
Review of Theological Journals 1983—4

Part II

The Editor

On the general theme of hermeneutics, I benefited from reading *Preaching Old Testament Texts* in the **Calvin Theological Journal** (Vol.18, No.1). The writer, Carl Kromminga, addresses himself to the question, what is the message of God to the Church today in Old Testament narrative, and how does one discern that message? In order to avoid a more 'moralising' approach to the Old Testament, the following hermeneutic procedure is recommended. First, "in approaching narrative texts one must be aware of the basic **Continuity** in the substance of divine revelation and at the same time of the **Discontinuity** in the forms of its disclosure because of the historic character of the revelation which is itself revelatorily documented in Holy Scripture" (p.40). Second, "historical texts are literary compositions and must be interpreted as such ... because texts are parts of **Literary** documents, it is vitally important to look for clues as to the **Writer's Intention**". Third, it is essential "to grasp what the Lord was moving the biblical writer to communicate to his originally intended (hearers) in **their** situation". Fourth, "what is **God** recorded as doing in this text? ... What is the text's larger background in divine promise and deliverance?" Fifth, how are psychological and symbolical or typical factors used in the narrative? Finally, we must reckon with its Christodynamic character. Here indeed is food for thought for all preachers.

A similar article, *Is it right to read the New Testament into the Old?*, appears in **Christianity Today** (p.77, Sept. 2, 1983). Quoting Benjamin Jowett's statement in 1859 that "Scripture has one meaning — the meaning which it had in the mind of the Prophet ... who first uttered or wrote, to the hearers or readers who first received it," Dr. Waltke who is Professor of Old Testament at Regent College, Vancouver, argues convincingly in favour of the traditional view that the New Testament has priority in 'unpacking' the meaning of the Old Testament. "The Bible is not like a bookcase with each book standing as a separate entity in itself," and he adds that "the intention of the Author is found not in parts but in the whole ... let us join Jowett in his desire to be alone with the Author and hear His words, but let us keep in mind that the Author is Christ, who spoke through the prophets."

Perhaps this is an appropriate moment to widen our discussion by referring now to New Testament scholarship which was the burden of a useful article in **Christianity Today** (16 Sept. '83, p.52). "Many of the concerns," we are told, "that were in the ascendancy 25 years ago are still current: (1) how to understand the essentially eschatological framework of the NT writers; (2) the concern of the biblical theology movement to see synthesis and unity in the

New Testament alongside analysis and diversity; and (3) the redactional study of the Gospels, which had a similar interest in the wholes as over against the parts (in contrast to form criticism, which dominated the previous period).” Some themes have shown great resilience over the decades and continue to dominate NT scholarship. For example, Christology is in the forefront while in Pauline studies, interest has again shifted to re-evaluation of Paul and the law — whether Paul saw the law as essentially terminated or fulfilled (with some sense of continuation) in Christ. At the moment the trend is toward a middle position that sees the law ended as a means of righteousness, but continued as an ethical imperative. There has also been considerable interest shown in the parables while sociology is also being used increasingly as a means of understanding the early church. The writer’s conclusion is that “New Testament studies is much better off than it was 25 years ago, and the future looks even better.”

New Testament Studies is an international journal published quarterly by the Cambridge University Press and includes articles in English, French and German. Volume 30, No.3, interested me with an article on “Sir Edwyn Hoskyns and the Contemporary Relevance of ‘Biblical Theology’ ”. Hoskyns, of course, was one of the founders of the biblical theology movement some two decades ago, and in this article Reginald Fuller questions whether the biblical theology movement can be described fairly as a detour (the view, for example, of scholars like G. Lampe, J. Barr, B. Childs etc.) from the main task of theology. He concludes that “the unfinished agenda of the older liberal theology has certainly acquired fresh urgency since the sixties, but it would hardly be wise to approach that agenda as though Hoskyns and his biblical theology were merely a detour” (p.334).

The department of biblical studies in the University of Sheffield publish a **Journal for the Study of the New Testament** and in the first article of Issue 91 J.D. Kingsley of Union Theological Seminary writes on *The Figure of Jesus in Matthew’s Story: A Literary-Critical Probe*. The question of the Christology of Matthew’s Gospel continues to be debated but there is no general agreement amongst the more renowned New Testament scholars as to where the centre of this Christology lies. Kingsley, however, claims that Matthew’s Christology is pre-eminently a Son-of-God Christology. “Through the vehicle of the Son of God,” he writes, “Matthew calls attention to the unique filial relationship that Jesus has with God and to the soteriological implications associated with this” (p. 3). Other subjects in this issue include the Purpose of Luke, Hebrew Poetic Tenses and the Magnificat, Peter and his Successors: Tradition and Redaction in Matthew 16:17-19, The Translation of Matthew 28:17. This same University also has a **Journal for the Study of the Old Testament** and while some of the articles are informative they are also academic and critical.

But for those wanting to keep abreast of New Testament scholarship I can assure you that **New Testament Abstracts** will prove a mine of information. This journal is published three times a year by the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and includes abstracts (title, author, date and basic outline of the thesis or publication) which are conveniently classified into

sections such as New Testament General, Gospel-Acts, Epistles-Revelation, Biblical Theology, New Testament World. This is a most useful reference journal.

Another more academic journal is the **Biblical Theology Bulletin** which is published quarterly in the States. Volume XIV, No.2, includes material on Glory, The Human Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, The Place of Wisdom in Biblical Theology (in which the writer argues for greater attention to the wisdom tradition by biblical theologians and then suggests that this wisdom literature might clarify some of the links between the Jewish and Christian Scriptures), and Jesus as Charismatic Leader. This latter article provides a detailed sociological analysis of charismatic leadership which, it is suggested, is built on people's alienation, indulges their penchant for illusion and claims power for itself. "Hitler may be a good example. Jesus was not" but there follows an unsatisfactory account of the Lord Jesus as 'reputational leader'.

I can refer, briefly, to two other journals of dubious value, namely **The Heythrop Journal** (a quarterly review of philosophy and theology and in Volume XXV, No.2, there are articles on Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Schleiermacher, and Hegel's Theological Atheism) and **The Catholic Biblical Quarterly**. For those interested in further study on the New Testament Canon, an article by F.F. Bruce on 'Some Thoughts on the Beginning of the New Testament Canon' will be essential reading in the **Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester** (Vol. 65, No.2, pp.37-60). This material is part of a fuller treatment of the history of the New Testament Canon which Professor Bruce is preparing and in this article he confines himself to the more problematic period prior to Irenaeus.

From Christ, as the head and spring of union, there proceedeth unto all particular churches a bond of union, which is his Holy Spirit, acting itself in them by faith and love, in and by the ways and means and for the ends of his appointment.

This is the kingly, royal, beautiful union of the church: Christ, as the only head of influence and rule, bringing it into a relation unto himself as his body, communicating of his Spirit unto it, governing it by the law of his word, enabling it unto all the duties of faith, love and holiness.

John Owen, Vol.16, p.190