

BOOK REVIEWSMORE EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT

- historical evidence for the Christian Scriptures compiled by J. Macdowell; 362pp; £4; kivar. Campus Crusade.

This book was prepared by a research team from American colleges in order to furnish Bible students with practical answers to counter those who challenge the historical accuracy and integrity of the Bible. There appear to be very few available textbooks written by conservative evangelicals to answer those who seek to undermine, e.g., either the Pentateuch by the Documentary theory or the gospel records by Form criticism. Sadly there is evidence of concessions being made in this realm to the critics by those who claim to speak for the evangelical position. This is a very useful handbook which marshals a mass of evidence to refute the liberals and it rests unequivocally on the basis of the full inspiration of the scriptures as the word of God.

The book consists of three main sections. The first outlines the presuppositions of anti-supernaturalism, the relationship of science to the miraculous as well as dealing with the link between archaeology and criticism. The second part examines the documentary hypothesis and shows its false assumptions, and at the same time gives the nature and history of biblical criticism tracing the three main schools of thought. The book also provides us with the internal and external evidence for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and it thoroughly examines the various documentary theories and presuppositions including the evolutionary and legendary view of the patriarchal narratives. The various Divine Names are considered while the alleged contradictions, repetitions, anachronisms, incongruities and internal diversities are also discussed.

The last section considers the basic tenets of Form

Criticism looking at its chief proponents, defining its terminology, examining the nature of oral tradition, pericopes, form classification and the alleged role of the church as a 'creative community'. Separate chapters are devoted to answering the critics' denials of the biographical, chronological and geographical value of the gospel records. The views of Dibelius, Kasemann and Bultmann are summarised and assessed.

Each section is prefaced by an outline which makes it a handy reference book rather than a weighty theological tome that is complex, forbidding and probably never completely read. Each section concludes with a summary of the main points and each chapter is clearly set out under numbered headings. The body of the material consists of carefully chosen quotations from a wealth of sources both from the critics and their opponents. Each section is followed by a lengthy and helpful bibliography of works referred to in the text. The book concludes with a few brief essays on kindred themes as well as an appendix giving autobiographical sketches of the evangelical contributors from Allis to Young.

I warmly recommend this as an inexpensive handbook which will prove useful for students and pastors and may save them a great deal of time wading through other volumes. Here is a reliable handbook for those who like their material distilled and lucid. Let no one be biassed against this book because of the 'stable' from which it proceeds.

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CHRISTIANITY AND THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

(A Short Introduction and Bibliography)

by Michael Miles. Published by The Christian Brethren Research Fellowship, obtainable from the Paternoster Press, pp.40, 65p.

This is an interesting booklet being No.7 in a series of Occasional Papers published under the auspices of the above Research Fellowship. The word 'Christianity'

in the title is used in its widest possible sense. Attention is drawn to the works of Roman Catholics on the one hand, also to those who *"are learning all the time through sharing and prayer with people of other faiths who bring their own beliefs and traditions to the community"* [p.22], and on the other hand to the work of Corrie ten Boom. One might assume that coming from among the Christian Brethren the writer would start from a clearly Evangelical position, unfortunately this is not the case. Dealing with the issue of integrating the mentally handicapped into worship, he writes, *"Again a willingness to experiment under God's own hand is called for, and no hard and fast rules should be laid down. It is quite possible that an hour long Quaker style meeting entirely in silence could bring as powerful a sense of God's presence to one particularly handicapped person as a Charismatic Catholic mass would to another"* [p.34]. This comment presumably gives some insight into the author's theological position. At the same time it raises questions in our mind about tendencies currently present in modern Brethrenism, under whose auspices the booklet is published.

The booklet is divided into seven sections, the last two of which are a useful Bibliography and list of relevant Addresses. These will prove most helpful to anyone desiring to enquire further into the issues raised in the earlier part of the book. The first section is introductory and in it certain basic issues are raised. First of all is the vital one of whether the mentally handicapped may enter into a firm personal relationship with God. The point is also made that the Church has tended to evade its Christian responsibility for those deprived of normal mental powers. In this connection it is relevant to recollect the character of Mr Feeble-mind in Pilgrim's Progress Part 2. Bunyan writes most lovingly and understandingly of this character and presumably he was drawn from a person or persons whom Bunyan had met with in his life. His

appearance in Pilgrim's Progress indicates that at least one Christian writer of earlier centuries was acutely aware of the problems raised by those of limited mental capacity. Furthermore those who are familiar with Kennedy's 'The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire' (see p.203f) will no doubt recollect Mary Macrae who came to Killearnan and was there converted. Kennedy wrote of her "*I used to know her then as 'foolish Mary' and wondered what could move my father to admit her to his study but the time came when I accounted it one of the highest privileges of my lot that I could admit her to my own*". Anyone concerned with working among the mentally deprived would be greatly encouraged to read about God's glorious work in her and her spiritual discernment and usefulness. Two such random illustrations should prevent us from making too harsh judgments about the Church's failure here, great though it may be. The second issue raised is that of the difficulties of parents who find a child born to them who lacks normal intellectual capacity, and the feelings of guilt and despair which can come to them. The writer has a sensitivity to the needs of all concerned and has obviously thought deeply about the issues raised.

The second section is entitled '*Some Theological Considerations*' and is divided into three main parts. This is probably the least satisfactory part of the booklet. We are confronted here with some pretty massive problems and due allowance must be made for the difficulty of dealing with such weighty matters in such a short space. At the beginning a very unpleasant remark is quoted that Luther is alleged to have made, but no source is given so we do not know from whom the allegation originates. If such a remark can be authenticated then we will have to face its implications, if not it should not be repeated. In the first section which is '*The Sins of the Parents*' the issue is raised "*Does God take out his righteous anger at the sins of the parents by punishing the child?*" and the author goes on to comment "*The witness of both Old and New Testaments is against such*

interpretation". A number of relevant texts are then examined such as Deuteronomy 24 v.16 and Exodus 20 v.5. It is then asserted "*It is the consequences of parental sins that may fall upon their children, not the guilt or direct punishment. And even those consequences are not necessarily a bad thing when one remembers it is a just and loving Father who oversees them*". Apart from the apparent belief in the universal Fatherhood of God which is not scriptural, there is a failure here to get to grips with the issues. It is clear from the observation of the world around us that children do suffer for their parents' sins. It is also clear from Scripture that children are involved in the punishment of their parents' sins. Such passages as 2 Kings 5 v.27, Leviticus 24 v.14f, Deuteronomy 28 v.15f, 2 Kings 6 v.24f need to be considered as do also Matthew 27 v.25 and Luke 19 v.44, 23 vv.28-30, these three latter passages in conjunction with an account of the siege of Jerusalem. It is also imperative that attention be paid to a verse such as Romans 5 v.14. Why do little children die? If a child is not guilty of sin then why does it die when death is punishment for sin? The issue is an intensely painful one, not least to those who have seen little children suffering, but it must be faced, and relates to the whole character of the human race. The writer is of course absolutely right to refer to John 9 v.3 and Luke 13 vv.1-5; such passages together with the message of the book of Job will restrain any tendency to harsh and unjust comments and judgments about the sins and sufferings of others.

The second section is headed '*Accountability*'. This deals with the very relevant issue of how far the mentally retarded are to be held accountable for their sins. Again very large issues are raised relating to Infant Salvation, but again the issues are not dealt with in a very helpful way. Calvin and George Macdonald are both quoted and in fairness it is obviously impossible to deal with such matters in two pages. Finally '*Moral Judgment*' is under

consideration. The author himself here seems to feel his difficulties. He writes "*There is some danger in ploughing across so wide a field encompassing 'children and the mentally handicapped'*". Quite rightly here and elsewhere he remarks that the mentally handicapped can on occasion show far clearer moral insight than supposedly normal adults and children. Corrie ten Boom makes the same point (see p.30). Intellectual competence should never be taken as a ground for assuming moral or spiritual superiority. "*The first shall be last and the last first*". Perhaps in heaven we shall find some, who on earth had little natural talent but used what they had fully for the glory of God, raised to far higher glory and responsibility than those who, proud of their natural gifts, failed to use them for Christ's kingdom. As the author demonstrates, to approach the mentally retarded with a sense of our own superiority is utterly alien to a truly Christian spirit.

The next section is '*Achievement*' and brief accounts are given of the works of Corrie ten Boom, Jean Vanier at L'Arche, Algrade School, Humbie nr. Edinburgh, and of David Watson at St Joseph's Centre (R.C) at Hendon. This is most useful and it is helpful to read of what is being done by a variety of people and organisations. Then follows '*Barriers to be Broken*'; this focuses attention on difficulties to be overcome in helping the handicapped and is again valuable. The fifth and final main section is '*Opportunities for Action*' containing practical recommendations. Certainly one could not agree with all that is said, nevertheless there is much here of real worth.

Readers of *The Evangelical Times* will have read of the work of Christian Concern for the Mentally Handicapped and their project at Aberystwyth, and will already have been confronted with a number of issues raised here. In reviewing such a book great care and balance is needed. While it is necessary to make the comments, which have been made, about the grave theological inadequacies of the booklet, yet one respects the desire behind it to promote the physical and spiritual

welfare of the mentally handicapped. It is easier to write a review of such a booklet than to bear the burden and strain of caring for a member of one's family who is thus afflicted. Read with care and discernment it would be of use for ministers who are looking for some introduction to the subject. No doubt Christian Concern for the Mentally Handicapped, 135 Wantage Road, READING, Berks RG3 2SL would be happy to supply further information to anyone interested in the subject.

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ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

by J.W. Rogerson. Published by Blackwells in 'Growing Points in Theology' series; pp 128; £7.95

This is an important work from within the critical school (the author is a lecturer in Durham University Theological Department) which encourages O.T. scholarship to reassess many of its conclusions in the light of modern anthropological developments, especially those 'assured results' which have been based upon a faulty anthropological methodology. It is a must for every theological college library and for students studying the O.T. in liberal contexts for there is good mileage here in repudiation of many critical assumptions in O.T. theological study.

Rogerson confines his study to social anthropology (the study of human societies) and then proceeds to make the most important point of his thesis in chapter 1 viz O.T. students have rarely been conversant with social anthropology but have based their conclusions upon (usually outdated) anthropological assumptions. Dividing the history of anthropological study into three he notes that the second period was characterised by the evolutionary assumption that all societies had passed through similar stages of social, mental and

religious development, by a tendency to study 'culture' apart from its social contexts, and by a reliance upon second hand (and often unreliable) evidence. This approach, completely rejected in the current third period, is yet the basis of many of the histories of Israelite religion which thus become subject to the same criticisms, viz (i) conclusions are usually unjustified and unverifiable since there is no evidence of the postulated evolution of societies; (ii) according to the modern anthropological approach material is usually insufficient to reconstruct past societies with any certainty.

In the second chapter the author takes into consideration two early theories which have greatly influenced O.T. study. The first, evolutionism (mentioned above) traced the development of Israelite religion by 'survivals' - features of culture which allegedly reflected an earlier and more primitive stage (as for e.g. K in knock in the English language). Widespread comparison was made with Arabic studies.

The latter and conflicting approach was diffusionism which leant heavily on Babylonian material and on the basis of a belief in degeneration of societies traced certain features of Israelite culture back to earlier and 'purer' forms.

Both these approaches have been subject to considerable criticism by anthropologists because Biblical material is taken out of context, interpreted by alleged parallels elsewhere and, in the former case in societies which must have changed considerably in the intervening millenia. In addition they founder on lack of evidence and an unwillingness to assess the evidence we do have (i.e. the O.T.) properly.

However, present study continues to flourish by appealing to such material, a situation made the more bizare since two conflicting methodologies are employed together. So Robertson - Smith's theory of sacrifice as "*communion with the deity*" still

persists without any evidence and the Passover is still regarded as a relic of semi-nomadism (a concept itself subject to contemporary criticism). We might add that theories such as New Year Festivals, death/resurrection of God-King in cosmic battles are widely found though they cannot be substantiated.

The third chapter of the book is extremely important. Rogerson begins by outlining the theories on primitive mentality advanced by Frazer, Levy-Bruhl, and Cassirer which have been very influential in O.T. studies (e.g. in the work of Wheeler Robinson and Aubrey Johnson). These views he subjects to criticism in the light of modern anthropological research, noting again that these theories were advanced in the pre-field work period of the second stage. He observes (i) these theories were based upon a comparison of material culture without reference to the social context, so that like was not compared with like and material relevant for comparison was ignored; (ii) we need to be sure that we understand how we think and not assume we know.

However, such theories especially with reference to magic or a magical world-view are still advanced or assumed even though recent studies of magic have emphasized its symbolic character and studies in oral tradition have suggested that apparent contradictions in thought (e.g. Proverbs 26:4-5) are not evidence of primitive mentality (as Von Rad) but "*invite us rather to see a mutually enriching combination of insights based upon the juxtaposition of sayings*" [p.118].

The study of folklore as it relates to O.T. study is the subject of the fourth chapter and is somewhat unsatisfactory since it presupposes that O.T. narrative is not inerrant history, but tradition that can be assessed by such comparison. Moreover, the attempt to find a basic structure discernible in all folklore and, therefore, a reflection of basic categories of the mind is questionable. However, Rogerson's conclusions may be useful in certain areas of conservative O.T. apologetic. The author notes (i) since the so-called basic structures

of folklore are discernible in the Jacob narratives, for example, a major question-mark must be placed against literary methods which fragment it; (ii) the existence of folklore parallels to O.T. events is not an adequate ground for the rejection of an historical core to the material; (iii) since a coherent symbolic structure has been revealed in folklore studies certain apparently archaic or strange elements cannot be used as the basis for developing a history of religious belief.

Chapter 5 brings us back to more useful ground being especially concerned to discuss social and political structure. Rogerson points out that O.T. students have too often used a concept lacking rigour of definition (e.g. tribe) and then, on the basis of a comparative approach, mistaken a formal resemblance for a real one, without consideration of the relative functions of each, and imposed an unsatisfactory model on the O.T. material (e.g. amphictiony). This has made a nonsense of the Biblical data. A similar approach, he notes, has been made with genealogies in an endeavour (without any warrant) to reconstruct early history.

Further, there has been a tendency in the use of vocabulary to impose a definition upon a context rather than let the context determine the meaning. This serious methodological error has been compounded by an unwillingness to assess the Biblical data itself. For example, without studying social or kinship material which often lie behind a rough and ready use of language (as in English), it has been assumed that the terminology scientifically reflects social structure.

The reviewer suggests that the points made in this chapter have a widespread application in the field of O.T. studies. All too often ill-defined models, concepts and definitions based less on a study of Biblical material but more on the assumption of the existence of a parallel have been imposed upon the O.T. and led to quite unsupported theories gaining widespread credence.

The final chapter traces the recent development of

Structural Anthropology by making a brief survey of the complex field, following this by a discussion of the applicability of its findings to the O.T. Two important points are made: (i) structural anthropology re-enforces the criticisms made against views of primitive mentality by discovering common structures in the thought processes of all men. (ii) the universal concern men manifest for classification and definition might prove useful, says Rogerson, in understanding some of the prohibitions of the O.T. laws of diet etc. as helping people to discover and maintain a proper relationship with God.

Concluding Remarks This book fulfils, as least partially, a major need which has existed for a considerable time. As such it ought to open the closed minds of O.T. scholars to reassess some of their pet theories. For conservative believers proper use and reference to the work ought to prove extremely useful in O.T. studies notwithstanding the limitations imposed by the size of the book and the actual stance of the author, which must always be borne in mind.

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SEARCHING FOR TRUTH - A Personal View of Roman Catholicism. By Peter Kelly; published by Collins; pp.192; £3.50

This is a significant book because it deals with some of the major problems and developments within contemporary Roman Catholicism. The author, an Australian, entered the Jesuit Order in 1938 and 30 years later became Jesuit Provincial Leader for South-East Asia. He was troubled, in these later years, by the church's official self-definition and after meticulous research he concluded that the claims the Roman church makes for itself could neither be defended historically nor reconciled with critical Biblical scholarship. This important conclusion led to his resignation from the priest-

hood as recently as 1975.

The drama of this autobiography needs to be read against the background of the turmoil produced by the encounter of Christendom with science and philosophy in the 19th and 20th centuries. While many Protestant churches were deeply affected at an early stage, the Roman church was able to postpone the encounter - officially at least - until the Papal Encyclical during World War II. Although Romanists were technically free afterwards to approach the Bible more critically, Biblical scholarship found itself under ecclesiastical censure during the fifties and it was only fully approved and recognised at Vatican Council II, although the Vatican continued to impose a form of medieval scholasticism on Catholic schools and seminaries, using its canonical power to prevent its theologians from dialogue with contemporary philosophy. However, it was too late for the flood-gates had already been opened. For example, Maurice Blondel and others developed philosophical ideas which interpreted the human, cosmic reality in evolutionary terms perceiving God as the Divine mystery operative at its centre. On this view history was the locus of the Divine self-communication. Blondel also corresponded with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and also influenced Marechal, the initiator in the Roman church of the Transcendental Method (the adaptation of Kantian philosophy and modern phenomenology) which is now the central philosophy used by catholic theologians.

These new trends within catholic theological and Biblical scholarship are to some extent still confined to the professionals and the trends are expressed more boldly in some areas and continents than in others. As Gregory Baum recognises in his introduction, this poses a problem; *"If a catholic brought up in pre-Vatican II catholicism suddenly encounters this new presentation of the catholic faith, the shock may well be considerable"* [p.10].

It was this kind of shock that Peter Kelly received. His early catholic training was 'orthodox' and

sheltered; he accepted without questioning that the Roman church was 'right'. Before the completion of his legal studies in Adelaide, it occurred quite suddenly to him that he should become a priest. After a little time, despite his worldly life, his mind was made up. His commitment was total and he entered the Jesuit Order. The following 12 years were involved in the usual Jesuit training and teaching. Ordained in 1949, he was sent in that same year to Rome to commence a three-year study of canon law. He was intensely disappointed with what he saw in Rome: *"The parade of Papal stateliness, the pomp of ceremony that seemed the exact opposite of the Gospels, the wire-pulling and cheating to get places, the official deviousness and high-handedness ... the whole system was far from edifying"* [p.26].

The disappointment and questionings of this period remained with him and deepened until his final decision to resign the priesthood 25 years later. He suspected that there was something seriously wrong with the church and slowly he began to see a gap between the essential preaching of Christ by the Apostles and the development of the Roman system. Added to this in the sixties was the new spirit of questioning which was widespread within the church and the uncertainties created by the Vatican Council itself. His sabbatical in Germany in 1973 gave him the opportunity of reading and assessing the implications of critical, Biblical scholarship and two years later his decision to resign from the priesthood was made but not without immense emotional pain.

It is interesting to notice the influences upon Kelly which contributed to this important decision.

He was clearly impressed by the success of the sciences and, in particular, the new knowledge gained of the universe by astro and micro physics. For example, what does "God" mean in such an unfathomable vastness? Did He really choose a small planet of an insignificant star in which to reveal

Himself? In this context he grapples with the existence and 'otherness' of God. Concerning God's existence, he believes that the traditional arguments only provide "*suggestive thoughts*" [p.41] but the vast discoveries of modern science raise new questions which cannot be ignored. For example, physical scientists of the calibre of Fred Hoyle, Julian Huxley and Heisenberg are groping for the ultimate reality. Hoyle refers to a hierarchy of intelligences formed out of gas which are bundles of energy. Kelly regards this attempt to find and describe the ultimate reality as significant and thinks the German term 'Gesamtzusammenhang' (the way everything hangs together) is a good definition of God. His main argument in favour of God's existence is that without something permanent which he calls 'God' he cannot see how human beings can be human.

His agnosticism comes through clearly when he asks, "*What positively is this God?*" He replies, "*I am completely at a loss*" [p.52]. He also wrestles with the question of life after death and the problem of evil. For him there is no appeal to infallible teaching whether in the Bible or church. To the rescue again comes physical science. The soul is connected in some way with matter which in the final analysis is energy and if the soul is something akin to it then possibly the soul is to be regarded as the person. After death the body "*is nothing but a mass of manifold molecules ... but the person is the energy disposition that made him what he was and will keep him the individual he is ... what lives on after death is not a split person, body here, soul there, both one day to come together again; but it is the whole person who lives on*" [p.64]. Concerning evil, the author rejects the classical formulation of, and answers to, the problem and advocates that God should be regarded as the Creator who left the universe to evolve itself. He rejects the idea of fixed laws of nature, preferring to think of a more chaotic struggle at first leading to an improving order with humans as part of this clumsy development (p.70).

In addition to science, another major influence contributing to the author's resignation from the priesthood was modern Biblical scholarship. After sketching the origins and development of the critical study of the Bible (pp.76-119), he concludes that "*the Gospels are not histories of the earthly life of Jesus ... there are very few of the words put in His mouth that we can be sure He actually spoke; very few of the scenes and the actions that we can be sure took place as described*" [p.100]. His faith is largely determined by what he calls "*sound modern critical Biblical scholarship*" [p.127]. This same scholarship regards the resurrection narratives as being "*born from that after-Easter faith. They are not historical and factual in our sense*"! Similarly he regards the statement that "*Jesus is God*" as false if taken as "*real identification*" [p.142].

The author found chapter five - entitled "*Church and Authority*" - the most difficult of all to write largely because it is the matters discussed here that caused such radical changes in his life.

He acknowledges that much of the evidence for the Papal claim can no longer stand critical scrutiny. For example, Matthew 16 verse 18 does not apply to the successors of Peter nor did our Lord here give to Peter supreme authority over the Church. Historically, he concedes that much is disputed and unknown of what happened in the first two or three centuries (p.160). "*It is certain*", he adds, "*that a great advance in Papal authority followed the public recognition of Christianity by Constantine .. the church was building its public system on the lines of Roman Imperial institutions*". Another advance took place in the medieval period, especially after the late 11th Century. Peter Kelly then speaks of the church running "*wild*" [p.161].

But what of the future? "*We are entering upon a great period now, and we cannot see very well so far where the lights and shadows blend, and what*

the new illumination means" [p.173]. One aspect of this enlightenment is that doctrine has a new and broader meaning while statements from Rome can no longer be considered as absolute truths.

The Roman church is now "*a groping church*" and no longer "*a slot-machine giver of answers*".

The book is desperately honest; it is also informative and intriguing. Changes are taking place within the Roman church. A great deal of its traditional life and teaching is in a process of flux and turmoil. This book will help us to be more aware of what is happening in Rome.

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THE BIBLE UNDER ATTACK

published by Evangelical Press at 95p

Three main articles -

Rev Hywel Jones on *THE INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE*

Prof Edgar Andrews on *CREATION & EVOLUTION*

Rev Iain Murray on *OUR TIMES AND THEIR
LESSONS*