

ogy at King's College, London. Topics discussed include New Testament Christology, Christ in the Trinity, the baptism of Christ, the person and nature of Christ, the ascended Christ, and the reconciling work of Christ.

The book opens with an introduction by Murray Rae who observes that theology finds its starting point not with a set of supposedly self-evident philosophical assumptions – both an ancient and modern tendency – but with “attentiveness” before the Word (p. 2). This sets the tone for the essays to follow. Each contributor attends to the words of God, Scripture and tradition in the hope of re-shaping a testimony, a retelling, of the story of Christ's person and nature for our time. Toward this goal, the book succeeds. All contributors pick up central themes of Christological doctrine and explicate them in ways that are faithful, *attentive*, to the orthodox theological tradition in Christology. Robert Jenson and Stephen Holmes' essays on the *Communicatio Idiomatum* are excellent as are those by Murray Rae and Douglas Knight on the Baptism and Confession of Christ respectively. As in any edited volume, certain essays stand out as particularly representative examples of the overall intent and this is no exception: those of John Webster and Sandra Fach.

Webster's essay, “Prolegomena to Christology: Four Theses” deals not specifically with the person or nature of Christ as the object of Christological inquiry, but with the one who is the self-giving *subject* of Christology, Jesus Christ. Webster contends for the primacy of the one who reveals himself – the self giving Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is known, and the parameters of that knowing are determined not by the knower, but by virtue of Christ's own self-giving. Thus, Christology's knowing is a humble and reverent knowing, a knowing not determined by the craftiness or creativity of its practitioners but by “virtue of the movement of his being”, by his free self-bestowal. Christology, then, does not “labour towards” Christ but “moves easily and freely” in the light of the reality that Christ has already given himself to be known and created the sphere in which he can be known (p. 28).

The “given-ness” that characterizes the knowledge of Christ leads Webster to several distinctive conclusions. Christ's free self-bestowal means that Christology is both a joyful and reverent science: joyful because it is undertaken in the “sphere of Christ's presence and promise” and reverent for it is the “astonished gratitude” of those who stand amazed at the goodness of the one in whose presence they stand (p. 27). Christology's given-ness leads as well to an affirmation of the Spirit's work of edifying the church through its “orderly explication of the knowledge of Christ” (p. 33), a refreshing emphasis too rarely heard in discussions of Christological method. Finally, Christology's given-ness determines the theological space occupied by the Scriptures as the collection of texts which serves the presence of Jesus Christ by “indicating or bearing testimony” to his address of the church (p. 34). By understanding prolegomena to be determined solely by Christ's own self-giving, Webster

develops an atmosphere in which not *demonstration* but *testimony* finds priority.

Sandra Fach, “The Ascended Christ: Mediation of our Worship”, explores the liturgical development of the early centuries contending that the change from giving “Glory to God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit” to ascribing “Glory to God *with* the Son, together with the Holy Spirit” led to a loss in recognized mediation and with it an atmosphere of distance between worshippers and God. While maintaining emphasis on the unity of God, the loss of mediation led to God becoming distant and potentially abstract. Hoping to recapture lost intimacy in worship, Fach argues for a renewed theological emphasis on Christ's present and ongoing mediatorial role in heaven as “the one who is God *as a human*” (p. 155). In a way that dovetails well with the overall flavor of “attentiveness” in these essays, Fach's concern here is not only to regain a renewed emphasis on the mediation of Christ, but to guard against abstraction in theology. Fach would have theology attend first to the economic Trinity, for here is found the work of the Lamb who continues to mediate the worship of the saints before the Father.

Despite its steep price tag this is a book worthy of recommendation both for its commitment to attentiveness to the Scriptures and the historical creedal traditions of Christology and for its eagerness to develop what is heard into a coherent retelling for the twenty-first century church. One would hope that T & T Clark will begin making valuable books such as this more accessible.

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***Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission:
Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian
Communities to Evangelize?
(Paternoster Biblical Monographs)***

Robert L. Plummer

Bletchley, Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2006, xviii + 190 pp., £24.99, pb, ISBN 978-1-84227-333-3

SUMMARY

Robert Plummer takes up the question of whether or not the apostle Paul encouraged his converts to share the gospel. This topic has previously suffered from superficial answers and specious arguments that have failed to look at all of the evidence in the pauline corpus. For Plummer, Paul's letters demonstrate that he expected both overt gospel proclamation and a more ‘passive’ witness of morality and Christ-likeness. Though this study does not lack depth or occasional insight, the contingent nature of Paul's letters prevent a fully convincing argument to be made for active ‘evangelism’. Nevertheless, Plummer does advance the scholarship on this matter in many areas and engages on a matter of importance for the church.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Robert Plummer widmet sich der Frage, ob der Apostel Paulus seine Konvertiten ermutigte, das Evangelium zu verbreiten, oder nicht. Dieses Thema ist bisher nur oberflächlich behandelt worden; fadenscheinige Argumentationen haben nicht einmal die gesamte Evidenz des Corpus Paulinum berücksichtigt. Laut Plummer zeigen die Paulusbriefe, dass er sowohl eine offene Verkündigung des Evangeliums als auch das eher „passive“ Zeugnis der Moral und Christusähnlichkeit erwartete. Obwohl es dieser Studie nicht an Tiefgang und gewissen Einsichten mangelt, verhindert doch der situationsbezogene Charakter der Paulusbriefe, dass eine überzeugende Argumentation für eine aktive „Evangelisationstätigkeit“ aufgebaut werden kann. Dennoch treibt Plummer die wissenschaftliche Behandlung dieses Themas voran und behandelt eine Angelegenheit, die für die Kirche wichtig ist.

RÉSUMÉ

Robert Plummer traite ici la question de savoir si Paul encourageait ou non ses convertis à communiquer l'Évangile. Ce sujet a reçu par le passé des réponses superficielles ou a été abordé à l'aide d'arguments spécieux, sans examen rigoureux de l'ensemble des données fournies par le corpus paulinien. Aux yeux de Plummer, les lettres de Paul montrent que l'apôtre attendait à la fois des chrétiens qu'ils proclament ouvertement l'Évangile et qu'ils rendent témoignage par leur moralité et leur vie à l'exemple de Christ. Bien que cette étude fasse preuve de profondeur, et à l'occasion de perspicacité, le caractère circonstanciel des lettres de Paul ne permet pas de démontrer de manière pleinement convaincante que Paul attendait de chaque chrétien une part active dans l'évangélisation. Le travail de Plummer fait néanmoins à divers égards des avancées dans le traitement académique de cette question importante pour la vie de l'Église.

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When one thinks of the biblical imperative to expand the Christian mission by relating the gospel to others, Matt. 28.18-20 probably comes to mind: 'Go and make disciples...'. History has shown that this statement was taken seriously by the church throughout the ages. But, Robert Plummer begs an important question: What role did Paul and his letters play in prompting the earliest churches to further the Christian mission in their locales? In this revision of his doctoral thesis at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Plummer argues that significant evidence can be culled from the Apostle's epistles to affirm that Paul did, in fact, encourage his churches to evangelize.

His first chapter, essentially reviewing the history of scholarship on this matter, is divided into two main categories: one focusing on scholars who have affirmed that some continuity existed between the apostle's evangelistic endeavours and his churches, and the other on scholars who argue for discontinuity. He concludes this treatment with a concern that previous studies have

lacked an exclusive focus on Paul that is both methodologically consistent and exegetically rigorous. It is apparent from his summary of the latest research that Plummer is significantly influenced by the work of Peter O'Brien, though he expects to offer a more extensive analysis of Paul. On the other side of the spectrum, Plummer sets up W.P. Bowers as a debating partner. Bowers, both scholar and missionary, argues that there is no evidence that Paul actively promoted outward-focused evangelism as an activity for his churches to participate in. In some ways, Plummer's thesis is aimed at refuting Bowers' proposal.

Plummer establishes, in his second chapter, the theological link between the apostolic mission and that of the Christian communities that accepted the Gospel. Previous arguments, such as the influence of the Great Commission, are correctly presented as improbable sources for Paul's thinking on this matter. Rather, Plummer finds the solution within the Gospel itself – it is a '*powerful, effective, and dynamic force*' (51) that 'propelled both [Paul] (as an apostle) and the churches (as gospel-created and gospel empowered entities) into the further spread of God's word' (67). The origin of this concept is traced back to the understanding of the 'word of the Lord' in the Old Testament.

If Paul *did* expect his churches to 'evangelize', then it stands to reason that he made it a didactic priority. Plummer's third chapter is occupied with gathering the evidence for arguing that he taught his converts to share the Gospel. Two topics are treated: (1) Paul's commands to witness *actively* (looking especially at Philippians, Ephesians and 1 Corinthians), and (2) Paul's commands to witness *passively* (especially the Pastoral epistles). Plummer concludes that both of these elements are present.

In his final chapter, Plummer surveys 'incidental' evidence for Paul's expectation of evangelism for his churches. In particular, he turns his attention to the testimony of miracles, and also of 'suffering' which imitates both the apostles and Christ himself and demonstrates a continuity of sharing in the natural result of living out and proclaiming a message that provokes hostility. A brief conclusion follows which is a précis of his various arguments and also includes a discussion of the implications of his investigation.

Plummer's study has much to commend itself. He has chosen a topic that has suffered from misdirected and superficial interest. He has correctly identified a number of issues that demand deeper exploration. However, his overall goal of proving that Paul taught his churches to evangelize is blunted by a number of factors. First, though he admits this limitation, one cannot help but wonder if we can really assess this matter from Paul's very context-laden contingent letters that deal primarily with pastoral problems. Second, he confirms quite easily the *passive* expectation of witnessing, but struggles to make a compelling argument for the *active* elements. What he labels 'commands' from Paul are not really imperatives, and many are interpretatively ambiguous. Third,

one wonders if the terms 'mission' and 'evangelism' are not a bit anachronistic and deserving of more nuance and explanation vis-à-vis their socio-historical context. In fact, Plummer nowhere expounds upon his definition of 'the gospel' – perhaps a seemingly innocuous issue, but understanding the content of the message is critical to determining its heralds.

This work will be of interest to pastors and theology students who are seeking an in-depth investigation of the church's role in the world from the Apostle Paul's perspective. Though we have little information in the pauline corpus, Plummer offers a detailed analysis of several strands of Paul's thinking that focuses on this neglected area of importance for the church.

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The Earliest Christian Artifacts Manuscripts and Christian origins

Larry W. Hurtado

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006, xiv + 248 pp.,

\$22.00, pb, ISBN 0-8028-2895-7

SUMMARY

Hurtado discusses the form of the oldest manuscripts of the Christian Scriptures, in particular the transition from roll to codex and the so-called *nomina sacra* abbreviations. This interesting book is full of data and will increase our respect for the transmission of the Scriptures.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Hurtado diskutiert die Form der ältesten Handschriften der christlichen Schrift, insbesondere den Übergang von der Schriftrolle zum Kodex und den so genannten *nomina sacra* Abkürzungen. Dieses interessante Buch ist eine große Datensammlung und wird unseren Respekt vor der Überlieferung der Schrift erhöhen.

RÉSUMÉ

Hurtado étudie la forme des plus anciens manuscrits du Nouveau Testament. Il s'intéresse en particulier à la transition du rouleau au codex et aux abréviations des noms sacrés. Cet ouvrage intéressant fourmille d'informations et invite au respect pour la transmission des Écritures.

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This is a book about biblical manuscripts but not about textual criticism. Instead Hurtado, professor of NT at Edinburgh University, looks at the physical characteristics of the earliest Christian manuscripts. The result is an attractive presentation that will even appeal to those who find textual criticism too technical or just boring. Hurtado argues convincingly that we can learn more from manuscripts than which text-form they represent. He shows for example how a single fragmentary sheet of a codex enables scholars calculate the size of the entire codex from which it came.

In the first chapter the author introduces us to the large number of preserved Christian manuscripts which date from the second and third centuries. For example, there are 18 fragments which contain fragments of the Psalms (LXX), 16 of John's Gospel, 12 of Matthew, 11 of the Shepherd of Hermas and just 1 of Mark. Not all books of the OT and the later NT are represented in what survives from this earliest period. Although the vast majority of the manuscripts stem from Egypt, Hurtado presumes that the situation in that country is representative for early Christianity in general. Writings that were later declared apocryphal are far less represented than books of the later NT. There are very early indications that Paul's epistles and the Gospels were copied together into one codex, and from around the year 300 there is a fragment which points to a collection of all Johannine writings (Gospel, Revelation and Letters) in one codex. This is physical evidence for the formation of a kind of canon.

The second chapter focuses on the Christian adoption of the codex over against the roll, which also happened very early on. As our sources do not discuss the reasons for this transition, it is left to later scholars to make out why it happened. Although certainty in this regard cannot (yet) be achieved, Hurtado argues that practical advantages cannot have been the only reason. Anyway, the codex should be seen as an expression of a Christian "material culture". They never used a new roll for any NT text, although they did recycle old rolls. The fact that two of the three preserved fragments of the Gospel of Thomas are on rolls would suggest that "Thomas" was not regarded as Scripture.

Chapter 3 deals with the *nomina sacra*, that is the habit of abbreviating words such as God, Jesus, Lord and Christ. This appears to be a typically Christian convention, not copied from the Jews although possibly inspired by their reverent approach to the divine Name. Hurtado argues that the phenomenon of the *nomina sacra* is not a device to save space but rather an expression of faith. It testifies to the early worship of Jesus as God. Chapter 4 discusses the stauogram, an early combination of the Greek letters tau and rho which was used in many manuscripts to abbreviate the words for cross (*stauros*) and crucify, and which looks like a person on a cross. Hurtado regards it as the earliest visual representation of the crucifixion, far older than any other such picture. The fifth and final chapter deals with various other subjects such as the size of codices, margins, lines per page, reader aids such as spaces, and corrections. It is interesting that Christian codices are generally smaller than non-Christian ones.

For me as an Evangelical scholar the book gave ample evidence of the care the early copyists took in passing the sacred texts on. Although we do not have the autographs, the transmission and reliability of the New Testament text are nothing short of impressive. The book is well-written, illustrated with graphs and photos, and it has the usual indexes. It deserves a place next to Alan