

in our dealings with people of other faiths. The idea of the moral law in the OT also needs to be looked at in the light of good works. 1 John and James put much emphasis on 'works' as expressions of belonging to God's people. 'God is love' is an important insight of 1 John. Morality is not just the domain of the OT. Moral codes are central to many religious traditions. The need to find a way of life codified in a set of moral sayings is something many human beings desire. This may be the appeal to Islam and Buddhism. Many Christians look to Buddhism to fill in the gaps that are missing in the New Testament. The practice of loving one's enemy is something Christians have learned from Gandhi. So although Bayes' book is an important historical study both of the Reformed tradition and of law in the New Testament, it left me with much wider questions. 'You don't have to go to church to be a Christian' is a common saying that communicates an understanding of Christianity far from the issues that Bayes discusses. But Bayes reaches a conclusion that is based on his modern reading of the New Testament. One that sees the importance of moral law. A view that rejects 'spiritual libertinism' (p. 212). Surprisingly, Bayes mentions James only once. Not once was the epistle of 1 John mentioned. I would have been interested to know what Bayes made of 1 John 2:7 about not writing a new commandment, but the old commandment. In Revelation 12:11, we are told that Christians conquer not just because of grace but because of the testimony they give in their lives. This means a radical living. The content of this is that of loving. The OT was clearly important for the identity of the New Testament writers, but the moral teaching surely went beyond that of the Decalogue. Jesus left a far more radical teaching. This teaching is crucial to the transformation of Christians into the image of God. Paul developed Jesus' teaching and life in his theology of the cross. The cross provides an ethical basis, which develops what we find in the OT although it has its roots in Isaiah 53.

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The Historical Jesus Question: The Challenge of History to Religious Authority

Gregory W. Dawes

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, xiv + 392 pp., £15.99, pb., ISBN 0-664-22458-X

SUMMARY

Dawes looks at eight thinkers who represent responses to the seventeenth century, a century that challenged the traditional acceptance of biblical authority and resulted in the historical Jesus question. Five important factors emerge from this century: diversity of human cultures over time, disillusionment with religious controversy, the new astronomy of Copernicus and Galileo, voyages of discovery, the emergence of the natural

sciences. Dawes looks at Spinoza, Strauss, Schweitzer, Troeltsch, Barth, Bultmann, Käsemann and Pannenberg in the light of these five factors. In his conclusion he writes: 'There is no way of reconciling Christian claims to religious authority with the knowledge and methods of the discipline of history' (p. 368).

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dawes beschäftigt sich mit acht Denkern, die Reaktionen auf das 17. Jahrhundert repräsentieren, ein Jahrhundert, das die traditionelle Akzeptanz biblischer Autorität in Frage stellte und zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus führte. Fünf wichtige Faktoren treten in diesem Jahrhundert in Erscheinung: die Vielfalt menschlicher Kulturen im Verlauf der Zeit, Desillusionierung angesichts religiöser Kontroversen, die neue Astronomie des Kopernikus und Galilei, die Entdeckungsreisen und die Naturwissenschaften. Dawes beschäftigt sich mit Spinoza, Strauss, Schweitzer, Troeltsch, Barth, Bultmann, Käsemann und Pannenberg im Lichte dieser fünf Faktoren. Er schreibt in seiner Schlussbetrachtung: „Es ist nicht möglich, christliche Ansprüche auf religiöse Autorität mit dem Wissen und den Methoden der Geschichtsforschung zu versöhnen“ (S. 368).

RÉSUMÉ

Dawes s'intéresse à huit penseurs qui ont apporté leur réponse aux questions soulevées au XVII^e siècle, au cours duquel l'acceptation traditionnelle de l'autorité biblique a été contestée, ce qui a débouché sur la question du Jésus historique. Cinq facteurs importants ont caractérisé ce siècle: la prise de conscience de la diversité des cultures humaines à travers le temps, la désillusion quant aux controverses religieuses, la nouvelle astronomie de Copernic et de Galilée, les voyages de découvertes, l'émergence des sciences naturelles. Dawes considère la pensée de Spinoza, Strauss, Schweitzer, Troeltsch, Barth, Bultmann, Käsemann et Pannenberg quant à ces cinq facteurs. Il conclut: «On ne peut en aucune manière concilier la notion chrétienne d'autorité religieuse avec les acquis et les méthodes de la discipline qu'est l'histoire» (p. 368).

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My reaction to this book is: 'terrific'! Dawes looks at eight thinkers who represent responses to the seventeenth century, a century that challenged the traditional acceptance of biblical authority and resulted in the historical Jesus question. Five important factors emerge from this century: diversity of human cultures over time, disillusionment with religious controversy, the new astronomy of Copernicus and Galileo, voyages of discovery, the emergence of the natural sciences. Dawes looks at Spinoza, Strauss, Schweitzer, Troeltsch, Barth, Bultmann, Käsemann and Pannenberg in the light of these five factors. Each thinker is discussed in some

detail over seven chapters. Dawes' conclusion titled 'The Lessons of History' is a negative one, as he claims that 'there is no way of reconciling Christian claims to religious authority with the knowledge and methods of the discipline of history' (p. 368).

Why is this a terrific book? It is clearly written and Dawes has provided us with a helpful contribution to the question of the historical Jesus. In what is a very useful text book for undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as teachers, we are presented with an invaluable survey and critique of the history of biblical interpretation. Dawes helps us understand some very important thinkers but also confronts us with some wider questions, questions about belief in the twenty-first century and how we relate to the challenges of the seventeenth century. I cannot help thinking that we have largely forgotten the challenge to faith raised so long ago. It would seem that we live as though there is no serious challenge to faith.

We live, however, in a society that seems more and more interested in spirituality and God. People seem unconcerned or ignorant of the challenge to religious authority. Many seek meaning apart from the agnostic's world view. Others simply are not aware of the challenge to religious authority. In spite of discovery channels and documentary programmes on religious topics, people live and believe in spite of these challenges. Has Dawes' work fully acknowledged that religious authority has not been mortally damaged? Why do people still believe in God? Why do people pray and meditate? Why do people go on pilgrimages? The fact that people believe in spite of the challenge to religious authority is grounds for a response to the challenge of the seventeenth century. This would seem to lend a hand to dialectical theology: Theology is about 'God is God'. We are not open to the same language and grammar as others. 'God is God' is our epistemological cry. Attractive as this seems, people are not fully prepared to embrace all which that entails. Many turn to religion because they want a tradition where they feel they are someone. A tradition that gives meaning in a stressful and prosaic world. This supports the association between religion and ethics. Religion provides a way of life grounded in ethics. This is not to say that we need religion to be ethical, but for many a belief system provides an ethical system. These points might seem relevant to people who are not involved with theology and not appropriate to theologians. But is it not true that many theologians continue believing in spite of the crisis that the seventeenth century raises? We continue believing and ignore the crisis. Maybe that is all we need to do. In that sense the overall thesis that Dawes is concerned with is not really a big concern to theology and belief today.

Finally, Dawes does not engage with the third quest. This would seem to be a major omission. We are missing twenty or so years of scholarship. I would have been interested to have had Dawes' erudite reflections on this quest in the light of the larger concerns he engages with.

What is interesting is that this question, on the whole, is not done by the work of those who would claim to be theologians or philosophers. Many are interested in making Jesus relevant to our society. The loss of the eschatological Jesus to the wisdom teacher makes Jesus a figure that many will find attractive. The crisis of religious authority does not exist. 'If it works it's useful' is a saying that represents many in our society. And not 'is it scientifically verifiable'. This third quest is concerned with purely historical questions asked by many who are Christians. They are not concerned at all with the question of the challenge to religious authority. The historical task is also the 'faith seeking understanding' task.

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*Is World View Neutral Education Possible
and Desirable? A Christian Response to
Liberal Arguments (Paternoster Biblical and
Theological Monographs)*

Signe Sandmark

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000, xiv + 182 pp.,
£19.99, pb., ISBN 0-85364-973-1

SUMMARY

As the title suggests, this book is primarily about education, specifically that of children. It is not intended as a thoroughgoing theological justification of any particular stance but investigates the claim that liberal education is value neutral. However, Sandmark goes further by asking whether, if such neutrality exists, it is a desirable basis for educating the young. She contrasts two cultural backgrounds, Norway, where state education is avowedly Christian and England, where the state's provision is largely liberal and secular. Following an introduction outlining this context, she presents an understanding of education from the perspective of her Lutheran worldview. She goes on to analyse the theories of two liberal educationalists, John White and Kenneth Strike and contrasts them not only with her own views but also with those of the Catholic writer Terence H. McLaughlin. Finally, she develops the idea that schools should be more explicit about their own basis and that in her view a well presented Christian education is the soundest base from which to work.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Wie der Titel besagt, geht es in dem Buch hauptsächlich um Bildung, insbesondere von Kindern. Es will keine tiefeschürfende theologische Rechtfertigung einer spezifischen Position geben, sondern untersucht die Behauptung, liberale Bildung sei wertneutral. Sandmark beschäftigt sich darüber hinaus mit der Frage, ob selbst dann, wenn es diese Wertneutralität gäbe, sie eine erstrebenswerte Grundlage für die Bildung von Kindern darstelle. Sie greift auf Erfahrungen in zwei Kulturen