, Aix-en-Provence

SUMMARY

The idea of an almighty God no longer seems plausible. J. Moltmann, Process theology, and 'theologies of the weak God' present attractive alternatives. However, 'classical theism', with necessary contextual adjustments, still has cards to play and some of its advocates have done so rather well in recent years. The writings of G. van den Brink, R.A. Muller, A. de Muralt, W.C. Placher, G. Bray and P. Helm are referred to.

The thesis of this article is as follows: two views (at least) of divine almightiness are unacceptable: that which presents God as per se knowing no limits, and that which proposes that God is powerless or has become paradoxically weak. The first contradicts divine wisdom; the second endangers biblical eschatology, because a weak God would be fundamentally

incapable of promising salvation or new creation.

Three lines are proposed in this synopsis. How did the Reformers speak about almighty God? Sometimes Luther and Calvin (the theologian of the cross and the theologian of predestination) are played off against each other—but this is not altogether satisfactory. Their ideas, and particularly the theological structure of Calvin's thought, are set against the background of the developing Christian tradition of an almighty God. Finally, the 'pauline paradox' of the power and apparent weakness of God, revealed at the cross and in the gospel, is one way to move beyond the opposition of divine power or weakness.

Are we, as Christians, living in such a way as to demonstrate that 'evangelical power' is found in service and humility?

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Konzept eines allmächtigen Gottes erscheint nicht länger plausibel. J. Moltmann, die Prozeßtheologie sowie die "Theologien eines schwachen Gottes" bieten attraktive Alternativen. Doch der "klassische Theismus"—notwendige kontextuelle Justierungen vorausgesetzt—hat noch immer Karten in der Hinterhand, die auch in den letzten Jahren von einigen seiner Vertreter mit Erfolg ausgespielt worden

sind. Die Schriften von G. van den Brink, R. A. Muller, A. de Muralt, W. C. Placher, G. Bray und P. Helm seien hier genannt.

Dieser Artikel stellt die These auf, daß (zumindest) zwei Sichtweisen der göttlichen Allmacht inakzeptabel sind: diejenige, welche Gott als per se grenzenlos darstellt, und die, nach deren Behauptung Gott machtlos ist oder paradoxerweise schwach geworden ist. Die erste Sicht steht im Widerspruch zur göttlichen Weisheit; die zweite

gefährdet die biblische Eschatologie, da ein schwacher Gott vollkommen unfähig wäre, Rettung oder eine neue Schöpfung zu verheißen.

In diesem Abriss sollen drei Gedankengänge aufgezeigt werden. In welcher Weise sprachen die Reformatoren über den allmächtigen Gott? Manchmal werden Luther und Calvin (der Theologe des Kreuzes und der Theologe der Prädestination) gegeneinander ausgespielt, was jedoch nicht vollkommen befriedigen kann. Ihre Ideen, vor allem die theologische

Struktur der Gedanken Calvins, werden im Kontext der sich entwickelnden christlichen Tradition eines allmächtigen Gottes beleuchtet. Und zuletzt: das "paulinische Paradox" der Macht und scheinbaren Schwachheit Gottes, offenbart am Kreuz und im Evangelium, ist ein Weg, den Gegensatz von göttlicher Macht und Schwachheit zu überwinden.

Leben wir als Christen auf eine Art und Weise, die demonstriert, daß "evangelikale Macht" in Dienst und Demut zu finden ist?

"Nulle part l'Écriture ne pose des limites à la puissance de Dieu... Il est impossible de donner une explication cohérente de l'existence du monde en dehors de la foi en un Dieu tout-puissant."

Herman Bavinck

"Le théologien chrétien ne peut pas plus échapper à l'influence de la métaphysique qu'il ne peut se défaire de sa peau."

Paul Helm

"Il ne nous est sans doute plus possible de caractériser Dieu comme toute-puissance¹." Il est évident que les chrétiens d'aujourd'hui ne semblent pas éprouver beaucoup d'enthousiasme face à l'idée d'un Dieu tout-puissant. Cette notion ne correspond plus à la vision standard du monde et de son histoire. Des objections fusent: cette doctrine limite, minimise, la responsabilité humaine, elle ne tient pas devant le problème du mal, elle est le résultat d'une pathologie de l'esprit humain ou elle relève d'une mentalité patriarcale sexiste. L'aspiration des chrétiens à avoir une divinité 'politiquement correcte' peut leur faire oublier que la plausibilité psychologique ne garantit aucunement la vérité théologique...

C'est ainsi que le Dieu faible devient attirant, car selon une expression consacrée: 'seul le Dieu souffrant peut nous aider'². Si la théologie du Process parle de la souffrance du Dieu faible, avec ou dans la création³, certains, comme J. Moltmann, vont plus loin et introduisent

les notions de faiblesse et de *pathos* en Dieu lui-même, comme étant l'expérience partagée du Père et du Fils, expérience qui atteint son sommet dans la parole d'abandon prononcée sur la croix. D'autres évoquent la tristesse infinie, la tragédie, l'accompagnement souffrant ou la douleur de Dieu⁴.

Devant un sujet si vaste, notre propos se limitera à répondre à la question suivante: comment les Réformateurs, en particulier Jean Calvin, ont-ils parlé de la puissance de Dieu? Nous le ferons selon trois axes: la tradition théologique de l'Eglise, particulièrement la chrétienté latine, les repères théologiques de Calvin, et le 'paradoxe paulinien' de la faiblesse et de la force de Dieu. Dans cette présentation, il ira de soi qu'un concept 'classique' de Dieu propre au théisme, s'il n'est pas le dernier modèle sur le marché, reste le plus cohérent et le plus proche du donné biblique, et que les Réformateurs ont contribué à le façonner de manière innovatrice en le personnalisant.

I. Les Réformateurs et la Tradition

L'idée d'un Dieu tout-puissant, à la différence de certaines affirmations courantes, n'est pas due à l'influence grecque sur la pensée chrétienne. Contrairement aux notions d'impassibilité ou d'éternité de Dieu, celle de toute-puissance ne semble pas exister dans la mythologie ou dans la philosophie helléniques⁵. Elle est vétéro-

testamentaire avant de trouver sa place dans le *Symbole des Apôtres*⁶. Trois aspects de la notion de puissance se dégagent des textes:

la domination universelle de Dieu, la puissance de Dieu sur la réalité, qui correspond au Dieu 'Sabaoth', expression utilisée 170 fois dans la Septante; la puissance de Dieu, qui prend soin des créatures et manifeste son pouvoir dans la réalité créée. C'est la providence. Ceci correspond au terme *pantokrator* utilisé en plusieurs passages de l'Apocalypse⁷; la puissance en tant que capacité qui permet à Dieu de réaliser ce qu'il veut dans tous les mondes possibles. Rien n'est trop difficile pour le Seigneur, Abraham l'a compris⁸: ce qui est impossible aux hommes est possible à Dieu.

G. van den Brink, dans son livre remarquable, *Almighty God*, affirme que de ces trois aspects, le premier est fondamental, le second en est la manifestation matérielle et quotidienne, alors que le troisième, qui est aussi présent dans l'Écriture, est devenu l'objet d'innombrables discussions théologiques⁹. En un sens, il a pris le pas sur les deux premiers. Il est intéressant de savoir comment...

Vers 1067, dans le monastère du Mont-Cassin en Italie, le recteur Didier et Pierre Damien ont passé une soirée agréable à discuter une question qui peut étonner, rapportée en ces termes:

Nous étions à table lorsque cette parole du bienheureux Jérôme fut citée dans la conversation: "Je vais, dit-il, parler hardiment: bien que Dieu puisse tout, il ne peut rendre vierge celle qui ne l'est plus"¹⁰. Tel est, au Moyen Age, le prélude à toutes les discussions sur la nature de la toute-puissance de Dieu. Il est difficile de comprendre la position théologique des Réformateurs sur la toute-puissance de Dieu sans s'interroger sur la nature de la tradition qui les précède. Dieu est-il *capable* de tout, sa puissance est-elle donc absolue et se manifeste-t-elle de façon entièrement libre dans son action? Ou bien Dieu agit-il de telle sorte que sa volonté exprime ses autres attributs? Ainsi naît la question théologique fondamentale: la puissance divine est-elle une *potentia*

absoluta ou une *potentia ordinata*?

Quel est l'enjeu de cette question? Le fait que les meilleures intelligences de toute une époque se soient évertuées à y réfléchir montre bien qu'il s'agit d'autre chose que d'un jeu de pure spéculation destiné à meubler l'oisiveté monacale. Si Dieu est capable de *tout*, parce que sa puissance est absolue, il peut même reconstituer une virginité perdue. Cependant l'Écriture affirme, en effet, qu'il y a des choses que Dieu ne peut pas faire—mentir, être infidèle à lui-même, oublier ses promesses, ou mourir. En revanche, dire que Dieu n'a pas de capacités au-delà de ce qui existe dans la réalité (ainsi Dieu ne peut redonner la virginité à celle qui n'est plus vierge), c'est dire que Dieu, dans sa volonté, n'est pas 'plus grand' que ce qui existe. Dieu et le monde auraient des 'vies parallèles' et Dieu, en quelque sorte, serait conditionné par le monde. Cette conception débouche sur l'idée que Dieu et le monde correspondent, d'une certaine façon, l'un à l'autre. Dieu est identifié à ce qu'est le monde; l'aboutissement d'une telle conception serait une forme de panthéisme ou de panenthéisme. L'Écriture, au contraire, indique que Dieu peut faire plus qu'il ne fait et bien plus que ce que nous pouvons imaginer.

Ce débat cherche donc à tenir ensemble la transcendance et l'immanence de Dieu, son altérité et la réalité de ses actions dans le monde. Dieu n'est pas identifié à 'ce qui est': il dépasse la réalité. Et, en même temps, Dieu n'est pas immobile, distant ou inactif dans le monde.

Quel rapport existe-t-il entre les deux types de puissance, la *puissance absolue* et la *puissance de la volonté*? En fait, il ne s'agit pour personne de deux puissances, mais plutôt de deux façons de concevoir la même réalité. La solution que le Moyen Age a proposée à ce problème, avec Anselme¹¹, au moins en un premier temps, a été de dire que la puissance absolue de Dieu est une capacité abstraite, théorique, que Dieu n'exerce jamais dans le monde. Il s'agirait de tout ce qu'un Dieu infini et éternel serait capable d'accomplir dans tous les mondes imaginables. Pour tant, quand Dieu agit dans le monde en se

révélant, il le fait par la puissance de sa volonté. Cette puissance est une expression de ce que Dieu a choisi de faire conformément à sa propre nature, selon les lois qu'il a établies lui-même dans l'ordre naturel et moral du monde comme dans la révélation spéciale de l'histoire biblique du salut. Voici une illustration banale: un être humain est capable de battre un petit chien, car il a une puissance absolue sur cet animal, mais il choisira volontiers de ne pas le faire, et il ne le fera jamais, s'il aime les animaux. Ainsi son pouvoir ne se manifeste pas et sa puissance ne s'exprime que dans le soin qu'il prend du chien. Anselme a dit au sujet de la puissance absolue que Dieu peut, mais qu'il ne veut pas (*potuit non voluit*) l'exercer.

La distinction entre la toute-puissance de Dieu et sa puissance en actes cherche donc à maintenir côte à côte la souveraineté autarcique de Dieu et la contingence radicale de la création et de la liberté humaine. Ces réalités sont gouvernées selon leurs principes propres, conformément à la volonté de Dieu, qui n'intervient pas avec son pouvoir absolu pour changer les règles du jeu. Ainsi sont fondées les notions d'alliance et d'économie du salut, qui expriment non pas la puissance absolue de Dieu, mais sa volonté d'être le partenaire de ses créatures¹². C'est bien ainsi que Thomas d'Aquin semble avoir compris cette distinction et Calvin après lui, lorsque tous deux y font référence, même s'ils sont, l'un et l'autre, très réticents à l'utiliser¹³. Et quel est le *Deus nudus absconditus* de Luther sinon celui qui nous est inconnu et qui ne nous concerne pas, alors que le Dieu associé à la souffrance de la croix révèle la volonté divine de nous sauver, non dans un acte de puissance absolue, mais dans un acte qui est tout le contraire¹⁴?

En théologie, il se passe de 'drôles' de choses... et pas seulement pour des raisons théologiques! Dans l'histoire de la théologie, le principe des 'choix contraires' joue un rôle important. Augustiniens et pélagiens, calvinistes et arminiens, orthodoxes et libre penseurs, rationalistes et piétistes, libéraux et barthiens, biblicistes et sécularistes, fondamentalistes et progressistes...

constituent autant d'aiguillages spectaculaires. La tendance, pendant les cinq siècles qui séparent Anselme de la Réforme, est à l'opérationnalisation progressive de la puissance absolue de Dieu, de sorte qu'à la fin du Moyen Âge la distinction entre ces deux puissances a été inversée. La puissance volontaire de Dieu est ce qu'il fait selon sa loi, *de jure*, alors que la puissance absolue est ce que Dieu peut faire pour dépasser l'ordre établi par lui, *de facto*, même en y contrevenant. La puissance absolue de Dieu n'est plus une capacité théorique et abstraite, mais une réalité dans le monde qui fait fi des causes secondaires. Ainsi la puissance de Dieu est comprise comme sa décision d'intervenir là où il veut, quand il veut et comme il veut, sans considération de ses autres attributs.

Cette notion de puissance absolue de Dieu, qui accentue sa liberté sans limite de faire tout ce qu'il veut, a souvent été décrite par les mots 'arbitraire', 'imprévisible', voire 'irrationnelle'¹⁵. C'est ainsi que, dans les cercles occamistes d'Oxford au XIV^e siècle, on discutait de la notion de 'tromperie divine' et de la possibilité pour Dieu de dire des mensonges. Cette idée était combattue par Thomas Bradwardine et Grégoire de Rimini et, en 1347, Jean de Mirecourt a été officiellement condamné pour avoir maintenu que Dieu pouvait mentir *de potentia absoluta*.

La notion de l'exercice de la puissance absolue de Dieu dans le monde s'est ainsi introduite dans toutes les débats théologiques, y compris celle sur la justification, et a contribué à ébranler la certitude en la fidélité de Dieu et en la stabilité de ses desseins, créant un climat d'incertitude spirituelle. Cette puissance absolue a favorisé le développement de la puissance de l'Eglise qui est devenue comme un havre de certitude. Ainsi, la scène était préparée pour la Réforme et la protestation des Réformateurs contre la notion de puissance absolue.

II. Calvin: Quelques Répères Théologiques

Trois écueils existent en ce qui concerne notre interprétation de la puissance de

Dieu chez Calvin: négliger l'arrière plan historique, opposer le prédicateur et le 'systématicien' et mal interpréter la nature de son système.

1. Les trois écueils

En ce qui concerne l'arrière-plan historique, Calvin est un ennemi acharné de cette doctrine de la puissance absolue de Dieu, qu'il qualifie de fabrication des docteurs papistes et une "chose détestable et diabolique", "un blasphème inventé en enfer"¹⁶. Ce n'est pas l'*Institution Chrétienne* qui nous dira le contraire:

Nous n'approuvons pas la rêverie des théologiens papistes, touchant la puissance absolue de Dieu: car ce qu'ils gergonnent est profane... Nous n'imaginons point aussi un Dieu qui n'ait nulle loi, vu qu'il est loi à soi-même¹⁷. Comme le dit R. Stauffer, contrairement à A. Ritschl, Calvin n'entend pas séparer la puissance de Dieu, qui est toujours équilibrée, de ses autres attributs, en particulier son amour, sa sagesse, sa justice et sa bonté. Ceci suffit à nous avertir que faire de Calvin un théologien de la toute-puissance tyrannique, c'est se tromper de cible¹⁸.

En deuxième lieu, en ce qui concerne l'opposition entre le prédicateur et le systématicien, J. T. McNeill nous rappelle que la somme de Calvin, l'oeuvre de sa vie, l'*Institution Chrétienne*, n'est pas un système de théologie, mais un manuel de piété, un catéchisme:

Il est important, dit-il, de se rendre compte que le point focal de l'*Institution* ne se trouve ni en la souveraineté divine, ni en la prédestination, ni même en l'obéissance à la Parole de Dieu qui sont considérées avec une référence constante à Jésus-Christ que la Parole ait connaître¹⁹.

Cela veut dire qu'il est hasardeux de juxtaposer les différents textes de Calvin selon leur genre. Même si le discours pastoral peut se situer à un niveau différent, il ne s'ensuit pas qu'il faille considérer l'*Institution* comme une oeuvre de logique déductive où tout découle de la source que serait la toute-puissance de Dieu.

Enfin, concernant le troisième écueil,

on a essayé parfois d'établir des oppositions entre différentes parties de la somme de Calvin, en prétendant que dans le tome I, Calvin parle de Dieu en dehors de la christologie, alors qu'il s'exprime autrement dans les tomes II et III. Cependant, les questions de structure, d'articulation d'une oeuvre ne sont pas nécessairement déterminantes pour interpréter la pensée d'un auteur. Sa compréhension de la matière, surtout dans un ouvrage comme l'*Institution*, écrit sur presque une trentaine d'années a forcément un caractère global, qui correspond à une vision d'ensemble et n'affecte pas sa manière d'être exposée.

Et comment Calvin présente-t-il Dieu dans le tome I? A la manière des scolastiques, comme une cause première²⁰? Peut-on partir de la nature du monde pour arriver à connaître Dieu? Non, dit Calvin, proche en cela de Luther. Calvin refuse de considérer l'essence de Dieu avant la révélation de Dieu. Il ne parle que rarement des attributs de Dieu, pratique courante depuis que Jean Damascène en a établi un classement célèbre dans *De la foi orthodoxe*. Ce que Calvin dit sur la nature de Dieu se réduit, en fait, à sa spiritualité et à son immensité, qui sont reconnues comme le situant au-delà de la compréhension humaine. Le Réformateur français se refuse à énumérer *a priori* les attributs de Dieu et à en déduire comment Dieu agit. Dieu n'est pas l'objet de la pensée spéculative, une cause première, comme c'est le cas même chez Zwingli, mais il est toujours la personne qui doit être adorée. Contrairement à la pensée du Moyen Age, qui met la nature de Dieu à la première place, et les personnes de la Trinité à la seconde, Calvin, suivant Luther, renverse cet ordre, et met en tête la connaissance de la personne de Dieu. La théologie de Calvin est théocentrique, un "personnalisme remplaçant un substantialisme."²¹

Il y a complémentarité entre Luther et Calvin car, comme le dit M. Lienhard, dans la théologie de la croix du Réformateur allemand, "il y a une perspective théocentrique marquée"; il est permis de penser que Calvin a développé cette vi-

sion fondamentale de Luther en l'utilisant comme fondement doctrinal pour la lecture de l'Écriture²².

2. Calvin, théologien de la logique contraignante de la toute-puissance?

Quelle est la structure de la pensée de Calvin? S'agit-il d'une logique contraignante partant d'un prédestinarisme qui fait de la croix une simple fonction de la toute-puissance? Nous proposerons, suivant l'exposé récent de R.A. Muller²³, que la théologie du Réformateur genevois n'est ni une théologie de la force découlant d'un Dieu tout-puissant, ni une théologie qui exclut l'humilité et l'abaissement de Dieu. L'accommodation et la condescendance divines sont des mots-clefs de Calvin²⁴, qui est, avant tout, un théologien de la médiation christique. Il existe, dans sa pensée, un tissu de relations entre les doctrines focales que sont: l'élection éternelle et secrète de Dieu, la personne de Christ, le Dieu manifesté dans la chair, et le salut appliqué, selon l'économie de l'alliance de grâce²⁵. Quelle est donc la nature du lien entre le conseil de Dieu, la christologie et l'ordre du salut?

Il faut noter, d'abord, que Calvin, lorsqu'il parle de Dieu, le fait de façon trinitaire, c'est-à-dire dans la perspective des personnes divines et non dans celle de la nature divine comme première cause derrière tout ce qui existe. L'intérêt que porte Calvin au rapport entre l'élection divine et la révélation de la volonté de Dieu en Christ dans l'incarnation et le salut n'est pas spéculatif. Commentant Jean 14:6, Calvin dit:

(Christ) est le chemin parce qu'il nous mène au Père; il est la vérité et la vie, parce que nous appréhendons le Père en lui... Car le Christ prouve qu'il est la vie parce que Dieu, en qui gît la source de vie n'est point possédé ailleurs qu'en lui²⁶.

La connaissance de Dieu dépend de la médiation de Christ, Dieu manifesté dans la chair, en qui tous les aspects du salut, de l'*ordo salutis*, trouvent leur origine et leur convergence. Il n'y a donc pas de *Deus nudus absconditus* qui plane comme une menace sur la théologie de Calvin, pas

plus que chez Luther! Il est impossible de faire référence aux décrets éternels de Dieu en dehors de l'économie trinitaire de la révélation par laquelle le salut est accompli par le Fils et appliqué par l'Esprit.

Quel est le rôle de Christ en tant que médiateur? Christ est celui qui unit en lui le divin et l'humain, le fini et l'infini, le temporel et l'éternel. La personne divine infinie assume la finitude de la nature humaine, *infinitum capax finiti*, et Dieu saisit la nature humaine dans une action qui relève de la grâce seule²⁷. Cette perspective et elle fondamentalement différente de celle du Luther de 1517, dont M. Lienhard écrit: "le Christ est pour Luther... à la fois Dieu qui se tourne vers l'homme, et le Fils devenu homme qui se tourne vers le Père"²⁸? Avec Calvin, nous sommes aussi loin d'une théologie de la gloire qu'avec Luther. Calvin ne cesse de dire que nous sommes incapables d'appréhender Dieu²⁹. A cause de la médiation unique de Christ, la seule connaissance possible de Dieu est celle du *Dieu incarné*, non de Dieu en lui-même. Ainsi commentant Jean 14:6ss, Calvin critique la spéculation:

... Toute théologie qui est hors de Jésus-Christ est non seulement brouillée, vaine et confuse, mais aussi pleine de rêveries, fausse et bâtarde... c'est une curiosité sotte et nuisible quand les hommes, ne se contentant point de lui, aspirent à Dieu par des voies obliques et tortueuses... Cette sotte cupidité ne vient pas d'ailleurs que d'un mépris de la petitesse et basse condition de Jésus-Christ... (qui) nous montre en cela la bonté infinie du Père... Je rapporte ces paroles, non pas à l'essence divine de Jésus-Christ, mais au moyen de la révélation; car Jésus-Christ nous est aussi peu connu que son Père quant à sa déité occulte³⁰.

Cette christologie fonctionnelle de Calvin, liée à la notion de médiation accomplie par la personne de Christ, a deux axes, l'un éternel et vertical, l'autre temporel et horizontal³¹. Ainsi le Fils de Dieu incarné unit le plan de Dieu, son décret, et la réception du salut qui est la conséquence temporelle de l'oeuvre de

Christ. La centralité de la christologie et la notion de la médiation nécessaire pour connaître Dieu éliminent toute possibilité d'établir un lien direct entre le salut et une prédestination en dehors de Christ. C'est pour cette raison que R.A. Muller affirme que chez Calvin, comme chez W. Musculus et T. de Bèze, la christologie a "une priorité métaphysique" sur la prédestination et que si nous parlons de 'causalité' ce n'est pas dans le contexte du décret secret que nous pouvons le faire, mais uniquement à la lumière de la médiation christologique³². C'est peut-être pour cette raison également que la prédestination a été déplacée de la doctrine de la providence, pour être placée dans le tome III de l'*Institution Chrétienne*.³³

Qu'est-ce que cela implique pour le rapport entre le salut en Christ—Jésus-Christ comme médiateur—et le décret divin? Calvin affirme que Christ est médiateur à la fois dans sa divinité et dans son humanité. Ceci semble être capital. Si nous considérons Christ comme Fils éternel de Dieu, il est un avec le Père; et, en tant que 'Dieu de Dieu', *autotheos*, il se désigne avec le Père comme celui qui accomplira la rédemption. En revanche, si nous pensons à l'humanité de Christ, il est subordonné au Père et accepte l'oeuvre du salut comme médiateur humain. L'abaissement à l'état d'humiliation concerne non seulement l'humanité, mais aussi la divinité³⁴. Comme le dit P. Jacobs, "Jésus-Christ est l'élection même." Autrement dit, la personne concrète du médiateur, en qui le salut se réalise historiquement, manifeste, dans l'histoire, la volonté divine de sauver³⁵.

Ainsi le Christ de Calvin est plus qu'un simple "miroir (*speculum*) de l'élection"³⁶, idée qui prend de l'ampleur dans les présentations de la pensée calvinienne par K. Barth ou G.C. Berkouwer. Christ est à la fois le Dieu qui élit et l'homme élu qui s'abaisse et souffre tous les jours de sa vie, surtout à la fin quand il meurt sur la croix³⁷.

Si le décret divin est la cause de l'incarnation laquelle est, à son tour, la raison du salut, le médiateur est loin d'être

simplement celui qui exécute une volonté étrangère. Comme médiateur divin, Christ est le Dieu décideur, et comme médiateur humain, il est l'acteur du salut. La personne unique de Christ dans son abaissement et son humiliation est la grâce de Dieu envers nous.

Nous retrouvons chez Calvin une structure prédestination/christologie, comparable à la dialectique du Réformateur allemand. Chez Luther, pour qui Christ est aussi le miroir de l'élection, l'oeuvre propre de Dieu est de faire grâce et de remettre nos péchés, et son oeuvre *impropre* concerne les peines de la croix, la destruction du péché. Nous ne cherchons donc pas la prédestination au-delà de Christ, car ce sont ses souffrances qui constituent la solution du problème de la prédestination. Le fait que la condamnation et le pardon se trouvent ainsi unis exprime notre acceptation auprès de Dieu³⁸.

Chez Calvin, la christologie a un axe vertical qui renvoie à la décision divine. Elle a, aussi, une dimension horizontale et temporelle. Christ, qui a accompli l'élection divine, est celui qui sauve, selon l'ordre du salut qui applique ce qui a été accompli: vocation, foi, justification, sanctification, persévérance et glorification. Christ est médiateur du salut, car, par ce processus, il unit à lui ses enfants. Encore un thème cher à Luther, l'union avec Christ, qui permet au croyant d'aller à la croix avec son péché et d'y recevoir l'amour de Dieu qu'elle représente³⁹.

La christologie de Calvin est fonctionnelle, car elle lie l'élection de Dieu à son accomplissement dans le temps; elle l'est également par le fait que Christ est l'auteur du salut appliqué. La notion même de médiation du Fils incarné cherche à maintenir l'équilibre entre ces deux axes. L'élection divine est la cause de la manifestation de la grâce de Dieu dans le salut. De même, Calvin ne se lasse jamais de dire que "l'élection est la mère de la foi", mais au sens que la parole de Christ suscite la foi et l'assurance sur l'axe horizontal de nos existences historiques. Parce que Christ est médiateur, nous pouvons considérer, sur l'axe vertical, le

rapport de l'élection à la christologie. Sur l'axe horizontal, le rapport entre le salut accompli une fois pour toutes et le salut appliqué par Christ et par l'Esprit se réalise au moyen de la bonne nouvelle de l'Évangile qui suscite la foi et l'assurance. Mais l'assurance subjective du croyant ne peut pas connaître l'élection de façon directe. Cette connaissance n'est appréhendable qu'en Christ, parce qu'il est médiateur, et à cause de ce qu'il a fait⁴⁰.

Ces perspectives introduisent le développement d'une sotériologie théocentrique et christocentrique dans la pensée réformée. Tout comme dans l'axe vertical, Christ agit pour accomplir le salut comme prophète, prêtre et roi, dans ses états successifs d'humiliation et de glorification; sur l'axe horizontal, le chrétien, uni à Christ par l'application du salut, participe aux trois offices de Christ en suivant les deux états de Christ. La souffrance est pour aujourd'hui, la gloire sera celle de la résurrection. Cette théologie est loin d'être une théologie de la gloire, le chrétien sert son Seigneur sous la croix. C'est une théologie de l'alliance fondée sur la double médiation de Christ. Dans la théologie classique des successeurs de Calvin, F. Turretin et H. Witsius, l'axe vertical sera appelé 'l'alliance de rédemption', scellée de toute éternité entre le Père et le Fils, et l'axe horizontal sera appelé 'l'alliance de grâce'.

III. La Puissance Évangélique

Là où Calvin soulève un problème, pour certains, c'est dans sa méthode théologique. Sa théologie est non-dialectique et ne s'accommode pas de paradoxes⁴¹. Ainsi, pour Calvin, selon ses détracteurs, tout découle logiquement du décret tout-puissant de Dieu; tout ce qui existe dans le monde relèverait donc d'une forme de causalité. Cela pourrait être assez facile à accepter dans le meilleur des mondes possibles mais, dans notre monde, ce genre de puissance, ou bien semble rendre Dieu responsable du mal, ou bien nous oblige à rejeter la notion de toute-puissance divine.

Une autre solution consiste à se débarrasser du Père tout-puissant et à proposer un autre concept où Dieu renoncerait à sa toute-puissance pour devenir un Dieu faible qui assumerait, comme l'image de la croix le suggère, nos souffrances. Ainsi la puissance de Dieu aurait été 'barrée' à la croix⁴². La croix est la faiblesse de Dieu, selon la parole même de Paul en 1 Corinthiens où l'apôtre dit que la prédication de la croix est folie et scandale, et il ajoute "La folie de Dieu est plus sage que les hommes et la faiblesse de Dieu est plus forte que les hommes." (1:25) Ici, nous rencontrons une sorte différente de puissance, la *potentia evangelica*, qui tire son efficacité de ce qui, aux yeux du monde, est faible. Mais est-ce que la puissance de Dieu se transforme en son contraire de cette façon-là? Dieu devient-il son contraire, un Dieu faible?

Plusieurs considérations peuvent être formulées à ce sujet⁴³. D'abord, il est évident que Paul indique que la croix est signe de faiblesse, d'un certain point de vue—celui des conventions propres aux Juifs et aux Grecs. Pensons à Nietzsche: pour lui, l'homme fort est celui qui s'affirme et qui domine, et le faible est celui qui est loyal, altruiste, obéissant et humble⁴⁴. Nous dirions le contraire. Notre analyse de la puissance, qui n'est pas simplement naturelle, dépend donc de nos perspectives. Paul ne dit pas que Dieu est faible ou que la croix est signe de faiblesse, il affirme que ce message n'est de faiblesse que pour ceux qui ne voient pas sa puissance. Comme le dit Calvin dans son commentaire sur ce passage:

Et là où il semble que Dieu besogne faiblement en cachant sa force, néanmoins cette faiblesse, qu'on suppose, est plus puissante que toute la force des hommes⁴⁵.

En deuxième lieu, l'apôtre dit que la faiblesse de la croix et de son message est une forme de puissance parce qu'elle permet d'atteindre les objectifs envisagés par Dieu. Si ces réalités étaient tout simplement faibles, elles ne feraient rien. Cette forme de faiblesse suppose la puissance de Dieu, car à travers elle, Dieu fait ce qu'il entend faire:

Car bien que notre Christ offense les juifs par l'humilité de sa croix, et toutefois soit moqué par les grecs, toutefois il n'y a que la force de Dieu sauvant tous les élus... et sa sagesse, pour ôter et faire tomber cette vaine apparence et masque de sagesse⁴⁶.

Loin d'être paradoxale, l'adoption d'une attitude de faiblesse suppose une sorte de puissance. Pensons à l'attitude de non-violence, par exemple. Dans le cas de Dieu, la faiblesse de la croix serait une simple marque d'impuissance et son message insensé si, dans l'utilisation de ces moyens pour aboutir aux fins envisagées, Dieu ne manifestait pas sa toute-puissance. Cette forme de faiblesse précise notre notion de la toute-puissance de Dieu et nous permet de la mieux cerner.

CONCLUSION

Calvin refuse le Dieu de la puissance absolue, mais il nous propose le Dieu de la puissance évangélique qui, par l'élection de ses enfants, son incarnation, son humiliation, la folie de la prédication, oeuvre avec efficacité pour sauver. Cette puissance est aussi effectivement puissante que la puissance naturelle. Autrement dit, la puissance divine, pour Calvin, est téléologique, elle n'est pas une force brute mais elle a une finalité, qui est la gloire de son amour manifestée dans le salut des sans-espoir. La puissance en question est celle d'un Dieu de grâce. Calvin dit que "Dieu veut nous gagner par sa douceur"... et qu'il "daigne bien nous secourir, et il veut que ceste puissance-là soit conjointe d'un lien inséparable à notre salut."⁴⁷

La *potentia evangelica* est le contraire de deux autres conceptions de la puissance: i) la puissance d'"Atlas"—Dieu peut faire tout et ii) la puissance conçue en termes totalement paradoxaux, comme abandon de la puissance au profit de la faiblesse. Ce genre de faiblesse n'a pas d'eschatologie, ne peut pas promettre le salut ou la nouvelle création, car si Dieu devient réellement faible, il devient, en même temps, incapable.

Pour l'apôtre Paul, Dieu devient faible à nos yeux. Pourquoi? Jésus remet en

question ce que sont la force et la faiblesse pour nous. Nos conceptions de la puissance (y compris celle qui fait de l'homme son sauveur), du pouvoir, de la domination, sont à l'origine de nos maux. Elles sont liées à notre rébellion contre Dieu, à notre volonté de puissance. Jésus dit, "quiconque veut être grand parmi vous sera votre serviteur; et quiconque veut être le premier parmi vous, sera l'esclave de tous. Car le Fils de l'homme est venu, non pour être servi, mais pour servir et donner sa vie en rançon pour beaucoup."⁴⁸

N'est-ce pas dans l'Eglise aussi que nous avons à apprendre cette leçon douloureuse pour notre orgueil que la puissance évangélique s'exprime dans l'abaissement et le service?

- 1 A. Houziaux dans *Foi et Vie* 95 (1996:1) 85.
- 2 R. Bauckham, "Only the suffering God can help" *Themelios* 9 (1984:3) 6ss. Sur J. Moltmann voir notre article dans *Hokhma* no. 43 ou dans *The power and weakness of God: impassibility and orthodoxy*, éd. N.M. de S. Cameron, (Edimbourg: Rutherford House Books, 1990) 52-68.
- 3 Voir, à ce sujet, R.G. Gruenler, *The inexhaustible God. Biblical faith and the challenge of process theism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983) ch.1.
- 4 Miguel Unamuno, Nicolas Berdyaev, Alfred N.Whitehead et Kazoh Kitamori respectivement.
- 5 R. Grant, *Gods and the One God* (Londres: SPCK, 1968) 78ss et G van den Brink, *Almighty God. A study of the doctrine of divine omnipotence* (Kampen: Pharos, 1993) 169ss.
- 6 Voir G van den Brink, *ibid*, 48ss et pour un survol biblique, P. Briard, *La puissance de Dieu* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1960).
- 7 Apocalypse 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22. Voir aussi 2 Corinthiens 6:18.
- 8 Genèse 18:14.
- 9 G. van den Brink, *op.cit.*, 68ss.
- 10 P. Damien, *Lettre sur la toute-puissance divine*, éd. A. Cantin (Paris: Cerf, 1972) 32.
- 11 Anselme semble avoir changé de position à ce sujet entre le *Proslogion* et le *Cur Deus homo*. Voir G.van den Brink, *op.cit.*, 83, 70-72.
- 12 Comme le démontre G. van den Brink, *ibid*, 83, 70-72.
- 13 C'est facile d'insister sur les différences entre Thomas d'Aquin et Calvin. Les complémentarités ne doivent pas être oubliées. Voir, par exemple, H. Chavannes, *L'analogie entre Dieu et le monde* (Paris: Cerf, 1969), A. Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin and contemporary protestant thought*

- (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), P. Courthial, "La pensée réformée et la scolastique" *La Revue réformée* 48 (1997:3) 31–41 et le livre fondamental de W.C. Placher, *The domestication of transcendence. How modern thinking about God went wrong* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996).
- 14 Voir G. van den Brink sur Aquin et Calvin, 89s.
 - 15 Associé aux noms de G. d'Occam et Duns Scot. Sur la question de la toute-puissance et la causalité dans les discussions médiévales, voir A. de Muralt, *L'enjeu de la philosophie médiévale* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).
 - 16 R. Stauffer donne une documentation importante à ce sujet, *Dieu, la création et la providence dans la prédication de Calvin* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1978) 112ss. C.f. Calvin, *Opera Omnia*, Corpus Reformatorum, XXXIV, 339s.
 - 17 *Institution Chrétienne*, III.xxiii.2b. Il est intéressant à noter que Calvin utilise peu le substantif "souverain" ou "le Souverain" en parlant de Dieu.
 - 18 Comme le fait J. Ansaldi, qui ne prend pas en compte la discussion historique qui précède Calvin et qui ne montre pas beaucoup de sympathie pour la théologie du Réformateur dans son livre *L'articulation de la foi, de la théologie et des Écritures* (Paris: Cerf, 1991) 107ss. Il nous semble aussi que R. Stauffer se trompe en suivant F. Wendel quand il dit que Calvin "mentionne la distinction scotiste" entre les deux formes de puissance, *op. cit.*, 115.
 - 19 F.L. Battles et J.T. McNeill éd., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, (Londres: SCM, 1960) lvi.
 - 20 Voir J. Ansaldi, *op.cit.*, 117. Il était courant au siècle dernier de considérer la prédestination en dehors de l'ensemble de l'enseignement de Calvin et de parler d'un "système prédestinarien". Sur les attributs de Dieu chez Calvin voir B.B. Warfield, "Calvin's doctrine of God" in *Works*, V, (Oxford University Press, 1931, et Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 165ss.
 - 21 J. Cadier, dans *Calvin ou Luther : faut-il choisir?* (Aix-en-Provence: Kerygma, 1996) 33.
 - 22 Voir M. Lienhard, *Luther témoin de Jésus-Christ* (Paris: Cerf, 1973) 98 et G. Bray, *The doctrine of God* (Leicester: IVP, 1993) 47ss.
 - 23 R. A. Muller, *Christ and the decree. Christology and predestination in Reformed theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986). Le livre de Muller est remarquable et montre la fragilité de la distinction courante entre Calvin et "la théologie scolastique" de ses successeurs.
 - 24 C.f. J. de Jong, *Accommodatio Dei. A theme in K. Schilder's theology of revelation* (Kampen: Mondiss, 1990) 30ss.
 - 25 R. A. Muller, *op.cit.*, ch. II.
 - 26 J. Calvin, *Évangile selon saint Jean* (Aix-en-Provence: Kerygma/Farel, 1978) 396.
 - 27 H. Oberman, "The extra dimension in the theology of Calvin" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21 (1970) 60–62. Nous ne commenterons pas ici le rapport entre le "extra calvinisticum" et la nature de la médiation christique, qui nécessiterait un exposé plus détaillé.
 - 28 M. Lienhard, *op. cit.*, 88.
 - 29 *Institution Chrétienne*, I.iv-v; II.i.1–4; ii.12–25.
 - 30 J. Calvin, *Évangile selon saint Jean*, 396–398.
 - 31 *Institution Chrétienne*, II.xvi. Calvin aborde la question de la mort de Christ dans le contexte de la médiation.
 - 32 R. A. Muller, *op.cit.*, 82.
 - 33 E. Fuchs estime que "Calvin renonce à lier immédiatement prédestination et providence pour éviter de dissoudre la responsabilité éthique". *La morale selon Calvin* (Paris: Cerf, 1986) 34. Sur la place de la prédestination dans l'*Institution* voir L. Schümmer 'Prédestination et destinée dans la pensée de Calvin' in *Destin, prédestination, destinée*, sous la direction d'A. Gesché (Paris: Cerf, 1995) 102ss.
 - 34 R.A. Muller, *ibid.*, 37. Voir les Commentaires sur Jean 17:6–8 et 6:38; *Institution Chrétienne*, II.xiv. 3,6 et le Commentaire sur Philippiens 2:10
 - 35 *ibid.*, 38.
 - 36 *Institution Chrétienne*, III.xiv.5. Voir K. Barth, *Dogmatique* II.2* (vol. 8 de l'édition française), G. C. Berkouwer, *Divine Election* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 104–110 et aussi O. Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, II, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 435ss.
 - 37 *Catéchisme de Heidelberg*, q. 37.
 - 38 M. Lienhard, *op.cit.*, 99, 108ss.
 - 39 *ibid.*, 104.
 - 40 *Contra* W. Niesel, R. A. Muller, *op.cit.*, 26, cherche à démontrer qu'il y a un 'syllogisme pratique' dans Calvin et que l'assurance de l'élection peut être le produit subjectif de la foi. Mais cette assurance n'existe jamais sans la prédication de la parole et sans l'union avec Christ, en qui nous sommes adoptés.
 - 41 Voir, à ce sujet les commentaires de L. Schümmer, "L'homme image de Dieu. Le corps temple du saint-Esprit dans la synthèse biblique de Calvin" *La Revue réformée* 47 (1996:5) 81s.
 - 42 Voir J. Ansaldi, *op.cit.*, 110–114.
 - 43 Nous suivons ici quelques idées proposées de façon plus détaillée par P. Helm dans sa conférence inaugurale à Kings College, Londres, intitulée "The perfect and the particular" (23 juin 1994). Voir aussi son livre *The providence of God* (Leicester: IVP, 1993) 224–228.
 - 44 Voir, par exemple, *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).
 - 45 J. Calvin, *Commentaire sur I Corinthiens* (Aix-en-Provence: Kerygma/Farel, à paraître) 37.
 - 46 *ibid.*
 - 47 R. Stauffer, *op.cit.*, 114.
 - 48 Marc 10:44s et parallèles.

- **The Healing of Modernity: A Trinitarian Remedy?**
A Critical Dialogue With Colin Gunton's 'The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity.' 1993.
Cambridge University Press. £9.95 (paperback)
- **Die Moderne: eine trinitarische Antwort?**
- **La Modernité: une réponse trinitaire?**

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die postmoderne Wende hat neue Möglichkeiten für eine theologische Kritik der Moderne eröffnet. In diesem Rahmen artikuliert Colin Guntons *The One, the Three and the Many* eine trinitarische Antwort auf die Herausforderung der Moderne bzw. Postmoderne. Gunton diagnostiziert die Problematik der Moderne als Loslösung von der Welt und vom Körper, die Schwierigkeit, den Einen und die Vielen in Beziehung zueinander zu setzen, das Problem der Homogenisierung und der Wechselbeziehungen sowie den Verlust von Sinn und Wahrheit. Er schlägt ein trinitarisch-theologisches Heilmittel vor und ist darum bemüht, das Konzept der Wahrheit wiederzubeleben durch die Suche nach allgemeinen Transzendentalien, d. h. Vorstellungen, die, da die Welt Gottes Schöpfung ist, von allen geteilt werden können.

Gunton schlägt im Rahmen unseres Überdenkens von Geschaffensein drei Transzendentalien vor. Eine Theologie der Wechselbeziehungen erfordert ein richtiges Verständnis des Verhältnisses von Schöpfung und Erlösung. Gunton weist außerdem auf die Perichorese als eine Transzendentalie hin, die uns hilft, die göttliche Ordnung richtig zu erfassen. Drittens verweist er auf die Relationalität, eine Transzendentalie, die aus dem Gedanken der Sozialität hervorgeht.

Guntons Analyse der Moderne bzw. Postmoderne stellt ein wichtiges Beispiel für die Art kultureller Analyse dar, an der sich Christen beteiligen müssen. Allerdings ist zu bemerken, daß es einer stärker nuancierten Analyse bedarf, um diesen in großen Zügen vorgetragenen Ansatz zu ergänzen. Guntons Verständnis der Postmoderne als Spätmoderne ist zu unterstützen. Außerdem sind bedeutende Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen Guntons Theologie und dem Neocalvinismus festzustellen. Die von Gunton im Rahmen einer christlichen Antwort auf die Moderne / Postmoderne vorgenommene Zentralisierung der Schöpfungslehre ist richtig, doch ist anzuregen, daß die Beziehung zwischen Theologie und Philosophie sowie das Ausmaß, inwieweit die trinitarischen Transzendentalien eine adäquate christliche Antwort auf die Postmoderne ermöglichen, einer erneuten Untersuchung bedürfen. Ein Dialog zwischen der neocalvinistischen Sicht und Guntons Ansatz ist als potentiell fruchtbar zu bewerten.

RÉSUMÉ

Le tournant post-moderne a ouvert des pistes nouvelles à la critique théologique de la modernité. Dans ce contexte, l'ouvrage de Colin Gunton, *L'Un, les Trois et Le Multiple*, développe une

réponse trinitaire à la modernité et à la postmodernité. Le diagnostic de Gunton quant à la modernité souligne le désengagement du monde et du corps, le problème de l'articulation entre l'Un et le multiple, le problème de l'homogénéisation, la question relationnelle, la perte du sens et de la vérité. Gunton propose un remède théologique trinitaire. Il cherche à restaurer la notion de vérité en ayant recours à des concepts transcendants ouverts, c'est-à-dire des concepts qui peuvent être affirmés de tous parce que le monde est la création de Dieu.

Gunton propose trois concepts transcendants à notre réflexion sur notre condition de créatures. Une théologie de la relation présuppose une appréhension correcte de la relation entre création et rédemption. Gunton propose la périchorèse comme un concept transcendant qui nous aide à penser correctement l'économie divine. La substantialité est le second concept transcendant que Gunton nous propose: cela permet de penser correctement la particularité. En troisième lieu, il nous

propose le relationnel : c'est le concept transcendant qui résulte de l'idée de sociabilité.

L'analyse que fait Gunton de la modernité et de la postmodernité est un exemple significatif de l'analyse culturelle à laquelle les chrétiens doivent se livrer. Il est à noter toutefois qu'une analyse plus nuancée est nécessaire pour compléter cette approche sommaire et générale. Gunton comprend la postmodernité comme une modernité tardive. Il y a des ressemblances frappantes entre la théologie de Gunton et le néo-calvinisme. Accorder comme il le fait une place centrale à la doctrine de la création pour répondre à la pensée moderne et postmoderne est juste, mais nous suggérons qu'il faudrait réexaminer la relation entre la théologie et la philosophie et voir dans quelle mesure les concepts transcendants trinitaires fondent une réponse chrétienne adéquate à la modernité. Un dialogue entre le néo-calvinisme et l'approche trinitaire de Gunton devrait produire des résultats fructueux.

Reading a book like Zahrnt's *The Question of God*¹ alerts one to the extent to which the story of twentieth century theology is the story of a struggle to come to grips with modernity. Since the late 1970s the postmodern turn has however opened up possibilities for fresh assessment of the relationship between theology and modernity. Indeed, on all accounts, modernity, is in deep trouble. What is not agreed upon is the diagnosis of the malady from which it is suffering. In *The One, the Three and the Many* Colin Gunton attempts a theological diagnosis of the condition of modernity and prescribes a theological remedy²:

My aim is to make a theological assessment of our era. I shall look at the world which we all share, believer and unbeliever alike, through a focus provided by the doctrine of the God made known in Christ and the Spirit, and in a process of identification and

elucidation shall hope to illumine where we stand now, so laying the basis for an approach to a Christian theology appropriate to the time. (11)³

Gunton is a prominent representative of a current renaissance in trinitarian theology⁴ and in *The One, the Three, and the Many* he seeks to show that a trinitarian theology gives us real insight as to how to heal modernity. *The One, the Three, and the Many* thus embodies a major theological response to the (post)modern challenge.

Our approach in this article will be as follows. Firstly we will describe Gunton's analysis of the problems of modernity. Then we will look at his trinitarian remedies for the problems. After that we will assess his analysis, using neo-Calvinist comparisons and insights to compare another Christian tradition wrestling with similar issues to those that Gunton

raises. George Hunsinger has made the point that within the Evangelical tradition the neo-Calvinist theology of Bavinck and Kuyper provides a fruitful point of dialogue with postliberalism⁵. We believe the same is true of dialogue with Gunton's *The One, the Three and the Many*—the neo-Calvinist tradition of Kuyper, Bavinck and Dooyeweerd provides a fascinating point of comparison with Gunton's approach.⁶

I. The Malady of Modernity

Gunton does not discuss the precise chronological boundaries of modernity. He rightly recognises that modernity is not monolithic:

There is therefore no single idea of modernity so much as a family of dogmas and practices, among which I would include post-modernity ... Within and between them all there is a common direction, mood perhaps, and it is that which I shall seek.⁽¹²⁾

The first four chapters of *The One, the Three, and the Many* seek to analyse the crisis in which modernity finds itself. Gunton points out that modernity made great promises but in so many ways these have not been fulfilled; chapter one begins⁷ and ends with the same quotation from Pippin: 'modernity promised us a culture of unintimidated, curious, rational, self-reliant individuals, and it produced a herd society, a race of anxious, timid, conformist "sheep", and a culture of utter banality'.⁸ Gunton articulates the following themes as central to understanding this 'dialectic' of modernity.

1. The Problem of Disengagement

Modernity has fostered an approach of *disengagement* from the world and body and what Gunton calls 'an instrumental stance' towards them. By instrumental Gunton means an approach to the other which uses them or it as a means for realising our will and not as something that we are integrally part of. This sets reason against the world and encourages

the imposition of will upon the alien world rather than integration with the good order of creation. This modern disengagement has alienated humankind from the world so that renewed consideration of humankind as an integral part of the world is urgently required.

Throughout this text Gunton is alert to the fact that much in modernity is not new; here for example he parallels this spirit of disengagement with the ancient Greek Sophists, against whom Plato wrote his *Republic*. Plato and Coleridge alert us to the importance of a philosophy of engagement. If there is a new element in modernity's disengagement it is that it is disengagement in relation to the God of Christianity. The problem of disengagement is that it fragments life; 'person and world were torn apart'. (15).

2. The Problem of Relating the One and the Many, Unity and Particularity

Modernity shares with ancient Greek philosophy the struggle to relate *the one and the many*, unity and particularity. Heraclitus came down on the side of particularity (the many) whereas Parmenides championed unity (the one). For Gunton the struggle to relate these two aspects of the universe is central to the problem of modernity. As recent decades indicate the way in which this question relates to different visions for society (collectivism or individualism) is of great practical consequence; should the emphasis be put on unity or plurality, the one or the many?

This question is important because as the ancients recognised there is a link between knowledge of the universe and how we understand human society. However 'it is generally held in the modern world that there is no link between cosmic and social order. Indeed, one could define modernity as the era in which the human race has achieved, or attempted to achieve, an autonomy from the environment which consists in freedom from any form of natural determination.' (19,20) However, as Gunton argues, this disengagement from nature has been catastrophic in modernity. We urgently

need some unified understanding of the universe but the crucial question is can there be a unity that respects plurality?

The fact is that in the Western tradition the sense of unity in our cosmos has often been provided by a concept of God as mainly single and unchanging. In this way 'God' has been a unifying principle which has undergirded totalitarianism. It is against this single God of deism that Feuerbach and Nietzsche level their devastating critiques of religion. There are of course various ways in which God may be conceived to unify the universe which is why Coleridge sought a view of God which made space for the other.

To wrestle with the nature of 'the one' is thus to raise the question of God. In much modern thought the idea of God as *the one* has come to be regarded as synonymous with oppression of the many (Kant, Feuerbach, Nietzsche). Consequently modernity's sought after liberation of the many has been accompanied by *the displacement of God*. This element of modernity as reaction to Christianity is central to Gunton's theological analysis of modernity. His introduction opens with a quote from William Morris: 'Modernism began and continues, wherever civilisation began and continues to deny Christ.' (1)

This displacement of God is accompanied by a relocation of the attributes of God in aspects of the creation. The focus of meaning and rationality and unity now becomes the human mind. Paradoxically the modern choice for the many against *the one* has not led to liberty and respect for particularity; Gunton speaks of 'the monism of the finite individual' (32). The individualism of modernity has brought in its wake its own forms of slavery and oppression, incisively recognised by Havel, who argues that the West mirrors, albeit in a different way, the homogenising tendencies of the East. As Gunton says 'When God is expelled from the public square ... the outcome is not freedom, but a form of displacement that can only be called demonic.' (38)

3. *The Problem of Homogenisation: the Loss of the Particular*

Chapter 2 develops Gunton's analysis by focusing on *the homogenising tendency of modernity* or what Gunton describes as the loss of the particular. Modernity sides with plurality against unity but paradoxically ends up denying particularity. This is surprising since modernity lays great stress on the individual and the rights of the individual. However as Gunton points out, individualism and particularity are not the same thing since individualism easily becomes anti-relational and thus oppresses the other. Gunton comments that 'The paradox of individualism is that it often reveals a genuine and powerful concern for the particular which in practice achieves the opposite, and the anti-particularist logic of individualism has been pointed out recently by a number of writers.' (44,45) Havel points out that the consumer culture of the West leads to homogeneity, to a levelling which inhibits the particular. Existentialism, for example, stressed the individual but when the relational character of the individual is ignored this individualism easily collapses into its dialectical opposite. Polanyi and Jaki argue that while science depends upon particularity it often succumbs to a homogenising tendency. As Gunton says 'homogeneity is the spectre at the whole banquet of modernity, not merely in some of its courses.' (44)

The roots of this inability to cope with the particular go a long way back. Gunton sinks a few historical shafts and concludes that in modernity we still suffer from the residue of a Platonised anthropology (view of the human person) and a Platonised ontology (view of the world and especially in our understanding of creation). Plato's body-soul dichotomy with its privileging of the soul as the essence of the person was engrafted into Western theology through Augustine and others. In this way the *imago Dei* is Platonised; it comes to be located ontically in reason/mind and the dynamic of the whole person living in relation to God and others is undermined. The person as a

particular whole is undermined and thus so is relationality:

for on the Platonic view our particular reality is not shaped by all aspects of our relatedness to each other, merely by the inward or narrowly rational dimensions of our being. ... the person is pared down to abstract qualities supposedly held in common. Our personal distinctiveness ... become(s) irrelevant to who and what we truly are. (p49)

Anthropology is closely related to ontology, the view of the whole of reality/creation. Here Gunton speaks of the West's double mind and sees Christian theology as unfortunately following Augustine (Platonic) rather than Irenaeus in its understanding of the creation—redemption relationship. If one is to do justice to the particular then the view one holds of the relationship between creation and redemption is according to Gunton critical: "*The root of the modern disarray is accordingly to be located in the divorce of the willing of creation from the historical economy of salvation.*" (p55) For Irenaeus creation is held together by the Son and the Spirit whereas after Augustine that function comes increasingly to be performed by timeless, conceptual universals. This tendency to replace christology with universals generates a very different understanding of the relationship between universals and particulars. Rather than the particularising will of God the universals move to centre stage and the latter always threaten particulars by drawing attention to that which is universal.

At the end of the Middle Ages Ockham reacted to this universalising tendency by abolishing the universals thus leaving us with the particulars while denying that there are real relations between the particulars: "Ockham is thus a doctrine of the Platonic abstract particular deprived of the support of the forms What is generated is an intellectual vacuum". Gunton (57, 58) notes three features in Ockham's theology that proved explosive in combination: 1. He reasserted the priority of particulars. 2. He denied the

Platonic and Aristotelian way of relating them. 3. An arbitrary conception of the will in humankind and in God. Ockham's theology results in the world appearing as the arbitrary product of divine will and sets the stage, according to Gunton for a conflict of wills: 'the image of God as reason, or reason allied to will, becomes the locus of a rebellion against the very God in whose image it understood itself.' (58, 59)⁹ Human self-assertion fills the place of this unknown God and responsibility for ordering the world is transferred to the human from the divine. Buckley sees this move as exemplified in Malebranche (58). "To be human is not now to be chiefly a mind but an essentially rational and at least potentially divine will: or rather, as it so often turns out in practice, a multiplicity of wills competing with one another for dominance." (59)

The extent to which this anthropology is still with us is evident in the debate over artificial mind. You need a Platonic view of the person as essentially rational to argue that computers could become fully human/essentially human. Of course this ignores the relational nature of human being. A Platonic ontology lingers in much theology, especially of the more conservative sort which struggles to come to grips with the particularity of the three dimensional world in which we live. Of course modernity has reacted to this other-worldliness of mediaeval Christianity with a strong materialism. However as the ecological crisis evidences, modernity has struggled to develop a healthily engaged relationship with its environment.

Gunton looks at freedom and the aesthetic as practical examples of modernity's inability to really do justice to the particular. Using Isaiah Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty* as his starting point Gunton argues that individualism and moral absolutism can never deliver real freedom. The modern individualistic concept of freedom is irremediably unrelational. Essentially the Kantian moral programme involves setting up in God's place a plurality of finite wills each aspiring to divinity.

Gunton finds in contemporary aesthetics the characteristically modern inability to relate the subjective and the objective, 'the... difficulty of making sense of the relation between subjective making and shaping by the artist, and reception by the public, on the one hand, and the objective reality of the piece of material reality that is produced or experienced on the other.' (66) The result is that we tend to be forced to choose between object and subject, as is obvious in contemporary literary theory (Cf. for example current reader-response theory).

4. *The Problem of Relatedness*

In its homogenising tendency modernity reveals a pattern of displacement. God is displaced into humankind and the other person becomes the one whom one must escape from or rule over. This homogenising tendency of modernity manifests an inability to understand how particular things are related to each other. It is this theme of *the problem of relatedness in modern life and thought* that forms the focus of chapter 3.

Time and space are basic co-ordinates of human existence and the way we understand these is indicative of how we understand relationships between entities. Modernity affirmed time and place over eternity; it repudiated tradition and championed human agency over providence. The dominance of science with its focus on configurations within the structures we experience is another characteristic of modernity's this worldliness. Paradoxically the result is that we seem to be less at home in time and space. There is more leisure time in the West and yet we struggle so much with the stress and pressure of time. Banks in his *The Tyranny of Time* suggests that a culture dedicated to leisure has produced the reverse. According to one survey 4/5 people in societies like our own feel continuously rushed for time. Harvey speaks of time-space compression in modernity. The pace of life has speeded up and spatial barriers have been so overcome that the world seems in danger of collapsing in on us.

Modernity's stress on time and space is a reaction to the Greek equation of temporal with fallenness, a stress which much of the Christian theological tradition fell foul of. Thus Gunton refers to 'Christianity's false eternity'. For Origen, for example, the temporal order is a rather unfortunate teacher leading to salvation rather than something which is inherently good and redeemable. Augustine struggles to distinguish the temporal from the fallen and this manifests itself in his doctrine of the incarnation which tends to be a timeless presence in the temporal rather than a genuinely 'economic action'. As Gunton says, 'It is the positive concern for living in time that Christianity submerged in a false eternalizing of the divine economy, and which modernity has attempted to appropriate apart from Christianity. ... late mediaeval theology bears many of the marks of gnosticism, and that modernity therefore can be held to represent a form of liberation from gnosticism.' (84)

Modernity's reaction is however similarly problematic; Gunton speaks of 'Modernity's false temporality'. In Newton (influenced by Plato) real time has to be undergirded by an appeal to an underlying substrate of absolute time; in this way time becomes the image of eternity. For Kant we project time as a mental construct onto the world; it is not part of the being of things. In Hegel time becomes 'the realm of divine self-realisation by means of cultural achievement.' (87) In all these different ways modernity's understandable attempt to save time only succeeds in abolishing it! This is costly as demonstrated by Marxism and historical relativism. In the former the temporal process is closed so that what happens is bound to happen. We know too well the consequences of this view in this century.

The root of modernity's problem with time is thus theological. Modernity displaces eschatology to a position within the world. Creation and redemption become human achievements. We have developed a stress on the future as the place where it all happens. Projects and lives are not allowed to mature in their

own time, but must be catapulted into the future with ever increasing desperation because, as is well known, the future never comes. ... innovation replaces originality.' (90) Much modern theology has colluded with this shift by abandoning the orientation to a divinely promised future. Of course we need a strong reaffirmation of the present but the limits of human agency must also be made clear; finally the kingdom is ushered in by God alone.

It is important to remember that Gunton is aware of the advantages of modernity; in his opinion we should welcome the increased consciousness of the openness of time and the awareness of greater possibilities. These developments are however part of a broader shift that is deeply flawed. The closing down of freedom is seen in modernity's rejection of tradition. Tradition however is essentially a very positive thing: 'The use of tradition concerns the way in which later generations of thinkers and agents shall receive that which their predecessors hand on to them in process of time.' (95) Polanyi and others have demonstrated just what a flawed account of acquisition of knowledge this view of tradition is; it certainly does not liberate us to be fully personal. In modernity's negative attitude to the world Gunton detects a renewed form of Gnosticism in which human rationality and freedom are set against the material world.

5. *The Problem of Meaning and Truth*

The result of the dialectic of modernity is that *meaning and truth have become deeply problematic* in modern life and thought. This is Gunton's focus in chapter 4. This loss of meaning is epitomised for Gunton by the postmodern denial of the possibility of objective meaning and truth. Subjectivism, relativism and emotivism abound in late modernity. Wayne Booth relates the increase of aggressive confrontation in modern political dispute to the death of rhetoric. As Gunton says 'Given loss of confidence in argument, the noisy and potentially violent demonstration is all that remains.' (103)¹⁰

Postmodern relativism has interna-

tional implications; in this respect Finkelkraut speaks of the rehabilitation of the foreigner and the condoning of racism, militarism and totalitarianism in the name of cultural equality. He identifies the source of this malaise as the nihilistic relativism of postmodernism (106). Gunton discerns the development of a 'pluralism of indifference' in modernity which does not tolerate any position which makes claims of truth: 'Radical relativism implies an imperious claim for its own truth which is viciously intolerant because it is undiscussable in terms of the ideology in which it is propounded.' (106) Paradoxically modernity, which aimed to defend the objectivity of truth has led to widespread doubt as to whether truth exists at all!

But relativism is no new doctrine. The two poles of Protagoras' thought were theological agnosticism on the one hand and epistemological and moral relativism on the other. Thus Don Cupitt's recent articulations sound very much like republications of the doctrines of Heraclitus in Protagorean form. As Gunton says of the parallels between postmodern relativism and ancient Greek thought: 'It is yet more evidence of the way in which certain fundamental—perhaps I could say transcendental—possibilities for thought were laid out by the Greek mind once and for all.' (107) Modern relativism differs from antiquity in its relation to Christian theology and to science. Modernity is a conscious return to Hellenism in reaction to Christendom in which certainty is sought in those disciplines likely to achieve mathematical-like certainty. For us that has become above all else science. The Greeks tended to see in human rationality something divine and in modernity as Craig has argued a doctrine of the image of God tends to operate unconsciously with the image being located in reason (rationalism), emotion (romanticism) or human activity (Hegel). Science has come increasingly to be pulled into the uncertain boat of the humanities, as is particularly clear in Rorty's pragmatism. However as Gunton, following Craig, notes, 'Pragmatism too, the giving

of priority to practice over truth and theory, derives from the same tendency to the divinization of the human that underlies the modern reassertion of Hellenism against the Judaeo-Christian tradition.' (111)

Gunton identifies Kant as a key figure for understanding the fragmentation of culture in the postmodern situation. Kant relegated the concept of God to a realm of which we could have no knowledge and mediated Newtonian metaphysics and Humean scepticism by locating the transcendental bases of all thought in the structures of the mind. The human mind fills the space of the displaced deity but, it does so in different ways for different spheres of culture. In science the mind provides the framework of concepts by which the reality presented to the senses is ordered. In ethical thought the practical reason acts like God in prescribing and describing the laws of behaviour. Artistic judgements are subjective and based on feeling which is entirely personal.

That means that the realms of science, ethics and art are understood in radically different ways and that the very possibility of a universe of meaning, a world and experience making overall unified sense, is lost to view. Crucial here is the fact that science, ethics and art are rendered intrinsically problematic because their basis is to be found in different realms of being. There is modern fragmentation in a nutshell. (116, 117)

Gunton also relates the postmodern subversion of community and rationality to Kant's rootless concept of the will—it refers only to itself —, which in turn is a response to the inadequate theology of the Christian West. In Irenaeus' understanding of creation God's will is free but not arbitrary; God's will is achieved through a community of love. In Augustine and his successors love is made subordinate to God's will which becomes arbitrary. This results in a concept of truth which denies plurality and against which modernity reacted.

Gunton concludes Part 1 by noting that modernity is a reaction to the era of

Christendom. It rejects Christianity's understanding of the transcendent basis of reality and uses much Greek thought to define itself in opposition to central Christian doctrines so that it is less original than people often suppose. God is displaced and the human mind moves into central position. Pentecost is inverted in what amounts to a new Babel!

II. A Trinitarian Remedy

In Part 2—'Rethinking createdness'—Gunton seeks a theological remedy for the crisis of modernity. Modernity's loss of the concept of truth has been mainly disastrous and for Gunton 'the responsibility of the theologian—whose concern is with the universal dimensions of meaning suggested by the concept of God—is to seek for ways to rehabilitate or reinvigorate the concept of truth.' (129) For Gunton the root of the problem is theological so that the solution is to be found in a renewed theological vision which understands modernity but moves beyond it.

1. *Trinitarian transcendentals*

Gunton sums up our present situation as follows:

the search for absolute rational truth led, through Kant's critique and the work of his great successors, to a suspicion of the very idea of objective truth and in turn to an insidious because absolute and unrecognised form of the very thing that was rejected. (131)

Postmodernity has its own homogenising metanarrative which rules out the possibility of a universal and objective truth which is nevertheless the work of fallible humans. How do we escape the dilemma of being forced to opt either for the one or the many?

One response has been the quest for non-foundationalist rationalities. In theology models along this line have been those of Barth, Wittgenstein and Cupitt. Gunton is cautious of this approach; they too easily evade the challenge of being universal and objective. He suggests that the way ahead lies in a quest for 'non-

foundationalist foundations'! (134) Foundationalism sought after a false certainty. We need rather to seek the sort of certainty Polanyi refers to, a certainty which allows one to believe what one holds to be true while knowing that it conceivably could be false. Gunton argues that 'Polanyi is seeking a conception of created rationality rather than the divine reason aspired to in the tradition. It is a rationality appropriate to created knowers in a world with which they are continuous.' (135)

Gunton pursues this type of rationality under the aegis of a quest for *transcendentals*. Transcendentals are notions which give some way of understanding what reality truly is. These must be open and should not be thought of as forms through which being displays itself—lest being be thought of as prior to God—but as 'notions which can be predicated of all being by virtue of the fact that God is creator and the world is creation.' (137) Gunton briefly reviews the history of this discussion of transcendentals ranging from the Presocratics to Aquinas and Kant—what is required is an alternative approach which eschews the weaknesses of this tradition. Thus it is important for Gunton that these transcendentals should be open: 'An open transcendental is a notion, in some way basic to the human thinking process, which empowers a continuing and in principle unfinished exploration of the universal marks of being.' (142) The quest is for universal concepts but not so much for conceptually tight ideas as for suggestion-rich ideas. In this respect Gunton appropriates Coleridge's notion of ideas as dynamic notions related to the ultimate aim of something. This type of idea often only emerges in apparent paradox. Such ideas also embody the interaction of the universal and particular, they are mediatory. Gunton strongly affirms Coleridge's sense that the Trinity is the idea of ideas, but stresses the difference between an idea and a transcendental. Unlike an idea a transcendental is a mark of all being. Ideas generate transcendentals. Gunton argues that content-wise the transcendentals we are

looking for will need to transcend the absolute opposition of objectivism and subjectivism, absolutism and relativism.

Gunton's aim in the rest of the book is to 'use the trinitarianly developed transcendentals to throw light on the contested questions which the earlier chapters showed to have been so unsatisfactorily treated in both the ancient and modern world.' (150) Gunton holds the doctrine of the Trinity closely together with the doctrine of creation: 'a renewed doctrine of creation is possible on the basis of a doctrine of God which in some way writes plurality into the being of things.' (151)

2. *A Theology of Relatedness*

Chapter 6, 'Towards a theology of relatedness' applies this trinitarian approach to the problem of the present (space and time) which Gunton analysed in chapter 3. How do we develop an adequate understanding of space and time? What theological proposals will enable an appropriate integration of time and eternity, the finite and the infinite? 'The quest is for an open metaphysic, or rather for a theology of creation which enables us to locate ourselves in reality without taking away that freedom and openness to the new without which we are not truly human.' (157)

Fundamental to the attaining of such a metaphysic is a correct understanding of the relationship between creation and salvation/redemption or what Gunton calls divine *economy*. Once again Gunton finds Irenaeus a useful model; against Gnostics who divorced creation from redemption he argued that 'the different aspects of God's agency formed a unity through time and space ... Time and space are given their distinctive dynamic of interrelatedness by God's creating, upholding, redeeming and perfecting activity.' (159) Under the influence of modernity much modern theology stresses salvation at the expense of creation. Thus christology tends to be abstracted from its broader context. Gunton rightly stresses that different views at these points have enormous practical consequences: 'different conceptions of the

divine economy bring in their train different ways of understanding God's relatedness to time and space. Those different emphases in their turn bring varying accounts of what it is to live in the world.' (160) A correct understanding of the difference between God and creation plus his sustaining of and commitment to the created order are vital.

Gunton proposes *perichoresis* as a transcendental which can help us to think correctly about the divine economy. Economy is the idea, perichoresis the resulting transcendental. Perichoresis opens up various possibilities for thought because is full of spatial and temporal conceptuality and it implies that in eternity Father, Son and Spirit share a dynamic reciprocity. How does perichoresis help us to understand the world: 'It is that we consider the world as an order of things, dynamically related to each other in time and space.' (166) Evil is a distortion of the dynamic but does not abolish it. Perichoresis can help us to understand personhood better:

persons mutually constitute each other, make each other what they are. That is why Christian theology affirms that in marriage the man and the woman become one flesh—bound up in each other's being—and why the relations of parents and children are of such crucial importance for the shape that human community takes. Our particularity in community is the fruit of our mutual constitutiveness: of a perichoretic being bound up with each other in the bundle of life. (169, 170)

Perichoresis gives us a better understanding of tradition: 'If there is a perichoresis of times, it should be necessary to treat none of the dimensions, past, present or future, as absolutely fallen or absolutely redemptive, but as all alike in potentially positive interrelation with us as we are.' (171) Gunton also argues that much modern physics and cosmology also teaches the perichoretic character of the universe. Reaction to the abuse of the environment in modernity is in danger of failing to recognise the difference between person and world; a perichoretic

response would enable one to understand the connectedness without levelling the differences.

3. *A Theology of the Particular*

Perichoresis is a transcendental which enables us to explore the relatedness of reality. Is there a transcendental which enables us to articulate the particularity within reality? This is what Gunton explores in chapter 7: 'Towards a theology of the particular.' The modern age needs, according to Gunton, a theology which gives a central place to the particular. In this sense Lessing's scandal of Christian particularity is an advantage: 'We could, I believe, make far more of the narrative particularities than we do, and glory rather more in the scandal of the one crucified for the sins of the world.' (181) Gunton finds the beginnings of a theology of the particular in a theology of the Spirit. The Spirit is associated with crossing boundaries—it brings God into relationship with the world and the world into relationship with God—and with maintaining and strengthening particularity. By virtue of these features Gunton argues that spirit could function as an idea in Coleridge's sense of the word.

Spirit is for the most part limited to the personal world, to God and human beings. 'It has to do with that unique feature of persons, their ability to transcend themselves, to think and act beyond the present and the place in which they are set.' (184) Hegel gave spirit a transcendental status and understood it in a very dynamic way. The problem of Hegel's idealism (modalist view of the Trinity) is avoided by recognising that spirit is illuminating as a qualification of the person and not of creation as a whole.

Theologically, it is a way of speaking of the personal agency of God towards and in the world; anthropologically a way of speaking of human responsiveness to God and to others; cosmologically a way of speaking of human openness to the world and the world's openness to human knowledge, action and art. (187)

Spirit is however not properly a tran-

scendental since it is not a universal mark of being. It does not 'assist us to understand the structure of an atom or the evolution of the material universe, to eat or to grow a cabbage or appreciate a work of art.' (188)

The Spirit's particular office is to realise the true being of each created thing by bringing it into saving relationship with the Father. Gunton relates this to particularity at the heart of the being of God i.e. in the eternal Trinity the Spirit's function is to particularise the *hypostases*, and he thinks that a renewed notion of the *substantiality* of God might help us towards a theology which highlights particularity. Particularity at the heart of the creator establishes the particularity of created beings. From this perspective the substantiality of God resides in the divine persons and the relations by which they mutually constitute each other. Thus it could be argued that the decision in the Western tradition to translate *ousia* by *substantia* undermined the full weight of the concept of person because it effectively introduced a stress on the underlying reality of God rather than on God as a communion of persons.

By substantiality Gunton thus means that God is what he is only in relationship. Western theology has often lost this emphasis so that abstractness rather than concreteness has become its characteristic.

The time has therefore come to raise again the question of substance ... and to claim that people and things, in dependence upon a God understood substantially and not abstractly, are also to be understood as substantial beings, having their own distinct and particular existence, *by virtue of and not in face of their relationality* to the other ... Everything, however, hangs upon the notion of substance that we develop. (194)

Gunton goes on to argue, having reviewed something of the history of the notion of substance, that '*hypostasis*, meaning substantial particular, variously taking shape as person and thing and constituted relationally, acquires the

status of a kind of transcendental.' (209) The development of such an understanding of substance would enable us to resist the homogenising tendency of modernity. The theological shaping of this is critical.

Substantiality is the gift of the creator, given in Christ in whom all things cohere. But, considered in the light of the Spirit's distinctive form of action as the perfecting cause of creation, that substantiality is not fully given from the beginning but has to achieve its end. It is something that by divine and human agency is to be perfected through time and in space, and so is given from the concrete future that constitutes the promise of particular perfection. That is the way in which the creation forms the framework, inscape, for science, art and morality. ... the created world in its teleology forms, or rather should form, the framework for the growing towards perfection of its human inhabitants. (208, 209)

4. *A Theology of the One and the Many*
Perichoresis and substantiality, the two transcendentals we looked at, suggest the trinitarian concept of *sociality*, whose central concept is shared being; 'persons do not simply enter into relations with one another, but are constituted by one another in the relations.' (214) The being of God is a being in communion and analogously this helps us to understand human society.

Biblically creation is of communal beings in three senses. Firstly the world is called into otherness to and relation with its creator. Secondly the human creation is being in relationship. Thirdly the world is what it is by virtue of its relation to the image bearers. The church in this context is called to be 'the medium and realization of communion.' (217) Unfortunately the church in our era has more often been an institution than a community.

Gunton argues that this theology of ecclesial communion has ontological implications. Too much modern theory, represented by thinkers like Hobbes, Locke and Kant, neglects the social dimension of reality. Hegel recovers this

but, according to Gunton, his concept of social being too easily collapses into a suppression of the particular. Once again Gunton finds a better approach in Coleridge, for whom social being of the kind embodied in a true ecclesia is the deepest expression of human reality. Gunton notes in this respect that 'It is significant here that the Bible has given us a word for social relations which allows neither a purely individualist nor a merely legal construal. It is that of covenant. Covenant expresses above all the calling of the human race into free and joyful partnership with God, and so with each other.' (222)

Contra Hardy Gunton argues that sociality is an idea rather than a transcendental. This idea of sociality yields an ethic of transformation but decidedly not one which buys into the modern myth of fulfilment and in which individual self-centredness is central. This ethic operates rather through the logic of gift and reception and is thus focused on the well-being of the other. It takes the whole of life seriously. Gunton quotes Perkins' delightful point that, 'if we compare worke to worke, there is a difference between washing of dishes and preaching of the word of God: but as touching to please God none at all.' (227) 'It is for such reasons that the practice of both art and the proper dominion of the natural order are trinitarian imperatives, for both are ways of fulfilling the command of the creator to those created male and female in his image.' (228)

Sociality is an idea and relationality the transcendental that emerges from it. Both God and the world have their being in relation: 'to be created is to have a direction' and this can become disoriented but cannot be undone. Redemption involves recovering the direction of the particular to its own end and not re-creation. Gunton concludes his masterly diagnosis of modernity thus:

Redemption thus means the redirection of the particular to its own end and not a re-creation. The distinctive feature of created persons is their mediating function in the achievement of perfection by the rest of

creation. They are called to the forms of action, in science, ethics and art—in a word, to culture—which enable to take place the sacrifice of praise, which is the free offering of all things, perfected, to their creator. Theologically put: the created world becomes truly itself—moves towards its completion—when through Christ and the Spirit, it is presented perfect before the throne of the Father. The sacrifice of praise which is the due human response to both creation and redemption takes the form of that culture which enables both personal and non-personal worlds to realize their true being. (230,231)

III. Assessment and Discussion

It will be obvious from the above that evaluation and discussion of Gunton's trinitarian response to modernity/postmodernity will not be quickly closed. There is much detail that needs careful evaluation, not all of which can be done here.

1. *The Importance of a Christian Evaluation of Modernity / Postmodernity*

The One, the Three, and the Many is a most important book. It embodies the faith-seeking-understanding conviction that the gospel is the key to the whole of life. As Buckley has shown a fatal temptation for Christians in modernity has been to try to argue for Christian truth on the basis of starting points other than that of the gospel¹¹. At best this leads to a shaky synthesis of Christian and non-Christian perspectives, at worst to capitulation of Christian to non-Christian viewpoints. Gunton rightly argues that we ought to respond to modernity and postmodernity by rehabilitating the notion of the gospel as true, and to use its light to help us understand modernity. In common with postliberalism this rightly and radically reverses the tendency in modernity, even among Christians, to start with modernity and let it show us what is true in the gospel!

The gospel is worldviewish at its core in the sense that it relates to the whole of

life and gives us a perspective upon the whole. Religious neutrality, as Clouser¹² has so clearly argued, is a myth, and one's religious beliefs will fundamentally shape one's understanding of modernity. Christians must therefore, if they wish to develop a Christian understanding of modernity, follow the sort of path that Gunton pursues; starting with faith and seeing how this illuminates modernity. The alternative is to allow one's understanding of modernity to be shaped by other religious beliefs¹³.

Modernity is the context within which we have grown up and do our scholarship. Gunton helpfully keeps us alert to all that is positive in modernity and this is important. There has been some very significant progress in modernity and this should be guarded and developed. However Gunton relentlessly and correctly brings us back to the paradoxes of modernity; there are these advances but ... This kind of broad cultural analysis from a Christian perspective is crucial if we are to discern the battle lines in our culture and avoid simply bowing to the idols of our day in our *Christian* service. In this respect *The One, the Three and the Many* is a beginning rather than an end and in this sense is to be joyously welcomed. Modernity has been/is an extraordinarily powerful movement which has swept all before it. Many Christians have been like Benjamin's angel, swept forward while facing the rear and never really waking up to the situation. As a result so much Christian action and thinking has been powerfully formed by modernity, very often without Christians being aware of its influence. We have too often fought against modernity beneath the Cartesian umbrella!

If we are to escape such a nightmarish vision then we need to know what is going on in modernity. We need large scale cultural analysis from a Christian perspective. And that means wrestling with concepts of time, space and society as Gunton does. In this respect I find *The One, the Three and the Many* reminiscent of Dooyeweerd's *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Christian and Secular Options*.¹⁴

Indeed the similarities between Gunton and the sort of neo-Calvinism¹⁵ that Dooyeweerd represents are notable. Both recognise the importance of a Christian starting point in the search for truth. Both diagnose an urgent need for the recovery of a biblical doctrine of creation and for seeing redemption as the fulfilment of creation (see below). Gunton's stress on the whole of life as service of God is also central to neo-Calvinism. Gunton's recognition that modernism begins where civilisation rejects Christ and the idolatrous immanentism that results from the displacement of God ties in closely with Dooyeweerd's analysis of the absolutisation of an immanent aspect of the creation once God is displaced. Both want to affirm order in creation but not in a static way. Both are alert to the negative effect on Western culture of certain theologies. Both are intensely aware of the need to rethink 'time' from a Christian perspective. And so we could continue. There are also important differences between Gunton and neo-Calvinism, and we will note some of these below.

Unfortunately there is no sign of these links in *The One, the Three and the Many* or in its bibliography. The similarities are close enough to suggest that a dialogue between Gunton and neo-Calvinism would be most fruitful. In what follows we will explore the similarities and differences between Gunton and neo-Calvinism as part of our critique of Gunton. The differences should not however detract from the importance of this type of analysis of modernity from a Christian perspective. Take biblical studies for example. As Gunton shows in his *Enlightenment and Alienation*¹⁶ biblical criticism is very much a child of the Enlightenment and if we are not careful we will be imposing a Kantian type epistemology and Enlightenment prejudices upon the Bible. Evangelical biblical scholars have by no means been exempt from this temptation, often assuming a modern epistemology and nevertheless seeking to arrive at conservative conclusions. As Gunton makes clear, much good has come out of biblical criticism but too often it has

been shaped by alien and distorting ideologies. If we are to avoid the problems while capitalising on the gains then we have to do the hard work of sifting through the evidence, determining where the influence of modernity has been distorting and where its genuine insights lie. But of course, we can only do this if we develop a keen sense of the battle lines of modernity/postmodernity.

2. *The Need for More Nuanced Analysis*

Gunton rightly sees what is being called post-modernity as late modernity¹⁷. He quotes Sardar who comments, 'Whereas modernism tried to come to terms with the "other" by excluding it, postmodernism simply seeks to render it irrelevant. The underlying fear of it continues unabated.' (69) Gunton is right I think in asserting the continuity of modernity and postmodernity and in arguing that the postmodern loss of truth and meaning follows logically from modernity. Like Plantinga¹⁸ Gunton finds the roots of the creative anti-realism of postmodernity in Protagoras, with Kant being the major modern figure to make human, rather than God's, knowledge creative. As Plantinga¹⁹ says:

For suppose we begin by thinking that it is we human beings who are responsible for the way the world is; it is we ourselves that form or structure the world in which we live. The it is an easy step to the thought that we do not all live in the same world. The Lebenswelt of Richard Rorty or Jacques Derrida is quite different from that of Herman Dooyeweerd or C.S. Lewis; and each of those is wholly different from that of Bertrand Russell or Carl Sagan.

Consequently Gunton's analysis of modernity is simultaneously one of post-modernism. Generally I am comfortable with this but the broad brush terminology—modernity/postmodernity, and the one and the many—does alert one to the dangers of large scale analysis. In terms of the breadth of argument in *The One, the Three and the Many*, ranging so quickly from Heraclitus to Havel, the book is rather small. In areas Gunton's case

requires more substantiation, and certainly it needs to be complemented by more surgical analysis of the different threads of modernity²⁰, and how these different elements relate to postmodernity. Finkelkraut, to whom Gunton refers, argues, for example, that postmodernism represents the triumph of Herder's romanticism²¹. Whether that is right or not, it does alert us to the need to explore in detail the dynamics of the different elements of modernity and how they play out in so-called postmodernity. Consider also Gunton's intriguing argument that too strong a stress on the One in Western theology is related to the oppression of the many. This may well be the case but in the Old Testament a strong stress on monotheism is the basis of a polity expressing concern for the orphan and the widow²². Gunton refers in this respect to Feuerbach and Nietzsche's critiques of religion as a source of oppression. Gunton argues that a trinitarian theology will avoid such an unhealthy stress on the One. Ingraffia by comparison analyses Nietzsche's, Heidegger's and Derrida's critique of theology and argues that they critique ontotheology but not biblical theology, which avoids the problems of ontotheology²³. These are complex issues but they alert us to the need for more thorough examination of some of Gunton's points.

Once again the neo-Calvinist tradition is instructive. Both Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven sought to do this kind of more detailed analysis, Dooyeweerd in terms of the ground motive of nature and freedom, and Vollenhoven in terms of periods, perichronic traditions and interweaving storylines²⁴. According to Dooyeweerd idolatry replaces God with a creature. This absolutisation of part of created reality necessarily calls forth the correlates of what has been absolutised, thereby setting up a polarity or tension between two extremes within a single ground motive. 'On the one hand, the ground motive breaks apart; its two antithetical motives, each claiming absoluteness, cancel each other. But on the other hand, each motive also determines the other's religious meaning, since each is

necessarily related to the other.²⁵ Dooyeweerd outlines four religious ground motives that have controlled the development of western culture: the *form-matter* ground motive of Greek antiquity, the Christian ground motive of creation, fall and redemption through Christ in communion with the Spirit, the Roman Catholic ground motive of *nature-grace* which seeks to combine the above two, and the modern humanistic ground motive of *nature-freedom* which seeks to synthesize the previous three.

Vollenhoven, like Gunton, stressed the way in which the basic solutions of the pre-Socratics recur in the history of philosophy. Seerveld describes Vollenhoven's problem-historical method as follows²⁶:

... that is Vollenhoven's method for writing the history of philosophy: tracing the sins of the Pre-Socratics out to the hundredth generation. ... From the records available Vollenhoven finds certain kinds of interpretations, types of conceptions, recurring again and again, generation after generation, new ones springing up and old ones petering out but many holding strong, naturally combined with the peculiar personality of a new thinker and with the changed spirit of a later era, but structurally at bottom the same old attempted interpretation of reality. So arises a kind of topography of the development of Western thought ... the structural inheritance of a thinker and the contemporary milieu of a thinker give you the two axes needed to plot his or her position.

The Reformation, according to Vollenhoven, marks a radical break which made possible the grounding of theoretical thought biblically. By means of such immanent and transcendent critique Vollenhoven sought to map out the history of western philosophy in immense detail. It is this sort of surgical analysis that is required of the postmodern turn. Of course it would be wrong to expect Gunton to even attempt such detailed work in one book. Indeed, *The One, the Three and the Many* can be seen as a call to such work, and in this respect the neo-Calvinist tradition has much to offer.

3. Creation and Redemption

In one sense Gunton's response to modernity/postmodernity can be summed up by saying that we need a biblical doctrine of creation. The entire second half of *The One, the Three, and the Many* is entitled 'Rethinking Createdness.' Gunton rightly recognises that how we construe the creation-redemption relationship is pregnant with practical implications. Gunton invokes Irenaeus in support of holding redemption closely together with creation and seeing the former as making possible the perfecting of creation.²⁷ Clearly the way Christians understand this relationship will shape deeply their attitude towards culture and determine how they think about space, time etc. The different Christian understandings of the Christ-culture relationship²⁸ are at root different perspectives on how grace relates to nature, or we might say how redemption relates to creation. Incipient Gnosticism has often plagued the Christian tradition and Gunton rightly argues that in this respect aspects of modernity can be understood as reactions to an inadequate doctrine/s of creation. It could be argued that to go wrong here is to set the response of modernity in motion. Much contemporary Christianity has still not resolved this issue. Think for example of the common Evangelical emphasis on the salvation of the soul and its often abstracted christology. The atoning death of Christ is seen as irrelevant to the creation!²⁹ At the other extreme immanent modern theologies have merely succumbed to modernity's secularism in the reverse way. The right response is to reform our doctrine of creation along biblical lines.

Once again the similarities to neo-Calvinism are astonishing. Similarly to Gunton, Seerveld argues that we need urgently to attend to the doctrine of creation if we want to promote the healing of modernity. He writes:

Perhaps the most redemptive message we people of God can bring to our world in crisis is an articulate confession of CREATION. Given the mindless, technocratic bent of our hypertropic civilization, I

believe it is especially the Good News of CREATION which may get through to the leadership of our secular culture ... I should like to recommend that we give concerted priority in our generation to a biblically CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF CREATIONAL ORDINANCES.³⁰

And neo-Calvinism has long insisted that if Christians are to understand and be constructively involved in our culture then a proper understanding of the creation-redemption relationship is crucial. Neo-Calvinists argue that creation, fall and redemption are total in the sense that they affect all of creation. Wolters (1996:10) articulates the distinctiveness of the neo-Calvinist worldview as follows.

One way of seeing this difference is to use the basic definition of the Christian faith given by Herman Bavinck: 'God the Father has reconciled His created but fallen world through the death of His Son, and renews it into a Kingdom of God by His Spirit.' The reformational worldview takes all the key terms in this ecumenical, trinitarian confession in a universal, all-encompassing sense. The terms 'reconciled,' 'created,' 'fallen,' 'world,' 'renews,' and 'Kingdom of God' are held to be cosmic in scope. In principle, nothing apart from God himself falls outside the range of these foundational realities of biblical religion. All other Christian worldviews, by contrast, restrict the scope of each of these terms in one way or another.

In another context Wolters writes that '[b]iblical faith in fact involves a worldview, at least implicitly and in principle. The central notion of creation (a *given* order of reality), fall (human mutiny at the root of all perversion of the given order) and redemption (unearned restoration of the order in Christ) are cosmic and transformational in their implications.'³¹ Following in the Reformed tradition of Bavinck and Kuyper neo-Calvinists stress that grace is the medicine that heals nature.

In the process of rethinking createdness Gunton and neo-Calvinism go different routes despite the similarities

—Gunton argues that perichoresis can help us to rethink createdness whereas neo-Calvinism argues for the law-idea as the route to go. These, as we will argue below, are not insignificant differences, but nevertheless, the basic concerns remain the same viz. to find a way of affirming the creation as truly good and for thinking rightly within such a perspective about the space-time context in which humans live.

It should also be noted here that Calvin too contains the resources for which Gunton appeals to Irenaeus. In *The Theater of His Glory* Susan Schreiner shows convincingly that Calvin holds redemption and creation closely together and teaches that through redemption God is reclaiming the whole of creation³². Calvin does not possess as strong a sense as Irenaeus of the dynamic development in creation, but the integrality of the two is clearly there, and Calvin is alert to the human responsibilities for creation.

4. Immanentism

Gunton is perceptive in his analysis of how the displacement of God leads to the role of deity being usurped by something immanent to creation. A favourite contender for this position has been human rationality and Gunton rightly relates the relativism of postmodernity to the logical consequence of such displacement. Yet again the similarities with neo-Calvinism is notable. The philosophical implications of immanentism are central to Dooyeweerd's analysis of modern philosophy. He goes to great lengths to critique the pretended autonomy of human thought and to analyse the tensions set up in thought when aspects of the creation order are absolutised once God is displaced.

5. Theology and Philosophy

Once one gets into more detailed evaluation of Gunton it becomes obvious that he is dealing with a lot of philosophy. A most important point which emerges from his analysis is the often very negative effect of secular philosophy upon theology. Think of the devastating implication

of Platonic anthropology and Greek views of time and matter upon theology. This raises the question of the relationship between theology and philosophy, but that is something which Gunton does not address in *The One, the Three and the Many*. Gunton appears to assume that theology is the universal Christian science and that its role is to construct new transcendentals etc. But where does philosophy come in and how does it relate to theology? And can theology function without philosophy? Indeed if theology willy-nilly carries within its theory construction ontological and epistemological scaffolding, what sort of scaffolding should it utilise? While we are seeing a revival of systematic theology, of which Gunton is an important source, any idea of systematic philosophy from a Christian perspective still tends to be regarded with suspicion. And yet what we have in Gunton's work are proposals for developing a Christian ontology, i.e. a framework for understanding the world in which we live.

Once again the comparison with neo-Calvinism is fruitful. In the early years of this century Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven concluded that the inner reformation of the sciences along Christian lines required the development of a Christian, systematic philosophy. Both used the law-idea as the connecting point between Scripture and philosophy, and attempted to develop ontological and epistemological insights that could facilitate and help Christians in developing redemptive theoretical insights. We cannot here expand on the shape of those insights but the point is that the emerging trinitarian paradigm and neo-Calvinists recognise the need for theoretical frameworks that can facilitate understanding of our world.

Within the Reformed tradition Cornelius Van Til made much of the trinitarian analogy philosophically, as does Gunton.³³ However, Van Til's use of this analogy has been criticised as due to the unhealthy influence of the British idealism of Bradley and in danger of becoming an abstract theologism.³⁴ Suffice here to note that in our quest for an adequate

response to modernity/ postmodernity we need to explore the relationship between theology and philosophy and scrutinise the philosophical scaffolding we utilise.

6. Trinitarianism

Gunton's approach to modernity/ postmodernity presents itself as trinitarian and is part of the renaissance of trinitarian theology. The doctrine of the trinity is portrayed as containing the resources to heal modernity³⁵. Here the contrast with the neo-Calvinism of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven is noticeable. It does not deny the truth and importance of the Trinity but it has generally not looked to the doctrine as a resource in the same way as proponents of the emerging trinitarian theology³⁶. Indeed neo-Calvinism has generally been suspicious of attempts to argue from the nature of God to truth about the creation, stressing that the laws for creation hold for the creation and that while God's character is consistent with those laws they do not hold for him as they do for creation.

Exploration of the tradition of transcendentals and comparison with the law-idea of neo-Calvinism would require another article³⁷. Suffice it to point out that Gunton and neo-Calvinism are after similar things. What Gunton means by non-foundational foundations is very similar to what neo-Calvinists mean by creation order. The right (Christian) starting point is required to discern these co-ordinates but they truly hold for the whole of creation and are in this sense objective and relevant to all humans.

For nearly a century now neo-Calvinists have worked at relating the philosophy of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven to all areas of life. This in the area of arts and aesthetics a considerable body of work is emerging. Encouragingly similar signs are present in the emerging trinitarian paradigm, with articles being written on the trinity and art, etc. Although one can argue that the trinitarian paradigm is the renaissance of an ancient perspective this application to different disciplines and areas of thought is comparatively recent. Once again a dialogue between the two

traditions would be beneficial as both make real attempts to understand God's world from an integrally Christian perspective.

My hunch is that the sort of transcendental that Gunton proposes will not go that far in providing Christian scholars with the ontological and epistemological framework that theoretical work and Christian practice requires, and in this sense I think the neo-Calvinist tradition has more sophisticated tools to offer. Suffice it to take two examples here. In Gunton and Van Til's thought the doctrine of the Trinity is presented as solving the perennial philosophical problem of the one and the many. Two aspects of this appear problematic to me. Firstly such an approach involves abstracting the idea of particularity and universality from the idea of the trinity, and secondly it is hard to see how the trinity in particular solves this problem. Would it make any difference if there were two persons in the Godhead or four; all it would seem is required is that there are more than one.

Our second example is perichoresis. It is a dynamic, interactive metaphor which usefully alerts us to the communal nature of humans and the divine. However is it true that '[t]hat is why Christian theology affirms that in marriage the man and the woman become one flesh ... and why the relations of parents and children are of such crucial importance for the shape that human community takes'? Perichoresis *alone* does not alert us to the centrality of marriage and family life in a perichoretic world. Indeed, especially in the light of the homosexual debate the link between perichoresis as a transcendental and the institution of heterosexual marriage becomes a matter for debate. Relationality and community are central to life but that they find their appropriate expression in heterosexual marriage and family life is derived from what we know of God's ordering of creation and not directly from perichoresis. As Spykman³⁸ says, 'The continuing normativity of the creation order is reinforced by the comprehensive biblical witness on the question of marriage and divorce. ...

Originally and abidingly marriage is meant to be an exclusive bi-unitary covenant between husband and wife. This is the Will of God. Marriage is for good and keeps. This is the norm, rooted in the creation order.' Furthermore does not the love command at the centre of Scripture's ethics already alerts us to the centrality of relationship in life, so that there are easier ways to get at the communal nature of humans than the rather abstract notion of perichoresis.

This example would seem to suggest that the insights of trinitarian analogies need not conflict with a neo-Calvinist emphasis on creation order. However, if trinitarian analogies are not to become speculative abstractions then they need to be complemented by a biblical doctrine of creation order. Intriguingly, Irenaeus contains a strong sense of creation order. He writes, '[God] ... has created the whole world ... and to the whole world [God] has given laws, that each [creature] keep to [its] place and overstep not the bound laid down by God, each accomplishing the work marked out for [it].'³⁹

Conclusion

Gunton's *The One, the Three and the Many* is an exciting and important example of the sort of work Christians must engage in if we are to contribute to the healing of modernity/postmodernity. Although he paints with a broad brush I find his diagnosis of the malady of modernity convincing. More controversial is his proposal that a trinitarian approach of the sort he proposes has sufficient resources to point a way beyond the impasse of modernity/postmodernity. In this article we have noted the close similarities between Gunton's trinitarianism and neo-Calvinism. However neo-Calvinism takes creation order as the link idea between Scripture and philosophy, whereas Gunton identifies the trinity as the idea of ideas. Certainly

from a Trinitarian perspective, the world will be seen as created by, and related and unconditionally obligated to, God the

Father who is the one from whom its purposive ethical order derives. The world will, further, be seen as caught up and transfigured by the redemptive activity of the Son in which creation's original purpose is renewed and consummated. Finally, as the sphere of the operation of the Spirit, creation ... will be seen as realities in process of transformation through reorientation towards the purposes of God which they are newly empowered to serve.⁴⁰

However this is not the same as developing trinitarian transcendentals. As we have suggested the danger of such transcendentals is that they become abstract and speculative. For this to be avoided they will need to be anchored in a biblical understanding of creation order, such as that developed by neo-Calvinism. There is much to be gained, I suggest, by a dialogue between Gunton's trinitarianism and neo-Calvinism, both of which are rightly trying to respond to the challenge of modernity/ postmodernity along integrally Christian lines.

- 1 London: Collins, 1966.
- 2 References to *The One, the Three and the Many* are indicated by page numbers after quotes.
- 3 The book is chiastically divided between the diagnosis of the condition and a corresponding suggested remedy.
- 4 See Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1991), Christoph Schwöbel ed., *Trinitarian Theology Today* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995). For a useful overview of this renaissance see Thomas Thompson, 'Trinitarianism Today: Doctrinal Renaissance, Ethical Relevance, Social Redolence', *CTJ* 32,1 (1997), 9-42.
- 5 George Hunsinger, 'What Can Evangelicals & Postliberals Learn From Each Other?' in Timothy R Phillips and Dennis L Okholm, eds. *The Nature of Confession. Evangelicals and Postliberals in Conversation* (Illinois: IVP, 1996), 134-150. For a general overview of postliberalism see William C. Placher, 'Postliberal Theology', in David Ford, ed., *The Modern Theologians*, 2 vols, (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1989), 2:115-128.
- 6 This is not to suggest that Gunton is a postliberal theologian. There are differ-

ences and points of agreement between Gunton and the postliberals. It should be noted that in our comparison of Gunton with neo-Calvinism we will focus on the development of the neo-Calvinist tradition by Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven, Seerveld, Wolters etc, rather than on the earlier work of Bavinck and Kuyper.

- 7 More or less, see p.13.
- 8 Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 22.
- 9 Ockam is a significant figure on the threshold of modernity. Gunton relies much on Blumenberg's analysis at this point.
- 10 Cf. also MacIntyre's characterisation of the breakdown of communication in disputes about moral questions.
- 11 Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, (New Haven and London: Yale, 1987).
- 12 Roy A. Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).
- 13 Neo-Calvinists emphasise this in their view of the antithesis. See, for example, Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, (Toronto: Wedge, 1979), 7-15.
- 14 Toronto: Wedge, 1979.
- 15 See Albert Wolters, 'Dutch Neo-Calvinism: Worldview, Philosophy and Rationality', in Hart, H. et al. eds. *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1983), 113-131, for a description of key characteristics of neo-Calvinism.
- 16 Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1985, 111-152.
- 17 See Craig Bartholomew, 'Post/Late? Modernity as the Context for Christian Scholarship Today', *Themelios* 22,2 (1997), 32.
- 18 Alvin Plantinga, 'Christian Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century,' In: S. Griffioen & B.M. Balk, eds., *Christian Philosophy at the Close of the Twentieth Century. Assessment and Perspective*, (Kampen: Kok, 1995) 31-34.
- 19 Ibid., 33.
- 20 It should be noted that Gunton's *Enlightenment and Alienation* contains more of this sort of analysis.
- 21 Alain Finkelkraut, *The Undoing of Thought*, (London: Claridge Press, 1988).
- 22 I am indebted to Stephen Williams for this point.
- 23 Brian D. Ingrassia, *Postmodern Theory*

- and *Biblical Theology*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).
- 24 For a description of Vollenhoven's approach see K.A. Bril, *Westerse Denkstructuren* (Amsterdam: VU, 1986) and Albert Wolters, 'On Vollenhoven's Problem-Historical Method', In: J. Kraay & A. Tol, eds., *Hearing and Doing*, (Toronto: Wedge, 1979), 231-262.
 - 25 Dooyeweerd, *Roots*, 13.
 - 26 'A Note on Philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam', *Reformed Journal* 8,2 (1958), 16-17.
 - 27 Gunton has explored the relationship between Christ and creation in his *Christ and Creation*, (Carlisle, Grand Rapids: Paternoster, Eerdmans, 1991).
 - 28 See R.H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (London: Harper Colophon, 1975).
 - 29 See Gunton *Christ and Creation* for a nuanced discussion of the relationship between Christ's atoning work and the creation.
 - 30 Calvin Seerveld, 'Response to the Address of Dr Houston', Unpublished response at colloquium at York University, 1975.
 - 31 'Gustavo Guittérez', in J. Klapwijk, et al., eds., *Bringing Into Captivity Every Thought*, (Lanham, NY; London: University Press of America, 1991), 237.
 - 32 Susan Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory*, (Michigan: University Microfilms, 1983), 139-179.
 - 33 See, for example, Cornelius Van Til, *Defence of the Faith*, (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967). Gunton does not refer to Van Til.
 - 34 I am indebted to Richard Russell for this information.
 - 35 Some are arguing that the doctrine of the Trinity is today's article of the standing or falling church. See G. Wainwright, 'The Doctrine of the Trinity. Where the Church Stands or Falls', *Interpretation* XLV,2 (1991), 117-132.
 - 36 John Bolt of Calvin Theological Seminary recently argued for a more strongly trinitarian approach. See his *Christian and Reformed Today*, (Ontario: Paideia, 1984). See also George van der Velde's response: 'A Trinitarian Framework and Reformed Distinctiveness: A Critical Assessment of Christian and Reformed Today', CTJ 22, 104-114. Vollenhoven makes more of the doctrine of the Trinity than does Dooyeweerd, but he too is cautious on the use made of it philosophically. See Dirk Vollenhoven, 'The Unity of Life', (Commemoration lecture for the Utrecht chapter of the SSR held on October 13, 1955. English translation forthcoming in a Vollenhoven Reader, edited by John Kok.)
 - 37 See Norman Kretzmann, 'Trinity and Transcendentals', in R.J. Feenstra & C. Plantinga, eds. *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement. Philosophical and Theological Essays*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 79-109, for a sense of the philosophical background to the debate about transcendentals.
 - 38 Gordon Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 183.
 - 39 I am indebted to Ray Van Leeuwen for this point. The quote comes from Irenaeus' *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, paragraph 10.
 - 40 J.B. Webster, 'God', In: D.J Atkinson & D.H. Field, eds., *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, (Leicester, Illinois: IVP), 5.

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- Hope for the Jews II
- Espérance pour les Israélites
- Hoffnung für die Juden

Sylvain Romerowski, Saints, France

This is the continuation of the essay that began in EuroJTh 6.1. The summaries of the whole essay are given here again, as they were in that issue. In Part II, the author concludes his survey of the promises to Israel in the Old Testament; and in Part III he takes the argument into the Book of Romans.

RÉSUMÉ

La première partie de cet article traite du rôle d'Israël dans l'histoire de la rédemption. Israël a été choisi en vue de la bénédiction de toutes les nations. A cause de ses désobéissances, ce peuple a dû subir le jugement qui a pris la forme d'une destruction des deux royaumes israélites, et de l'exil. Les prophètes de l'AT ont promis de la part de Dieu un salut qui devait comporter deux aspects correspondant à deux étapes distinctes: le retour de l'exil et la conclusion d'une nouvelle alliance qui lui apporterait le pardon de ses fautes et une transformation intérieure. Ce n'est pas tout Israël qui devait bénéficier de ce salut, mais seulement un reste d'Israélites convertis. Dieu opèrerait un tri au sein de son peuple pour en éliminer les rebelles. Par contre, des gens des nations se tourneraient vers lui, et il les incorporerait au peuple de Dieu: ainsi, ceux-ci bénéficieraient des promesses faites à Israël.

Lorsque Jean Baptiste annonce un baptême d'Esprit et de feu, il le présente comme l'oeuvre du Messie par laquelle il va opérer ce tri au sein du peuple d'Israël. Par conséquent, depuis la Pentecôte, le peuple de Dieu est Israël, dont les Juifs incrédules ont été retranchés, et dans lequel les non-Juifs qui croient en Jésus-Christ ont été incorporés.

La deuxième partie est consacrée à la question du rôle du pays d'Israël dans l'histoire du salut. Elle présente la thèse selon laquelle ce pays a joué un rôle semblable à celui du peuple: de même qu'Israël a été choisi en vue de la bénédiction de toutes les nations, son pays a été choisi en vue de la bénédiction de la terre entière. Car d'après les prophètes (et le NT reprend cette ligne de pensée), le pays du peuple de Dieu devait être agrandi, jusqu'à s'étendre à la terre entière. Par conséquent, ce n'est pas par la possession d'un pays particulier que s'accomplissent les prophéties de l'AT, car le territoire qui revient à Israël ne se limite pas au pays de Canaan. Le rôle du pays d'Israël dans l'histoire du salut, et plus particulièrement de Jérusalem, s'est achevé lorsque les événements du salut se sont produits en ce lieu. L'espérance des croyants Israélites aujourd'hui, qu'ils partagent avec les croyants d'origine non-juive, est celle de régner avec Christ sur la terre entière renouvelée.

La troisième partie aborde le sujet de l'espérance pour les Israélites à partir de l'épître aux Romains. L'ensemble du NT, et Paul en particulier, enseignent que les Israélites incroyants ne font plus partie du véritable Israël, le peuple de Dieu. L'auteur étudie le chapitre 11 de l'épître aux Romains, qui a pour but de répondre à la question de savoir si Dieu a rejeté son peuple. Aux yeux de l'auteur, la réponse de Paul comporte trois éléments: 1. Dieu n'a pas rejeté son peuple car il s'est conservé un reste d'Israélites pour les sauver. Dieu a seulement purifié son peuple en retranchant les Israélites incroyants. 2. La porte demeurerait ouverte au temps de

Paul (et l'est encore actuellement) pour les Israélites inconvertis: s'ils se tournent vers Christ avec foi, ils peuvent encore être sauvés et être réintégrés dans le peuple de Dieu. 3. Un jour, 'tout Israël sera sauvé'. Par là, il faut comprendre que Dieu va faire quelque chose de spécial pour le peuple d'Israël à la fin de l'ère présente: les Israélites qui seront alors en vie se tourneront vers Christ en tant que peuple et recevront le salut. Dieu agira de la sorte, non pas parce

que les Israélites inconvertis auraient conservé un droit quelconque, mais en vertu de sa grâce envers un peuple qui a perdu tout droit à un quelconque privilège.

Dans la dernière partie, l'auteur répond à ceux qui pensent que l'on ne devrait plus annoncer l'Évangile aux Juifs et affirme que cette activité demeure une obligation pour l'Église aujourd'hui.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der erste Teil dieses Artikels behandelt die Rolle Israels in der Heilsgeschichte. Israel ist im Hinblick auf die Segnung aller Nationen auserwählt worden. Aufgrund seines Ungehorsams mußte das Volk das Gericht erdulden, das in der Vernichtung der beiden israelitischen Königreiche sowie im Exil bestand. Die Propheten des AT haben im Auftrag Gottes eine Rettung verheißen, die zwei Aspekte, mit zwei verschiedenen Etappen korrespondierend, aufweisen sollte: die Rückkehr aus dem Exil und den Schluß eines neuen Bundes, der den Israeliten die Vergebung ihrer Schuld und eine innerliche Umwandlung bringen werde. Doch nicht ganz Israel sollte von diesem Heil profitieren, sondern nur ein Rest bekehrter Israeliten. Gott wird im Innersten seines Volkes eine Auswahl vornehmen, um die Rebellen unter ihnen auszulöschen. Demgegenüber werden sich Leute aus den Nationen zu ihm wenden, und er wird sie dem Volk Gottes einverleiben, so daß erstere von den Verheißungen, die an Israel ergangen sind, profitieren werden.

Als Johannes der Täufer eine Taufe des Geistes und des Feuers ankündigte, präsentierte er sie als Werk des Messias, wodurch dieser die Auswahl im Innersten seines Volkes Israel vornehmen wird. Deshalb ist das Volk Gottes seit Pfingsten ein Israel, aus dem die ungläubigen Juden herausgeschnitten und in das die

Nichtjuden, die an Jesus Christus glauben, einverleibt worden sind.

Der zweite Teil ist der Frage gewidmet, welche Rolle das Land Israels in der Heilsgeschichte spielt. Er unterbreitet die These, daß das Land eine ähnliche Rolle spielt wie das Volk: wie Israel im Hinblick auf die Segnung aller Nationen erwählt worden ist, so ist auch sein Land im Hinblick auf die Segnung der ganzen Erde erwählt worden. Denn nach den Propheten (und das NT nimmt diesen Gedankengang auf) sollte das Land des Volkes Gottes vergrößert werden, bis es sich über die gesamte Erde erstreckt. Aus diesem Grund bedeutet die Inbesitznahme eines bestimmten Landes nicht die Erfüllung der alttestamentlichen Weissagungen, denn das Gebiet, das Israel zurückerhalten soll, ist nicht auf das Land Kanaan begrenzt. Die Rolle des Landes Israels, und vor allem Jerusalems, in der Heilsgeschichte ist vollendet, sobald sich die Heilsgeschehnisse an diesem Ort vollzogen haben. Die heutige Hoffnung der gläubigen Israeliten, die sie mit den Gläubigen nicht-jüdischen Ursprungs teilen, besteht darin, daß sie mit Christus über die gesamte erneuerte Erde herrschen werden.

Der dritte Teil erörtert das Thema der den Israeliten sich bietenden Hoffnung ausgehend vom Römerbrief. Die Gesamtheit des NT, und vor allem Paulus, lehren, daß die ungläubigen Israeliten keinen Anteil mehr am wahren Israel, dem Volk Gottes, haben.

Der Autor untersucht das 11. Kapitel des Römerbriefes, das eine Antwort auf die Frage geben will, ob Gott sein Volk verstoßen hat. Aus der Sicht des Autors enthält die Antwort des Paulus drei Elemente: 1.) Gott hat sein Volk nicht verworfen, da er sich einen Rest der Israeliten erhält, um sie zu retten. Gott hat sein Volk lediglich gereinigt, indem er die ungläubigen Israeliten herausgeschnitten hat. 2.) Die Tür blieb zur Zeit des Paulus für die unbekehrten Israeliten offen (und ist es auch noch heute): wenn sie im Glauben zu Christus umkehren, können sie noch gerettet und wieder in das Volk Gottes integriert werden. 3.) Eines Tages "wird ganz Israel gerettet werden". In diesem

Zusammenhang gilt es zu verstehen, daß Gott am Ende der gegenwärtigen Ära etwas besonderes für das Volk Israel tun wird: die Israeliten, die dann noch am Leben sein werden, werden sich als Volk zu Christus wenden und das Heil empfangen. Gott wird auf diese Weise handeln, doch nicht, weil die unbekehrten Israeliten irgendein Anrecht darauf hätten, sondern aufgrund seiner Gnade einem Volk gegenüber, das jegliches Recht auf jedwede Begünstigung verloren hat.

Im letzten Teil antwortet der Autor denen, die meinen, daß man den Juden das Evangelium nicht mehr verkünden solle, und bekräftigt, daß diese Tätigkeit ein Auftrag der heutigen Kirche bleibt.

II. Hope for the Jews with regard to the land of Israel or the land of Israel in salvation history

Our thesis regarding the promised land is that it played a role parallel to that of the people of Israel. Just as Israel was chosen with a view to the blessing of all nations, the land was chosen in view of the blessing of the whole earth.

According to the message of the OT prophets, the enlargement of the people of God to include people from all nations was to be accompanied by an extension of Israel's territory. The eschatological territory promised to Israel in the prophetic corpus of the OT was not limited to that comprised within the borders defined by the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 15), that which had been under the rule of Solomon. It extends far beyond. For instance, it is said it would include the land of Edom (Ob 19,21), the territory of Moab and Ammon (Zep 2.9) which Israel was forbidden to conquer by the old covenant law (Dt 2.9,19). Zechariah even declared that God's people would occupy Lebanon and that they would not have enough space with it (10.10).

As we have shown elsewhere,¹ in the second part of the book of Obadiah, which is eschatological (Ob 15–21), Edom functions as a type of all the nations (this is

indicated by vv. 15f), as is the case in other prophetic oracles (Am 9.12; Is 34; 63.1–6; Eze 36.5). Therefore, to say that Israel will possess the territory of Edom (Ob 19,21; cf. Am 9.12) amounts to saying that Israel will possess the whole earth. This is explicitly affirmed in Psalm 2.8.

This view of things is found in the NT also. Paul interprets the Abrahamic promise as the promise of the *inheritance of the world*, and not merely of a country (Ro 4.13). The OT promises of long life and happiness in the land of Israel are restated in the NT as promises of long life and happiness upon the earth (Eph 6.3 quoting Ex 20.12; Mt 5.4 quoting Ps 37.11).

We therefore conclude that, in the old covenant, the promised land functioned as a sign that the earth as a whole belongs to the Lord and that He would entrust the whole earth to his people. The land of Israel was like the firstfruits of the whole earth which the people of God was to inherit. In this way, the earth would become full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Is 11.9).

We have seen that the new people of God was founded with Israel's remnant as its kernel. Likewise, it was from Jerusalem and from the land of Judah that the territory of God's people was to be extended (Ob 19–21). Salvation is from

the Jews (Jn 4.22) and it was accomplished in Jerusalem. At the cross mounted immediately outside the gates of Jerusalem, the whole earth, and perhaps the whole cosmos, was reconciled with God in Christ (Col 1.20) in order to share in the redemption of God's children (Rom 8.18–23). Luke draws attention to the following facts: the salvation events took place in Jerusalem (Lk 24.18), the new people of God was constituted in Jerusalem by the gift of Spirit baptism (Ac 1.4,8) and salvation was then to be propagated from there to all the earth (Ac 1.8).

Therefore, once salvation has been accomplished in Jerusalem, the time has come when worship of the Father is no longer confined to the Jerusalem Temple (Jn 4.21–23), for wherever upon earth two or three gather in Jesus' name, he is in the midst of them, in parallel fashion to God's presence in the old covenant sanctuary.

What then does this theology of the land mean in terms of hope for the Jews in our time? And what is the significance of the return of Jews to the land of Israel in our century from that perspective? Many believe this contemporary event to be a fulfilment of OT prophecies.

In order to assess this last claim adequately, extensive exegesis of many passages in the OT prophets would be necessary. This cannot be done here. We will limit ourselves to proposing three conclusions that we have reached on the basis of such exegetical work.

1. The OT prophets do speak of a return of Israelites to the promised land. But this is the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylonia. It took place from 538 B.C and on to the following century. But concerning what has happened in our own century, we find no trace in the message of the prophets.

Yet, in the books of Isaiah and Micah, the return from the Babylonian exile is presented as a type of another return. This means that there will be another return for the Jews, which is compared to their return from Babylonia. This new return is also depicted as a new Exodus: God will grant a deliverance which is described in

language that recalls the deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Is 4.5–6; 10.26; 11.10–16; 12.2 = Ex 15.2; Mic 7.15–20). Soon it becomes clear, however, that this new return and this new Exodus are of a different kind from the first ones. For the enemy of his people whom God will then conquer, as he conquered the Egyptians in the past, is sin: *sin will be hurled into the depth of the sea* as the Egyptians had been overflowed by the Red Sea (Mic 7.15 and 17–18). Likewise, the return will be a return to the Lord (Is 10.20–22): the Lord is now, as it were, the promised land to which the new Exodus leads. There is much more to be said about these themes, but we will only add two more comments here.

First, the new Exodus will be led by Immanuel, the messianic son of David and second, Isaiah foretold that Gentiles would participate in it with the remnant of Israel (11.10–11).

Hence the new exodus corresponds to the second aspect of salvation. The return from Babylonia is presented as a figure of this new exodus; and it functions as a prelude to the new exodus.

All this is figurative and typological language, but it can be easily misunderstood. As a matter of fact, it has been misapplied in interpretations which insisted on a literal eschatological return of Israel into his land. This leads us to our second proposition.

2. The OT prophets extensively used figurative language which has often been misapplied. Let us give here one more example.

Isaiah often depicts a transformation of the desert into fruitful orchards (32.15–17; 35.6f; 43.19; 44.3f; 49.9f; 51.3). This language has been deemed fulfilled in the Israeli realizations in the Negev from 1948 on, through an efficient irrigation system bringing down the water from the Jordan. We ourselves, while visiting an uncle living in a kibbutz in the Negev, south of Beersheba, have seen these wonderful orchards in the midst of the desert, and we can bear witness to this stupendous achievement of the Israelis. But the question remains: has this anything to do with the above Isaianic passages?

The prophet himself gives us clues to his meaning. As we attempt to understand these texts aright, we must also keep in mind that they are parallel passages and therefore ought to be interpreted together, each in the light of the others.

In Is 32, the Holy Spirit is compared to rain which is poured from on high to water a desert and fertilize it (v. 15). What kind of fruit is then produced in the desert? It is justice, righteousness and peace (vv. 16f). We cannot but remember the song of Isaiah 5 at this point. There, Israel was compared to a vine which did not produce the fruits expected by the Lord, justice and righteousness (Is 5.1–7). In ch. 32, the desert is likewise a metaphor for Israel's failure to produce righteousness. But Israel will be transformed by the Spirit in order to produce these fruits that the Lord requires from him.

Similarly, in Is 44.3, the first half verse is in figurative language and is paralleled by the second half verse, in more literal language. The second is explanatory of the other. The prophet speaks of a pouring of water on a thirsty land. Then he explains the water as an image of the Spirit and the thirsty land as an image of the offspring of Israel.

In 51.3, the desert will be changed into a garden, but again, the fruits that will grow there are not ordinary fruits but joy and gladness.

Is 40.3–4 is another text to be mentioned in this connection. For the voice calling to prepare the way for the Lord in the desert, to raise up every valley and make low every mountain, is identified in the NT as that of John the Baptist (Mt 3.3; Lk 3.4). John called the people to conversion in preparation for the coming of the Lord Christ. Hence the desert stands once again for Israel, who should set aside his pride (mountains are often symbols of pride in the prophets' writings) and fill in what is missing in his life (the image of filling in the ruts) by conversion.

The desert imagery is only one of many examples of figurative language which has at times been misapplied to contemporary events. It could be shown, as we have done for this example, that most

frequently, if not always, the prophets give similar clues to orient our interpretation of their imagery that has been ignored when such language has been applied to contemporary events.

We have to recognize metaphorical language for what it is.

3. What about the promises of material blessing and prosperity which pervade the eschatological message of the prophets? Should we expect a literal fulfilment for national Israel, or should we spiritualize them and apply them to the Church? Neither of these solutions are satisfactory in our eyes.

These promises are part of the promises of eschatological salvation addressed to Israel. But as we have seen, this salvation is intended only for a remnant of Israel, and some Gentiles were to be joined to Israel and thereby benefit from the same blessings. The land of the people of God was to extend far beyond its original borders to encompass the whole earth. Therefore, we cannot limit the import of these promises of material blessing and prosperity to national Israel, nor to the land of Canaan.

Yet, though the prophets make abundant use of figurative language and we have to read them accordingly, spiritualization constitutes another category of interpretation and is unwarranted in our eyes. (Spiritualization differs from taking a given unit of language as figurative, in that it works on the principle that salvation and blessings have no material significance, and it operates somewhat arbitrarily insofar as it does not rely on interpretative clues in the texts themselves). For there are no indications in the texts that the above mentioned promises are anything else than promises of material blessing.

In our view, these blessings will benefit the new covenant people of God and will be fulfilled on the new earth described by Isaiah (Is 65.17ff), depicted again in the book of Revelation (chs 21–22) and presented by Paul as our earth redeemed (Rom 8.18–25).

We conclude, then, that we are not warranted by Scripture in formulating

hope for the Jews today in terms of the possession of one particular land. Or, rather, we do not think that the territory to be allotted to Israel should be restricted to the land of Canaan. The role of the land of Israel, and more particularly of Jerusalem, in redemptive history was brought to completion when the events of salvation took place there. Also, the land of Israel had a typological significance under the old covenant; the type will be fulfilled in the reality of the earth redeemed by Christ and made new. The hope Jewish believers have today, and which they share with Gentile believers, is that of reigning with Christ upon the earth renewed, the whole earth.

III. Hope for the Jews according to Romans

The eleventh chapter of Romans has a significant bearing upon the question of hope for the Jews today. Yet before we turn to that question, we have to consider how Paul views the status of unbelieving Jews in the epistle as a whole.

1. The status of unbelieving Jews in Romans

In Rom 2.28–29, Paul writes: ‘A man is not a Jew if he is only circumcised outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward or physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly...’ Of course, the first man spoken of is physically speaking a Jew, he is physically circumcised, and he belongs to national Israel. But he is not a Jew in another sense: he is no longer within God’s people, the new people formed from Pentecost on. For circumcision was a sign of the covenant and of belonging to God’s people. But heart circumcision (an image used in Deuteronomy and then by Jeremiah) is the true circumcision according to Paul, the circumcision that makes one a member of the new covenant, and part of the true people of God.

According to Rom 4.12, Abraham is not the father of all Jews, but only of some of them, i.e. those who have faith in Christ.

What Paul refers to here as the offspring of Abraham is obviously not Abraham’s descendants in a biological sense. To be the offspring of Abraham here means to be a member of the people which God purposed to create for himself through Abraham (*God’s children*, v. 8), the people who would receive the promise made to Abraham (the promise of the world, v. 13). Again, unbelieving Jews are considered as excluded from this entity.

In Rom 9.6, Paul makes a distinction within Israel: ‘Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.’ And not all descendants of Abraham are to be considered as part of his offspring, or as God’s children (v. 7). In other words, Israel as the people of God is not coextensive with Abraham’s descendants, nor with national Israel. Just as Ishmael and Esau, though they were among Abraham’s descendants, are not to be counted as part of God’s people, not all Israelites are to be counted as members of God’s people.

The image of the olive tree explains why this is so. The olive tree represents the people of God, just like the vine in the OT (Is 5; Eze 15; Ps 80). Unbelieving Jews once were branches of the olive tree: they once were members of the people of God, i.e. under the old covenant. But as we have seen above, when Jesus came and administered to the people a baptism in Spirit and fire, a sorting out of the Israelites took place. The unbelieving Jews are therefore now represented as branches that have been cut off from the olive tree. They have been severed from the people of God. They have been *rejected* and placed outside of it (11.15). Only Jews who have put their trust in Christ remain part of the people of God; they are represented by the natural branches remaining on the tree (11.27). These form what Paul called in 9.27, using Isaianic language, the remnant of Israel.²

The words the prophet Hosea addressed to Northern Israelites at the eve of the fall of Samaria also apply to unbelieving Jews: ‘You are not my people and I am not your God’ (Hos 1.9).

The fact that unbelieving Jews now stand outside of God’s people, and there-

fore do not share in salvation, is what causes Paul great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart (9.2). This very fact makes him wish he would be accursed for the sake of the Israelites (9.3). The apostle is not coldly asserting theological truths, or building an argument for mere intellectual delight, without any sensitivity. He is suffering from what he is teaching about the Jews. Nothing less than the fact that unbelieving Jews have been excluded from God's people and are therefore in great danger of eternal death (cf. 10.1) can explain such a deep torment as Paul is expressing. We should beware lest we be entrapped by misplaced culpability or sentimentality and thus be led to tone down or even relinquish this fact. The apostle both expressed great concern and love for the Jews and asserted this drastic fact at the same time! Unless we take this reality into account, we will misunderstand what Paul has to say about what hope there is for the Jews today.

2. Hope for the Jews according to Romans 11

The eleventh chapter of Romans opens with the question: 'Did God reject his people?' This question arises against the background of the matter dealt with in the previous two chapters: the fact that most Jews rejected the Gospel. Paul has explained it in two complementary ways. First, the rejection of the Gospel by a majority of Jews took place because God so willed it (9.6–29). For God only elected some of the Jews to be part of true Israel, of his people, and to receive salvation, just as he only chose Jacob and not Esau to be part of the old covenant people. Therefore, the unbelief of a large part of the Jewish nation does not cancel God's purpose but rather carries it out.

Secondly, as always in Scripture, and especially in the Pauline writings, human responsibility is affirmed on the background of absolute divine sovereignty. Thus Paul points out that if some Israelites do not presently benefit from salvation, it is not without their being responsible for it. For they have attempted to obtain justification on the

basis of law observance instead of receiving it by faith (9.30–10.13). And ignorance of the Gospel on their part cannot be brought as an excuse for this attitude because they heard it and rejected it in disobedience (10.14–21).

If then God did not elect all Jews unto salvation, does it follow that he rejected his people? Or if Jews wilfully rejected the Gospel, is there any place left for the Jews in the plan of God? Since most Jews did not acknowledge their Messiah, is there any hope left for them?

To the first question, Paul answers negatively, and, according to our understanding of Romans 11, presents three reasons to justify this response:

i. In the present, there are Jews who are still members of his people and who benefit from salvation (11.1–10).

ii. Also in the present, the door remains open for Jews to receive salvation and be reincorporated into God's people (11.11–24).

iii. In the future, 'all Israel will be saved' (11.25–32).

i. The first point does not present any real exegetical difficulty for the issues we are dealing with. Paul draws the attention to the fact that, though God hardened a majority of Israelites who have not obtained salvation, he preserved a remnant of elect Israelites, of whom he himself is one. And thanks to God, the present writer could say the same as Paul in that respect, as well as many of his brothers and sisters '*kata sarka*' today.

God did not reject his people. He only purified it by taking off from it the unbelieving Jews. He rejected these individuals (11.15), but not his people as such.

ii. Difficulties begin with verses 11–12 and 15. In v. 11, Paul says that many Jews *stumbled*: they did not respond to the Gospel by faith in Christ and thereby failed to receive salvation. But Paul denies that this situation is definitive: They did not fall beyond recovery. What we think he has in mind is that it remains possible for them to come to Christ in faith and receive salvation.

Then Paul adds a comment on the stumbling of these Israelites: God used it

in order to bring salvation to the Gentiles. In that connection, we may think of the experience of the apostle as related in the book of Acts: very often, it is the rejection of the Gospel by the Jews which led Paul to address the pagan world with the Gospel (Acts 13.45–48; 18.6; 28.24–28).

At the end of the verse Paul brings in the idea that this salvation of the Gentiles may serve in turn to bring Israelites to salvation: seeing Gentiles saved, Jews may be stimulated to desire the same salvation.

In v. 12 Paul imagines what will or would be the conversion of Israelites. If a transgression on their part (their rejection of the Gospel) brought such a positive effect as the salvation of Gentiles, how much more a positive attitude on their part will or would bring a positive effect.

Several uncertainties confront us here as to what Paul exactly means. For one thing, what is the meaning of the Greek word *plerôma*? We mention three possibilities: 1. 'The fulfilling of God's will';³ 2. The participation of all the Israelites in salvation (the large majority of exegetes); 3. The full number of Israelites who must be saved, i.e. the full number of the Jewish elect (so apparently H. Ridderbos).

For another thing, if one adopts option 2 for *plerôma*, is the verse to be understood as affirmative or, as conditional (so Leon Morris)? In other words, is Paul saying: 'it will be great when such an event happens' or: 'it would be great if such an event were to happen'?

In vv. 13–15, Paul insists on what he has just said in vv. 11–12. He also adds a thought concerning his own apostolic ministry. Since the Jews may be stimulated to desire salvation when they see Gentiles obtaining it, Paul hopes that his Gospel ministry to the Gentiles may indirectly contribute to the salvation of some Jews. Seeing Gentiles saved through his ministry, some Jews might also be converted.

In verse 15, he repeats what he said in v. 12. God *rejected* Jews out from his people as a sanction of their unbelief and this proved an occasion for Gentiles to receive his favor. But Paul envisions again that Jews will or might be accepted

again by God and says that this would be a resurrection from the dead.

For most exegetes, this last affirmation is about an eschatological event: the conversion of the Jewish people as a whole. This fits in with option 2. for *plerôma* in v. 12, understood as an affirmation. In their eyes, vv. 12 and 15 say the same thing as v. 26.

The mention of a resurrection from the dead is then understood by some in a figurative sense, to convey the idea of a formidable event and of passing from spiritual death to spiritual life. But for F. F. Bruce and C. E. B. Cranfield,⁴ Paul is referring to the bodily resurrection, meaning that the conversion of the Jewish people as a whole will take place right before and will lead on to physical resurrection.

However, there are two objections to this interpretation. First, it gives to the word *plerôma* a different meaning from the one it usually receives in v. 25. There, Paul speaks of the coming in (into the people of God) of the *plerôma* of the Gentiles. He certainly does not mean that all the Gentiles will be saved. It is therefore largely agreed that Paul refers to the full number of the Gentiles who must come in, i.e. the full number of the Gentile elect. Are we warranted in ascribing a different meaning to the word *plerôma* when it is used about the Jews? This seems very dubious. On the contrary, the use of *plerôma* in v. 25 lends strong support to option 3. in v. 12: the full number of the Jewish elect.

Secondly, the immediate context of vv. 12 and 15 does not support the majority interpretation. For as we have seen, Paul expresses the desire that his ministry may contribute to the salvation of some Jews. This strongly suggests that what he has in mind in vv. 12 and 15 is not an event of the end time, but the conversion of Jews through his own ministry and during the whole missionary era.

Therefore, we believe that in vv. 12 and 15, Paul points out how great it is when Jews turn to Christ in faith – it is like a resurrection (in a figurative or spiritual sense) – and how wonderful it will be

when all the Jews who must do so all along missionary history will have come to Christ for salvation!

Further on, within the presentation of the image of the olive tree, Paul elaborates on this idea (vv. 23–24). It is because of their unbelief that Jews are like branches cut off from the tree. But if they do not persist in this unbelief, they will be grafted in again on the tree, for God is able to do so. And he will be even more willing to graft in natural branches than he has been to graft in the foreign branches, i.e. the Gentile believers.

Therefore, the possibility remains open, in the time of Paul, and still in our own time, for Jews to come in faith to Christ and be incorporated again in God's people. They have stumbled, but their fall is neither irremediable, nor necessarily definitive.

iii. From v. 25 on, Paul goes a step further. Not only does the door remain open for the Jews, but says Paul, one day, this possibility will become actuality: 'all Israel will be saved.'

It is an understatement to say that the interpretation of this assertion is disputed! Who is 'all Israel'? That is the question.

1. Calvin considers 'all Israel' to stand for all the elect, Jews and Gentiles. Accordingly, Paul would be saying that when all the Gentile elect are saved, the full number of Israel will be complete.

We mention this interpretation first to set it aside immediately. For it is difficult to ascribe to 'Israel' in v. 26 a different meaning from what is its obvious sense in the preceding verse. In v. 25 'Israel' refers to national Israel, that which has been hardened in part. Furthermore, the whole chapter uses the term 'Israel' in the national sense, and in contrast with the Gentiles. It would be very confusing if Paul suddenly used 'Israel' in a different way from that of all the rest of the chapter, without giving the least indication of it. It is very difficult to believe he did so.

2. According to the vast majority of exegetes, Paul is saying that the hardening of Israel is not only partial (since there is a remnant left even in Paul's time) but

that it will be limited in time. It will last only until the Gentile elect have come to salvation. Then, at the end of the missionary era, the Jewish people of that time will be saved as a whole, i.e. the last generation living right before Christ's return. In this view, 'all Israel' is however not to be understood as all individual Jews with no exception, but as the great majority of them. *Sanhedrin* 10.1 is a text sometimes alluded to in that regard for it says that 'all Israel will have a share in the world to come' and is followed by a list of exceptions (according to C. E. B. Cranfield). Paul would be thus predicting a national revival of the Jewish people to take place right before the return of Christ.

3. H. N. Ridderbos's view has been followed by a number of Reformed theologians.⁵ He thinks that 'all Israel' refers to all Israelites who receive the Gospel and are converted all along Church history, and even to all the Israelites from of old who have turned to God in repentance. He considers the *mystery* of v. 25 to lie in the fact that Israel will not be saved without the Gentiles. Then he takes *houtôs* at the opening of v. 26 as meaning 'in this way'. Paul would then be saying that Jews can only be saved as Gentiles come in. Israel can be saved only in this way, and not without the Gentiles. Yet, as for now, one does not see Israel as a people to be saved: we only see a few individual Jews that are converted in the midst of an unbelieving people. But then 'all Israel will be saved', and this means that Israel will be manifested in his unity as the eschatological people mentioned by the prophets who was to benefit from the promises of salvation.

Ridderbos thereby understands vv. 25–26 as saying the same thing as he and the present writer found vv. 12 and 15 to be saying. His arguments are as follows:

a. There can be found no other mention of a general conversion of Israel in the rest of the NT. It is very dubious that Paul would have revealed such an event in five words with no other explanation.

b. Paul previously spoke of the conversion of Israelites in his time, and that of some only (vv. 12, 15).

c. In v. 31, the apostle says that it is *now* that the Jews receive mercy.

d. That all Israel be saved in the sense of interpretation 2. is contradictory with what Paul said in ch. 9: a mere remnant of Israel is to be saved, and this not on a national basis.

We do not find these arguments conclusive:

d. does not prove Ridderbos's point. For if the last generation of Israelites is saved as a whole, the remnant principle of chapter 9 still functions during the whole history that precedes.

c. The second *nun* ('now') of v. 31 is weakly attested in the Greek manuscripts. And even if it is retained, it can be understood more loosely than Ridderbos does.

b. does not stand if one distinguishes between Paul's time, of which he speaks in vv. 12 and 15, and the end time which could be the concern of v. 25.

a. may not be entirely true. When the apostles asked about the time when the kingdom would be restored to Israel, Jesus did not reply that such an event would not happen. He merely said it did not belong to them to know the date (Acts 1.6–7). This strongly suggests that the kingdom will one day be restored to Israel, that is that Israel as a people will enter the kingdom which has been taken away from him because of his unbelief (Mt 21.43). The Lk 21.24 passage might be another text saying the same thing.

Furthermore there are some objections to Ridderbos's view and solution 2. is not without support.

a. Ridderbos's interpretation does not do full justice to our text. His idea that v. 26 speaks of the eschatological manifestation of Israel in its unity as a saved community falls short of the content of Paul's words: 'all Israel will be saved'.

b. The *heôs* of v. 25 followed by the *houtôs* of v. 26 tends to indicate temporal succession: the salvation of 'all Israel' will follow that of the Gentiles. Therefore, the salvation of all Israel cannot be identified with the salvation of Jews who are converted all along the missionary era.

c. The word *pas* 'all' in v. 26 seems to

build an opposition with *apo merous* 'in part' of v. 25. But then, Israel has to be taken as national Israel in both cases.

d. It is the Israel that is now hardened that will be saved, not the mere remnant. This receives confirmation from v. 28: it is the Jews who have refused the Gospel and are therefore enemies as far as the Gospel is concerned whom God loves. Paul seems to be saying that despite the unbelief of Israel, God will accomplish something special for this people for the sake of his ancestors.

For these reasons, we prefer solution 2. for vv. 25–26.

This interpretation has been said to be illogical. If Israel no longer is the people of God, there appears to be no reason why God should reserve special treatment for it. There is no reason why Israel should obtain a particular destiny. But this is exactly what Paul says: God saves by grace, and not according to logic. It is when Israel has been bound over to disobedience (v. 32), it is when Israel has lost all rights, all titles to any privilege or special favor that God saves them as a people and grants them special favour. It is when there is no reason left for God to reserve special treatment for Israel that he does something special for Israel, something he will not do for any other nation. This is what grace is.

The way in which God deals with Israel demonstrates that Israel does not deserve anything more than the other nations, and that if it is saved, it is as much by grace as the Gentiles. For God saves those who have no title to salvation, both the Gentiles and then the Jews once they have lost all rights to any privilege.

Verses 28–29 call for further comment: 'As far as the Gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account.' This assertion again sets the Jewish unbelievers in opposition to the people of God. The word 'enemies' puts them in the shoes of the *goyim* of the OT. But as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.' God does not forget that Israel served his purposes in the history of redemption. He does not forget having

concluded the Sinaitic covenant with them. Of course, the covenant treaty contained provisions for sanctions, blessings and curses. All that we Jews deserve on the basis of that covenant are the curses. Yet, God in his mercy decided that the blessings would nevertheless be fulfilled for Israel because of the historical role he had called him to play. This is the reason why 'all Israel will be saved' one day.

Such an event presupposes that there will be a massive conversion of Jews to Christ in the end time. For Christ is the only way to salvation, even for Jews. They will be saved by faith. What will happen then is a kind of mass revival of this people.

Gentile believers may have a significant role to play in such a revival, in bringing the Gospel to the Jews. In this way, the Jews will obtain mercy as a result of God's mercy to the Gentile believers (v. 31).

IV. Evangelism and the Jews

1. Should we preach the Gospel to the Jews?⁶

Nowadays, more and more voices are speaking out, condemning evangelism to the Jews on the part of the Church, or 'proselytism' as it is sometimes called in a disparaging way. Some of the most recent *Statements of the World Council of Churches and Its Members* have tended to take this direction.⁷ This is not surprising since in recent years the ecumenical movement has been increasingly manifesting an attitude of acceptance of non-Christian religions as other valid ways to God. Even in evangelical circles, voices have been raised to preclude Jewish evangelism. Motivations for such attitudes are diverse.

i. Soteriological universalism leaves no sense to evangelise the Jews, nor indeed any others.

ii. Jewish universalism is also encountered, i.e. the view according to which the Pauline statement that *all Israel will be saved* would mean the salvation of all Jews of all times. This view is sometimes argued as a consequence of the election of

the Jews and of their descent from Abraham (Ro 11.28).

iii. Some believe the Jewish people to be the suffering Servant of the Lord in the book of Isaiah, and that his sufferings in the course of history have atoning value.

iv. It is sometimes claimed that the Church has lost all right to trying to bring the Jews to embrace her faith, because of her attitude towards the Jews in history.

v. Some evangelicals believe that the fulfilment of Ro 11.26 is imminent. They conclude from this that there is no point in proclaiming the Gospel to the Jews since God is now going to draw them all to Christ himself. Rather, the Church would better prepare herself to welcome the Jews in her midst.

Point v. can be answered easily. Even if we grant that in Rom 11.26 Paul foretells a revival of the Jewish people as a whole in the end time, Jesus said we cannot know when this will happen (Ac 1.6). Hence we must reject this claim to knowledge that such an event is imminent. Furthermore, Paul may suggest that the Jews will turn to Christ upon the proclaiming of the Gospel to them by Gentile believers (Ro 11.31). Consequently, the perspective that *all Israel will be saved* should rather encourage us to Jewish evangelism.

Answering argument iii. would require detailed exegesis. We can only bring in a few thoughts here. The Servant of the Lord is called Israel in a polemical way: he is presented as the true Israel, in contrast to the people who is proud of calling himself Israel but does not live up to the vocation this entails (Is 48.1). Therefore the Servant cannot be the people of Israel. For this reason, some identify him with the remnant of Israel, or an elite of righteous Israelites. But the Servant accomplishes his redemptive work on behalf of the remnant of Israel (Is 49.5); hence he must be distinct from such an entity. Furthermore, if there was any elite of righteous men, the prophet must have been part of it. But in ch. 6, Isaiah had confessed his impurity. This shows that in his eyes the best of the Israelites were in need of the justifying work of the Lord's

Servant who was to die as a guilt offering for the sins of his people (Is 53). No elite of Israel could effect such atoning work. As a matter of fact, the idea that Israel's suffering, or that of some Israelites, might have atoning value is totally foreign to the rest of Scripture.

Against Jewish universalism, we have already pointed out that Paul considers Jewish unbelievers as being outside Abraham's true offspring which is heir of the promise of salvation and that the feelings he expresses in Rom 9.1–3 make no sense if all the Jews will finally be saved. His prayer in Rom 10.1 also implies that not all of them are saved.

Israel's election does not mean unconditional salvation for all Jews. On the contrary, as far as the Gospel is concerned, they are enemies (Rom 11.28a). As a matter of fact, this election entails accrued responsibility and more severe judgment if this responsibility is not met (Amos 3.2). In Paul's mind, the salvation of the last generation of Israelites is linked with Israel's election, but this says nothing concerning the previous generations.

Jesus did not say anything different in addressing Jewish people. In his eyes, Jewish unbelievers are not true children of Abraham (8.39) but rather children of the devil (8.44), a stern warning indeed. Their being biologically issued from Abraham is no guarantee of salvation. Life for the Jews only comes through Christ (Jn 5.39f). Hence Jews do not have eternal life if they reject him (Jn 6.53). To disbelieve Christ amounts to disbelieving God (Jn 5.37f) and also Moses, with the result that one is standing condemned by Moses' writings (Jn 5.45–47). If Jews do not acknowledge that Jesus is 'I am', i.e. Yahweh, they will die in their sins (Jn 8.21–24).

Having pointed out that his Jewish hearers have rejected their Messiah, Peter proclaims that there is salvation in no one else (Ac 4.11–12). The implication is obvious: rejecting Jesus Christ excludes Jews from salvation.

According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, rejection of the Gospel prevents one from entering God's redemptive rest

(Heb 3–4) and exposes one to a fiercer judgment than was the case with violation of the old covenant (Heb 2.1–4). See also the warning in Heb 10.29.

Turning again to Romans, we must recall that the first three chapters of this epistle are intended to demonstrate that Jews and Gentiles are on the same footing concerning salvation: Jews and Gentiles alike are in a state of sin and stand condemned for their sins (Rom 3.9,19f); Jews and Gentiles alike can only be justified through faith in Jesus Christ and on the basis of his atoning death (3.21–26).

If we insist so much on all these Scripture references, it is not to denigrate our kinsmen '*kata sarka*', but to expose the monstrous fallacy of the idea that the Church should refrain from Gospel proclamation to the Jews. Refraining from proclaiming the Gospel to the Jews is the worst thing one can do to them today. This is the real anti-Jewish attitude!

For the Gospel is for the Jews (Rom 1.16). It was designed to be preached first to the Jews (Ac 1.8). The apostles, and even Paul, though he was the apostle to the Gentiles, obeyed this command of Christ as we learn from the book of Acts (and Gal 2.9). They are for us examples to be imitated in this very activity. Preaching the Gospel to the Jews is not a matter of a right that the Church might have lost; it is an obligation laid upon her by the urgency of the Jews' need of salvation. It is a matter of life and death.

Of course, since apostolic times, there has been much suffering caused to the Jews by a so called Christian world, all kinds of vexations and discriminations, the Inquisition, the pogroms, the *shoah*, and so on. These are undeniable facts. Does it lend any validity to argument iv? Let it be permitted to us to answer by a more personal word.

My father's father was arrested with other Jews in Paris, in the Spring of 1941, and taken to the camp in Drancy. In 1942, he was part of the fourth convoy of Jews leaving France. The destination was Auschwitz. My mother's parents had come to Paris from Salonica, Greece, in the 1920s with many relatives. Of this

numerous family, only my grand parents and a few relatives escaped the events of World War II and lived beyond 1945; the rest of the family was taken to concentration camps. One of my mother's sisters was arrested by the Gestapo and taken to Auschwitz in the last year of the war; she passed close to death, but was able to come back to France a year or so later. Her husband is from Poland. He managed to survive by fleeing to Russia and hiding himself there for five years. He remembers that when he was a boy in Poland, Jews were chased by people holding crosses in their hands. My mother and brother are believers. To my aunt and uncle, our being Christians is a betrayal of our people, and amounts to making common cause with the oppressors.

Now, what if the persons who shared the Gospel with my mother had thought they did not have the right to do so because of what her family had suffered? I might not be writing these lines today. The three of us might be heading on to die in our sins. Would not that be worse than all the atrocities committed during world war II?

In conversation with my aunt a little bit of Church history has proved helpful. It showed that the Church of Jesus Christ must not be confused with Christendom, nor with whatever bears the name of 'Church'. The true Church of Jesus Christ is made up of the followers of Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, he prayed for the forgiveness of the Jews who had condemned him (Lk 23.34). A true disciple of Jesus Christ cannot have a different attitude towards the Jews. Jesus himself said: 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven... Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"' (Mt 7.21,23). True disciples of Christ are to be recognized by their fruits (Mt 7.16,20). Jesus does not have to be judged in terms of everything that has been done in his name or by people calling themselves Christians.

In fact, the true Church has often been persecuted by the same so-called

Christians who persecuted the Jews. There were also disciples of Christ who publicly protested against the treatment reserved to the Jews. I presently have on my desk copies of letters, written in 1941 and 1942 and addressed to the highest authorities in France by Marc Boegner, then President of the French Protestant Federation, and expressing disapproval, in the name of the Protestant Churches, of decisions and actions of the government against the Jews. We know of Christians who have risked their lives to save Jews, to hide them and help them in various ways.

Jews are able to understand these things. They already know some of these facts. As a matter of fact, the number of Jewish believers today may be proportionately higher than believers coming from any other race or religion.

We are not ashamed of the Gospel. Because it is not the Gospel which produced such poisonous fruits as discriminations, the Inquisition, pogroms, the shoah or the like.

Of course, the Gospel remains a stumbling block to many Jews, and sometimes this is so because of the confusion between Christendom and the true Church of Jesus Christ. But the Gospel has always been a stumbling block for numerous Jews, and would be so even if the crimes we know had not been perpetrated (1 Cor 1.22-25). And we fear the Gospel has now become a stumbling block for some who claim the name Christian for themselves! For what they are preaching simply is 'another gospel', which is really no gospel at all (cf. Gal 1.6-7).

We certainly must be cautious in the way we present the Gospel to the Jews, and do it out of love and with love. But Jews need to call upon the Lord all the more because of what they have suffered all through history. And how will they call upon him unless the Gospel is preached to them (Rom 10.17)?

The Church of Jesus Christ is indebted to the Jews because she has received from them the oracles of God, and the Messiah, and because salvation is from the Jews. Bringing the hope of the Gospel to the

Jews out of love and in love is what the Church of Jesus Christ owes them.

2. In what sense is the Gospel for the Jew first?

In Rom 1.16, Paul wrote that 'the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, for the Jew first as well as for the Gentile.' We must first note that Paul affirms equality between Jews and Gentiles (*te kai*, 'as well as'). The same Gospel saves Jews and Gentiles in the same way (by faith) with no difference on these points.

However, there is at the same time a certain priority of the Jews. Of what priority is the apostle speaking here?

Some believe on the basis of this text that we are bound still today to preach the Gospel in priority to the Jews. What this means in practice is problematic. For all Churches around the world are not surrounded by Jews in all areas upon earth. And where there are Jews, should we assume that we first have to tell the Gospel to all of them before we ever turn to non-Jewish people?

In our own opinion, Paul has a different kind of priority in mind, a historical priority. In history, the Gospel had to be preached first, and at the beginning almost exclusively, to the Jewish people. This was during the intermediate period when the old covenant was being superseded by the new covenant. For it took a certain time in history to establish the new covenant and to pass from the old to the new.

Thus we hear Jesus say that he had been sent merely to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and he in turn committed to his disciples a mission exclusively directed to Israelites during his earthly ministry (Mt 10.6; 15.24. Also see Act 3.26).

At Pentecost, the Gospel is proclaimed to the Jews who have come to Jerusalem for the festival. And the book of Acts makes it clear that the Gospel was preached to the Samaritans only later, and to the Gentiles even later yet.

When Paul begins missionary work on a new field, he always goes to the Jews

first, following a principle delineated in Acts 13.46. Often, his turning to the Gentiles comes upon the refusal of his message by the Jews. In Rome Paul follows the same practice (Acts 28.28).

The destruction of the temple in AD 70 marks the end of the intermediate period we are speaking about. The Jews are expelled from Palestine (with still later developments following the Bar Kochba revolt). These events manifest the rejection by God of unbelieving Israelites as his people. The end of the temple cultus also signifies the termination of the old covenant. In a sense, God was thereby ratifying the rejection of the Messiah by Israel as a people.

Up to that time, the Gospel had been presented to the Jews first. But finally it appeared that Israel as a whole had rejected it. This took a certain time, the time necessary for the Gospel to be brought to the Jews in the diverse areas of the empire.

The account of Acts 28 is a climax in the Lukan story. The rejection of Jesus Christ by a majority of Jewish religious authorities in Rome epitomizes the refusal of the Gospel by the majority of the Jews, all along his missionary journeys, and gives it global significance. What Paul says in Acts 28.25–28 looks like a definitive conclusion concerning Israel as a whole, the conclusion drawn from a long story culminating in the Roman episode.

Once this global rejection of the Messiah by Israel as a people becomes evident, what Jesus had foretold in Mt 21.42–43, with its concrete manifestation in the destruction of the second temple, comes about. This brought to an end the Jewish priority in the Gospel. This priority was historical, and designed for the period necessary for the rejection of Christ by the Jewish people as a whole, and as a people, to become manifest.

This significance of the AD 70 events as a judgment upon Israel as a people for his rejection of the Messiah appears in Jesus' parable of the wedding banquet (Mt 22.7). It may also be alluded to in a comparable way in 1 Thess 2.16. Paul does not make clear what he has in mind

when saying *the wrath of God has come upon the Jews at last* and it is a controversial matter. He seems to be referring to a precise event in history and in our view, an allusion to the destruction of the temple then to come in AD 70 is the most probable. The context would make it the sanction for the Jewish opposition to Jesus and his apostles (vv. 15–16). We may compare the Thessalonian passage with Lk 21.20–24 where a similar terminology is used: Jesus speaks of wrath against the Jewish people in a predictive description of the events of AD 70.

Conclusion

There is hope today for the Jews because God sent the Messiah promised by the Jewish prophets, so that any Jew can receive through faith forgiveness for his sins on the basis of the expiatory death of the Messiah, and be renewed by the Holy Spirit.

There is hope because, even though many Israelites rejected their Messiah, the door of the kingdom of the Son of David remains open for them to enter, and many Jews will enter in our own time, as many have done so in the past two millennia, and even many more will enter in the end time.

There is hope, for God will send again the Messiah whom he has appointed for them and there will be times of refreshing for the Jews who will have turned to him in faith. And they will inherit the world as was promised to Abraham, and reign with the Messiah, and with people from all nations, upon the earth renewed.

Because of this hope, there is a pressing

and urgent need laid upon us to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews. There may not be agreement concerning everything that has been said in this paper. But this at least is an essential point about which there should not be any doubt in the minds of us all!

- 1 See *Les livres de Joël et d'Abdias* (*Commentaire Evangélique de la Bible*), Vaux-sur-Seine, Edifac, 1989, 269f, 290ff.
- 2 We think Jn 15.1–6 has the same import: Jesus is the true vine in the sense of the true Israel, just as the Isaianic Servant of the Lord was called 'Israel'. The branches that do not bear fruit and are cut off to be burned in the fire (vv. 2,6) represent the unbelieving Israelites. This is also to be compared with the effect of Spirit and fire baptism (Lk 3.9). As Jesus said elsewhere, the kingdom of God was to be taken away from them and be given to a nation that would produce the fruits of it (Mt 21.43).
- 3 Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1988, *ad loc.*
- 4 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Romans* (*Tyndale*), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans; C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans (ICC)*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1990, vol 2, *ad loc.*
- 5 We depend here on R. B. Gaffin, 'Professor Ridderbos on Romans 11.25–32 (An informal translation of Herman Ridderbos, 'Israel in het Nieuwe Testament, in het bijzonder volgens Rom 9–11,' *Israel* (den Haag: van Keulen, 1955), pp. 57–64)', unpublished mimeographed paper.
- 6 On this topic, see J. Guggenheim, 'Faut-il encore annoncer l'Evangile au peuple juif', *Ichthus* 70 (1977), 20–26.
- 7 *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People, Statements of the World Council of Churches and its Member Churches*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1988.

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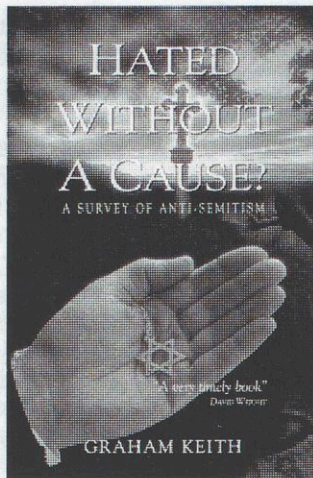
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- **Mobilising the Church for Mission**
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- **Hin zu einer biblischen Theologie des Glaubens—Die Kirche zur Mission mobilisieren**

Dennis E. Lindsay, Birmingham

RÉSUMÉ

'La foi' occupe une place centrale dans l'enseignement biblique en tant que moyen par lequel les hommes peuvent entrer en relation avec Dieu. Amener des personnes à la foi en Dieu est le but premier de la mission chrétienne. Pourtant le mot 'foi' est utilisé dans le monde actuel, tant religieux que profane, dans des acceptions très diverses et parfois contradictoires. Brevard Childs note qu'une large part de la confusion qui prévaut dans l'Eglise aujourd'hui provient d'une ignorance très générale du sens et du contenu de la foi. Cette confusion et cette incertitude ont démobilisé de vastes secteurs de l'Eglise et les ont empêchés d'entreprendre une oeuvre missionnaire dirigée vers la culture ambiante de manière efficace.

Curieusement l'Eglise est souvent la cause de cette incertitude et de cette confusion, en ce qu'elle a adopté pour le mot foi des sens spécifiques et exclusifs. Ceci en privilégiant à l'extrême la foi en un objet extérieur (foi en des faits), ou

bien en privilégiant l'intériorité de la foi (subjectivisme). Au contraire, la théologie de la foi fondée sur la Bible sera nécessairement équilibrée et comprendra des nuances variées.

Cet article esquisse un itinéraire qui aboutisse à une conception intégrale de la théologie biblique de la foi. Cette voie doit prendre en compte la diversité tout en élaborant une structure unifiée pour ainsi mettre en lumière le sens et le contenu de la foi dans la Bible. La terminologie biblique, ainsi que certains passages-clés de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament, contribuent à une notion inclusive du concept de foi. Il y a aussi d'autres concepts et d'autres termes qui apparaissent dans la Bible et qui nous aident à définir les paramètres théologiques de la foi biblique—en particulier toute la notion de salut dans ses rapports avec la foi. En saisissant d'une manière plus globale la notion centrale de la foi, l'Eglise sera en mesure de mieux percevoir sa propre identité et de se préparer à une oeuvre missionnaire plus fructueuse auprès du monde moderne.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der 'Glaube' ist ein zentraler Aspekt der biblischen Lehre hinsichtlich der Frage, wie die Beziehung des Menschen zu Gott aussehen sollte. Glauben an Gott hervorzubringen ist das herausragende Ziel christlicher Mission. Doch der Begriff 'Glaube' wird in der modernen religiösen und säkularen Welt auf

äußerst verschiedenartige und manchmal widersprüchliche Weise verwendet. Brevard Childs bemerkt, daß ein Großteil der gegenwärtigen Verwirrung in der heutigen Kirche auf eine weitverbreitete Unklarheit über die Bedeutung und den Inhalt des Glaubens zurückgeht. Diese Verwirrung und Unklarheit in bezug auf den Glauben hat viele Teile der Kirche regelrecht

immobilisiert und davon abgehalten, sich an einer effektiven missionarischen Begegnung mit der sie umgebenden Kultur zu beteiligen.

Ironischerweise muß man häufig der Kirche selbst die Schuld für diese Unklarheit und Verwirrung geben, da sie für polarisierte und exklusivistische Glaubenskonzepte eingetreten ist. Diese Polarisierung erfolgte meistens entweder durch eine Veräußerlichung des Glaubensverständnisses (d. h. 'Glaube an Tatsachen') oder durch eine extreme Verinnerlichung des Glaubens (Subjektivismus). Im Gegensatz dazu wird eine biblische Theologie des Glaubens unwillkürlich ausgewogen sein und eine Vielzahl von Nuancen umfassen.

Dieser Artikel ist darum bemüht, den Kurs in Richtung auf eine umfassende biblische Theologie des Glaubens aufzuzeigen, der versuchen muß, die Vielfalt zu berücksichtigen und zugleich

eine einheitliche Struktur anzubieten, anhand derer sowohl die Bedeutung als auch der Inhalt des biblischen Glaubens eindeutig identifiziert werden können. Die biblische Glaubensterminologie sowie Kernstellen des Alten und Neuen Testaments tragen zu einem umfassenden Verständnis des Glaubenskonzepts bei. Das biblische Material enthält zudem viele andere, auf den Glauben bezogene, Konzepte und Begriffe, die dabei helfen, die theologischen Parameter des biblischen Glaubens festzulegen; vor allem das gesamte Konzept der Rettung sowie dessen Bezug zum Glauben. Wenn die Kirche das zentrale theologische Konzept des Glaubens auf eine ganzheitlichere Weise versteht, wird sie eher in der Lage sein, über ihr Selbstverständnis Klarheit zu gewinnen und folglich zu einer effektiveren missionarischen Begegnung mit der modernen Welt fähig sein.

Introduction

'Faith' is central to the Bible's teaching about how people should relate to God. To elicit faith [in God] is the primary objective of Christian mission (e.g., Mark 1:14f; John 20:31; Rom 1:17; etc.). Yet the term faith has come to be used in the modern religious and secular world in the most diverse, and sometimes contradictory ways. Brevard Childs observes that 'much of the present confusion in today's church rests on a widespread uncertainty over the meaning and content of faith'.¹ This confusion over such a key theological and missiological concept has virtually immobilised a large sector of the church in the West from participating in any effective missionary encounter with its surrounding culture.

Ironically, much of the blame for this uncertainty about the meaning and content of faith must be assigned to developments within the church itself. Earlier in this century Emil Brunner pointed to a 'fatal displacement in the interpretation of the word "believe" which in turn was

responsible for a gross misunderstanding of faith in the Christian tradition.'² Brunner identified various forms of the misunderstanding of the Greek noun *pistis* within that tradition. The primary failure is due to the fact that the object and content of faith have been reduced to a non-personal set of facts, a dogma, an institutional authority or even, in the case of orthodox Protestantism subsequent to the Reformation, to a sort of bibliolatry—an aprioristic faith in the Bible itself.³

In contrast to this 'externalisation' of faith, the church and Christian tradition at the end of the second millennium also bear witness to the trend of an intense 'internalisation' of faith. In this instance faith becomes an internal, spiritual and highly individualised experience having more to do with emotive response to an inward stimulus than a rational response to outward data. Obviously we may locate in this inward shift a reaction against previous church tradition which placed so much emphasis upon the external. Again ironic, however, is the fact that this rather subjective kind of faith is shared by the

most unlikely of theological bedfellows in the larger context of the modern Christian church. For the internalisation of the faith experience is at once the hallmark of the Bultmannian existential tradition as well as the hallmark of a large sector of conservative evangelicalism. For the former tradition a rational belief in many of the traditional, external facts and dogmas is no longer held to be possible so that an internalisation is required in order to maintain faith. The latter tradition, on the other hand, while upholding the validity of the traditional, external facts, finds itself hard-pressed to express their relevance for faith apart from the individual, subjective experience. This situation illustrates the confusion in today's church and underscores its missiological dilemma.

What we see from these developments of externalisation and internalisation respectively is a basic polarisation of the concept of faith in the lives of various Christian traditions. It is not the externalisation or the internalisation as such, but rather the polarisation of faith which falls miserably short of a biblical theology of faith, not taking into account the many facets of faith as they emerge from the biblical understanding.

In this article I propose to map out a route towards an integrated biblical theology of faith. This route must attempt to account for the diversity and at the same time provide a unified structure, by which both the meaning and the content of biblical faith can be clearly identified. Along the way it will be necessary to give attention to key passages from the Old and New Testaments, as well as any faith-related concepts, which help to define the theological parameters of biblical faith. Our route begins with a look at the faith terminology itself.

Biblical Faith Terminology

'There are two, and in the end only two, types of faith', declared Martin Buber in his highly influential monograph *Two Types of Faith*.⁴ The two types of faith which, according to Buber, stand in direct contrast to one another are identified as

the Hebrew *'emunah* of the Old Testament-Jewish tradition and the Greek *pistis* of the New Testament-Christian tradition. The former, Buber argues, is understood in terms of trusting someone and the latter in terms of acknowledging something to be true—there being in neither instance sufficient reason for the trust or acknowledgement.

It is true that the Greek noun *pistis* and the Hebrew noun *'emunah* provide us with the generic terms for faith in the New and Old Testaments respectively. Buber's polarisation of *'emunah* and *pistis*, however, rests upon a broad oversimplification of the respective terms which does justice to neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament concept of faith.⁵ A closer examination of *pistis* and *'emunah*, along with their cognates, is the necessary starting point for the development of an integrated biblical theology of faith.

The substantive *'emunah* is derived from the Hebrew root *'aman*. This common root gives rise to further substantival and verbal forms which likewise belong to the faith terminology of the Hebrew Scriptures. The basic meaning of the root and its derivatives has to do with the concept of firmness, steadfastness, reliability. From the earliest usage, the stem was neither exclusively nor primarily employed as religious faith terminology in the strictest sense. So, for example, in Ex. 17:12, during the Israelites' battle with the Amalekites, Moses' uplifted arms are described as 'steadiness' (*'emunah*)⁶ once they were securely supported by Aaron on the one side and by Hur on the other side. Similarly the hiphil stem of *'aman*, normally conveying the idea of 'trusting' when used in the context of religious faith, appears in Job 39:24 in a purely neutral and profane sense. Here the subject of the verb is a frenzied horse in the midst of battle, which, when he hears the blast of the trumpet, is unable to 'stand still'. From this root meaning of the *'aman* stem, it is not difficult to see how this word group lent itself to theological use and development as faith terminology.

Artur Weiser, who supplied the background on the Old Testament concept of

faith for the article on *pistis* in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, provides a good summary of the use of the 'aman word group as faith terminology.⁷ Perhaps the single most important consideration about the 'aman group as faith terminology is the adaptability of the terms to include many aspects of faith. For example, the hiphil stem may refer either to a person (e.g., Gen. 15:6) or to a message (Isa. 53:1) as the object of faith. In Isa. 7:9 a word play utilising the hiphil and niphil stems of 'aman displays the reciprocal nature of faith/faithfulness between human and divine subjects (cf. Isa. 28:16; Hab. 2:4).

Moreover, the substantival forms of the word group display an important connection between additional nuances and component aspects of faith. The noun 'emunah, for example, may express the subjective idea of (personal) faithfulness (in relationship) to another (e.g., Prov. 28:20) or the more objective idea of trust which is placed in another⁸ or, what is most likely, an integral combination of both subjective and objective elements (cf. Hab. 2:4; Dt. 32:20). But faith/faithfulness does not exhaust the (theological) significance of 'emunah. In almost half of the occurrences of this noun in the Old Testament the LXX translates with *aletheia* rather than *pistis*. Thus there is logically and theologically a very close relationship between faith and truth in the Hebrew Scriptures.

This relationship is further underscored by the noun 'emeth, also derived from the same stem. This noun is translated with *pistis* by the LXX in six instances. Almost one hundred times, however, it is translated with *aletheia* or a cognate form; and in ten instances it is translated by the Greek 'righteous' (*dikaïos*) or 'righteousness' (*dikaïosyne*).

Weiser observes about the passive niphil stem of 'aman, which commonly functions adjectivally, that 'a consistent rendering with one word is quite impossible'.⁹ Normally the term is translated 'firm, secure, reliable' (i.e., 'faithful'), but Weiser holds that these translations are only approximations and do not ade-

quately express the full and final meaning. [The niphil of 'aman] does not express a quality which belongs to the subject at issue and which might apply equally to something else. ['aman] is shown to be a formal concept whose content is in each case determined by the specific subject. It states that the qualities which belong to the subject concerned are really present. It thus has something of the meaning of the term 'specific', indicating the relation of the reality to that which is characteristic of the particular subject. In keeping with the total thinking of the OT the reference is not simply to one feature but to the totality of all the features belonging to this subject.¹⁰

The point to be made here, without going into great detail concerning the individual nuances and aspects of faith bound up together in the 'aman root, is that there are a variety of nuances inherent in this Hebrew terminology. Furthermore, it is precisely this quality of the 'aman word group which enabled the various derivatives to be developed as the key Old Testament terms for faith. What this indicates about the nature of (biblical) faith is a comprehensiveness as opposed to an exclusiveness. Weiser observes that 'where the [hiphil verbal stem of 'aman] itself is used, one can hardly fail to note its tendency to extend into the most comprehensive possible sphere of application, just as [the noun 'emunah] too embraces the whole attitude of a life lived in faith'.¹¹ Adolf Schlatter insists, with particular reference to the noun 'emeth, that the rich variety of nuances which together produce 'reliability'¹² cannot be broken down into the isolated components:

That Good Will which is closed to hatred and jealousy, that Truthfulness which neither conceals anything nor practices deceit, that Trust which harbours no suspicion against one's neighbour, that Steadfastness which endures by his side through fortune and through misfortune, that Courage and that Skilfulness which know how to perform service and to offer assistance—not the one or the other of these, but all of these together constitute 'emeth.¹³

With regard to the Greek noun *pistis* and its cognates, I have argued elsewhere that these terms in the LXX and, subsequently in the New Testament, correspond directly to concept of faith presented by 'aman and must therefore be interpreted in light of this Hebrew word group.¹⁴ Thus we would expect to find evidence, particularly in the New Testament writings, of the same rich combination of nuances and component aspects of faith in the use of the *pist-* word group. While it is difficult to maintain that *pistis* fulfils precisely the same function as the 'aman root in all its facets demonstrated in the OT, it is possible to show that the *pist-* group in the NT does indeed reflect the usage of 'aman in the OT as faith terminology.

As with 'aman in the OT, so also with *pist-* in the NT, faith can have as its object a person (Gen. 15:6; cf. e.g., Jn. 12:11) or a message [about a person] (Isa. 53:1; Mk. 1:15). The reciprocal relationship of faith(fulness) between divine and human subjects noted above (esp. in Isa. 7:9; Hab. 2:4) is also very much a part of the NT understanding (cf. Rom. 1:17; Mk. 9:24). Paul is almost certainly thinking of faith in terms of the root meaning of 'aman when on various occasions he exhorts Christians to 'stand firm [in the faith]' (1 Cor. 16:13; cf. Gal. 5:1; Rom. 11:20; Phil. 1:17; etc.). Moreover, it is clear that the Pauline letters also understand faith in connection with the important (for the OT) related concepts of truth (e.g., 2 Thes. 2:13; also vss. 11, 12) and righteousness (Rom. 1:17; 3:21ff.).

The above does not exhaust the list of ideas, nuances or related concepts of faith—either in the OT or in the NT. Nor have we provided an exhaustive list of the faith terminology. There is, for instance, in addition to the 'aman root a specific Hebrew root meaning 'to trust' (*batah*). Of special note concerning this verb is that it is commonly used in the OT referring to trust in idols. ('aman never appears with reference to faith in idols.) Parallel to *batah*, when used in reference to Yahweh, is the verb *hasah* which means 'to seek refuge in'. In addition, there are several

Hebrew stems which express the idea of hope.¹⁵ In the NT, while *pisteuein* adequately expresses the element of trust, we find the additional specific terminology for hope (*elpis*, *elpizein*).

Indeed, the NT knows many facets of faith (*pistis*), just as the OT displays many facets of the word group 'aman. Thus it is hardly permissible to single out, as for instance Martin Buber does, one component or another and claim for that component an exhaustive definition of NT faith or OT faith respectively. In reality the terms are much more fluid in their use and much more inclusive in their portrayal of the rich, biblical concept of faith. Anyone who is engaged in a modern missionary encounter with men and women of any culture, with the view to eliciting a 'response of faith', must seriously consider the rich totality of what constitutes—in biblical terms—this desired response of faith.

Key Biblical Passages and Faith-Related Concepts

At this juncture we shall proceed on the basis that the OT concept of faith is at least to a large extent definitive, but in any event formative for the NT understanding of faith. Having affirmed the importance of the 'aman word group as the OT expression for faith, we immediately observe that these words for faith appear relatively seldom in the OT as compared with the virtual explosion of usage of faith terminology in the NT. One of the reasons for this, as I have shown elsewhere,¹⁶ is that the faith terminology itself—both the Hebrew 'aman and the Greek *pist-*—was undergoing a process of development within the religious context. An extremely significant step in this development process was the exclusive identification of the *pist-* word group with the Hebrew 'aman group in the LXX translation of the Hebrew scriptures. This identification of *pist-* with 'aman is unparalleled in the secular Greek of this time. This important development allows for even further development of the use and understanding of the *pist-* words in a

similar vein. Therefore what we find in the NT is a coming into full bloom of the concept of faith which is, by comparison, only seminally, but nonetheless significantly, present in the OT.

The following seven OT passages are worthy of special consideration: Gen. 15:6; Ex. 4 (esp. vss. 1,5,8,9,31); Ex. 14:31; Isa. 7:9; Isa. 28:16; Isa. 53:1; Hab. 2:4. These are of course not the only OT passages referring to faith. The Psalms in particular make repeated use of faith terminology, as perhaps one might expect. There are other occurrences as well. However these seven passages are both seminal and significant in their contribution to the OT faith concept and they are echoed by the NT use and understanding of faith.

The golden thread which is common to all seven passages, besides the use of faith terminology, is the theme of salvation. Each of the references to faith occurs in the larger context of a salvation oracle. On the one hand this is significant for what each passage has to contribute to a biblical theology of salvation. For example in the instance of Abraham in Gen. 15 the salvation oracle was, in the first instance, one having to do with Abraham's personal salvation (i.e., through procreation; cf. vss. 2–5). The blessing of salvation would not end with Abraham, however; eventually it would extend to his descendants (Gen. 15:12–16, 18–21) and ultimately it would take on cosmic dimensions (cf. Gen. 12:3; 18:5; 22:18). In the Exodus accounts, particularly Ex. 14, the salvation oracles had to do with a most concrete situation where the deliverance required was literally a matter of life and death. The salvation oracle of Isa. 7:9 has to do with political deliverance in the light of a threat of war and enemy aggression, whereas the later salvation oracles of Isaiah (28:16; Chs. 52–53) point to the eschatological salvation of God's people through the establishment of God's (messianic) reign in Zion.

One of the most important points to make in the present discussion is the fact that faith is integrally linked to the theme of salvation as the appropriate—indeed,

the required—human response to God on the basis of the divine salvation oracle (cf. Hab. 2:4). Foundational to any discussion of a biblical theology of faith is this integral relationship between faith and salvation. This evolving connection between faith and salvation may be sufficient in itself to explain to a large extent the sudden explosion of the use of faith terminology in the NT. In particular, if the eschatological, messianic salvation hope of Isaiah was seen by the NT authors—indeed by Jesus himself (compare Isa. 53:1 and Mk. 1:15; cf. also Mt. 8:10ff., 13)—to be realised through the exercise of faith, then it is no wonder at all that faith has become such a central NT theme (cf. Mk. 16:16; Jn. 20:31; Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:16; etc.).

It is not possible within the scope of our present discussion to go into the amount of detailed discussion of the relationship between salvation and faith which will be required for a more comprehensive study of the biblical theology of faith. I should, however, like to highlight one aspect of this relationship which seems to me to be especially significant—particularly in light of Christian mission. The fact that certain OT 'faith texts' (e.g., Gen. 15:6; Isa. 28:16; 53:1; Hab. 2:4) have had at least some influence upon the NT understanding of faith is fairly apparent from the instances where these passages are directly quoted or where there exists strong evidence of allusion. What is perhaps not as clear is any 'implicit' influence upon the NT understanding of faith by OT texts which are neither quoted nor where any overt allusion is readily detected. I am referring now to Ex. 14:31 and Isa. 7:9 (though there may indeed be other OT texts which fall into this category).

The Hebrew text of Isa. 7:9 contains a word play using the 'aman root (cf. also 2 Chr. 20:20). Two verbal stems of 'aman—the causative *hiphil* and the passive *niphal* stems respectively—appear in this salvation oracle which is directed to Ahaz, King of Judah. The satisfactory translation of this Hebrew word play into other languages has posed a problem since the time of the LXX. The difficulty has to do

with the retention of the faith terminology, which is certainly the issue here, and at the same time expression of the root idea of 'standing firm' which is inherent in the Hebrew *'aman*. Perhaps an awkward, yet meaningful attempt at an appropriate rendering in English would be something like the following: 'If you do not stand firm [with respect to faith in the Lord] you will not be stood firm (or "established") [with respect to faith].' Awkward as this translation may be, it becomes apparent that the Hebrew text is signalling (albeit in the form of negative statements) that faith exercised bears the result of faith confirmed or faith strengthened. Moreover, this process or 'faith spiral' takes place through a salvation event. For Ahaz in Isa. 7:9 the whole process remained purely hypothetical: He neither exercised faith in the first instance, nor did he experience any confirmation or strengthening of faith. It is clear from the passage, however, that the one expression of faith is the prerequisite for the salvation event and the other expression of faith the result of the salvation experience.

The same principle is illustrated in positive terms in Ex. 14 and the salvation event at the crossing of the Red Sea. Hemmed in between the sea on the one side and the advancing Egyptian host on the other the Israelites were in a state of panic immediately prior to the miraculous crossing of the sea and the deliverance from the Egyptians. It was at this point that Moses called upon the Israelites not to be afraid but to exercise 'faith' in Yahweh,¹⁷ promising that they would experience salvation from the Egyptians: 'Stand firm¹⁸ and you will see the salvation of the Lord which he will perform for you' (Ex. 14:13). Immediately following their passage through the Red Sea, having experienced the Lord's act of deliverance, the faith of the Israelites was confirmed and strengthened: '...The people feared the Lord and put their trust in¹⁹ him and in his servant Moses' (Ex. 14:31).

This interplay between faith exercised—salvation event—faith confirmed/

strengthened is basic also to the relationship between salvation and faith in the NT and the implications are much more far-reaching than we can presently explore.²⁰ However, the principle thus highlighted finds parallels in the teachings of Jesus. For example in the parable of the talents in Mt. 25 the two servants who displayed faith(fulness) in small things were able to pass through the judgement of their returning master and in the end were entrusted with greater responsibilities requiring greater faith(fulness) (cf. vss. 21,23). Likewise the father of the boy possessed by an evil spirit in Mk. 9 recognised the necessity of faith as a pre-requisite for the salvation of his son; at the same time he recognised the inadequacy of his own feeble faith which was in need of strengthening and thus cried out to Jesus (vs. 24): 'I believe; help my unbelief!'²¹ The point can be argued further that this 'faith—salvation—faith spiral' principle is also basic to Paul's understanding of faith and the community of the saved—i.e., that men and women are saved by faith exercised in relation to Christ and are subsequently called to lead lives of faith(fulness) (cf. Rom. 12:3; 15:13; 1:5). This principle could perhaps also help to explain the use and meaning of the notable phrase *ek pisteos eis pistin* ('from faith to faith') in Rom 1:17.

This brief illustration shows how one aspect of the OT concept of faith is implicitly present in the NT, lending further credence to the point that I have argued elsewhere that it is appropriate to speak in holistic terms of a biblical theology of faith (in contrast to OT faith versus NT faith).²² It is likely that there are additional components and aspects of faith in the OT which are implicitly taken over in the NT use of faith terminology. Indeed, there are many avenues which must be explored along the route towards a biblical theology of faith. Among them are the following: the relationship between faith and firmness, between faith and obedience, between faith and righteousness; the relationship between faith, hope and love; the connection between faith and

gospel, between faith and the kingdom of God; the apparent contradiction between trusting God and fearing God; the relationship between faith in God and faith in facts, and also the important consideration of faith in God (Christ) and the faith(fulness) of God (Christ). Our understanding of these important relationships will inform how we go about eliciting a response of faith through missionary endeavour.

Conclusion

Perhaps one of the most frequently misused and abused watchwords of the Protestant Reformation is the slogan 'faith only'. While I sympathise with the original sentiment of *sola fide* as it applies to the Pauline exegesis of salvation by faith versus salvation by human works, I am not in sympathy with the way that the slogan 'faith only' has lent itself in many modern Christian circles to an exclusivistic, polarised and thus narrow understanding of what constitutes faith—as though faith were 'this' and not 'that'; a process of the inward spirit and not of the outward body; a resolution of the will and not a physical act of obedience. Human nature's tendency to polarisation readily exploits this kind of exclusive language. I propose that a more accurate watchword would be something like 'faith wholly'—*omnino fide*—, suggesting in positive, inclusive terms that faith (and everything that belongs to the understanding of faith) is the summa of the Bible's teaching about how men and women must relate to God.

It may be that this brief presentation has raised more questions than it has answered. I have, however, completed what I set out to do: to map out a route towards a biblical theology of faith. The guideposts may be summarised as follows:

A biblical theology of faith must take account of the faith terminology and the various nuances, both explicit and implicit.

A biblical theology of faith must take account of key biblical texts, both in their

immediate contexts and in their broader application in and influence upon other texts.

A biblical theology of faith must take account of related terms and concepts which help to set the theological context for and parameters of faith.

A biblical theology of faith must remain balanced and inclusive as it attempts to integrate many internal facets and many external relationships into a holistic interpretation of this central theological concept.

I submit that this route, if conscientiously pursued, will serve 1) to enable the Church at the close of the 20th century to clarify its self-understanding in terms of the meaning and content of faith, and 2) to mobilise the Church at the outset of the 21st century for effective missionary encounter with the modern world.

- 1 Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Fortress Press, 1992), p. 595.
- 2 Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation; Dogmatics: Vol. III*, trans. by David Cairns (Westminster Press, 1962), p. 185.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 185–89. Cf. my discussion of Brunner's argument in *Josephus and Faith* (Brill, 1993), pp. 180ff.
- 4 Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith* (MacMillan Publishing Co., 1951), p. 7.
- 5 For a fuller discussion and critique of Buber's thesis, see my treatment in *Josephus and Faith*, pp. 165ff.
- 6 This designation of Moses' arms as 'steadiness' is in direct contrast to Moses' own flagging strength to keep his arms lifted as the battle raged on throughout the day.
- 7 Bultmann & Weiser, '*pisteuō k.t.l.*', TDNT, Vol VI, pp. 182–196.
- 8 There is a close relationship between the substantive '*emunah*' and the hiphil verbal stem; cf. *Josephus and Faith*, pp. 24f.
- 9 Weiser, TDNT, Vol. VI, p. 184.
- 10 *Ibid.*; italics mine.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 190; italics mine.
- 12 *Zuverlässigkeit*.
- 13 Adolf Schlatter, *Der Glaube im Neuen Testament* (Calver Verlag Stuttgart, 1982 and 1927), p. 553 (my translation).
- 14 Cf. *Josephus and Faith* (esp. Chapter Two); see also my article 'The Roots and

Development of the *pist*- Word Group as Faith Terminology', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 49(1993), pp. 103–118.

15 Cf. Weiser, TDNT, Vol VI, p. 191.

16 Cf. 'Roots and Development'; also *Josephus and Faith*, esp. Chapters 1–4.

17 Cf. Mk. 5:36!

18 The verb here is the *hithpa'el* of *yatzab*

rather than the *hiphil* of '*aman*'. The sense of the verb is, however, precisely the same.

19 *Hiphil* stem of '*aman*'.

20 E.g., what is actually implied in concrete terms by the pre-requisite exercise of faith or the resulting strengthening of faith?

21 Cf. also Lk. 17:5f.

22 Cf. *Josephus and Faith*, esp. pp. 188f.

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente les Frères Étroits (Darbyistes) depuis leurs premiers débuts à Dublin et à Oxford dans la troisième décennie du XIX^e siècle, et plus tard à Plymouth en 1848. C'est un mouvement qui s'est répandu, d'abord en Europe, puis aux États-Unis, sous l'influence d'un chef 'charismatique', John Nelson Darby. Depuis le temps de Darby et dans la suite, les Frères Étroits ont développé une vigoureuse doctrine de 'séparation'. Initialement cela signifiait séparation de l'erreur doctrinale connue. Dans la suite pourtant, cette séparation en est venue à embrasser tous les aspects de la vie, en sorte qu'aujourd'hui les Frères Étroits sont totalement isolés du monde extérieur.

Depuis le début des années 70, les Frères Étroits ont été toujours plus soumis à la domination et au contrôle d'un dirigeant unique. Cet article affirme que, depuis, les Frères Étroits,

de groupement séparé qu'ils étaient, sont progressivement devenus une secte ou un nouveau mouvement religieux. La preuve en est le refus de certaines libertés élémentaires aux Frères Étroits. Leurs relations sociales, leur emploi, leur mariage, leurs emprunts, leur lieu de résidence, leurs enterrements, et tous leurs contacts avec le monde extérieur sont placés sous le contrôle d'une hiérarchie locale des Frères. Ceux qui s'écartent de leur ligne sont réduits au silence ou exclus. Ceux qui dévient reçoivent des visites à domicile et doivent souvent subir ce qu'on peut considérer comme des interrogatoires abusifs. Cette conclusion que les Frères Étroits constituent une secte est confirmée par l'opinion et l'expérience de rescapés récents du mouvement.

(Note du traducteur: ce tableau ne s'applique pas du tout à la situation des assemblées de Frères Darbyistes de France, telle que nous les connaissons).

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel untersucht die exklusiven Brüder ausgehend von ihren Anfängen in Dublin und Oxford im dritten Jahrzehnt des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts und später in Plymouth in 1848. Es war eine Bewegung, die sich unter dem Einfluß der charismatischen Leitung John Nelson Darbys sowohl in Europa als auch anschließend in den Vereinigten Staaten ausbreitete. Seit der Zeit Darbys entwickelten die "Exklusiven" eine ausgeprägte Lehre der "Absonderung". Ursprünglich war

damit eine Absonderung von bekannten Lehrirrtümern gemeint, doch im Laufe der Zeit begann sie, alle Lebensbereiche einzuschließen, so daß die Mitglieder der exklusiven Brüder zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt vollkommen isoliert und von der Außenwelt abgeschlossen sind.

Seit den frühen 70ern werden die exklusiven Brüder in zunehmendem Maße von einem übergeordneten Leiter dominiert und kontrolliert. Dieser Artikel zeigt auf, daß sich die Brüder seit dieser Zeit immer weiter davon entfernt haben, eine "sektiererische" Gruppe zu sein, und zu einer "Sekte"

bzw. "neuen religiösen Bewegung" geworden sind. Dies zeigt sich in der vollkommenen Verweigerung grundlegender Freiheiten. Die sozialen Interaktionen der Exklusiven—Arbeit, Ehe, Hypotheken, Wohnsituationen, Beerdigungen—sowie jeglicher Aspekt ihres Kontaktes mit der Außenwelt werden von örtlichen Brüder-Hierarchien kontrolliert. Wer aus der Reihe tanzt, wird abgekanzelt,

oder man zieht sich von ihm zurück. Abweichler werden in ihren Häusern besucht und (häufig entwürdigenden) Verhören unterzogen, auch bekannt als "priesterliche Beratungen" (engl. "priestlies"). Der Folgerung, daß die exklusiven Brüder tatsächlich eine "Sekte" sind, wird Nachdruck verliehen unter Rückgriff auf Meinungen und Erfahrungen kürzlich Entkommener.

Early Days

In 1826 John Nelson Darby, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin took up the post of Curate of Calany, a remote country parish in County Wicklow. The young minister who had a restless and inquiring mind, as well as a real desire to 'save souls' was soon also recognised for his saintly living. In the Spring of 1827 however, he suffered a riding accident and was taken to Dublin in order to recuperate. Here he encountered a group of discontented evangelicals who were meeting together to pray, to read the Bible and encourage one another. In November 1829 a group of about a dozen of their number held a simple free-style communion service at 9 Fitzroy Square. Thereafter a regular weekly breaking of the bread was established and numbers soon began to grow. This necessitated the group having to move to a public hall in Aungier Street. Some of those involved expressed concern about this step fearing that it would result in their becoming a separate Church. Such indeed eventually proved to be the case. The first Brethren Meeting in England was held at Plymouth in January 1832.

The backdrop to this formation of the Brethren or the 'Saints' as they are sometimes called, focused on the uncertainties and the political turmoil of the 1820s. This was also a decade of high unemployment following the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Food prices were rising and across the countryside men and women were expressing their discontent by rick burning in the name of the legendary Captain

Swing and destroying machinery under the auspices of the fictitious Ned Ludd. As so often happens in times of hardship and political uncertainty people begin to believe the end of the world is near. They readily welcome apocalyptic preachers who proclaim the nearness of the coming of Jesus to set up a thousand (millennium) year period of bliss on earth. It was not only Darby who emphasised an imminent millennium, other groups such as the Catholic Apostolic Church, the Christadelphians, the Millerites and the Seventh Day Adventists all shared this same emphasis.

Early Leaders

The first 'brother' of this new movement is generally reckoned as Edward Cronin (d.1882). It was his view that all true Christian believers of whatever denomination should be invited to share in the breaking of bread at the Lord's table. The movement which reached a membership of 6,000 by 1855 achieved a significant impact on account of its inner core of leaders who had both gifts and social influence. Prominent among them as Anthony Norris Groves (1795–1853), a dentist, who had been a missionary in both Syria and India. In 1825 he had been instrumental in the conversion of Michael Solomon Alexander who was later to become the first bishop of Jerusalem.¹ It was Groves whose ideas captivated the thinking of the inner circle. Speaking to John Gifford Bellett, a Dublin Lawyer, he said: 'This I doubt not, is the mind of God concerning us, that we should come

together in all simplicity as disciples, not waiting on any pulpit ministry, but trusting the Lord will edify us together by ministering to us, as He sees good from ourselves.²

John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) was another who was prominent among the inner circle from the earliest days. He was destined to become the leader of the 'Exclusives' following a major rift in the movement in 1848. Darby was born at Westminster trained initially as a lawyer but circumstances led to his changing to a clerical career. He was an inveterate traveller and early visited Oxford where among many others he met with Benjamin Wills Newton (1807–99) and George Vicesimus Wigram (1805–79). Both men became ardent supporters of his views. Wigram (1805–1879) whose brother Joseph later became bishop of Rochester, was the twentieth son of Sir James Wigram MP and was man of considerable independent means. Forsaking a commission in the army he entered Queen's College, Oxford where he was the only undergraduate to keep a close carriage. He had intended to become a clergyman of the Church of England but bishop Blomfield refused to ordain him on grounds of his extreme evangelical views.

Newton hailed from Plymouth and an assembly of the saints was soon established in the town. For this reason the early gatherings were often known as 'Plymouth Brethren'. Newton was a serious and dedicated brother with an inquiring and restless mind. Under his earnest and forthright leadership the Plymouth meeting expanded rapidly.

Bristol was to become another prominent centre of early Brethren activity. Here George Muller (1805–1898), later famous for his orphanage homes and his many faith ventures, co-pastored Bethesda chapel with Henry Craik (1805–1866). Muller was the brother-in-law of Anthony Groves and, possibly for this reason, he and Craik led their congregation to adopt Brethren principles.

Unusually for a group which was to become so sectarian in its attitudes the great majority of early leaders were men

of fortune, intellect and influence. This incidentally has been a continuing feature of the movement right up to the present time. An analysis of forty four early Brethren leaders revealed the following. Twelve were Anglican clergymen or were training for the Anglican ministry when they joined the movement. Five were non conformist ministers, four were lawyers, twelve owned land or had income from family funds, four were doctors or teachers, five were in business and there was one actor and one artist.³

It was however this upper middle-classness of the leaders which enabled the movement to spread rapidly in the 1830s. It is also the probable explanation for the quashing of speaking in tongues at Plymouth and the rejection of other phenomena which are based on biblical literalism such as feet washing and the kiss of peace. One of the Anglican clergymen who took up membership with the early Brethren was James L. Harris, a graduate of Oxford. He edited *The Christian Witness* to which Darby, Bellett, Newton and others all contributed lively articles which set out the Brethren doctrines with appetising vitality. A tract department was established and a steady flow of pamphlets and other literature began to attract the attention of the gentry and well-healed sections of society. Among them was Lady Powerscourt with whom Darby established a close rapport.

The early Brethren had no place for an ordained ministry or specially prepared Sunday homilies. Instead everyone was expected to share their faith whenever the opportunity arose. Preaching in the open air and in meeting houses and drawing rooms was expected of everyone in fellowship. The Sunday breaking of bread meetings were simple and unadorned. Hymns were sung without musical accompaniment and the brothers who felt prompted to do so, offered their insights on a chosen biblical passage before the communion elements were passed round.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the newly emerging assemblies began to emphasise the need for 'separateness' from the world. The 1830s and 1840s were a

time when 'end time expectancy' was running high; the Lord was at hand, and everyone, above all the Brethren, must be ready to meet Him at his coming. So what had begun as a movement with a Communion table which was open to all believers was transformed into one which excluded all save the elite of the Brethren.

The leading spirit in all of this was Darby. During the later 1830s and 1840s he rose to a position of total ascendancy over the many assemblies which were being established. Darby was a constantly on the move, a skilled organiser, a persuasive debater and, perhaps above all, a gifted and inspiring preacher. Indeed even in the 1970s evangelists such as David Watson were making reference to his writings and sermons. Darby's preaching tours frequently took him to London, Ireland and the Continent where he focused his energies on France, Germany and Switzerland. Here some seventy Brethren meetings were established.

The Split of 1849 and the Formation of the Exclusive Brethren

Virtually the only place in England where Darby did not hold sway was Plymouth. Whilst he was overseas in the early 1840s Benjamin Newton had remained in his home town and took almost total control over the Ebrington Street Assembly. Darby who was quick to recognise his own traits in others returned and protested at his 'clericalism' which he maintained quenched the work of the Holy Spirit. A conflict of some kind was inevitable.

The clash that was waiting to happen was occasioned in 1847 when Newton gave some unorthodox explanation on the person of Christ to a small invited group. In essence he taught what Brethren later termed 'the tainted Christ'. His contention was that Jesus had, like the rest of the human race, been born and lived under the curse of God until the time of his baptism in the river Jordan. This was quite simply a version of 'adoptionism' which maintained that Jesus did not have any divine status until God 'adopted' him

as his beloved son. This doctrine has found a steady flow of advocates through the centuries and most notably in recent times in the writings of Bishop David Jenkins of Durham. Most of those who had sat at Newton's feet soon admitted to having been taken in by 'the delusion of Satan.' Even Newton himself confessed to the error of his ways and subsequently moved away to London.

Far from this being the end of the matter however, it proved to be only the beginning of what was to be an irreparable rift in Brethren. Some of those who had listened to Newton in Plymouth went to Bethesda in Bristol where they were allowed to break bread. There was no evidence that any of them had taken on board Newton's recent teachings but notwithstanding, calls were made by Darby and others for Bethesda to exclude them. In response the Bethesda leaders issued a celebrated document known as *The Letter of the Ten*.⁴

At the beginning of this letter the leaders' utterly disclaim the assertion that the blessed Son of God was involved in the guilt of the first Adam 'or' ever... had the experiences of an unconverted person.' Most crucially of all they refused to admit that merely by hearing erroneous teaching Christians are contaminated by it:

For supposing the author of the tracts were fundamentally heretical, this would not warrant us in rejecting those who came from under his teaching until we were satisfied that they had understood and imbibed views essentially of foundation truth.⁵

This paper committed Bethesda to the original Brethren position of keeping the communion table 'open' to all who share the historic biblical Christian faith. However, Darby and George Wigram, another of the early inner circle leadership, had by this time already separated themselves from Newton's assembly and set up a rival meeting at Raleigh Street. Muller and Craik did their best to keep open the hand of friendship with them and invited Darby to speak at Bethesda in April 1848. He declined this well meant gesture and

instead embarked on a tour of the north in July and August following which he issued his celebrated *Bethesda Circular*. In this he maintained that to associate with evil in the way that Bethesda had done was 'is opening the door now to the infection of the abominable evil from which at so much cost we have been delivered.'⁶ Darby also stated a little later in the same paragraph that 'by receiving persons from Bethesda, those doing so are morally identified with the evil.'⁷ Thus began the overarching and principal doctrine of the Exclusive Brethren namely separating from evil.

From 1849 onwards the 'Exclusives' emerged as a separate group. Frequently they were referred to as 'Darbyites' on account of Darby's total domination. Far from declining as a 'faithful remnant' however, the next thirty years proved to be a period of expansion and prosperity. One early writer referred to it as 'the flowing tide of the Exclusive Movement.' In 1849 George Wigram employed his academic talents by editing a separate Journal under the title of *The Present Testimony*. It continued for thirty years and ran to eighteen volumes. To it Darby contributed his Synopsis of the Books of the Bible and others produced well-written articles on key doctrinal issues.

The Character of Exclusive Brethrenism

Darby's teaching on 'separation' from evil was essentially rooted in the Old Testament notion of holiness of 'touch no unclean thing!'⁸ The fear was that if a person associated with evil in any shape or form they would be 'contaminated' or at the very least tainted by it. The matter, as far as Exclusives see it, is symbolically illustrated by Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. The Priest and the Levite were both unwilling to come into close proximity with the man who had been robbed lest he should be dead since to have touched a corpse would have left them ritually unclean.

From Darby's time onwards the Exclusive Brethren have become steadily and

increasingly withdrawn from the outside world which is regarded as a place of evil and corruption. Darby progressively taught a sharp distinction between the true Church, that is the assemblies of the Exclusives, and the rest of Christendom which had apostatised. In theory Darby believed a saint could exist outside of the Exclusive Brethren but in practice it was only within the fellowship of the Saints that people experience and work out their salvation. For the 'Exclusives' their assembly and their community is the only safe place.

As in many areas of life one person initiates a new doctrine or teaching and others run with it with more enthusiasm and to considerably greater extremes. Such was the case with the Exclusives. Darby expressed his views in a paper entitled *Separation from evil, God's Principle of Unity*. In it he wrote:

Separation from evil becomes the necessary and sole basis and principle of unity... for God can have no union with evil... He separates the 'called' from evil. Come out from among them and be ye separate, and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.⁹

When Darby died in 1882 he was succeeded by John Stoney but the decade which followed witnessed the emergence of a number of other smaller factions each taking the name of their most prominent teacher: Grant, Kelly, Stuart and Lowe.¹⁰ The descendants of most of these groups are still active today. Stoney's teaching of 'separation' emphasised the need to sever all connection from people if it is clear that the Lord has abandoned them. After a short period Stoney was succeeded by Frederick Raven. He stressed the importance of 'not relying on or depending on worldly support'. This is still a prominent trait among present day Exclusives who only work in Brethren companies and borrow money solely from within the Church fellowship. Stoney declared: 'If you want to go on with the gospel, you must go on with it perfectly independent of all worldly support. You must not look for patronage or support from man.'¹¹

On the death of Raven, James Taylor Senior (d.1953) took the reins of the movement. He had emigrated from Ireland to establish a linen business in New York City. In his early ministry at Chicago on the subject of 'The House of God and the Gospel' he propounded a new teaching in which he asserted that whilst salvation was in Christ it was in the Church, it was also in the church, 'since it was in the Church that Christ was honoured.'

The years 1918–1920 saw the beginnings of a theological justification for separation. It was all a matter of 'dealing with evil'. A key passage in this teaching was the second chapter of Paul's second letter to Timothy verses 19–22. The man who has 'purified himself' will 'separate himself to be a vessel to honour'. The crucial text which all Exclusives still underscore is in verse 19: '... and let everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw'. Thus the way to deal with evil therefore is to withdraw from it.

After the death of James Taylor Senior there was a period of some six years before his son, James Taylor Junior (1896–1970), otherwise known as 'big Jim' assumed overall control of the movement. In his public ministry entitled *'The Foundations of the Gospel and Other Readings'* he introduced the doctrine of 'separate tables'. This forthright injunction required that no one was allowed to sit at table with their own family members of twelve years and older if they did not break bread with the Brethren. Later the doctrine was extended more widely. Members were not allowed to eat with unbelievers in their home or at their office or place of work. Children were no longer allowed to eat school dinners, instead they had to take a packed lunch or go to a Brethren home during the midday break. Things reached paranoid extremes when Taylor declared that the Brethren were not allowed to eat any food which had been prepared by an 'unbeliever' that is people other than the Brethren. Taylor's notion of separation provoked some bizarre incidents. In the north east of Scotland many Exclusives were involved in the fishing industry. In order

for them to avoid sitting at table with fellow crew members who were unbelievers, galley tables were sawn down the middle so that there was an eighth of an inch gap. Brethren fishermen ate their food at one end and the rest of the crew at the other. However even this was outlawed when it reached Big Jim's ears!¹²

The Exclusive Brethren Today

From Big Jim's era to the present day little has changed in the restricted lifestyle of the Exclusive Brethren. If anything the many harsh and often banal injunctions which he laid down have been both tightened and extended. As with most strongly controlled religious communities, marriage arrangements are closely legislated. From much earlier times Brethren were required only to marry within the movement. This is a common practice among sect and cult groups known as 'endogamy'. In the Taylorite era Brethren were required to marry young. Many girls wedded at 16 or 17 and boys about the same. Since College or University was not an option and employment was guaranteed with the Brethren there was no reason to delay. Taylor made it clear that to remain single was unacceptable. Young men were to take the initiative and propose to any sister they felt drawn to. There was to be no refusing and all wedding ceremonies were to take place on Tuesdays. In the 1970s and 1980s Taylor further insisted on large families as a way of increasing the membership. At the present time it is now generally accepted that it may be better for couples to marry when they are little more mature perhaps having reached 19 or 20 years of age.

Under Taylor's leadership restrictions were brought in regarding education and professional qualifications. Children in primary and secondary schools were not allowed to play for school teams or take part in after school activities. They were only to socialise with other Brethren children and that off the school premises. Pupils were withdrawn from morning assemblies and Religious Education. In

1961 a ban was placed on University and College education which has continued to the present time. Newspapers listed the names of undergraduates who had quit Oxford and Cambridge Colleges to 'avoid fellowship with unrighteousness.'¹³

About this time a law was introduced which forbade anyone to be a member of a trade union or a public body of any kind. This meant that Brethren were forced to give up the practice of medicine, pharmacy or all occupations which required professional validation. Almost overnight men who had held positions as scientific researchers, company directors and solicitors were forced to take up manual and shop floor jobs. In my own home town of Cheltenham, one man who was a researcher at the National Coal Research Station was compelled to become a counter assistant with Sharpe and Fisher Builders Merchants. He continued in this position for a number of years until retirement. One escapee reported that he had finally left the Exclusives because he was banned by the sect from being a member of the 'unholy Automobile Association.'¹⁴

Brethren inevitably keep themselves aloof from party politics and local government. They steadfastly avoid any entanglement with 'the powers of this world'. Historically because of their commitment to private enterprise and managing their own affairs Brethren have had an in-built suspicion of Socialism. Occasionally they have sought to lobby Parliament as for example in June 1964 when representations were made on their behalf in the Commons debate on the Pharmacy Bill. This proposed to allow members of the Brethren to practice pharmacy without being members of the Pharmaceutical Society. In more recent times the Tory MP Teddy Taylor has spoken on their behalf on one or two occasions.

Perhaps hardest of all for the Brethren and particularly for their children, is the fact that they are compelled to live a very restricted life-style. Quite apart from the prohibition to eat with non-members, the Brethren may not even share a bath or a front door with them. More recently they have been ordered to put an extra layer of

insulation on their side of the partition wall if they live in a semi-detached house with unbelievers on the other side. Saturday is now regarded as a holy day along with Sunday and any type of work is forbidden on penalty of expulsion. Exclusives are prohibited from having any contact with family members who are not in full membership. Margaret N, a friend of mine, was not even informed when her father died. In fact it is standard practice that funeral arrangements are kept secret in order to prevent unbelieving family members from attending.

Brethren generally move into quiet private housing areas. Cul-de-sacs are particularly popular. If members want to purchase a house a loan is taken out from the assembly or from other members of the Brethren. To take out a policy with a mortgage company is strictly forbidden. This means that many individuals are financially tied in with their local meeting for periods of thirty or forty years. For employment these days Brethren work only for Brethren or for Brethren companies and businesses.

Brethren are not allowed to take holidays on public beaches, they are not permitted to possess a radio or television set and the cinema and dance hall are similarly regarded as 'citadel of Satan'. Cats and dogs and other domestic pets are not to be kept. In general, Brethren have few hobbies although photography is actively encouraged. In fact in the nineteen nineties it has become an Exclusive practice to photograph all the members attending meetings. Children often spend their spare time making collages of their local fellowship.

One area where the Exclusive Brethren do hold together is in the matter of hospitality. At weekends Brethren families come together in quite large numbers. Perhaps twenty or thirty people will sit down to a meal after which there will be games, homespun music and fun activities. One surprising aspect of Brethren socialising is that the use of spirituous liquor, especially whisky and gin, is encouraged. This practice also dates back to a Taylorian edict. Big Jim, it seems, had

a great liking for his Johnny Walker so he exhorted his members to follow him.

When a member of the fellowship dies Brethren make their own funeral arrangements. As with the Muslims they now have one of their people in each area who embalms the body, buys the coffin and transports it to the cemetery. Funerals are held with as little public attention as possible. Often young boys are left to fill in the hole above the casket when the burial prayers have been completed.

Exclusive Brethren Worship

Exclusive Brethren worship has always been plain and unadorned since the earliest times. What takes place on a given Sunday today is little different in basic ethos from the early beginnings in Dublin in the 1830s. Essentially the congregation is seated in a semi-circle with men on one side and the women on the other. Hymns are sung unaccompanied by any musical instrument as this is felt to 'hinder the freedom of the Spirit'. The women wear head scarves and they are not allowed to speak at the meetings. Men who feel moved to do so may get up and make an impromptu contribution to the theme of the meeting. This is usually focused on elaborating a particular Bible passage. There is no prepared sermon, order of service or set prayers. Since Taylor Junior's time 'breaking of bread' services have been held at six o'clock in the morning. A further somewhat quirky regulation was Big Jim's requirement that men do not wear ties at the meetings because 'all worldly ties must be cut'. Exclusive Brethren often preach in the open air on Saturday mornings although they find themselves at loss what to do when people start to engage them in conversation to find out more. Most assemblies hold a Gospel service although these are often during the Sunday lunch hour period when few people are likely to want to attend.

Big Jim: a Man out of Control

At one level the tightening restrictions in the Brethren in the 1960s are under-

standable against the background of freedom and liberalisation which was taking place in society. However, as the decade progressed the power which Taylor exercised over his following went well beyond reasonable limits. The absolute power he had in his hands began to corrupt him absolutely. Three things in particular were to cause his downfall. He became increasingly engrossed in money making activities, his gin drinking led to his becoming an alcoholic and his salacious appetite led him to an increasing obsession with women and sex.

It had long been the custom for the acknowledged world leader of the Brethren to give public Bible teaching in England. These gatherings were often held at major venues such as Westminster Central Hall and attended by several thousand members. Called 'Readings' the teaching was, and still is, given in a dialogue format. A nationally recognised brother speaks out the question and then the leader answers. In the early days these readings were deeply spiritual expositions of Biblical passages which were related to the issues of daily living. All readings were and continue to be published in small paperback volumes and treasured as God's Word.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s Jim Taylor was clearly a man out of control. Many of the readings were crude innuendoes and cheap hurtful jibes which made little sense to anyone. Speaking at Nostrand Avenue, New York City, he addressed one member of the congregation as follows: 'You are a man of action too you "fat" there, don't forget your cheque. We will take cheques, we will take anything, but we do not want them to bounce.' Turning to a lady he said: 'Ah, it occurs to me about that dear sister over there, Mrs. B. Have you changed your will?'¹⁵ Well if not do it, you must do it.' Later he confronted another gentleman: 'Do you hear that you Toronto man, what in the world is your name, you baldy? But you are not a baldy like L. you have not got the brains he has got.'¹⁶ At the celebrated meeting in Aberdeen in August of the same year the rhetoric was even

worse as Taylor denounced devout believers as 'bums', 'bastards' and 'sons of a bitch'.¹⁷ But this was comparatively mild fare compared with what followed. Shattered and exhausted, Taylor retired to his room at the home of James Gardiner where he was staying on the outskirts of the city. Among the visitors also there were Alan and Madeleine Ker from Harrow. 'Madey' Ker offered to wash Taylor's feet and followed up with some gentle massaging of his neck. 'I find that very soothing', Taylor later confessed to a Daily Express reporter. The therapy completed Madeleine Ker got into the bed beside Taylor only to be discovered a short time later by Gardiner and some of the other local leaders.¹⁸ Despite Taylor protesting his innocence the national press carried headlines the following day which announced with a large picture 'The Woman in Big Jim's Bed'.¹⁹

Once the news broke, it was sufficient to shake substantial numbers free of the abusive and emotional hold which Taylor had over them. Following the incident about eight thousand members parted company with the Exclusives over the next two years.²⁰ Whatever had taken place, Taylor was clearly compromised. 'Mrs. Ker was in the same bed', he told one reporter, 'but she wasn't lying with me, and I wasn't lying with her, if you see what I mean.' Escapees with whom I have spoken, take the view that obsessed with sex as he was, Taylor was probably incapable of committing adultery. A few days after the event at Aberdeen 'Big Jim' changed his story line. It had all been deliberately staged to see who were the 'real saints' who would remain faithful to him. Then at the beginning of October just when moves were afoot to oust him from the leadership altogether the papers reported: 'Big Jim Taylor, the Archangel of the Exclusive Brethren, the fanatical religious sect, has died in New York'.²⁰

The power struggle for overall control continued for some weeks and eventually James Symington, a pig farmer from Neche in North Dakota, took control. He was highly regarded in America and Taylor himself had publicly said to him:

'You will take over when I go'. It was inevitable that as one of Big Jim's toadies, Symington would maintain the regime with more of the same. It is axiomatic among the Exclusives that their leader can do no wrong, hence it becomes difficult for a successor to reverse his predecessor's edicts. This meant that all the extremes which included 6.00 am Sunday worship, separate tables, total isolation from the outside world and even the exhortation to drink whisky and spirituous liquor have continued down to the present time.

Symington remained at helm until the early 1980s when he was replaced by Big Jim's Australian son-in-law, Bruce Hales. Bruce had been noted in the 1960s as 'very ambitious young man'. He was a highly motivated in business and came to England on a number of occasions in an effort to mobilise Brethren companies to make more money. He married Taylor's daughter, Consuella ('Consi'), a move which doubtless helped to strengthen his claim to the throne. As things turned out, his tenure in the top spot was short. Like his father-in-law, his problems with alcohol eventually rendered him incapable of any kind of leadership. His younger brother John therefore took up the reins and still retains the position at the present time. The Exclusives are currently reckoned by those who have recently left to have a membership of about 10,000 members.

Cult Features of the Exclusive Brethren

There can be little doubt that the Exclusive Brethren have moved from having been a 'sect' to become a 'Cult'. Recent escapees from the movement are unanimous on the matter. The Exclusives currently have all characteristics of what sociologists of religion designate as a 'cult' or New Religious Movement (NRM).

All Cults have a leader who claims divinity or at the very least is the sole judge of other members' actions. There has always been a dominant figurehead over the Exclusive Brethren since the

earliest days of John Nelson Darby but since Big Jim's time they have come to exercise total control. They are known as 'Universal Leader' or 'Man of God'. Their major public teachings are conveyed at 'readings' and are then printed in book form. They are required and acted upon without question even though they have devastating consequences including the separation of husbands from wives and children from parents. These have resulted in a trail of divorce, broken homes and suicides. Many who escaped the movements in the 1970s and 1980s, some of whom I know personally, remain severely emotionally damaged.

Cults operate a totalitarian regime. Government is from the top and passed down through area leaders who are also 'ministering brothers.' Taylor instituted what is known as the monthly 'Care Meeting' to which any member who has failed to comply with movement's pronouncements are summoned. Deviants who have engaged in such activities as visiting non-Brethren family members or eating with work colleagues are either 'shut up' (confined to their own home) or 'withdrawn from' (not spoken to) for designated periods of time. In a given area faltering or lapsed members are visited in their homes by local leaders or 'priests' who remonstrate with them about the error of their ways. There are many accounts of these sessions ('priestlies') by recent leavers of abusive questioning including extracted confessions of affairs, masturbation, lust and cinema going.

As with Cultic groups such as the Branch Davidians of Waco, the Exclusive Brethren exercise almost total control over members' daily living. For instance, Taylor ordered all Exclusives to marry. Initially girls were to wed at 16 or 17 and boys at 18. At present 20 or 21 is recommended. Taylor also required that the ceremonies should be conducted by Brethren marriage officers and take place only on Tuesdays. He followed this up with an order that Brethren should have large families. He further ordered that women were not to refuse a proposal of marriage made by any suitable man.

Since the Big Jim era Exclusive behaviour has been totally controlled right down to domestic minutiae. This is seen in the order to men not to have beards and also not to wear ties at Sunday services because 'all worldly ties must be cut'.²¹ Women are required to wear head scarves at all times. These are to be plain white or blue in colour and are often pinned back behind the ears.

It is well known that one of the means by which Cults retain total control of their adherents is exclusivity and isolation. In this matter the Exclusive Brethren, as their name suggests, are no exception. They believe that no other body has the 'truth of the Church' or 'walks in the light of the assembly' or 'acts in the power of the Holy Spirit.' Exclusives are isolated from the 'world' and its surrounding culture at every level from the cradle to the grave. In schools for example their children are withdrawn from assemblies and RE lessons. They are not allowed to participate in out of school activities or socialise with non Brethren children. A recent development has been home tuition and about one third of all Exclusive children are now educated in this way. Television sets are banned and newspapers not taken. When it comes to funeral services these are kept very quiet. There are no public announcements in the press and the arrangements which are solely in the hands of Exclusives who are appointed as undertakers. Burials usually take place within a day or two before family members in the outside world get to hear the news.

As in all other Cults, Brethren come to have a deep emotional dependence on their movement. They take out mortgages with the Brethren, they only work for Brethren companies and businesses and all their socialising which is often enjoyably full is within the context of the Brethren. In short they know of no other life other than that of their local fellowship. Not surprisingly, individuals who 'come out' often feel racked with guilt and emotionally bereft. A recent university thesis indicated high levels of psychological damage on the part of leavers.²³

Finally, there can be no doubt that, as in other controlling groups, Exclusive Brethren exploit their following at every level. Women have never been allowed to speak in the meetings and they play a very subservient role at every level. At the height of his corrupt power trip Taylor ordered that women were not to wear bras or underwear which was nothing more than an excuse to satisfy his predatorial sexual appetites. Between the meetings at Manchester and Aberdeen in 1970 he 'cuddled and fondled every 'sister' who came near him and pulled many of them down on his knee.²² The practice was short-lived in England although it continued for longer in South Africa under the teaching of Derek Noakes.²⁴

It would be hard to conclude in any other way than to categorically assert that the Exclusive Brethren are a highly dysfunctional movement. Their recent leaders exemplify the old adage that 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' For the evidence of these two assertions we need look no further than the hundreds of past and present walking wounded in almost every major town and city in the British Isles.

A recent academic study of the psychological damage experienced by Exclusive Brethren indicated 50% still experience upsetting memories, 62% still find it hard to trust their own feelings and 47% experience feelings of not belonging to any group.²⁵

- 1 See *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Michael Solomon Alexander.
- 2 Quoted B. Wilson, *Patterns of Sectarianism* (London, Heinemann, 1967)
- 3 B. Wilson, *Op. Cit.*, p.
- 4 *Letter of the Ten* 29 June, 1848
- 5 *ibid.*, p.3
- 6 J.N. Darby, *The Bethesda Circular* (1848) p. 3
- 7 *ibid.*, p. 3
- 8 See Isaiah chapter 52 verse 11
- 9 J.N. Darby, *Separation from Evil, God's Principle of Unity*
- 10 See T. Tinder, editor, 'The Brethren Movement in the World Today' *Christian Brethren Fellowship* September 1973, Volume 25, p. 12
- 11 F.E. Raven, *Ministry Volume 1* p. 313
- 12 See *Aberdeen Press and Journal* 25 May 1961 and 11 September 1961
- 13 *Daily Express* 29 April, 1961
- 14 *Daily Mail* 11 July, 1962
- 15 J. Taylor (Junior) *Readings At No Strand Avenue and Other Ministry* No. 4 October 1970 p. 105
- 16 *ibid.* p. 108
- 17 See N. Adams, *Goodbye Beloved Brethren* (Impulse Publications 1972) pp.120-133
- 18 *The Sunday Express* 23 August 1970
- 19 *Sunday Mirror* 16 August 1970
- 20 *Daily Mail* 16 October 1970
- 21 I have witnessed this at the South Carlton Street Meeting in Cheltenham
- 22 J. Aebi-Mytton, *An Exploratory Study of the Mental Health of Former Members of the Taylorite Branch of the Exclusive Brethren* (Unpublished MSc Thesis, University of London, 1993) p. 8
- 23 *Ibid.*, p8.
- 24 Information received from David Shorto by interview January 1997
- 25 J. Aebi-Mytton, *Op.Cit.*, p. 25

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0960–2720

The Open Secret. An Introduction to the Theology of Mission **Lesslie Newbigin**

London: SPCK, 1995, viii+192pp.,
£9.99, ISBN 0–521–42184–5

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Newbigin entwickelt in The Open Secret eine biblisch-trinitarische Theologie der Mission, die drei Aspekte umfaßt: die Verkündigung des Königreichs Gottes, die Teilhabe am Leben des Sohnes und das Zeugnis vom Geist. Auf dieser Grundlage geht Newbigin dann auf die folgenden gegenwärtigen missiologischen Themen ein: die Beziehung des Evangeliums zur Weltgeschichte sowie die Fragen, die von der Befreiungstheologie, der 'Church Growth School of Mission' und der Präsenz anderer Religionen aufgeworfen werden. The Open Secret bietet christliche Forschung auf höchstem Niveau und verdient eine weite Leserschaft.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet ouvrage, Newbigin expose une théologie de la mission qui est biblique et trinitaire, et qui s'ordonne autour de trois thèmes: la proclamation du royaume de Dieu, la participation à la vie du Fils, et le témoignage de l'Esprit dont nous sommes porteurs. Sur cette base, l'auteur aborde les problèmes missiologiques qui se posent actuellement: le rapport entre l'Évangile et l'histoire universelle, la théologie et la libération, la vision missionnaire de la croissance des Églises et la question des autres religions. L'ouvrage fait preuve d'une érudition chrétienne exemplaire et mérite une large diffusion.

The Open Secret is a worthy addition to the feast of Newbigin's writings. Newbigin was for some thirty years a missionary in India. There he was constantly challenged about the way in which the gospel encounters Indian culture. Since returning to England Newbigin has written extensively about how the gospel encounters Western culture. *The Open Secret* represents Newbigin's mature reflection on a biblical theology of mission. It is the deposit of a lecture series that he delivered to Christians preparing for mission work. It is not intended to be an academic work and combines a lucid

style (typically Newbigin) with a lack of academic footnotes. And yet, also typically Newbigin, one is intensely aware that the clearly ordered text is compact and undergirded by comprehensive and creative Christian scholarship and first hand experience of the main mission debates of this century. This is not a lightweight text, but it is clear, relevant, accessible scholarship of the very best sort.

The title of the book refers to the treasure of the gospel that has been entrusted to the church; it is the 'open secret of God's purpose through Christ, to bring all things to their true end in the glory of the triune God' (p. 188). Mission is the church's calling to steward this open secret. Newbigin rejoices over the growing recognition of mission as central to the identity of the church. However there is much debate over what 'mission' entails. Newbigin's aim in this text is to place the debate about mission in a biblical perspective.

And this he does in a wonderfully fresh and biblical way. After an opening chapter which surveys the debate about mission during this century, chapters 2–6 set out Newbigin's proposal for a biblical theology of mission. He argues in chapter 2 for an epistemological starting point in the lordship of Christ. The authority of Jesus is ultimate and thus to seek to root one's theology of mission in any other starting point is inadmissible. Indeed '[t]he Christian mission is thus to act out in the whole of life of the whole world the confession that Jesus is Lord of all' (p. 17).

The question of Jesus' identity led the church to the doctrine of the Trinity and this doctrine resulted in the early church developing a new view of the world which healed the contemporary rift between the sensible and the intelligible. In this tradition Newbigin elaborates a trinitarian theology of mission around three loci: proclaiming the kingdom of the Father (faith in action), sharing the life of the Son (love in action), and bearing the witness of the Spirit (hope in action). Mission is all about the reign of God over the whole of creation (kingdom). In Jesus this has arrived but in the weakness of the cross; the resurrection is the firstfruits of the final coming of the reign of God but it takes the eye of faith to see this, so that mission is *faith* in action; it is living out in all of life the conviction that the reign of God has come and is coming.

Jesus embodied the kingdom, and the church participates in his life and mission. For all its brokenness, the church, as the eucharist indicates, is the place where the reign of God is present and at work in history. At the eucharist Christians are taken up again into the sacrificial life of Christ and sent out to be the community of the cross and resurrection in God's world: love in action. Mission is the work of the Spirit and the gift of the Spirit is the firstfruits of the coming kingdom. In this sense mission is hope in action.

In chapters 7–10 Newbigin, from the basis of his trinitarian theology of mission, examines important issues in current missiology. Chapter 7 deals with the gospel and world history, chapter eight with liberation theology, chapter 9 with the church growth school of mission and chapter 10 with the difficult question of the gospel and other religions. Newbigin's handling of these complex issues is masterful. He rightly recognises that the clash between the biblical view of history and modern historiography 'is perhaps the most important issue in the dialogue between the gospel and the contemporary culture of the Western world' (p. 83). He points out that in all historiography one has to have some criteria for determining what is significant, and the Christian historian correctly brings to the data the assumption that God has disclosed the meaning of the whole story in the story of Jesus.

Liberation theology is, according to Newbigin, a helpful reminder that faith and obedience cannot be separated in mission. Modern mission has been too influenced by colonialism and Newbigin agrees with liberation theology that the ideology of the free market is a form of idolatry. Confrontation of this idolatry is probably the most urgent missionary task of the coming century. Newbigin shares liberation theology's rejection of the idealist view of persons as essentially spiritual but has reservations about its adoption of a Marxist view of human nature which has little room for reconciliation, and its Marxist epistemology—social scientific analysis cannot take the place of the biblical story.

Newbigin shares the church growth school's concern for evangelism but denies that the Bible holds numerical growth and the message of the kingdom closely together: 'There is a deep concern for the integrity of the Christian witness, but there is no evidence of anxiety about or enthusiasm for rapid growth. In no sense does the triumph of God's reign seem to depend upon the growth of the church'.

Newbigin also insists that obedience and discipleship cannot be separated: 'It is notorious that the times and places from which successful evangelistic campaigns and mass conversions have been reported have often been marked by flagrant evils such as racism, militant sectarianism, and blind support of oppressive economic and political systems' (p. 135). However, *contra* liberation theology he is cautious about efforts of missionaries to fix the ethical content of that obedience; local churches must be led by the Spirit in this respect.

On the difficult issue of the relationship between conversion and culture, Newbigin thinks the church growth school is in danger of having a static view of culture, whereas it is always changing. He invokes Paul's doctrine of the powers as an appropriate Biblical framework for thinking about culture. The powers (of state, religion, law, custom etc.) 'provide the ordered framework within which it is possible for human freedom to develop' (p. 143). They are part of God's creation and to be brought under his reign. Newbigin proposes a three-pronged model for thinking about conversion and culture: the traditional culture itself, the 'Christianity' of the missionary, and the Bible. A limitation of the ecumenical movement has been its failure to recognise the traditioned nature of its own presuppositions.

The final chapter discusses the gospel among the religions. Newbigin is clear that the Christian cannot sacrifice her epistemological starting point in this discussion. He locates the roots of Hick's approach in philosophical idealism; this is as confessional an approach as a Christian one. Examining the various models for understanding other religions, Newbigin proposes that we leave the final destination of adherents of other religions to the mercy of God, and that we enter into dialogue with them simply as a witness to the One who has taken hold of us. We need to recognise light wherever we find it while also being aware that religion is the sphere of the demonic. The purpose of dialogue can only be obedient witness to Christ.

In a mere 192 pages Newbigin covers a lot of ground, and we cannot evaluate all his arguments in detail, although they inevitably call for just such engagement. One often feels that one is getting in a succinct page what Newbigin has developed through years of ministry! What makes this book so exciting is its *integrally* Christian starting point. It is extraordinary just how strong and conscious this

starting point is. The first few chapters which set out the theological foundations of mission are full of statements like the following:

'The Christian mission is thus to act out in the whole life of the whole world the confession that Jesus is Lord of all' (p. 17).

I have spoken of mission as the *proclaiming* of God's kingship over all human history and over the whole cosmos. Mission is concerned with nothing less than the completion of all that God has begun to do in the creation of the world and humankind. Its concern is not sectional but total and universal (p. 56).

Newbigin sets out from a comprehensive vision of Christ's Lordship, and this shapes his entire missiology. When one discovers the comprehensive Lordship of Christ (that is, a Christian worldview), one realises that such a holistic perspective reshapes one's thinking in all sorts of areas. Sadly, however, we often do not have the time or texts available to help us work through that process of re-formation. *The Open Secret* is a wonderful example of such reshaping, and if mission is half as central to a Christian theology as Newbigin thinks it is (and I agree), then working through the reshaping at this point will be helpful for one's understanding of the Bible, history (cf. chapter 4), the relationship between evangelism and justice (cf. chapter 8), a Christian approach to other religions and the problem of pluralism (cf. chapter 10), and many other areas. Certainly in the area of mission Newbigin demonstrates that his starting point is capable of bringing a nuanced perspective to bear on many of the contemporary debates in missiology.

Furthermore, Newbigin's *kurios*-centric approach takes the authority of Scripture seriously in a foundational way; Scripture is continuously and thoughtfully referred to. (Newbigin is intensely aware that without a strong doctrine of the authority of Scripture, the church will be unable to critique contemporary culture effectively [cf. Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda* St. Andrews Press, 1993:248-250]). The outline of his trinitarian theology of mission is developed out of passages of Scripture in the most helpful ways. For example, in his chapter on 'Mission as Action for God's Justice', Newbigin outlines in a very useful page how Romans 8 presents the unity of the Christian hope, embracing the private and public life of the human person (pp.106,107). Newbigin rightly focuses the authority of Scripture in terms of its mediating a personal relationship with Christ, but I do not think this is necessarily in conflict with

an evangelical affirmation of a propositional aspect to Scripture, as Newbigin sometimes suggests. (For a discussion of the authority of Scripture, see Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* [London: SPCK, 1986:42-64]). *The Open Secret* remains a model of missiological scholarship in the liberating grip of Scripture.

Newbigin's position on particular areas requires detailed evaluation that we cannot pursue here. Suffice it to mention that I am not persuaded by his appropriation of Paul's doctrine of the powers as a way into a Christian understanding of culture. In my opinion a dynamic notion of creation order, biblically understood, may be the better route here. Newbigin's theology of law and election, plus his view of the several interpretations of Christ in the NT as alerting us to the destination of the gospel to all mankind are always stimulating, but require careful analysis.

The Open Secret is a classic; it is one of those books that should be read widely, and engaged with in detail. Its great merit is its rootedness in a rightly huge view of the LORD CHRIST. Newbigin starts *The Open Secret* with the words, 'Christ is the light of the nations', and he appropriately ends the book as follows:

The mystery of the gospel is not entrusted to the church to be buried in the ground. It is entrusted to the church to be risked in the change and interchange of the spiritual commerce of humanity. It belongs not to the church but to the one who is both head of the church and head of the cosmos. It is within his power and grace to bring to its full completion that long-hidden purpose, the secret of which has been entrusted to the church in order that it may become the open manifestation of the truth to all nations (p. 189).

Craig Bartholomew
Cheltenham, England

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Truth and Authority in Modernity **Lesslie Newbigin**

Leominster: Gracewing, 1996. ix + 83 pp.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette brochure vise à aider l'Eglise à comprendre sa responsabilité missionnaire dans le contexte actuel et à l'assumer. L'auteur affirme que la recherche de la vérité s'effectue toujours

dans le cadre d'un ensemble de croyances, et que, si Dieu est le créateur de tout être, toute quête de la connaissance doit trouver son point de départ en lui. Newbigin montre ensuite comment l'autorité de Dieu nous atteint de façon médiate et comment nous devons lui rendre témoignage.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dies Büchlein will der Gemeinde helfen, ihre missionarische Verantwortung in der Spätmoderne zu verstehen und auszuüben. Newbigin argumentiert, dass jede Wahrheitssuche im Rahmen von Glaubensvoraussetzungen geschieht, und dass, wenn Gott der Urheber allen Seins ist, jeder Erkenntnisanspruch Ihn als Ausgangspunkt nehmen muss. Der Autor zeigt, wie Gottes Autorität vermittelt wird und wie wir Zeugnis für sie geben sollen.

Since his return to Britain from a long ministry as a missionary in India, Leslie Newbigin has explored in several publications the missionary challenge presented to the church by Western culture. It is therefore fitting that he should contribute to the "Christian Mission and Modern Culture" series which aims at helping the church understand its missionary responsibility to a culture in crisis. This booklet gives him the opportunity to summarise much of what is at the heart of his thinking on Christian mission and modern culture. The first chapter highlights that the authority of the creator cannot be demonstrated independently of God's own self-revelation, since it is personal and final authority. Therefore, the first issue to be addressed must be modernity's rejection of authority. Newbigin retrieves the pre-modern and post-modern insight that all knowledge is based on faith. People gain new insights and are able to doubt rationally only within a framework of beliefs. If God is really the author of all being, all claims to knowledge must start with him. 'The search for an authority prior to and more basic than the authority of God's self-revelation must end in failure.' (9f). But how is this authority mediated to us? This is the question dealt with in the second chapter.

Beginning with observations of what Jesus did to mediate his authority, Newbigin finds three elements: 'a living community, a tradition of teaching, and the continuing work of the divine Spirit illuminating the tradition in each new generation' (31). He then turns to the contemporary debate among Christians on the authority of Scripture, of the church and its tradition, of reason, and of experience.

Newbigin attempts to deliver us from false alternatives by setting the different elements in proper relation to one another.

The final chapter summarises the argument under the heading "Witnessing to divine authority in the context of modernity". It challenges us to acknowledge the personal element in all knowledge (and especially in knowledge of God) and to commend the authority of the Gospel not by asserting a set of eternal and undubitable truths (in line with modernist thinking), but by telling and living the story which we believe and whose author is God.

Thus, this book not only challenges some basic assumptions of the culture in which the church is operating, but it also challenges the church to let its model of truth and authority be shaped by Scripture rather than by modernist assumptions. As a tight summary of Newbigin's writings on the witness of the church in our sceptical age, this volume is especially suitable for those with little time to read. Yet even those who want to explore in some depth the important issue of 'truth and authority in modernity', could do much worse than start with this profound little book.

Thomas Renz
London, England

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Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study

John Barton

London: Darton, Longman and Todd,
1996 (2nd ed.), xvii + 294 pp., £15.95, pb.
ISBN 0-232-52201-4

RÉSUMÉ

Voici la seconde édition, revue et augmentée, de l'ouvrage paru en 1984, Lire l'Ancien Testament. Il présente toute la gamme des approches de l'interprétation de l'Ancien Testament, depuis les méthodes 'traditionnelles' de la critique littéraire, formiste et rédactionnelle, en passant par l'approche canonique de B.S. Childs, le structuralisme et la 'nouvelle critique', jusqu'à la critique rhétorique, la poétique biblique, l'esthétique de réception et les développements post-structuralistes comme la déconstruction. Il met en valeur les points forts et les limites de chaque méthode et défend habilement la thèse qu'il n'existe pas de méthode correcte pour éclairer le sens du texte.

De plus, il montre à quel point il est important de déterminer le genre du texte pour bien le comprendre. Même si l'on n'est pas d'accord avec tous les arguments de Barton, on doit reconnaître que l'ouvrage se recommande par son équilibre et sa clarté.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die zweite, erweiterte Auflage von Bartons ursprünglich 1984 erschienenem Buch *Reading the Old Testament* behandelt nun das gesamte Spektrum literarischer Methoden zur Interpretation des Alten Testaments, das von den 'traditionellen' Ansätzen der Literar-, Form- und Redaktionskritik über B. S. Childs' canonical approach, den Strukturalismus und den sogenannten New Criticism bis hin zur Rhetorischen Kritik, der Biblischen Poetik, der Rezeptionsästhetik sowie poststrukturalistischen Entwicklungen wie der Dekonstruktion reicht. Barton versteht es, die Stärken wie die Grenzen der einzelnen Ansätze aufzuzeigen und argumentiert im übrigen überzeugend, daß es die korrekte Methode, welche die Bedeutung des Textes erhellen würde, nicht gibt. Darüber hinaus zeigt er auf, wie wichtig die Gattungsbestimmung für das Verständnis eines Textes ist. Selbst wenn man Bartons Urteil nicht in allen Fällen zustimmen wird, so verdient das Buch doch aufgrund seiner Ausgewogenheit und Anschaulichkeit eine klare Empfehlung.

When the first edition of Barton's *Reading the Old Testament* appeared in 1984, it was received as a ground-breaking and much needed work. In it Barton surveys the various literary methods employed in Old Testament study in order to illustrate which interpretive questions each of them is able to answer and which not.

Barton develops his argument on the basis of the structuralist concept of 'literary competence and genre recognition'. Hence he affirms that the interpreter needs to address the question of what sort of text he is dealing with since 'reading a text depends crucially on decisions about genre, about what a text is to be read as' (pp. 5-6).

Three chapters assess the contributions of literary criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism to the task of Old Testament interpretation. Here, as in the remainder of his study, the strength of Barton's discussion lies in his penetration into the strengths and weaknesses of the respective methods. He uncovers their underlying assumptions and

demonstrates their achievements as well as intrinsic limitations.

Turning to 'recent' developments, B. S. Childs' canonical approach is discussed as are structuralist criticism and the so-called New Criticism. Of all the methods assessed, the canonical approach meets with the most poignant critique. Barton—not accepting Childs' contention that his enterprise is basically a theological one—traces close links between the canonical approach and the New Criticism and claims that those two stand or fall together implying, of course, the latter. Structuralism, on the other hand, is welcomed as offering some important concepts and correctives to the biblical scholar although its 'ideological commitment and illusions of grandeur' (p. 190), i.e., its exclusivistic claims are rejected.

Due to important developments during the last twelve years, two new chapters have been added in this second edition. Chapter 13, 'The Reader in the Text', focuses on rhetorical criticism, biblical poetics, and reader-response criticism (reception-aesthetics), while post-structuralist developments such as deconstruction and postmodernist attitudes towards texts in general are treated in the following chapter. Barton affirms the value of those approaches that attempt to uncover how (rather than what) texts mean (i.e., the methods discussed in ch. 13), but he vehemently rejects postmodernist relativism—as displayed in deconstruction, for instance—as absurd.

Throughout Barton argues a strong case against the idea of a 'correct' method, which, if only applied properly, would enable the interpreter to discover once and for all the true meaning of the text. 'Biblical "methods" are theories rather than methods'. A theory, Barton adds, 'may lead to useful insights [] but it can never be a technique which can always be used with the assurance that it will yield correct results' (p. 244).

This judicious perspective alone deserves a wide readership. The book is also recommended for the emphasis it lays on 'the recognition of genre' as a fundamental hermeneutical task. It does not provide detailed instructions as to how the methods are to be practised, nor is it a sophisticated critique of their underlying philosophical assumptions. But it does facilitate orientation in the increasingly complex labyrinth of 'methods'—or rather 'theories'—and it is brilliantly written. Especially the many vivid illustrations help the reader understand the often

complex and sometimes puzzling hermeneutical concepts.

One will certainly disagree with Barton at times since his perspective—despite his cautious and well-balanced argument—is necessarily shaped by his own agenda, i.e., his preference for a moderate *redaction criticism*. This becomes evident, for example, in his critique of rhetorical critics who ‘can nearly always “demonstrate” a rhetorical structure in any given text and so invalidate historical-critical arguments based on its apparent (or evident) formlessness’ (p. 201). While this is true in principle, the problem remains whether the texts in question are correctly described as formless or not. And although the answer will have to be given on an individual basis, Barton’s statement shows that the results we get are always determined by the questions we ask. It is therefore problematic to label the drive behind rhetorical criticism an apologetic one (p. 204), as it would be mistaken to condemn the historical-critical enterprise as simply destructive.

But these quarrels are not intended to lessen Barton’s achievements, which make his book—even if one does not agree with everything Barton says—an important contribution to the issue of Old Testament interpretation.

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0960–2720

The Spirit and the Letter: Studies in the Biblical Canon

J. Barton

London: SPCK, 1997, 210pp., £17.50, pb, ISBN 0 281 05011 2

RÉSUMÉ

L'Esprit et la Lettre est le second ouvrage de Barton sur le canon biblique. Son premier ouvrage, Les Oracles de Dieu, traitait du canon juif de l'Ancien Testament et était très peu satisfaisant. Celui-ci traite du canon chrétien des deux Testaments; il est beaucoup plus positif et utile. Tout en reprenant des éléments de l'ouvrage précédant, il adopte une approche différente. Il insiste sur la fréquence des citations chez les Pères de l'église et sur les listes de livres bibliques. Sa conception selon laquelle la fréquence des citations serait plus importante que le statut scripturaire et que les listes de livres relèveraient d'une tendance tardive est intenable.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

The Spirit and the Letter ist Bartons zweites Buch zum biblischen Kanon. Sein früheres Werk Oracles of God behandelte den jüdischen Kanon des Alten Testaments und war ausgesprochen unbefriedigend. Das vorliegende Werk thematisiert den christlichen Kanon beider Testamente und ist wesentlich positiver und hilfreicher. Obwohl es an einzelnen Punkten auf dem früheren Buch aufbaut, ist es doch prinzipiell grundverschieden. Besondere Beachtung wird der Häufigkeit, mit der die biblischen Bücher von den Kirchenvätern verwendet wurden, sowie den Verzeichnissen der Bücher gewidmet. Doch Bartons Behauptungen, daß die Häufigkeit der Benutzung von größerer Bedeutung sei als ihr Status als Heilige Schriften, und daß die Verzeichnisse eine späte Entwicklung darstellten, sind nicht aufrechtzuerhalten.

John Barton is a writer who thinks adventurous thoughts about the canon. In *Oracles of God* (1986), dealing with the Jewish canon of the Old Testament, they were very wild thoughts indeed, and were capable of being comprehensively disproved (see ‘A Modern Theory of the Old Testament Canon,’ in *Vetus Testamentum* XLI:4, 1991). In the present work, dealing with the Christian canon of the Bible, and in particular of the New Testament, his thoughts are more disciplined. Based on his Hulsean lectures, to which he had clearly devoted a great deal of study, his approach remains challenging but makes a real contribution to understanding, whether or not his conclusions can be accepted as they stand.

Barton’s attitude to the New Testament is, on the whole, very positive. He recognises that the books were written early, and that most of them were early accepted as authoritative. He holds that they should be treated as self-consistent. Building on the work of Franz Stuhlhofer, he points out that the early Fathers use them more, proportionately, than they use the Old Testament. From this he makes the bold deduction that they were really more authoritative for the Fathers than the Old Testament was, though the Old Testament was reckoned as Holy Scripture, and the New Testament at first was not. He goes on to make the further bold deduction that the idea of Holy Scripture is merely theoretical, and that what really matters is how much a book is used. A more sober deduction would be that scriptural status and frequency of use are both significant, though in different ways, the former

speaking of the inspired origin of a book, the latter speaking of its experienced profitability.

The author also makes a second distinction, not between authoritative books and Scripture, but between Scripture and canon. By the latter, he understands the exact determination of which books are Scripture and which are not, a question not finally settled, in the case of the New Testament, earlier than the fourth century. He holds that the exact limits of the Jewish Old Testament were determined similarly late. It was only then that the books could be listed. In both cases, however, the books were used as authoritative much earlier, and certain other books as well—books like the Shepherd of Hermas and the Didache in the case of the New Testament and books like the Apocrypha and Enoch in the case of the Old Testament. What Barton's attitude to these other books is remains obscure. Indeed, he does not really discuss the boundaries of the Christian Old Testament as a separate question from the Jewish, and if he did, he might be driven by consistency to the conclusion that the Christian boundaries and the Jewish are not the same.

This second distinction of Barton's is even more vulnerable than his first. The idea that one cannot speak of a canon until one has an exact list has no historical basis. It is true that the word 'canon' is not used until the fourth century, but the idea is present as soon as belief in Scripture is present, and extant Christian lists of the Scriptures date not from the fourth century but from the second. It is true that the second century list of the New Testament Scriptures, the Muratorian Fragment, is not altogether identical in content with the later lists, and mentions doubt about one of the books it includes, yet the amount of common ground is striking. And as to the second century list of the Old Testament Scriptures, that of Melito, it is identical, apart from one book, with the canon of the Hebrew Bible and with the lists provided by those of the later Fathers who adhere to the Hebrew canon.

Altogether, this is a worthwhile and thought-provoking book, but not to be treated as a manual. Its worst parts are those dependent on the author's earlier book, *Oracles of God*.

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Children in The Early Church: Children in the Ancient World, the New Testament and the Early Church

W. A. Strange

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996,
120pp., £ 8.99, ISBN 0 85364 763 1

RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur expose brièvement, mais utilement, quelle attitude on avait vis-à-vis des enfants dans les familles et dans la société chez les Juifs, les Grecs et les Romains au temps de Jésus. Il présente l'attitude de Jésus et de l'Eglise primitive, telle qu'elle se dégage de la Bible. Il examine ensuite la place des enfants en rapport avec le baptême et la Sainte-Cène à travers les éges. Finalement il fait quelques remarques sur la situation actuelle.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Autor bietet einen kurzen, aber hilfreichen Überblick über die Einstellung zu Kindern in den Familien und der Gesellschaft der jüdischen, griechischen und römischen Kulturen zur Zeit Jesu. Außerdem skizziert er anhand des biblischen Berichts die Einstellung Jesu sowie die der frühen Kirche. Anschließend betrachtet er die Rolle von Kindern im Zusammenhang mit Taufe und Abendmahl durch die verschiedenen Zeitepochen und äußert schließlich einige Gedanken zur gegenwärtigen Situation.

This book is timely in light of the continuing debate on the place and role of Children in the Church. Last November the Church of England Synod accepted guidelines in a report to the Synod about the admission of children to Holy Communion. Recently I saw a large poster outside a church which read 'Children welcome'—it is surely an indictment of the whole Church that we need to make a statement like that.

The author of this book began with a question in mind, 'if Jesus had so much to say about children, why did the early Church have so little to say?'

Answering this generated other questions which in turn give this short book its framework. In it Dr Strange provides a survey of the early cultures around Jesus' time, of the Jewish, Roman and Greek attitudes to children within the family and within society as a whole. He then briefly reviews the biblical

material of Jesus' attitude to children, and the place of children in the Early Church as mentioned in the Epistles.

In a very interesting chapter on 'Children and the Sacraments', he gives a historical and biblical overview of infant baptism and children at the Eucharist. He does not provide a definitive 'proof' for infant baptism but clearly tries to present arguments that uphold this position while at the same time appreciating those who hold to believers' baptism. Most of the arguments for infant baptism are clearly documented in many other places.

However, I found the survey Dr Strange presents on children and the Eucharist very informative. From a reference to Cyprian (d.258) it appears that children were in the habit of receiving communion from birth (i.e. after baptism). Although Augustine built a powerful case for the admission of Children to Communion, the Western Church at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) barred children from communion, whilst in the Eastern Church the admission of children to communion continued to be the norm, as indeed it remains today.

Those who are convinced that children play a vital role in today's church will find this book very affirming, and those who still need to be convinced on the right place of children will find it thought provoking. The book is not just for ministers and church leaders; it is a well written and accessible volume to all, and it is clearly written by someone who is passionate about children's full involvement (as far as they are themselves able) in the Body of Christ, the Church today.

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God and the Biologist: Faith at the Frontiers of Science

R.J. Berry

Leicester: Apollos, 1996, 143pp., £12.99, pb, ISBN 0-85111-446-6

RÉSUMÉ

La science et la foi chrétienne sont deux façons différentes de connaître. A cet égard elles sont complémentaires. La science répond à la question "comment?", la foi à la question "pourquoi?". Dans trois essais, l'auteur, professeur de génétique, plaide pour une position

chrétienne au sujet de l'évolution, de la technologie génétique et de l'éthique de l'environnement. Il prétend que l'évolution est un fait, que les humains sont des animaux, mais que cela ne compromet pas la compréhension de la vérité scripturaire. Au contraire, cela permet aux chrétiens de parler d'un but dans un monde livré au hasard et de l'immanence de Dieu dans un monde hostile. La technologie moderne dans le domaine de la procréation a soulevé la question cruciale du moment précis où commence la vie. Les théologiens ne donnent pas de réponse claire à cette question et nous devons rechercher l'éclairage de la recherche scientifique actuelle. Il appartient aux chrétiens d'introduire l'éthique dans le débat écologique, car les solutions purement politiques et scientifiques sont inadéquates. L'auteur engage l'Eglise à adopter une attitude responsable et réfléchie vis-à-vis de la création dans son ensemble.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Wissenschaft und christlicher Glaube stellen verschiedene Arten des "Wissens" dar und verhalten sich zueinander komplementär. Die Wissenschaft beantwortet die "Wie-Frage", der Glaube hingegen die "Warum-Frage". In den drei Essays verteidigt der Autor, ein Professor für Genetik, eine christliche Position zu den Themen Evolution, humane Reproduktionstechnologie und Umweltethik. Er versteht die Evolution als Tatsache und den Menschen somit als Tier. Dies jedoch mache ein biblisches Wahrheitsverständnis keineswegs zunichte. Vielmehr erlaube diese Sicht Christen, in einer Welt des Zufalls über Sinn zu sprechen und in einer feindlichen Welt über die Immanenz Gottes. Die moderne Reproduktionstechnologie hat die drängende Frage aufgeworfen, wann genau das Leben beginnt. Da die Theologie keine endgültigen Antworten auf diese Frage bietet, müssen wir uns anhand aktueller wissenschaftlicher Forschung informieren. Christen haben die Aufgabe, ethische Fragen in die Umweltdebatte einzubringen; denn politische und wissenschaftliche Lösungen an sich sind inadäquat. Der Autor fordert die Kirche heraus, ein verantwortliches Verhalten in bezug auf die gesamte Schöpfung anzunehmen.

We live in an age in which Science is deeply distrusted. The post-war scientific triumphalism has evaporated in the face of nuclear disaster and environmental degradation. Governments have lost confidence in funding scientific research and fewer undergraduates

enrol to study courses in the 'hard' sciences. Science promised a new world, but instead has delivered a tarnished version of the old.

There is of course another view. A view espoused by those who believe in the objectivity of science and the reality of scientific truth. This group would remind us that, whether we like it or not, in the developed world, we enjoy the fruits of modern scientific technology every day of our lives. The practical demonstration that 'science works' is an important strand to their argument, as is argued by Richard Dawkins who highlighted the hypocrisy of those who reject science and still fly in aeroplanes at 30 000 ft.

If we now add to the contemporary debate over the status of science some history—in short a century and more of conflict between some areas of the Christian Church and those who practice science—it is not surprising that many people are confused about the relationship between science and faith. In my experience this area is rife with muddled thinking and unhelpful writing. Many, who might engage in this debate opt out and adopt a simplistic pro-science or anti-science stance. Professor Berry is not one such, for he writes with the explicit aim of 'clearing away the overgrown thickets which confuse and deter those who want to explore the interface of science and faith'. His thesis is simple, but not simple minded—there are two books, the book of nature and the book of scripture, we need to read them both and read them together. Oversimplifying for the sake of clarity he suggests that the book of nature tells us 'How?' whilst the book of scripture tells us 'Why?'. Berry is a committed scientist, working at a high level in his discipline, and a practising Christian who takes a high view of Scripture. He writes to persuade both the sceptic and the muddled Christian believer that Christianity and a scientific understanding of the world can represent complementary insights. He also writes to assure the Christian who is a scientist that there need be no dichotomy between work and faith.

The heart of this book is a short collection of essays on the subjects of evolution, human life issues (genetics) and environmental ethics. Each essay (briefly reviewed below) is developed with scientific integrity and argued from a Christian viewpoint. Professor Berry is an ecological geneticist, that is to say he is an evolutionary biologist, and is Professor of Genetics at University College London. He writes with an authority which comes from a deep involvement with his subject matter over

a long period of time. He has chaired a working party to advise the Church of England on the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, he is a member of the UK Government Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, was commissioned to write an 'ethical response' to the World Conservation Strategy and more recently chaired a working party to formulate a 'Code of Environmental Practice'.

Evolution is fact.

The author opens his discussion of evolution with two very clear statements. Evolution is a fact, and humans are animals. Few working in the Life Sciences and the Earth Sciences would disagree. Many religious people on the other hand find these ideas unpalatable. One critical area of confusion in the evolution debate which Professor Berry seeks to clarify is the use of the term 'theory'. To the layman "Evolution is *only* a theory". Berry argues that this betrays an ignorance of the use of scientific language. In science the word 'theory' is a technical term which means 'an established interpretation of facts; a corpus of ideas as firmly grounded as any other in the field', not, as many would claim 'a speculative, untested idea'.

There remain however, some difficult questions. For if evolution is a fact and humans are animals, what precisely is our 'humanness' and how do we interpret the creation accounts in Genesis? For Berry, the Biblical record must be read not as a scientific description of events but as theological statements. Two simple but profound observations follow. Firstly, the creation accounts show a clear description of progress, from chaos to humankind, broadly supporting the notion of evolution. Secondly, 'humanness' defined as 'man made in the image of God' becomes relational, not physical; thus palaeontology becomes subservient to mankind's (geologically) recent history. For any scientist working with the bricks and mortar of evolution the Creationist position is untenable. For Berry, Creationist logic is encapsulated in one word—"wrong". Nevertheless the author does not attempt a 'hatchet job', even though he could have done, rather, he makes an important theological point, a clever approach which meets the Creationists on their own ground. He shows that the great irony of the Darwinian revolution, although few could see it at the time, is that in evolution God is brought back into his world from whence He had been excluded by the theologians of the 18th and 19th Century.

That God is active in his creation is the opposite of the Creationist position which focuses on God's past work in Creation. For the Christian both truths are vital—God has worked and is working in our world, He is both transcendent and immanent.

You are more than your genes dictate

To what extent are we programmed by our genetic make-up? Some would argue that we are imprisoned by our genes and that the blue-print laid down at fertilisation determines for all time our physical and moral character. Professor Berry presents an opposing view. He shows that even if all the details of human DNA were known, human beings cannot be adequately described by their genes. There is no such thing as a behavioural gene. Every behaviour is the result of interactions between inherited (genetic) and environmental (physical, social, cultural) factors.

Currently, there are two broad areas of genetic research which raise major moral issues. The first is genetic manipulation, presently the subject of intense media debate in the UK. The second area is reproductive technology, a topic discussed at some length in this book. The landmark birth of Louise Brown the first 'test tube baby', conceived through *in vitro* fertilisation raises two important moral questions—when *precisely* does life begin? and, what is the nature of the marriage bond in the light of donor insemination? The author dwells chiefly on the former of these two issues and argues that the evidence is against the proposition that life begins at conception, whilst remaining agnostic about the point at which God's image is impressed upon the physical nature. For some this is unsatisfactory, but the reality is that scripture gives very little guidance on these issues. In the light of this Professor Berry has powerfully restated his principal thesis. Here is new ground being broken. No-one has trodden this way before and so we need all the help we can get including the insights of modern science as well as those of biblical scholarship.

Green Christianity

The current environmental debate frequently addresses itself to those with political power, but at its heart the environmental 'problem'

requires scientific and moral solutions. The complexity of environmental pathways are such that events triggered by this generation may have consequences far removed in time from the present. Thus current political systems, with their short time scales and immediate agendas can be irrelevant. However, the author documents the way in which scientific solutions to environmental problems are also inadequate by showing that the premise 'accurate knowledge leads to right solutions' is flawed. He shows how early environmental strategies which ignored the moral dimension were doomed to failure and describes his own involvement in seeking to bring ethical issues to the fore.

Some have argued that 'Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt' over environmental degradation because Christian theology has encouraged humankind to exploit the natural world for their own ends. To counter this view Berry restates the Christian doctrine of conservation—we live in God's world, which He has entrusted to us and so we are required to be responsible stewards. He compares the Christian position with that of other religious groups and explores what is meant in the concept of stewardship. He challenges the Christian church to adopt an accountable, responsible behaviour towards the whole of creation which may then form the basis of a Christian challenge to the wider world.

Berry concludes his book with a call to 'a mature doctrine of creation'. Sadly, an area of Christian thought which has lost confidence and suffered massively from internal disagreements. Disagreements which arise from misunderstandings at the science-faith interface. It is time for scientists and theologians alike to state more boldly their understanding of God's work and purpose in creation. We have here a neglected and yet powerful apologetic for our age, for in many ways Christian thinkers have been ahead of the game in anticipating the post-modern loss of confidence in science. They always knew that science held only partial answers. As contemporary society questions meaning and purpose, we have in a mature Christian doctrine of creation, confident answers to vital questions.

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Jesus and the Victory of God**N. T. Wright**London: SPCK, 1996, 762pp., £30 pd.,
pb. ISBN 0 281 04717 0**RÉSUMÉ**

L'ouvrage de Wright est considérable et important. Il fait partie d'un projet visant à retracer en plusieurs volumes les origines du christianisme. Dans un premier volume il avait exposé en détail le cadre dans lequel se situait l'histoire de Jésus. Il en fait maintenant le récit d'une manière intéressante, accessible et stimulante, en s'appuyant solidement sur la tradition de savants tels que Glasson et Caird. Quels sont les points principaux de son argumentation? Au temps de Jésus, Israël se considérait comme en exil, à cause de l'occupant étranger. Il attendait que YHWH revienne lui rendre justice. Jésus incarne ce retour par son action et sa parole. Il est celui qui représente véritablement Israël, mais aussi, il redéfinit Israël et ses symboles—y compris le temple—autour de sa personne. Avec Jésus, l'histoire d'Israël atteint un moment crucial, en particulier parce qu'il prend le contre-pied de ses attentes et de ses symboles nourris d'hostilité envers Rome. Dans ce sens son message et son ministère sont apocalyptiques. Ce terme ne doit pas être compris dans le sens que lui donnent Weiss, Schweitzer et d'autres théologiens allemands, c'est-à-dire l'attente de la fin du monde matériel. Il s'applique au nouvel ordre mondial introduit par Jésus en redéfinissant Israël autour de sa personne. Le genre apocalyptique de Marc 13 (et les textes parallèles) n'a jamais été destiné à être compris littéralement. Schweitzer avait raison de voir dans l'apocalyptique le centre à partir duquel il convient de comprendre Jésus, mais il se trompait totalement dans sa conception de l'apocalyptique elle-même. Le message de Jésus sur le retour du roi, et l'affirmation de son partage du trône de YHWH ont une grande importance. À cause de l'influence qu'ils ont eu sur le développement de la christologie dans l'Eglise ancienne. Wright est conservateur dans son optique théologique fondamentale, radical (dans un sens positif) dans son analyse historique et très stimulant par ses déclarations sur Jésus. Ces déclarations ne sont pas vraiment nouvelles, mais elles avaient besoin d'être réaffirmées avec autant d'adresse, de minutie, de solidité et de conviction pour figurer dans le champ académique. Il devient à

ce jour périlleux d'étudier la vie de Jésus et le royaume de Dieu sans consulter cet ouvrage. Il n'a pas seulement une immense importance pour les lecteurs britanniques ou américains, mais particulièrement aussi pour les spécialistes de l'Europe continentale—tant libéraux que conservateurs—qui partagent encore la compréhension de l'apocalyptique du Dr. Schweitzer.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Wrights Buch ist von beträchtlichem Format, sowohl hinsichtlich seines Umfangs als auch hinsichtlich seiner Bedeutung. Es ist Teil von Wrights mehrbändigem Projekt zu den Ursprüngen des Christentums. Nachdem im ersten Band der Hintergrund der Jesuserzählung auf detaillierte Weise beschrieben worden war, widmet sich dieses Buch der Erzählung selbst. Es bietet eine provokative und ausgesprochen lesbare Darstellung, die fest in der Tradition von Gelehrten wie Glasson und Caird gegründet ist. Worin besteht Wrights grundlegende Argumentation? Israel erlebte zur Zeit Jesu ein starkes Gefühl des Exils, insofern als es von einer fremden Macht beherrscht wurde und Jahwes Rückkehr zu seiner Verteidigung erwartete. Jesus verkörpert diese Rückkehr sowohl in seinen Taten als auch in seinen Worten. Er ist derjenige, der Israel wahrhaftig repräsentiert. Doch er definiert Israel und seine Symbole—einschließlich des Tempels—neu in bezug auf seine eigene Person. Jesus bringt Israels Geschichte zu ihrem Höhepunkt, nicht zuletzt dadurch, daß er die zeitgenössischen antirömischen Symbole und die dahinterstehende antirömische Einstellung unterminiert. In diesem Sinn sind seine Botschaft und sein Dienst voll und ganz apokalyptisch. Doch dieser Begriff sollte nicht so verstanden werden, wie von Weiss, Schweitzer und den sich an sie anschließenden deutschen Wissenschaftlern vorgeschlagen wurde, d. h. als ein Terminus, der die Erwartung des Endes der physischen Welt bezeichnet. Statt dessen meint er die neue Weltordnung, die durch Jesu neue Definition Israels in bezug auf seine eigene Person heraufgeführt wird. Die apokalyptische Gattung, wie wir sie z. B. in Mk 13 (und den Parallelen) finden, zielte nie darauf, wortwörtlich verstanden zu werden. Schweitzer verlagerte die Apokalyptik zu Recht ins Zentrum der Jesusforschung, doch hinsichtlich seines Entwurfs derselben lag er vollkommen falsch. Jesu Verkörperung der Rückkehr des Königs sowie sein Anspruch, an Jahwes Thron Teil zu haben, sind aus christologischer Sicht

bedeutsam, da sie die Entwicklung der frühchristlichen Christologie unmittelbar beeinflussten. Wright ist konservativ in bezug auf seine theologische Grundhaltung, radikal (im positiven Sinn) in bezug auf seine historische Analyse und ausgesprochen provokativ hinsichtlich seiner Jesus betreffenden Thesen. Diese Thesen sind nicht vollkommen neu, doch bedurfte es einer mit solchem Geschick, solcher Ausführlichkeit, Zuverlässigkeit und Überzeugung vorgetragenen Neuformulierung, um sie auf die wissenschaftliche Tagesordnung zu setzen. Von jetzt ab wäre es unverantwortlich, Jesus und das Königreich Gottes zu untersuchen, ohne dieses Buch zu konsultieren, das von immenser Bedeutung ist, nicht nur für die britische und amerikanische Wissenschaft, sondern vor allem für europäische Gelehrte auf dem Kontinent, die noch immer das Schweitzerische Verständnis von Apokalyptik teilen.

To call this book 'substantial' would be the understatement of the month—it is magisterial, both in terms of size and importance. Not that its insights are all entirely new (cf. Glas-son, Caird and Borg among others who wrote similar things long before Wright), but the way in which they are assembled is impressive and immensely helpful and coherent. There is no doubt in my mind that this book is as important as volume 1 (*The New Testament and the People of God*) which prepares the ground for this one, not least by offering one of the best available introductions to first century Judaism. Admittedly there is even more repetition in volume 2. (yes, Jesus embodies YHWH's return...) than in volume 1 (yes, Josephus thought God had gone over to the Romans...). Nonetheless Wright is a gifted communicator, so this not as big a problem as it might be with most authors. The real problem with too much repetition is that it uses up space that is badly needed elsewhere, in this case a treatment of the resurrection—which is missing. A book on Jesus and the victory of God without a discussion of the resurrection may seem odd, to put it mildly, but the author assures me that the resurrection has only been postponed, not cancelled. Presumably this means that what was supposed to be a five volume project (*Christian Origins and the Question of God*) now ends up comprising six volumes (?). It would probably be unfair to remind ourselves at this point that Jewish scrolls must have focused the mind wonderfully. This book may be massive, but it is extremely readable and relevant—especially

for those who suffered at the hands of Weiss, Schweitzer, Bultmann etc. (ch. 1) and/or the so-called Jesus Seminar (ch. 2).

The main benefit readers can expect from this book is an up-to-date and coherent portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth against the backcloth of first century Judaism. Wright is not only thoroughly familiar with present scholarship, he is himself one of the leading authorities on Jesus world-wide. If a scholar's reputation is to be judged on the basis of his ability to integrate credibly and coherently large quantities of diverse primary evidence, Wright's excellent reputation is very much justified. So who was this Jesus whom he describes and how did he relate to his environment? The obvious starting point is one established in volume 1: at the time of Jesus Israel still experienced a strong sense of exile. If YHWH is Israel's God, how is it that the Romans are in charge? As long as pagan oppression continues, the exile cannot really be over. When it does come to an end, God will have established his rule—God's kingdom. It is the major contribution of the Gospels to describe the inauguration of this climax of Israel's history. They portray Jesus as both the representative of Israel and the embodiment of YHWH's promised and long awaited return. In short, Jesus re-defines Israel and all her symbols around himself. More than that, he claims to share in God's throne, thus compounding what in the eyes of many of his contemporaries was blasphemy. With his actions and words he subverted Israel's misguided values and sought to re-direct her agenda away from an anti-Roman stance to one of spiritual renewal. God's judgement would befall those who were opposed to such renewal, in fact, Israel's most treasured possession, the Temple, would become the epicentre of God's wrath. It had been misused by the authorities as a symbol of arrogant nationalism, religious segregation and a power base for self-preservation. Yes, it would form the starting point of God's revolution, but not in the way envisaged by most—its destruction would be the clearest sign of the inbreaking kingdom: God had indeed returned. Talk of the end of the world is typically apocalyptic (in the sense of genre) and therefore ought not to be literalised. The coming down of the Berlin Wall too was 'earth shattering', but hardly in the literal sense. Jesus' apocalyptic scenario (Mk 13 and parallels) was a thinly veiled allusion to the defeat Israel was going to suffer by the Romans, not because of inferior military power, but because their contemporary

agenda was misguided and because God/the Son of Man would allow it to happen. It is hardly surprising that this impending end of Judaism (AD 70) as it was known would be described in similar, though perhaps stronger, apocalyptic tones as the exile before, or even the desecrations of the Temple committed by Antiochus Epiphanes and Pompey a century or two earlier. Schweitzer, Bultmann, Käsemann and others (including most conservative commentators—strange bed fellows indeed) throughout this century radically misunderstood apocalyptic. Wright exposes this misunderstanding for what it is and states quite categorically: Jesus did not predict the end of the physical world; but he did predict the end of a world order, i.e. one which centred around the nation of Israel and specifically the Temple in Jerusalem. The new world order is based on an Israel which is defined around the person of Jesus. Schweitzer was entirely justified in making apocalyptic the centre of Jesus' thinking, but he was 100% wrong in what he understood this to mean. In response to volume 1 one commentator (B. Witherington) expressed his hope that Wright would confirm in volume 2 that he does not 'deny that Jesus and others believed that at the end of human history there would indeed be cosmic events, a literal return of Christ, a final judgement and a new heaven as well as a new earth'. Given that Witherington, among others, understands these notions strictly literally, he will (predictably) be disappointed with this volume. But was there ever a basis for a literalistic understanding of, say, Dan. 7.13, a verse alluded to repeatedly by Jesus? In any case, Dan. 7.13 does not refer to a return, let alone one to earth.

There is an astonishing mixture in Wright's discussion of the revolutionary (certainly as far as Schweitzer's heritage among liberals and conservatives alike is concerned) and the conservative. He consistently refutes allegations that sayings or episodes are secondary inventions by the early church. His most potent argument here is one of coherence: if it can be shown that a saying makes sense within a plausible historical reconstruction of Jesus' ministry, it becomes unnecessary to ascribe it to the second generation of early Christianity. In his own terminology, we need to employ criteria of double similarity and double dissimilarity. Put differently, when something is credible within Jesus' contemporary Jewish and Christian context, yet subversive or paradoxical enough not to have been invented in either, then we are likely to

be in touch with the earliest layers of tradition. It is striking that Wright does not (want to?) rely on redaction critical tools very much. This is partly due to the fact that for him the overall picture matters most. He prefers to use what one might call a sharply modified and conservative version of form criticism. This is usually quite effective, for instance when he shows how the Son of Man sayings, far from being secondary, fit in well with the first century environment as reconstructed on the basis of our STJ (Second Temple Judaism) sources. Wright's conservative approach is equally evident in his discussion of Jesus' messianic self understanding, which he affirms. Jesus regarded himself as in the line of the Prophets, but more than that, as YHWH's embodiment, both positively (concern for Israel) and negatively (oracles of judgement). The term 'messianic' can mean many things to many people. Wright is careful to avoid the impression that Jesus's self awareness was somehow congruous with the 'high christology' of later orthodoxy. This caution is justified not least on the basis of Jesus' own preferred self designation: Son of man, not Christ. In other words, rather than to use the slippery terminology of contemporary political expectation, Jesus prefers to reveal his mission gradually and initially tacitly, but with ever increasing clarity and scope for confrontation. This development goes in tandem with Jesus' approach to Jerusalem. It is not until the High Priest puts him on the spot that Jesus agrees, yes he is the Christ indeed. The High Priest's display of disgust that follows, however, is to be explained not primarily on the basis of someone claiming to be the Messiah, but in the light of Jesus' allusion to Daniel 7, which implies his sharing of God's throne. That must be true blasphemy—or the truth.

We must look more closely at this matter of christology and significance. For Wright it is pivotal that Jesus understood himself as a prophet. As such he encoded his own language in terminology reminiscent of his Old Testament precursors. Particularly important in this connection are numerous allusions to and quotations from Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah. They largely revolve around exilic traditions. Wright demonstrates convincingly how the co-texts and original contexts of these passages more often than not contribute to the force of their reappropriations by Jesus. The implied message is clear: inescapably Israel's history repeats itself, but this time it is moving towards a resolution tied

up with the Son of man. Coupled with this terminological interplay there are Jesus' actions and stories which repeatedly invoke Israel's hope for YHWH's past actions and hoped for return. The clearest example is the entry into Jerusalem. But the parables belong here too. They are subversive (and in that sense apocalyptic) re-tellings of Israel's history, climaxing in the return of her God. In contrast to majority opinion, the implied hearer is located at the end of the story (i.e. looking back over Israel's history), not at the beginning (i.e. looking ahead to the church's epoch). The parables are in the first instance reviews, not previews. There is another important insight here: the parables are characterised by a progressive degree of clarity—the closer Jesus gets to his final destination in Jerusalem, the more overt his parables become. Initially not even the disciples understood—now even the religious authorities know exactly what is meant (and take hostile action). One might call this progressive subversion. This combination of an increasingly overt subversion of Israel's contemporary values by Jesus and his equally progressive evoking of imagery suggestive of YHWH's return lies at the heart of the synoptics' christology. It climaxes in his reference to his sharing of God's throne, a point which, Wright suggests, is likely to have formatively influenced NT christology, particularly the notion of Jesus' divinity. I do not need to stress that there is a lot here which will be regarded by many as highly provocative and I must confess I look forward eagerly to the more detailed responses this book will attract from various quarters. As part of this review I can only suggest one or two of the most pertinent questions to put to Wright.

It is not difficult to predict that there will be those who regard Wright's construal of the synoptics' eschatology as perhaps applicable to Mark and Luke, but not Matthew. After all, does Matthew not employ *parousia* terminology? And does he not report the parable of the virgins and the sheep and the goats etc.? Does this not show clearly that the eschatological discourses have in mind rather more than the events of AD 70? Personally I think that these questions can be answered within Wright's framework (cf. Glasson). Having said that, I do think that Wright's treatment of the ascension and return motif (cf. Acts 1:11) is uncharacteristically evasive ('It looks much more like a post-Easter innovation than a feature of Jesus' own teaching') and needs further clarification. However, the issue I wish to focus on

now is that of salvation. If in the first century Jewish setting God's kingdom and forgiveness are essentially ways of referring to the absence of exile, it is not surprising to find Wright urging his readers against any de-historicizing abstractions of such terms. On a national level forgiveness means end of punishment at the hands of foreigners. On the individual level it means restoration to the covenant community. Forgiveness is not an idea, it's a fact—at least for those whose agenda is Jesus. Jesus' communion words are not about abstract atonement, but about the historical rescue of God's people from their exilic plight. In a footnote Wright admits that with the increasing gentile mission, the specifically Jewish echoes of forgiveness become fainter. In response, one wonders what the hermeneutical controls for such contextualisation of the gospel might be. Does this issue not deserve more than a footnote to complete what is otherwise an excellent discussion of forgiveness in Jewish thinking? Where, if Wright is correct, does personal piety come into the Christian equation? What does it mean in non-abstract terms to refer to 'Israel's destiny to save the world'? Wright's interpretation of the Beatitudes against the backdrop of Jewish-Roman relations is inspiring because it is radically historical and in that sense non-abstract. But what do we make, for instance, of Matthew's addition to the communion words 'for the forgiveness of sins'? As Wright takes Sanders' understanding of Jewish restoration theology further, new questions emerge in the process. They need to be addressed and no doubt will be in one of the remaining volumes.

I should also mention a few points of detail. The first concerns the 'renewal of the heart' and the Romantic (and liberal Protestant) ideal of religion which separates the inward from the outward, regarding the inward as good and the outward as irrelevant for spiritual life. Wright suggests that to understand this distinction in such terms is wide off the mark as far as first century Judaism is concerned. There, the inward *and* the outward can *both* be good or bad. Israel at the time of Jesus illustrated the latter. Consequently Jesus offered the renewal of what he considered a badly flawed contemporary Jewish agenda. An important text here is Mk 7.14ff/Mt 15.10ff. What matters is not the food that enters a body, but the thoughts that emerge from the mind. For Wright this illustrates Jesus' belief that YHWH desires to recreate human beings as wholes and that the

time for fulfilling this had arrived. I have no problem with the view that Jesus regarded his own time as that of eschatological fulfilment, but is the 'liberal Protestant' interpretation of this particular text not the most straightforward reading after all? It is one thing to demonstrate that 19th century liberal ideas of personal religion fall far short of reflecting first century concepts of practical piety. But to have demonstrated this hardly means that all liberal ideals—including the distinction between outward and inward piety—are biblically unacceptable. That would have to be established separately.

A related issue is that of the timing of the kingdom. One of the things that mark out Christian texts about the kingdom from other second Temple Jewish texts is the combination of present and future components. A short-hand way of saying this would be: there is the present kingdom of the Christ and there will be the future kingdom of God (Eph 5.5?). It would be tempting to argue at this point that Christ's kingdom consists of the church. But, Wright reminds us, Jesus did not go around promising people a church. What he did promise was the imminent fulfilment of his kingdom (eg. Lk 17.20f). The question now has to be this: if the events of AD 70 are the sole referent, or fulfilment, of the so-called eschatological discourses, what further fulfilment of Jesus' 'now but not yet' time frame is to be expected after that date? This temporal matter combines with the earlier discussion of ethics and personal piety. If, as Wright argues, personal piety in its traditional understanding of de-historicized private dealings with God are not at the heart of Jesus' preaching, on what basis will any further judgement, i.e. after AD 70, take place? Further, how might first century piety (properly understood in a thoroughly historical way) be contextualized for later generations? It will be interesting to see how Wright deals with such questions in later volumes.

Related to this matter of the timing of the kingdom is the question of fasting. Jesus' admonition not to fast while the bridegroom is present (Mk 2.18–20) makes sense on the assumption that the bridegroom embodies the return of YHWH, thus signalling the end of 'exile' (of which fasting was a symbol). However, in Mk 2 Jesus goes on to say that there

will be a time for fasting after the bridegroom's departure. How does this fit into Wright's eschatological framework? Does this period of fasting subsequent to the return of YHWH (in the shape of the bridegroom) and the rebuilding of the (spiritual) temple through Jesus refer to the Son of man's judgement on Jerusalem (Mk 13—AD 70)? Is the exile not really over until that judgement has been exercised? Further clarification is needed at this point.

Finally there are two areas which are probably deserving of greater coverage than given by Wright. (1) How should passages like Lk 11.37–54 and parallels ('Woe to the Pharisees and Scribes') be read given some recent scholarship in the wake of E.P. Sanders? How far is Wright prepared to follow Sanders' analysis? I am here thinking of such issues as ideology and historicity in the Gospels accounts. (2) There is an eleven page section on Jesus' subversion of contemporary interpretations of the major Jewish symbols of the kingdom (Land, Family, Torah, Temple). Unfortunately Jesus' redefinition of the Torah only gets a third of a page. This does not do justice to the importance of the topic and there is no discussion of such important texts as Lk 16.16–18 and parallels. It may be right to point out that it would be unhelpful to start with 'tough, gritty aphorisms' (p225) and then to work towards some sort of synthesis on this matter, but this hardly deterred Wright from dealing very intelligently with other such aphorisms elsewhere. It seems that not to have done so in this case is a genuine omission.

To conclude, I need to emphasise that whatever points of criticism one might wish to make in detail, this is a superb and vitally important book. Clearly it will not be truly complete until a supplementary discussion of the resurrection (and related accounts such as those of the transfiguration) is published. Despite a degree of unnecessary repetition of detail, the book has been a pleasure to read and re-read. I very warmly recommend it to the widest possible readership, academic or otherwise. For the former it is a 'must'.

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**Jehu und seine Revolution:
Voraussetzungen, Verlauf, Folgen.**

Werner Gugler

Kampen: Kok/Pharos 1996, 315 pp; pb.
£23,90 NLG 59.90.

SUMMARY

Gugler sketches a new outline of the circumstances that led to Jehu's revolution. In contrast to other treatments, Jehu ben Nimshi is seen, not as one 'zealous for YHWH', but driven, in the execution of his reform and his campaign against the Baal cult, primarily by his own political ends. The participation of Ahab, son of Omri, in the anti-Assyrian coalition at the battle of Qarqar in 853 BC is highly problematical. The thesis of a dual religio-politics on the part of the Omrides is rejected as mistaken. In terms of the history of research, the relevance of this book lies also in the study of a period that is understood, in recent sceptical historical studies, as the time when Israel first achieved a consciousness of its election. According to Gugler's reconstruction, however, this time can scarcely bear the weight attributed to it. Jehu's period was not so significant as to be the source of everything in Israel's tradition and faith concerning the one God that has come to have supreme importance to the present day for Jews and Christians.

RÉSUMÉ

Gugler fait une nouvelle esquisse des circonstances qui ont abouti à la révolution opérée par Jéhu. Contrairement à d'autres analyses, Jéhu, fils de Nimchi, n'est pas considéré dans ce travail comme poussé par son zèle pour YHWH : ses réformes et sa lutte contre le culte de Baal, auraient été motivées avant tout par ses propres intérêts politiques. La participation d'Achab, fils d'Omri, à la coalition anti assyrienne dans la bataille de Qarqar, en 853 avant Jésus-Christ, semble très problématique. La thèse d'une double attitude de la part des omrides en matière de religion et de politique est écartée comme étant erronée. Pour la recherche historique, le présent ouvrage présente aussi l'intérêt d'aborder une période qui est considérée par la critique radicale comme celle où Israël a commencé à prendre conscience de son élection. D'après la reconstruction échafaudée par Gugler cette époque ne peut guère avoir l'importance qu'on lui attribue. L'époque de Jéhu n'avait pas l'envergure voulue pour servir de point de départ à

tout ce qui fait la tradition d'Israël et sa foi en un seul Dieu, et qui a acquis jusqu'à aujourd'hui une importance capitale pour les Juifs et pour les chrétiens.

Das Gericht am Hause Ahab durch Jehu spielt in den Königsbüchern eine wichtige Rolle. Der Prophet der Wendezeit Elia hatte es angekündigt, Elisa den Vollstrecker Jehu gesalbt. Trotzdem bleibt die theologische Wertung Jehu ben-Nimschis für den Leser der Königsbücher auffallend doppelgesichtig. Sein mit vielen Morden verbundener Herrschaftsanfang findet kaum ungeteilte Zustimmung. Neben dieser Unsicherheit in der Wertung bereitet die historische Rekonstruktion der Epoche einige Schwierigkeiten, eine einfache Kombination der biblischen und ausserbiblischen Quellen lässt eine Reihe Fragen offen. In Teilen der neueren Diskussion um die Geschichte Israels spielen die religiösen Spannungen, die sich in der Wirksamkeit Elias zeigen und von denen die Revolution Jehus bestimmt gewesen sein soll, eine Schlüsselrolle. Nach z.B. Nils Peter Lemche seien die biblischen Geschichtsbücher durch die nachexilische national-zionistische Religiosität mit ihrem Erwählungsbewusstsein, das auch vor ethnisch begründeten Ehescheidungen nicht zurückschreckte, und dem alles dominierenden Monotheismus derart verzerrt, dass eine historische Rekonstruktion sich davon besser vollständig lösen sollte. Anders, als es die Darstellung in der Bibel vermittele, sei Israel vielmehr im wesentlichen als eine Ausformung der landestypischen semitischen Gesellschaft und sein Glaube als eine Variante der kanaänischen Baalsreligion anzusehen.

Auf dem Hintergrund dieser Diskussion verdient die von H. M. Ohmann betreute Kampener Dissertation von Werner Gugler besondere Aufmerksamkeit. Ausgehend von einer historisch-exegetisch angelegten Fragestellung versucht sie, zu einer neuen Darstellung der Zeit Jehus zu gelangen. In den drei Kapiteln 'Die Lage Israels am Ende der Omriden-Epoche' (88 Seiten), 'Die Revolution des Jehu' (128 Seiten) und 'Jehu Revolution im Urteil der Bibel' (32) gelingt dabei unter gleichwertiger Berücksichtigung der zugänglichen biblischen und ausserbiblischen Quellen ein insgesamt überzeugender Entwurf. Er vermittelt ein wesentlich weniger romantisches Bild als in manchen bisherigen Darstellungen. Die Quellenlage, nach der Jehu als religiös motivierter Revolutionär anzusehen wäre, der motiviert von jahwisti-

schen Idealen handele und die Rache Jahwes vollstrecke, ist nicht gegeben. Vielmehr erscheint Jehu in der Rekonstruktion Guglers bei der Zerschlagung des Baalskultes als vorrangig eigenen politischen Zielen verpflichtet.

Gugler wertet die Alt-Donner'sche These einer disparaten Bevölkerung mit kanaanäischen (Samaria) und israelitischen (Jesreel) Regionen und einer damit verbundenen dualistischen Bevölkerungs- und Religionspolitik der Omriden als irrig. Eine Teilnahme Ahabs an der Schlacht von Qarqar 853 v.C. mit 2000 Streitwagen und 10000 Infanteristen, wie sie sich durch eine Gleichsetzung des auf der KurH-Inschrift Salmanassers III. erwähnten Ahabbu kurSir'ila'a mit Ahab von Israel ergibt, hält er für wenig wahrscheinlich. Im Anschluss an Van der Woude erscheint ihm die Identifikation, auch angesichts des sehr schlecht erhaltenen und unsicheren Zeichenbestandes, trotz ihrer weiten Verbreitung, nicht überzeugend.

Auch wenn die vorliegende Arbeit dem Faktor der literarisch vermittelten Geschichte, den theologischen Intentionen der biblischen Literatur und der spezifischen Charakteristik und Rhetorik dieser Art von Historiographie vielleicht nicht ausreichend Rechnung trägt, leistet sie doch dankenswerterweise einen wichtigen Beitrag zu einem Thema, dessen aktuelle forschungsgeschichtliche Relevanz über das archivarisches Interesse eines Buchhalters der Historie hinausgeht.

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***Er sandte sein Wort:
Theologie der christlichen Mission/
Band 1: Die Bibel in der Mission***
Peter Beyerhaus

Wuppertal: TVG Brockhaus, 1996, 864 S., DM 68.-, Hb., ISBN 3-417-29412-6

SUMMARY

With Er sandte sein Wort (He sent his Word) the Missiologist Peter Beyerhaus from Tübingen presents his first volume of an extensive biblical salvation-history theology of missions in which he courageously calls to return to the foundations of our Christian faith. The hope remains that Beyerhaus' biblical salvation-

history theology of missions finds open doors in the ecumenical movement and the world-wide church.

RÉSUMÉ

Er sandte sein Wort (Il envoya sa Parole) est le premier volume d'une série consacrée à la théologie biblique de la mission basée sur l'histoire du salut. L'auteur, le professeur Peter Beyerhaus, de Tübingue, est un spécialiste de missiologie. Il plaide avec courage pour un retour aux fondements de notre foi chrétienne. Il est à souhaiter que cette théologie biblique de la mission, trouve une oreille attentive dans le mouvement oecuménique, et dans les Eglises du monde entier.

Der Tübinger Missionswissenschaftler Peter Beyerhaus legt mit "Er sandte sein Wort" eine Theologie der Mission vor, die weit über die Grenzen einer klassischen missionswissenschaftlichen Arbeit hinausgeht, weil sie sich auch fundamentalen Fragen der Exegese, Dogmatik, Dogmengeschichte und Praktischen Theologie annimmt. Angesichts der "Grundlagenkrise der Mission" in der Postmoderne bietet Beyerhaus eine hilfreiche Rückbesinnung auf die Grundlagen unseres christlichen Glaubens und auf ein ganzheitliches, heilsgeschichtliches, biblisches Verständnis von Mission. Konsequenterweise weist Beyerhaus darauf hin, daß die Heilige Schrift nicht nur den theologischen Erkenntnisgrund, sondern gleichzeitig auch das Hauptmittel des missionarischen Dienstes bildet, dem die Inhalte des Glaubens und missionarischen Handelns zugeordnet werden. Mit reformatorischer Akribie weist Beyerhaus darauf hin, daß von der Respektierung der Autorität der Bibel Sein und Nichtsein der christlichen Mission und Kirche abhängt (S. 1). Dieser für evangelikale Christen selbstverständlichen und bindenden Voraussetzung missionarischen Reflektierens und Handelns heute entspricht der Aufbau des Buches.

Im ersten Teil (S. 19-162) zeigt Beyerhaus, wie seit der Zeit der Apostel bis in die Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts christliche Mission sich aus einer heilsgeschichtlichen Schau der biblischen Offenbarung begründete und auch entfaltete.

In einem zweiten Teil (S. 163-392) weist Beyerhaus kontroverstheologisch auf die verheerenden Folgen für Theologie und Mission hin, wenn das reformatorische Formalprinzip Sola Scriptura preisgegeben wird. Als Ansatz zur Überwindung der historisch-kritischen

Forschung in Theologie, Kirche und Praxis der Mission verfeinert Beyerhaus die pneumatische Exegese von Hellmuth Frey und die heilsgeschichtliche Begründung der Mission von Karl Hartenstein und glaubt, im pneumatisch-heilsgeschichtlichen Schriftverständnis einen hermeneutischen Schlüssel gefunden zu haben, die Grundlagenkrise der Mission von der Wurzel her zu überwinden.

Der dritte Teil des Buches (S. 393–724) macht deutlich, daß heutige missionarische Verkündigung nach Inhalt und Gestalt "durchgehend von der Autorität der Heiligen Schrift bestimmt ist und ihre überzeugende, aufbauende Vollmacht gewinnt" (S. 18).

Beyerhaus' Theologie der Mission ist ein mutiger Ruf zurück zu den Quellen reformatorischer Grunderkenntnis, auf die S. Uda in Lausanne 1974 warnend hinwies: "Wenn sich die Kirche nicht an dem autoritativen Wort Gottes, des Herrschers, als höchste Autorität orientiert, wird sie bald aufhören, die Kirche des lebendigen Gottes zu sein" (S. Uda, "Biblical Authority and Evangelism", in: Let the Earth Hear His Voice, S. 87, zitiert von Beyerhaus auf S. 726).

Beyerhaus' Theologie der Mission endet mit einer Übersicht der internationalen ökumenischen und evangelikalen Konferenzen unseres Jahrhunderts, einem Abkürzungsverzeichnis und einer umfassenden Bibliographie zum Thema des Buches. Das umfangreiche Bibelstellenregister, Personenregister und Sachregister bietet eine willkommene Hilfe zum persönlichen Weiterstudium und Vzur Vertiefung der angesprochenen Thematik.

Es bleibt zu hoffen, daß Beyerhaus' Versuch einer biblisch-heilsgeschichtlichen Missionstheologie im ökumenischen Raum und in der weltweiten Kirche auf offene Ohren stößt und eine Rückbesinnung auf unser geistliches Erbe auslöst. Evangelikale Theologen und Missionare wünschen Beyerhaus die Motivation und Kraft für weitere wertvolle Bände einer Theologie der christlichen Mission. Wie wär's mit den Themen: "Er sandte seine Apostel", "Er sandte seine Gemeinde" und vielleicht sogar "Er sandte seinen Geist"?

Hans Ulrich Reifler
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**Schrift Gottes im Lehrstreit.
Luthers Schriftverständnis und**

Schriftauslegung in seinen drei großen Lehrstreitigkeiten der Jahre 1521–28

Armin Buchholz

Europäische Hochschulschriften: Reihe
XXIII, Theologie, Band 487, Bern: Lang,
1993, 275 S., 72.- Sfr, Pb., ISBN
3–631–46389–8

SUMMARY

In this 1993 Hamburg doctoral thesis, Buchholz examines Luther's understanding and exposition of Holy Scripture in theological controversy. To this end he examines Luther's argumentation in his debates with Emser and Latomus (1521), Erasmus (1525) and also with Karlstadt, Oecolampadius and Schwenckfeld (1524–1528). The author argues that the Bible, as God's Scripture and his clear word written in natural language, should be understood in its literal sense and not allegorically. This has consequences for today's historical research into the Scriptures, which is diametrically opposed to this.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans sa thèse de doctorat soutenue à Hambourg en 1993, Buchholz étudie de quelle manière Luther comprend et expose l'écriture dans les discussions théologiques. Pour ce faire, il examine l'argumentation de Luther dans ses conflits avec Emser et Latomus (1521), Erasme (1525), Carlstadt, Zwingli, Oecolampade et Schwenckfeld (1523–1528). L'auteur fait ressortir que Luther tenait la Bible pour la parole de Dieu, claire, écrite dans un langage naturel et devant être comprise selon le sens littéral et non d'une façon allégorique. Cela n'est pas sans conséquence pour la recherche biblique historique contemporaine à laquelle cette conception est diamétralement opposée.

Die Arbeit zu Luthers Theologie von Armin Buchholz wurde 1993 in Hamburg als Dissertation eingereicht. Buchholz erörtert im ersten Teil seiner Untersuchung die Frage der Eingrenzung des Themas, weil der enorme Umfang des literarischen Werkes des Reformators Quellenauswahl zur Pflicht macht. Durch gezielte Auswahl soll willkürliche Verwendung von Originaltexten verschiedener Lebensstufen Luthers verhindert werden. Der Verfasser entscheidet sich für die "Kernjahre der Reformation" von 1521 bis 1528 (S. 12). In dieser Zeit begrenzt er seine Forschungsarbeit wiederum auf wenige,

anerkanntermaßen wichtige Schriften des Wittenberger Reformators; es geht um die theologischen Streitschriften in den drei großen Lehrauseinandersetzungen mit Emser, Latomus und Erasmus sowie Karlstadt, Zwingli, Ökolampad und Schwenckfeld. Nur einer literarischen Gattung von Luthers Schriften, seinen theologischen Streitschriften, wendet sich Buchholz zu, und nicht der Auslegung der Schrift in Predigt und Seelsorge. Seine Auswahl begründet Buchholz mit der grundlegenden Bedeutung dieser Lutherschriften für Bildung, Begründung und Widerlegung von Lehre (S.13); es habe bisher nur wenig zusammenhängende, intensive Textarbeit an einzelnen Quellen gegeben.

Die umfangreiche Sekundärliteratur zu seinem Thema bearbeitet Buchholz in Auswahl, begrenzt auf die relevanten Forschungen des 20. Jahrhunderts, die vorwiegend in den Anmerkungen diskutiert wird.

Die Frage nach der Relevanz des Themas will der Autor nicht zu früh stellen. Er spart sie für den letzten Abschnitt seiner Dissertation auf und begründet dies mit dem Hinweis, daß die Darstellung von Luthers Position nicht vorschnell durch Überlegungen zur Vergewärtigung beeinflusst werden soll (S.14).

Der zweite Teil der Monographie beschäftigt sich mit Luthers Antwort von 1521 auf die Schriften von Emser und Latomus. Luther arbeitet in diesen Werken heraus, daß allein die Heilige Schrift die einziggültige, weil göttliche Autorität im theologischen Streit darstellt (S.19). Die Bibel ist in ihrem Wesen Schrift Gottes (*scriptura Dei*). Kirchenväter und Tradition, vom Papsttum approbiert, müssen hinter Gottes Wort zurücktreten, wenn sie im Widerspruch zu diesem stehen. Luther insistiert darauf, daß die Schrift nur nach ihrem Literalsinn zu verstehen sei (S.41).

Luthers Schriftverständnis und Schriftauslegung im Streit mit Erasmus im Jahr 1525 hat der dritte Teil zum Thema. In der Darstellung von Luthers Lehre über die doppelte äußere und innere Klarheit und Dunkelheit der Schrift geht Buchholz auch immer wieder auf den origenistischen Hintergrund von Erasmus tropischer Schriftauslegung ein (S.100 und öfter). Dagegen hält der Reformator an der natürlichen Bedeutung der Worte fest, die die einzig richtige Deutung der Bibel ermöglichen (S.99). Die Heilige Schrift ist das erste Prinzip (*primum principium*), das grundsätzliche Axiom der theologischen Wissenschaft (S.132–133).

Der vierte Hauptteil der Dissertation zeichnet die Frage des Schriftprinzips im

Streit von 1524 bis 1528 zwischen Karlstadt, Zwingli, Ökolampad und Schwenckfeld über die Abendmahlsfrage nach. In dieser Auseinandersetzung geht es letztlich um die Gewißheit des wörtlich zu verstehenden Textes der Einsetzungsworte (S.141). Die von Luther als Enthusiasten verurteilten Theologen halten sich nicht an das äußere Wort, so der Vorwurf des Reformators. Sie meinen, daß die Gegenwart Christi in den Abendmahlselementen Brot und Wein weder möglich noch vom Text her geboten sei. In dieser Frage entwickelt Luther seine Position des Primates der natürlichen Sprache als "Frau Kaiserin" (S.181) gegenüber allen allegorischen Auslegungsversuchen.

Zum Schluß (Teil 5) faßt Buchholz seine Arbeitsergebnisse auf zehn Seiten zusammen und wertet sie aus. Etwa genauso umfangreich ist ein weiterer Schlußabschnitt, der die gegenwärtige Relevanz von Luthers Schriftlehre und -auslegung im Kontext einer von der historischen Kritik geprägten Schriftforschung aufzeigt. Luthers Schriftauslegung spielt in der Gegenwart keine Rolle mehr, weil sich seine Bibelbetrachtung und die historisch-kritische wesentlich voneinander unterscheiden (S. 241). Als Ergebnis kommt der Verfasser zu dem Fazit, daß zwischen Luthers Theologie und der historisch-kritischen ein unüberbrückbarer Widerspruch bestehe (S.248). Die Frage nach der Relevanz von Luthers Theologie kann nur im Bewußtsein dieses Gegensatzes bedacht werden (S.249).

Die Monographie von Buchholz wird sicher nicht nur in Kreisen, die Lutherforschung betreiben, auf Interesse stoßen. Sie ist über den engeren Kreis der Lutherforscher auch besonders wichtig für alle, die sich mit der Frage der richtigen Hermeneutik und Exegese beschäftigen.

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Negro Spirituals. Geschichte und Theologie

Theo Lehmann

Hänssler Theologie Neuhausen:

Hänssler, 1996, 415 S., DM 48.-, Pb., ISBN 3-7751-2634-1

SUMMARY

This monograph by Theo Lehmann is a standard work in the German language on the

history and theology of the Negro Spiritual. Lehmann describes the development of these songs against the background of slavery and the position of the Christian church on the Afro-Americans. He collects the text (often printed in English) and the content of the Spirituals systematically, and notices especially their themes of eschatology and ecstasy. Lehmann's thesis, even thirty years after its first submission in the University of Halle-Wittenberg in the then German Democratic Republic, is a study in hymnology that cannot be replaced by other works.

RÉSUMÉ

La présente monographie de Theo Lehmann est un ouvrage de base en allemand sur l'histoire et la théologie des Negro-Spirituals. Il analyse l'origine de ces chants sur l'arrière-plan de l'esclavage et de l'attitude des Eglises chrétiennes à l'égard des Afro-Américains. Il présente le texte et le contenu de ces chants d'une manière systématique, en faisant spécialement ressortir les thèmes relatifs à l'eschatologie et à l'extase. La dissertation de Lehmann, bien que présentée il y a 30 ans à la Faculté de Théologie de Halle-Wittenberg, constitue une étude hymnologique qui ne peut être remplacée par d'autres ouvrages.

Die Dissertation des Chemnitzer Pfarrers Theo Lehmann ist nicht umsonst als das erste Standardwerk über die Negro Spirituals in deutscher Sprache gelobt worden. Sie erschien erstmals vor dreißig Jahren im evangelischen Hauptverlag der damaligen *Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, bei der Evangelischen Verlagsanstalt in Ostberlin. Daß die Arbeit jetzt noch einmal neu aufgelegt wurde, zeigt die Wichtigkeit dieser Arbeit ebenso wie der Literaturnachtrag auf S. 387, dem der Leser entnimmt, daß in den vergangenen Jahren nicht gerade viel zum Thema der *Negro Spirituals* geschrieben wurde. Der Text der gut 400 Seiten starken Monographie ist sehr klein gedruckt und enthält viele englische Zitate aus Originaltexten. Dies sollte den interessierten Leser jedoch nicht davon abhalten, sich dem Buch zu widmen, denn: Die Negro Spirituals bilden den Beitrag der nordamerikanischen Neger zur Kunst der Kirche (S. 9). Sie haben wie keine andere kirchliche Kunst auch außerhalb der Kirche durch Millionen verkaufter Tonträger gewirkt.

Zum Verständnis des Negro Spirituals muß man die Sklaverei als Umfeld, in der es entstand, kennen. Deshalb stellt Lehmann im ersten Teil seiner Arbeit zuerst die Sklaverei in Nordamerika dar. Darauf schildert er, wie es zu Taufen von schwarzafrikanischen Sklaven kam und wie sich die "weißen" amerikanischen Kirchen zu den Farbigen verhielten. Die Entstehung eigener afroamerikanischer Kirchen war schließlich eine Notwendigkeit. Auf diesem Hintergrund entfaltet der Verfasser dann das Werden der Negro Spirituals, wobei er auch der theologiegeschichtlich interessanten Frage nachgeht, wie die Spirituals auf die Erweckungen in den *Camp-meetings*, aber auch auf die Theologie John Wesleys und William Millers zurückweisen (S. 133–142). Wichtig für das rein sprachliche Verstehen der Negro Spirituals sind Lehmanns Ausführungen über den Dialekt der Lieder (S. 153–155).

Im zweiten Teil seiner Monographie stellt Lehmann den theologischen Inhalt der Spirituals systematisch zusammen und behandelt umfassend in einem eigenen Kapitel ihre Eschatologie, in deren Rahmen er auch die Frage der Ekstase behandelt. Die gottesdienstliche Ekstase ist weder durch Wirkung des Heiligen Geistes noch durch Einfluß von Dämonen, sondern durch den Rhythmus gewirkt (S. 278–280): Am Anfang der neuen ekstatischen Welle steht nicht der Heilige Geist, sondern—der Jazz (S. 279). Das Schlußkapitel stellt den Ort der Spirituals in ihrer Beziehung zu Jazz und Blues dar; Lehmann plädiert gegen die Abwertung des Körperlichen in einer "sitzenden Kirche" für eine echte "Kirche in Bewegung" (S. 372), wobei ihm klar ist, daß lebendige Gottesdienste nicht gemacht werden können, sondern aus dem Glauben kommen müssen.

Lehmanns umfangreiche Arbeit ist auch heute keineswegs veraltet, wenn der Autor auch den inzwischen diskriminierend klingenden Begriff "Neger" durch das heute übliche "Afro-Amerikaner" ersetzt wissen will (S. 5). Sie ist jedem zu empfehlen, der sich nicht nur mit Negro Spirituals, sondern in diesem Zusammenhang auch mit grundsätzlichen Fragen der evangelischen Hymnologie befassen will.

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