

Book Reviews

Hoehn, Richard A. *Up From Apathy*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1983. 172 pp. \$10.95, paper. ISBN 0-687-43114-X.

"The Word became flesh." Accordingly, our words exhorting others to social sensitivity must be "fleshed out" in our own lives, observes Richard Hoehn, associate professor of church in society at the Brite Divinity School of Texas Christian University. This is but one of many inductive conclusions emerging from Hoehn's study of biographical literature and 87 original interviews of social activists. His goal is to discover what brings people first to moral awareness and then to social involvement. The intended audience is educators, ministers, politicians—in fact, all who are concerned about "how in a free society people might be educated and motivated to choose a public participation in behalf of the human community" (p. 9). No one concerned about such matters will find reading this book wasted time.

The book is filled with fascinating lengthy quotations of people describing their moral-conversion experiences. Hoehn's own analysis of this material is also quite interesting, though the text drags at times when too much secondary theoretical analysis of moral change is introduced. There is a very helpful index and a set of notes (where some of the secondary analysis also belongs). Some of the most insightful topics include: experiences which most typically lead to moral awareness (p. 35 ff.), metaphors through which people describe their coming to awareness (chap. 3), factors that move people to act (chap. 5), frames of reference which determine people's awareness and actions (chaps. 3, 6), and how to teach social awareness and action (chap. 8). Out of this investigation, Hoehn synthesizes his own "ethic of sociality" (p. 134 ff.), which "can be described as a perceptual, intellectual, and emotional leaning toward the meaningful reality of self and other, or it can be described as love" (p. 139).

Hoehn has selected a sample group to interview which is diverse in terms of age, sex, race and vocation. Unfortunately, virtually everyone is "politically left of center"—such that certain unspecified parts of the study, by his admission, "apply only to those who basically are oriented to a liberal/radical view of justice and human community" (pp. 19-20). Another drawback is that the role of religion in stimulating moral awareness and social involvement is only explicitly addressed in the closing few paragraphs of the book. Nevertheless, the book does provide a valuable resource still not duplicated several years after the book's publication. It shows—not theoretically but from proven experience—

how to raise others up from apathy to a life of biblical, social holiness.

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Fuller, Reginald H. *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*.

Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. Second edition. x, 225 pp. Paper. ISBN 0-8006-1378-3.

This most recent work by Fuller, professor emeritus of New Testament at Virginia Theological Seminary and author of numerous significant books in NT studies, is based upon lectures delivered at several universities in Europe and the United States. This second edition incorporates new scholarship, especially Marxen's insistence that "Peter's post-Easter experience" was the foundation of the later Easter faith.

Fuller's purpose is to present the often "contradictory" reports of the Resurrection in a responsible manner to support "contemporary faith," and to provide guidance to those who preach and teach this *kerygma* (proclamation). He brings to this task the techniques of form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, and extensive familiarity with secondary literature, as well as his commitment as a churchman. Fuller insists that faith was the *result* of seeing, that "biblical faith is always response to revelation." To this the witness of the New Testament would agree!

He seeks to trace the "formation" of the accounts of the Resurrection, treating the accounts in the chronological sequence of their writing, beginning with 1 Corinthians 15, perhaps the first extant Pauline account. Since Paul omits reference to the empty tomb, Fuller is convinced that Paul knew *only* of a *list* of the appearances. *Narratives* of the appearances came next, followed by *appearances* in Galilee, and then *traditions* of the empty tomb. Thus, he moves from Paul to Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, John, "transposed narratives" (in the Gospels) and then to contemporary faith-proclamation. An appendix treats the apocryphal gospels. Allowing this sequence to dominate his treatment throughout, he omits the numerous references in the Book of Acts to the Resurrection, including Peter's emphasis on the empty tomb (Acts 2:24-36). He considers Luke's account of the walk to Emmaus and John 20-21 as legends with slight historical basis, and no mention is made of the raising of Lazarus.

With reference to the Pauline list of appearances it does not seem to occur to him that Paul may have omitted the empty tomb account because Paul experienced only the risen Lord and in this chapter was attempting to correct mistaken ideas about the Resurrection. This pericope dominates his entire historical perspective. Fuller finds little help in Acts regarding

Paul's vision of the "Risen One" because he considers Acts late. It "downgrades Paul," and its three accounts of Paul's conversion are merely "compositions of the author" that make use of some traditional materials.

In the brief report of the empty tomb in Mark 16:1-8 this form critic finds the reference to Galilee (v 7) a Markan interpolation. Strangely inconsistent with his estimate of the veracity of Acts, he cites Acts 13:29 ("they [the Sanhedrin] laid him in a tomb") as evidence that the Gospels are in error in stating that Joseph took responsibility for Jesus' burial. Yet Mark's report, that the Risen Lord would meet his disciples in Galilee (cf. Matt 28:16), is viewed as earlier, and hence more accurate, than the accounts in the other three gospels of initial appearances in Jerusalem.

In Fuller's analysis of Mark, Jesus did not think of his resurrection as an event separate from the "general resurrection of the elect." Instead, "Jesus proclaimed the imminent event of the eschatological kingdom of God apocalyptically conceived, and therefore also by implication the resurrection of the elect" (p. 60). Throughout the volume the author fuses and confuses the historical Resurrection of Jesus with the general resurrection at the end time. The same is true of his treatment of the appearances. This perspective influences his treatment of the empty tomb account in Mark, the Emmaus story in Luke, and the accounts of the post-Resurrection events in Matthew and John.

This carefully-crafted presentation comes to its climax by giving guidance to believers and to preachers. How can the reader believe these "inconsistent" narratives? How can the preacher be aware of the problems and yet inspire the "Easter Faith"? Because of his commitment to the form-critical method the author argues, as a historian, from effect (*kerigma*) to cause (appearances), and only later to the empty tomb. There is no doubt that the early church believed Jesus to be alive. The historian's task is to find the cause of this faith by means of a careful dissection of varied strata of tradition in hope of separating event from legendary accretions.

To what extent is this labored effort successful? It is a major improvement over the form-criticism of Dibelius and Bultmann. Fuller correctly insists that faith must be based on fact. He functions in a post-Bultmannian era but before the more recent critical trends of narrative criticism, structuralism, and canonical criticism. If he had written in the early eighties, instead of the late sixties, would his methods and conclusions have been different? His interactions are mostly with German scholars, especially Bultmann, Grass and Marxsen.

In his search for the historical kernel of truth, he tends to react more from the standpoint of the form-critic than from the witness of the extant narrative itself. This hinders contemporary faith and proclamation. Why does he stress the "discrepancies" more than the commonality among the diverse witnesses? It is commonplace that witnesses who agree in every detail are more suspect than those who witness to a consistent central

theme with minor diversities. In this central theme, the consensus is that the first link in the unfolding drama of the Resurrection is the empty tomb and then the appearances. The four Gospels and Acts agree on this sequence. But he is convincing when he insists that the faith of the church is based on actual events, attested by responsible witnesses, not simply on subjective "wishful thinking."

Yet he concludes that "resurrection faith" is not the historical faith that the women found the tomb empty and that disciples saw Jesus risen from the dead. Rather, it is "faith in the risen Lord" (p. 183)! On what does "faith in the risen Lord" rest if not upon authentic, and hence credible, reports of these events? He answers, it is this proclamation "that the preacher has to offer...and not the factual details." How does this differ from Bultmann's "Easter faith" unsupported by *events* reported in the New Testament? The author's eagerness to combine redaction-criticism with a convincing kerygma leave much to be desired.

For the scholar, the attention to other critics in the text and in footnotes is detailed and helpful. For the general reader and scholar more attention to conservative scholars would result in a more balanced and ecumenical book. The notes would be more helpful if the chapter titles had been accompanied by chapter numbers. Some excellent features include indices of biblical references, ancient authors and modern authors. The volume is a stimulating study of an important subject.

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Hauerwas, Stanley. *Against the Nations: War and Survival in a Liberal Society*. Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985. viii, 208 pp. ISBN 0-86683-957-7.

In this volume the professor of religious ethics at the Divinity School of Duke University continues the themes and burdens of his previous books. In many respects it is a sequel to his *The Peaceable Kingdom*, though in this book he takes on new adversaries.

Hauerwas begins by acknowledging that readers may have problems with the structure of the book. And this is true. The opening chapters contain development of concerns expressed by Hauerwas elsewhere, namely, that Christian ethics be Christian, and that imagination is a crucial element if ethics are to be Christian. These are well stated in *The Peaceable Kingdom*, but here the author is responding to criticisms of his earlier work. The interior section of the book appears to be a set of digressions, though it is somewhat related to the general theme and tone of the book. Chapter five on the Holocaust seems to be a separate paper

presented originally elsewhere and incorporated into the book. The same may be said of chapter six on the Jonestown tragedy. These are followed by chapters on the Kingdom of God and a response to Richard John Neuhaus's "Christianity and Democracy." Then the last chapters return to matters found in the earlier chapters. Even Hauerwas acknowledges the problem: "The relation of these chapters on war [8-10] to the first part of the book is complex." Indeed it is! But that is not to detract seriously from the issues with which Hauerwas wrestles.

The general theme is indicated in the sub-title. How does the Church in the West live out its assignment in the world when the world and the recent history of the Church are marked by accommodation and concession? When the Church and the world work together at the level of the lowest common denominator? When the Church fails to realize that its distinctiveness is its primary asset in its presence in the world?

These themes are highlighted when Hauerwas expresses concern over the nature of anti-nuclear sentiment which has no adequate eschatological foundations. He takes on Neuhaus and the American Catholic bishops not so much because they are arch-enemies, but because they have both spoken effectively and meaningfully on crucial issues. There are no sectarian concerns here. The views of Neuhaus and the bishops are unacceptable because they do not give primacy to the ultimate given of the Christian faith. Justice and survival, relevance and meaning are more important than faithfulness. Hauerwas, on the other hand, continues to assert that the Church must be the Church; that on the basis of its Christian hope and the use of a sanctified imagination the Church can assume a posture of foolishness, and in that foolishness be more relevant ultimately than it would otherwise be. "Presence," for Hauerwas, continues to be seen as the Church's assignment.

One of the better features of the book is the author's treatment of the Just War Theory. In fact I regard it as the fairest statement ever by a pacifist. The theory of a just war he affirms is a pacifist position with an amendment. "For although it is seldom noticed, just war is a pacifist position to the extent that it assumes that the burden of proof is on those who would use violence rather than those who would refrain" (p. 167). His regard for the just war position, though he cannot finally accept it, is also seen in the fact that the book is dedicated to Paul Ramsey, the most powerful exponent of just war, as well as to John Howard Yoder. He puts the just war theory in its best light before responding to it. Would that all adversaries were so generous!

Hauerwas continues to be one of the most creative American Christian ethicists in his raising of foundational issues. He does so with forcefulness, but fairly and with a desire to heal and restore the Church.

One final irony: Hauerwas, here and elsewhere, insists that Christian

ethics must be Christian. Yet he carries the title at Duke University of professor of *religious* ethics.

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DeVries, Simon J. *I Kings*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 12. Waco, TX: Word, 1985. ixiv, 286 pp. ISBN 0-8499-0211-8.

The Word Biblical Commentary series is broadly evangelical and directed toward "anyone who seeks to build a theological understanding of scripture upon a solid foundation of scholarship." Each volume uses a uniform format. An original translation is presented and followed by "Notes," mainly text-critical. A section dealing with "Form/Structure/Setting" treats critical problems. A "Comment" section offers a traditional paragraph-by-paragraph exegetical discussion, and an "Explanation" section apparently aspires to a theological appropriation of the text.

Simon DeVries, professor of Old Testament at the Methodist Theological School in Delaware, OH, is a relative newcomer to evangelical publishing, though not to OT scholarship at large. His publications include *The Achievements of Biblical Religion, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, Prophet Against Prophet*, and many articles.

DeVries follows the mainstream opinion of higher-critical scholarship. In *Kings* he finds several different sources and the work of several editorial hands or "schools." He nevertheless recognizes the essential compatibility of the different "deuteronomistic" editors. He proceeds, nominally, as though these are all one voice, one context of thought, one editorial program, and gains a modest historical basis for treating the text as a literary whole. The unity perceived allows DeVries to present, in the "Form/Structure/Setting," detailed outlines of the units in the text which go beyond simply partitioning the material. They present a unifying thread that holds the material together as a whole, albeit a redactional one. "Comment" fills out both the full explanation of his translation (the "Notes" deal exclusively with manuscript evidence supporting his textual reconstruction) and provide a consecutive exposition. Many will quibble with points made in the "Comment" sections, but DeVries deals competently with the standard questions, providing complete bibliographies. I found the author's frequent self-citation mildly irritating and amateurish. The volume is current and competent, but the commentary's philological work does not equal the older, comprehensive volumes of Montgomery and Gehman, and Burney, nor is it as brilliant and daring as the latter's. Like other modern treatments of *Kings*, too much space is spent with redactional minutiae. Nevertheless, in its organization of exegetical data

along the lines of his analysis of each unit's structure, it surpasses Gray, who simply buries the text in unfocused erudition.

DeVries is more willing than some evangelicals to find in scripture modes of narration that are not "historical" in the traditional sense. He characterizes certain stories as "prophet legends," and he argues that the authors did not intend, nor did the readers expect, these stories to be "taken literally." They are rather theological paradigms. Despite this nod in the direction of "radical" criticism, DeVries takes historical issues seriously, and does not conclude from the presence of unusual events in narratives that they are unhistorical. His discussions under the heading of "Sacred History as Theological Testimony" struggle with the role of history in theological exegesis and suggest "historicality" as a useful category. "Historicality" denotes a narrative's authentic expression of Israel's life and historical self-awareness, transcending "historicity" in the traditional sense. Many will be dissatisfied with the conclusions, but all will appreciate seeing these issues seriously engaged.

The "Explanation" sections present contemporary theological appropriation of the text. He sets out his theological method when he remarks, "we must ask for *the word* among all the words," (chap. 20) distinguishing between "normative" and "non-normative" elements of the text, discerning what "it" considers normative. The notion of truths separable from the particulars of the text, and the theological task as a winnowing, will not satisfy readers who are uneasy with a sharp separation between the "word" of God and the "words" of Scripture. Nor will it satisfy those, right or left, who have reflected a "kernel and husk" theory of meaning. An unfortunate consequence of separating "the word" from "the words" is the sometimes tenuous connection between the theological "Explanation" and the exegesis in the preceding sections. Each "Explanation" should register the distinctive imprint of each story emerging from the preceding detailed outlines and expository treatment. Instead, they often give commonplaces like "Yahweh was at work to frustrate Adonijah and to establish Solomon" (chap. 22). Again, the commentary perpetrates the very "moralizing and vapid sentimentality" (chap. 21) it decries when a story tells us "how much easier it is to break up what belongs together than it is to restore what is broken" (p. 159).

The "Explanation" section occasionally engages larger questions. Dealing with I Kings 13, DeVries rightly starts with the treatment of Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics*, II/2. Complaining that Barth brought "strange fire...to the altar," making an "antique text...bear all the systematic logic of a modern philosophy" (p. 173), DeVries finds the key in how the characters, and, by analogy, the readers, come to know the true word of God. The preacher must be radically obedient to the word proclaimed, an imperative finding its full expression in Jesus. Unfortunately, a hermeneutical analogy between selected (how?) characters and the reader can only deduce prosaic lessons ("Practise what you preach," or, "only listen

to preachers who practise what they preach") from a text fraught with tension and mystery. Does the text ever envision the reader as analogous to one of its characters? Is analogy, with its concomitant demand for historical and existential congruence, really the best mode of actualization?

Disagreements with DeVries aplenty there are sure to be. Nevertheless, that theologically concerned expositors finally have something worth responding to is good news.

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Olson, Dennis T. *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New: The Framework of the Book of Numbers and the Pentateuch*. Brown Judaic Studies, 71. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985. 253 pp. Paper, ISBN 0891-398865; Hardback, ISBN 0891-398857.

This book is a slightly modified version of the author's doctoral dissertation completed at Yale University. It addresses a fundamental problem in the study of the book of Numbers: the lack of a coherent picture of the book's overall structure. Without this essential framework, Numbers "collapses into a jumble of unrelated fragments with no purpose or meaning" (chap. 1). Chapter one provides a competent, informative review of major commentaries on Numbers, but offers only a brief paragraph on major specialized studies. These latter are dealt with in the argument, but a more complete introduction would have been helpful. Chapter two demonstrates the failure of scholarly research to agree on the book's structure, displaying all the proposals for major unit divisions: over 21 suggested "major" breaks! Olson blames this lack of consensus on a wrong approach: chronological, geographical, and tradition-historical data, however significant, do not break open the book's structure decisively.

Chapters three through five present Olson's own thesis. After an insightful defense of treating Numbers as a distinct literary unit (chap. 3), in chapter four he reviews research on the book's major feature: the two census lists in Numbers 1 and 26. This chapter deals in detail with the exegetical problems posed, not just by the census lists, but by "tribal lists" in the OT in general. Exegetical theories of Noth, Mendenhall, Gottwald, and others are considered tersely and fairly. The heart of the book is chapter five. It argues that the real significance of the lists resides not in their numerical, military, or historical function, but in their literary function for the book as a whole. The lists demarcate the halves of the book. After dealing responsibly with the historical-critical questions

impinging on such a claim, he sets out formal indicators in the text supporting his theory. Most persuasive, however, is his expository outline, in which the whole book rises Phoenix-like from the ashes as a coherent vision of the death and rebirth of God's people. Plausible *tours de force* are rare, but this one works. Not only does he make sense of Numbers, providing a sound basis for a commentary, but he also sets Numbers in the context of the structure of the Pentateuch as a whole.

The last four chapters address three well-known exegetical cruxes. From Olson's new perspective, treatments of the spy story (Numbers 13-14), the Balaam cycle (Numbers 22-24), and certain legal texts show, not an interpreter forcing texts into a schema, but texts finally finding their rightful place in a coherent literary and theological work.

This study is a splendid piece of exegesis, rescuing Numbers literarily and theologically. But it does not render the historical-critical process moot. Its only weakness is the lack of a discussion of methodology. The case has a plausibility of its own, but without a definitive methodological discussion, it remains a single effort, not a model or program. On the other hand, the best methodological reflection often takes place after interpretation has been done well.

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Abraham, William J. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*.
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985. 250 pp.
\$21.95. ISBN 0-13-491887-8.

William J. Abraham is associate professor of evangelism and philosophy of religion in the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. His books include *The Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, *Divine Revelation and the Limits of Historical Criticism*, and *The Coming Great Revival: Recovering the Full Evangelical Tradition*. As the titles of his books suggest, Abraham brings a breadth of knowledge to his academic studies. In *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, he draws upon his background in philosophy to provide a practical introduction in philosophy of religion.

Abraham introduces philosophy of religion from what many consider the minority opinion among philosophers. He argues that religious belief is capable of rational assessment and can be rationally justified. He considers it restrictive and artificial to cast the philosopher as a neutral observer of the religious scene. An author's personal convictions inevitably appear and should appear if the discipline is to have life and blood. Thus he presents philosophy of religion in a way that encourages his

readers to seek and find the truth, particularly as found in Christianity.

In contrast to classical models that overemphasize the place of natural theology in philosophy of religion, Abraham begins with the crucial question of the nature of religious language. He rejects the logical positivist critique of religious language as nonsense, i.e. as unable to meet the empirical requirements which are essential to cognitive discourse in general. Abraham also rejects inadequate Christian rebuttals that fail to meet logical positivism on its own terms of cognitive verifiability. He appeals to Basil Mitchell in vindicating religious language. Mitchell argues that as long as the believer grants that historical findings can falsify some theological claims, e.g. the resurrection, religious language is liable to falsification in principle and is therefore cognitive.

Much of the first half of the book is devoted to the justification of religious belief, and thus represents the heart of what the author is trying to communicate. Here he presents two opposite ends of the perennial debate concerning the relationship between faith and reason. On the one hand, the fideist tradition argues that belief in God is to be construed as a basic belief requiring no argument in its favor for it to be considered rational. Karl Barth represents a theological version of fideism and Alvin Plantinga selects Richard Swinburne as a representative of hard rationalism. In this tradition belief in God is defended by a rigorous appeal to the canons of normal logic, arguing that inductive rather than deductive logic makes belief in God rational, i.e. more probable than not.

Abraham rejects fideism as being ultimately implausible. Fideists are interested in reasons for religious belief despite protest to the contrary, and they all too easily commit themselves to unfounded assumptions about the nature of arguments for and against religious belief. He also rejects hard rationalism for several reasons, not the least of which is its failure to resolve the tension between reason and faith, or reason and revelation.

Abraham offers what he describes as a soft rationalist approach which represents a mediating position between fideism and classical natural theology. It differs from other approaches in its claim about the kind of argument that should take place in debates about significant religious beliefs. In this tradition religious belief is to be construed as one among many competing, complex metaphysical visions rather than a simple proof for the existence of God. Such global theories, which would include Marxism, humanism and existentialism, are never a matter of simple demonstration or strict probabilistic reasoning. Rather, one appeals to various considerations which taken together as a kind of cumulative argument lead one to say that one global theory is true and another false. He again appeals to Basil Mitchell and his concept of a "cumulative case," where what matters is not where you start, but the total case you make. If one is to remain a theist, one develops the kind of cumulative case that evaluates the complex web of religious belief by appealing to

several independent threads of evidence taken together, using informal, sensitive, personal judgment to weigh its validity. He argues that the kind of assessment proposed by soft rationalism is a genuine rational assessment because cumulative case arguments are generally accepted as reliable.

Abraham recognizes limitations in his argument that religious belief is capable of rational assessment and can be rationally justified. For example: affirmations cannot be properly judged to be rational or irrational; personal judgment is liable to serious error; and the actual justification of religious and metaphysical beliefs is in practice a very elusive affair. He admits that his views are highly contested and that readers should not accept his conclusions uncritically. Nevertheless, he presents a compelling cumulative argument in justifying religious belief. His efforts resemble Anselm's dictum concerning the relationship between faith and reason—"faith in search of understanding"—which closely follows the Augustinian model concerning the relationship of belief and authority to reason—"Belief in order that you may understand."

Abraham rightly affirms that Christianity is based on faith, but that it is a reasonable faith. It does not represent a lack of faith to subject the revelation of God's self-disclosure to the test of human reason. Nor is belief in justification by faith incompatible with the pursuit of reasons for theology. Although he allows a substantial role for reason to play in understanding Christian faith, he does not revert to a classical version of natural theology. Rather, he philosophically argues that we need to be more intellectually honest and careful in how we try to articulate the rationality of religious belief.

The remaining chapters of the book are devoted to enduring questions in philosophy of religion. These questions include morality, freedom, miracles, revelation, and so on. He also includes discussions on the relationship between religion and history, science, and world religions.

The final chapter aptly deals with the issue of religious certitude and a vindication of the tenacity with which religious people commit themselves. Abraham does not argue that belief can be held regardless of the evidence. Religious people must always remember that if religious language is to be considered cognitive, they must also grant that it is entirely falsifiable in principle. Thus he takes a more modest approach in making logical sense of the kind of tenacity which is typically found in religion and in defending it against philosophical objection.

In a sense, the final chapters of the book—in which Abraham discusses various questions in philosophy of religion—serve to substantiate the rationality of religious belief. Each contributes to a cumulative case that religious belief is capable of rational assessment and can be rationally justified. Although he may be criticized for failing to present a traditional

introduction to philosophy of religion, he presents a compelling introduction to religious faith that is reasonable.

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Dunn, James D. G. *The Evidence for Jesus*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986. xiv, 113 pp. Paper, ISBN 0664-246982; Hardback, ISBN 0664-24140-9.

In 1984 a television series entitled *Jesus: The Evidence* was aired in Britain. The makers of the program set out to inquire into the impact of recent historical scholarship on traditional views about Jesus. I was living in Scotland at the time and, along with others of the Christian community, hoped for a balanced attempt to bridge the gap between the technical world of NT scholarship and the world of everyday Christians. These expectations were unrealized, however, for the programs highlighted outdated, radical and sometimes idiosyncratic points of view. Along with other well-publicized religious events, this three-part program raised many questions regarding the foundations of classical Christian faith. While this television series had little influence in the U.S.A., the issues it raised are no less significant for us: Can we trust the Gospels? Did Jesus consider himself to be the Son of God? What did the earliest Christians believe concerning the Resurrection? Was there an "orthodox faith" in earliest Christianity? These are the questions Dunn addresses in his response to *Jesus: The Evidence*.

In many ways, Dunn is especially suited for writing just this sort of study. He is a world-class NT scholar, with a keen interest in Jesus-studies and the beginning of Christianity. As a Methodist pastor he is seriously committed to the ministry of the local church and is sensitive to the thinking of the non-academic audience. And he has long considered himself a bridge-builder between scholars in opposing camps. These qualities are each focused in helpful ways in this volume, with the result that we find here a resource of great value for introductory-level studies, for continuing education for pastors, and for serious-minded lay students of the Bible.

Of the book's four chapters, the first is foundational and is perhaps the most significant. Here Dunn asks whether the Gospels are historically trustworthy and accurate in what they tell about Jesus. His answer: Yes *and* No! He is convinced that the Gospels interpret the significance of Jesus, but that this interpretation grows out of good historical information. Numerous helpful examples are provided by way of demonstrating how the evangelists retold the stories about Jesus in order to highlight their own interests. He insists that if we have difficulties in coming to

terms with this editorial procedure we need not project them back into the early church. For them the meaning and substance of Jesus's words were more important than maintaining strict verbal accuracy.

Chapter two takes up the question of Jesus's self-understanding. Dunn argues that Jesus probably did regard himself as having a distinctive filial relationship with God, but the full-blown christological claims we find in John's Gospel and elsewhere in the NT are the products of development in the first years of the Christian movement. Naturally, in order to argue thus Dunn is led to deal at length with the character of the fourth Gospel, and he concludes for the image of John as "preacher."

The subject of the Resurrection is taken up in chapter three. As in earlier sections, Dunn is not breaking new ground but does present old arguments in fresh ways. Moreover, in a stimulating way, Dunn, the NT scholar, dons the hat of an apologist as he helps his readers see the reasonableness of faith in the Resurrection while at the same time warning them against trying to over-define the NT language of resurrection. The final chapter is Dunn's attempt to dispel the notion that earliest Christianity was made up of warring sects. As one might expect from the author of *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, he recognizes a large measure of diversity in earliest Christianity and warns us against idealizing the apostolic age, while holding to the fundamental unity of first-century Christianity.

In the end, Dunn insists that modern Christianity has nothing to fear from historical scholarship but should welcome inquiries into the truth, even if it means adjusting some long-held but inadequately founded notions. No doubt the more conservative will find in *The Evidence for Jesus* occasion to raise many red flags. Others might wish Dunn would have done more to communicate his insights to those with little or no theological sophistication. On the whole, however, we may welcome this short book for what it is—a common-sense, well-informed, introductory study of four important issues confronting thinking Christians in the 1980s.

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Pobee, John S. *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul*.

Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 6.
Sheffield: JSOT, 1985. x, 155 pp. Paper, ISBN 0905-774531; Cased,
ISBN 0905-774523.

A context for this study in current NT scholarship is not difficult to

locate, for questions of historical origins continue to loom large on the contemporary agenda. Pobee's work has particular and direct bearing on two such issues: the origin of Paul's theology and the origin of atonement theology in the New Testament. The monograph itself, we are told, originated in the early 60s, when its author, now professor of theology at the University of Ghana, was doing research at Cambridge. Its argument is straightforward: late-Jewish martyr theology has contributed significantly to the Pauline understanding and explication of the Christian faith.

Pobee develops his case by devoting a large, initial section of his book to an analysis of the pre-Christian theology of martyrdom. In spite of its relative length, Pobee's outline is at times rather sketchy, though comprehensive enough to delineate the major themes and vocabulary of martyr theology and demonstrate that martyr theology was not a monolithic development but must be appreciated as a many-hued phenomenon.

Two points of particular importance for the remainder of Pobee's study may be noted. First, the author discounts the influence of Isaiah 53 on martyr theology. Second, however, he makes little effort to explicate the source(s) of martyr theology behind the inter-testamental texts in question, or to document the development of a positive theology of death in pre-Christian Judaism.

In his third chapter, Pobee applies the results of his survey to the theology of the cross, arguing that the martyrological interpretation of the cross was used to make sense of the crucifixion of Jesus, at least in Jewish circles. The focus of attention falls repeatedly on the Pauline evidence, but, in that he occasionally treats additional evidence (e.g. the eucharistic words), Pobee apparently believes that his study has more general implications for our understanding of the development of atonement theology in the early church. For him, all traditional atonement phraseology stems from martyr theology.

The final three chapters of Pobee's work go on to draw out the implications of the martyrological interpretation of Jesus's death for Pauline theology. Pobee argues with varying success that Paul's soteriology, ecclesiology, christology, eschatology, and ethics were determined by martyr theology. A more helpful discussion of Paul's self-understanding as a servant of Christ follows; it is perhaps here that Pobee's thesis is the most compelling. The final chapter of the volume is devoted to an attempt to understand Paul's perspective on the persecution of the church within the context of martyrological categories.

We can be grateful to Pobee for his overall helpful survey of pre-Christian texts bearing on our understanding of martyr theology, for indicating certain consequential areas in Pauline thought that seem to have been influenced by martyr theology, and for his helpful exegesis of individual texts. We must ask, however, what role Pobee's first chapter on "forms of persecution" plays in the overall argument of the book. It is not integrated into the book, and is more suited to an appendix. As for the

overarching thesis of the book, we may feel a certain uneasiness that Pobee has given us no chapter on the sources of martyr theology. In fact, more attention to these sources might indicate how atonement theology developed in relation to these same sources and did not, after all, rest as squarely on martyr theology as Pobee insists. Moreover, we must ask, if the theme of martyrdom was so important for making sense of Jesus's death on the cross, why do we not see more evidence of this in the passion narratives of the canonical Gospels? Despite the helpfulness of this study on certain specific issues, then, fundamental questions remain regarding its central argument.

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