

first became known for her work on Luke, in this case her dissertation on the preface of the Gospel in which she argues that it is not the typical preface of a piece of historiography. On Acts she has so far published a fine small commentary (in *The People's Commentary*) as well as numerous essays and she announces that she will write a new edition of Black's NT Commentary to succeed C.S.C. William's work. The essays have now been gathered in one volume. The first chapter was written specifically for this collection and shows what Alexander's long term research project is and where each essay fits in. She is studying (Luke and) Acts against the background of the secular literature of the time; more specifically she investigates the genre and the generic characteristics of Acts.

Throughout Alexander defends and develops her view that Luke and Acts are not to be classified as ancient historiography but she explains that this does not necessarily imply that they are therefore fictional writings. She patiently takes the reader by the hand and shows how Acts does not fit the definition of historiography in the tradition of Herodotus and Thucydides which in Hellenistic times had become a genre dominated by rhetoric. Not only does the common preface point in a different direction, so does the register of the Greek Luke writes: his is not the atticising Greek of the elite but a simpler yet educated language. Perhaps surprisingly, from the point of view of Luke's reliability his severance from historiography is not a bad conclusion for Alexander shows that in the second century historiography had a pretty bad reputation. On the other hand, although Acts has some similarities with the ancient novel such as an interest in travel, in particular travel by sea, it also differs from the novel in fundamental ways. Luke consciously writes about a very recent past in which the Roman Empire plays a large role, not about a distant romanticised past as we find in the novels. There are some affinities with the genre of the intellectual biography although this too is not a close fit. Alexander shows that the portrait of Paul resembles what readers would have known about Socrates in at least eight major respects. The nearest parallels, however, are with the Old Testament which has clearly served as Luke's model in several ways. Luke writes the kind of Greek that cultured Jews would have appreciated most. Alexander does not develop this line of thought very far but others have written extensively about it. The conclusion is that an ancient reader who took up Acts would probably expect a factual not a fictional work, a piece of 'technical literature', at the level of popular culture. Of course factuality does not exclude selectivity and the use of particular perspectives.

Alexander's work is very focused. She hardly touches other issues such as place and date of Acts, or Luke's background, although she does hint at a late origin and at the likelihood that Luke was Jewish. The book can be read without knowledge of Greek; one essay, however, contains much untranslated French. It is well-produced but at an official price of £32.99 for the paperback it

is still not cheap. It is a must-have for libraries and all subject specialists, though.

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The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels

Stephen C. Barton (ed.)

Cambridge: CUP, 2006

p/b; £15.99; ISBN-13: 9780521807661

SUMMARY

This volume is a collection of introductory essays on the canonical Gospels. The papers pay specific attention to historical background, literary and theological content, and the impact of the Gospels on Church life and modern society. The collection is useful as it combines theological, historical, and literary approaches together and deliberately tries to avoid a faith versus academy approach to the Gospels.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Band ist eine Sammlung einleitender Artikel zu den kanonischen Evangelien. Die Artikel widmen ihre besondere Aufmerksamkeit dem historischen Hintergrund, dem literarischen und theologischen Inhalt und dem Einfluss der Evangelien auf das kirchliche Leben und die moderne Gesellschaft. Die Sammlung ist nützlich, da sie theologische, historische und literarische Ansätze verbindet und bewusst zu vermeiden versucht, dem Glauben verpflichtete Ansätze gegen akademische Ansätze in Bezug auf die Evangelien auszuspielen.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage contient un ensemble d'articles d'introduction aux Évangiles canoniques. Ils s'intéressent particulièrement à l'arrière-plan historique, au contenu littéraire et théologique des Évangiles et à leur influence sur la vie de l'Église et la société moderne. L'ouvrage associe des approches théologiques, historiques et littéraires en s'efforçant d'éviter d'opposer la foi et la recherche académique.

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This volume in the Cambridge Companion Series looks at the canonical Gospels with a special emphasis on the canonical context of the Gospels and Christian life as a continued performance of the Gospels. The book is divided into three parts: (1) Approaching the Gospels – Context and Method; (2) The Gospels as Witnesses to Christ – Content and Interpretation; and (3) The Afterlife of the Gospels – Impact on Church and Society.

The 'Introduction' by Stephen Barton draws attention to the dichotomy of interpretation of the Bible in academic universities that stands 'over' the text and the interpretation of the Bible in the church that stands 'under' the text. According to Barton the present volume seeks to go beyond this divide by incorporating historical, literary, rhetorical, theological, and aesthetic approaches to the Gospels which does better justice to

their christological subject matter and function as Christian Scripture.

Loveday Alexander asks 'What is a gospel?' in search of the genre of the canonical Gospels. She notes their largely biographical shape and compares them to orally traditioned literature, school traditions, Greek literature like *bios* and aretalogies, rabbinic hagiography, and the biographical episodes from the Hebrew Bible. In the end she concludes that the gospels are reminiscent of the Greek *bios* but written in a theological framework indebted to the Hebrew Bible.

Francis Watson investigates 'The fourfold gospel' and notes that a pluriform Gospel collection was by no means intended or inevitable. According to Watson, in the early church some (e.g. Papias) could prefer the living voice of oral tradition over the written word. Some could privilege a certain Gospel over others in order to supplant competing Jesus narratives (e.g. *Gospel of Thomas*). Some could opt for a purified Gospel shorn of all disagreeable traits (e.g. Marcion and Luke). Some could write supplementary Gospels to fill in the blanks about events in Jesus' life such as his childhood and birth (e.g. *Protoevangelium of James*). Others (e.g. Tatian) opted for a Gospel harmony comprised of elements of all four canonical accounts. Watson also draws attention to the efforts of Origen and Augustine who dealt with the pluriformity and lack of cohesion between the canonical accounts. For Origen spiritual truth was not dependent upon material truth, while for Augustine the crucial element is in the intended sense and not in actual details.

Richard Hays examines 'The canonical matrix of the Gospels' where he works through all of the four canonical Gospels to show how the story of Israel is determinative for the contours and shape of each particular Gospel. Mark's story enveloped in apocalyptic urgency draws on the theme of 'new exodus', in Matthew the life story of Jesus recapitulates the story of Israel, in Luke the long held promises for liberation in Israel's Scriptures came to fulfilment through Jesus and the church, and in the Johannine Gospel the narration is saturated in a vast matrix of symbols from the Scriptures. According to Hays, the task of the interpreter is to trace these intertextual links between the Gospel stories and their Old Testament precursors.

Stephen E. Fowl engages the subject of 'The Gospels and the historical Jesus' where he notes that the rise of historical-critical studies has significantly altered the way that the Gospels are read today. He examines three particular stances concerning the study of Jesus: i. adopt the framework provided by the canonical Gospels (e.g. Luke Timothy Johnson), ii. situate Jesus in a framework that would be recognizable to his peers (e.g. N.T. Wright), and iii. locate Jesus in a particular theoretical framework (e.g. John Dominic Crossan). Fowl himself suggests a Christian reading of the Gospels should prioritize theology over history with the result that Christians learn how Scripture renders the world in which they live.

Sandra M. Schneiders approaches the topic of 'The

Gospels and the reader' where she sets out the hermeneutical issues related to readers and texts concerning biblical interpretation. She describes pragmatic uses of biblical text (i.e. liberation, feminist, ethical, and spiritual hermeneutics) and interacts with the theories of Ricoeur and Gadamer concerning the creation of meaning by readers of texts. It includes a helpful discussion of the role of faith in biblical hermeneutics.

The 'Gospel according to Matthew' is covered by Stephen C. Barton who emphasizes that Matthew's Gospel tries to hold together the old and the new in light of the post-70 CE situation of the church and synagogue (i.e. 'rupture and innovation'). He provides an outline of the Gospel along the lines of the birth of the Messiah, the testing of the Messiah, the teaching of the Messiah, the deeds of the Messiah, the transfiguration of the Messiah, the resurrection of the Messiah.

Joel Green introduces 'The Gospel according to Mark' and he begins by noting how the cross is interwoven throughout the Marcan narrative. For Green, Mark is the continuation and actualization of the story of God. He notices how Mark juxtaposes two apparently irreconcilable facts: Jesus is a powerful and rejected Messiah. The resolution is that it is precisely as the worker of powerful deeds and as an authoritative teacher that Jesus goes to the cross. Although Green is very reserved about attributing a particular background or setting to Mark's Gospel he intimates that Mark may have been written for those experiencing duress and wrestling with their own failures. Green proposes that Mark's abrupt staccato ending leaves the question of the proclamation of the gospel open-ended and disciples must decide if they will let the good news of God be written in their lives.

John T. Squires covers the 'Gospel according to Luke' and initially examines the nature and purpose of Luke's Gospel as set within the wider Hellenistic world. He then provides an overview of Luke's story of Jesus and he notes its connection to the story of Israel and to the story of the church. Squires also provides a very succinct and helpful survey of the key themes in Luke's Gospel including: the sovereignty of God, the salvation of God, the kingdom of God (proclamation, embodiment, discipleship), stewardship of possessions, table-fellowship, the marginalized, men and women, and Jews and Gentiles. Squires finds in Luke a picture of God's care for the marginalized and an emphasis on his providential and compassion concern for the entire world.

Concerning the 'Gospel according to John' M.M. Thompson begins by noting the differences between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels and contends that no single factor can account for John's distinctiveness. She finds in the prologue the Gospel in a nutshell particularly as an encapsulation of the Fourth Evangelists' overall christology. Thompson then proceeds to describe how the main themes of the Johannine narratives and discourses about Jesus. This is followed by helpful explorations on the mission of Jesus, symbolism, dualism, and discipleship as they are expressed in

John's Gospel.

The final section of the volume includes the afterlife of the Gospels and looks at the Gospels and doctrinal development (Frances Young), the Gospels and the lives of saints and martyrs (David Matzko McCarthy), the Gospels and spirituality/worship (Gordon Mursell), and the Gospels and morality/politics (Scott Bader-Saye).

Overall this is a sound volume with good introductions to the Gospels and it covers material not always included in most Gospel introductions.

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Introduction to Modern Theology. Trajectories in the German Tradition

John E. Wilson

Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2007

Pp. 286 + x; p/b; £16.99; 978-0664228620

SUMMARY

John Wilson shares insights into the history of modern theology won from years of teaching. Centred on the German tradition, and focussed on explicating seminal texts, Wilson's history provides a series of insightful portraits of leading Protestant theologians and their work in conversation with the key philosophical developments which so greatly effected theology in the 19th and 20th centuries.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

John Wilson gibt Anteil an seinen Einsichten in die Geschichte der modernen Theologie, die sich auf jahrelanger Lehrerfahrung stützen. Wilsons Geschichte bietet eine Reihe aufschlussreicher Portraits führender protestantischer Theologen und ihrer Werke im Gespräch mit philosophischen Schlüsselentwicklungen, die im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert die Theologie stark beeinflussten. Er widmet seine besondere Aufmerksamkeit der deutschen Tradition und konzentriert sich auf die Erläuterung wegweisender Texte.

RÉSUMÉ

John Wilson montre ce que l'on peut apprendre de l'histoire de la théologie moderne en mettant à profit son expérience de nombreuses années d'enseignement. Il s'intéresse principalement à la tradition allemande et procède par l'explication de textes. Il livre une série de portraits de théologiens protestants éminents et expose leur œuvre de façon éclairante en la mettant en rapport avec les courants de pensée philosophiques qui ont grandement influencé la théologie des XIX^e et XX^e siècles.

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The fruit of decades of teaching in the area of the history of modern theology, Wilson's textbook delivers what the title suggests, namely a concise introduction to the main currents of 19th and 20th century German

language theology. The focus is further narrowed almost exclusively to Protestant figures and trends (with Karl Rahner as perhaps the sole exception) though widened by the inclusion of a number of English speaking theologians significantly influenced by this German trajectory, e.g., Emerson, James, Rauschenbusch, Niebuhr, King. Wilson organises his presentation around key figures, providing in each case very brief biographical and bibliographical notes before expositing one or more representative texts. These concise expositions are the core of the book and its signal strength. Wilson's aim in each case is to provide a summary discussion of the central arguments of these particular figures and texts and to highlight their connections with the wider story of theological development across these centuries. The text is helpfully cross-referenced throughout in the service of this end. Footnotes usefully indicate the standard editions of primary texts and leading secondary literature.

Wilson devotes the first third of his book to the 'formative period' of German Idealism. Key works and arguments of Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Schleiermacher and other related figures are explicated here. The focus is upon questions concerning the scope of reason, the nature of knowledge, the 'absolute' and its relation to contingency, and the idea of 'religion' and its relation to *Wissenschaft*. The expositions of the leading figures are quite detailed, and though technical at times, are always clear and concise. For Wilson, these philosophical struggles of the first half of the 19th century are decisive, for they generate the *problématique* of all 'modern' German theology, as well as providing the predominating categories by which the theological tradition will negotiate the challenge of modernity for the next two hundred years.

The six chapters which compose the remaining two-thirds of the work are in the main chronologically arranged. Discussion of several leading proponents of the theology of 'mediation' (chapter 3) is followed by exposition of a longer list of 'Ritschlian' and liberal theologians reaching as far into the 20th century as Fritz Buri (chapter 4). Brief treatments of Kähler and Overbeck (chapter 5) set the stage for a more extended presentation of the work of Barth, Brunner, Bultmann, Ebeling and Bonhoeffer under the rubric of 'Dialectical Theology' (chapter 6). The penultimate chapter considers the 'post-liberal' theologies of Tillich, Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr and King. The book's final chapter is devoted to comment upon some leading German theologians of the post-World War II period, including Sölle, Moltmann, Pannenberg and Jüngel.

Wilson's aim of offering a responsible, annotated chronicle of the progress of German Protestant theology of the past two centuries is well achieved and students of this period will be well served by the entrée the book affords into the theological conversation of modernity. It is a shame that the author's modesty precluded him advancing any explicit and overarching judgments about the course of this history, a modesty signalled most clearly by the absence of a summary conclusion to the