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# Review of Theological Journals: 1985—6 (Part 1)

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## *The Editor*

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The United Nations has declared 1986 as the International Year of Peace and it is this theme which **Theological News** (Vol.18, No.1, March 1986) takes for its editorial.

The World Evangelical Fellowship which publishes **Theological News** and the **Evangelical Review of Theology** is sponsoring, through its Theological Commission, a consultation on violence and peace under the title, 'Christ our Liberator and Redeemer'. This will be held in Singapore from the 27 June — 2 July 1986. The Consultation will be grappling with the basic issues of a theology of evangelism, peace and justice, the role of the Church in giving practical leadership in a world of escalating violence and death. "The phenomenon of violence will be studied in its many manifestations — sin and alienation from God, violence in family life from abortion to euthanasia, violence in the community and society from terrorism to religious and political oppression, violence in the global threat of war and nuclear holocaust ... We will work towards a more biblical and evangelical theology of liberation and redemption" (p3). Papers are being prepared by Rene Padilla, Rodrigo Tano, Don Carson, Ron Sider and others.

**The Evangelical Review of Theology** (vol.9, No.1, Jan. 1985) continues the theme of peace in a helpful exegesis of Ephesians 2:11 — 3:21 with its salutary reminder that "Ours is a world of which God has a purpose, a world of axioms, of religion, of politics, of history, and of culture. And what is that purpose? It is that the wisdom of God be made known to this very world through the Church. God's wisdom is nothing other than the peace of Christ that comes through the Cross ..." (p17).

A number of articles, including the editorial, in this same issue deal with various aspects of the peace theme. The editor reminds us: "Today there are many claimants to world peace and justice. Islam with its claim of religious superiority offers its **Shar'iah** law of moral absolutes and detailed rules for daily living, while Marxism offers an ideology pledged to 'the consolidation and flowering of the world socialist system'. The NATO and Warsaw Alliances offer peace through nuclear deterrents to a world threatened with self-annihilation ... Unless the Church is both salt and light it can be neither the conscience of the nations nor the hope of eternal salvation for a transformed society. But first the church must know the way of the Cross ... It must participate in the miraculous power of prayer. It must be a peace maker to its own fragmented community before it can be a peace maker to the world. The Church must believe and obey the whole Gospel" (p199).

Another related article is **Key Issues in Missiology Today** by John Grafton. He argues that “the relationship between the Church and the kingdom and the significance of this relationship to missions should receive increasing attention on the part of evangelicals” (p244). The nature of this relationship then determines our answers to a number of other questions. For example, what is the primary aim of evangelism? Is it to preach Christ and the kingdom or to plant churches? Or, to put it another way, is the task of missions based on the nature of the church or the nature of the kingdom?

The author then asks a series of searching questions relating to evangelism. What is ‘evangelism’? Is social action an inherent part of it? Again, what is the ‘gospel’? To what extent is it correct to say that many evangelicals are preaching an “emasculated gospel, an easy believism, and ‘cheap grace’ ”? Another key question is that of the gospel and culture. Will culture alter the gospel? Will the context take precedence over the text of Scripture? Will over-contextualizing lead to syncretism?

I am now turning in more detail to the area of **New Testament** studies. In **Themelios** (Vol.11, No.1, Sept. 1985) there were two interesting articles. The first was an editorial on the Virgin Birth and bodily resurrection. Referring to David Jenkins, the Anglican Bishop of Durham, and his denial of both the virgin birth and the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the editor observes that not only has the Bishop “sided with certain scholarly opinions rather than with traditional and biblical orthodoxy” but he has also “aligned himself with some very questionable theological opinions” (p3).

One important task in relation to the virgin birth is the harmonising of the Matthean and Lukan accounts but three significant points need to be noted. First of all, Matthew and Luke are our earliest sources and they are independent accounts which nevertheless agree that Jesus was miraculously born of Mary before she married Joseph. Secondly, the fact that other N.T. writers do not mention the virgin birth proves nothing and it is likely that “the tradition of Jesus’ virginal conception antedates Matthew and Luke”. Thirdly, the earliest non-Christian version of the event, i.e. the Jewish charge that Jesus was an illegitimate child, acknowledges the unusual character of Jesus’ birth. Therefore, the biblical view “has a lot going for it historically as well as theologically and it is accepted by many scholars”. Raymond Brown in his standard, classical work on the subject entitled **The Birth of the Messiah** (Geoffrey Chapman, 1977) allows for the virgin birth “as a serious possibility”. It is therefore “premature” concludes the editor, “for a bishop of the church to side with those who deny traditional Christian orthodoxy at this point”.

He also argues that the case for the Lord’s physical resurrection is even stronger. Harmonisation again is an area of the subject demanding attention but all the independent sources teach the raising of the dead, physical body of Jesus. It is ironical “that at a time when a Jewish theologian has published his arguments in favour of the physical resurrection of Jesus” (**The Resurrection of Jesus**, Pinchas Lapide, SPCK London, 1984, 160pp, £4.95) that the Bishop of Durham “can publicly question this traditional element of the Christian

good news; this time the historical evidence favours the Jew's interpretation rather than the Bishop's!

Readers who want to research the subject further may like to know of some of the following articles/books recently published:

**Scripture, Tradition and History in the Infancy Narratives of Matthew in Gospel Perspectives II**, ed. R.T. France and D. Wenham, Sheffield; JSOT, 1981, pp 239—266.

A new and important commentary on **Matthew** by **D.A. Carson** with a helpful discussion of the infancy and resurrection narratives. **Volume 8 in Expositor's Bible Commentary**, Zondervan, 1984.

On the resurrection see: **Easter at Durham**, **M. Harris**, Paternoster, 1985, which is a lucid and critical treatment of the Bishop of Durham's views in the light of New Testament teaching.

**The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study**, **G. Osborne**, Baker, 1984.  
**Easter Enigma**, **J.W. Wenham**, Paternoster, 1984.

**The Hope of a New Age: The Kingdom of God in the New Testament** is the title of another article in **Themelios** and written by Professor Howard Marshall. This is a lengthy and detailed treatment of an important subject which will up-date readers on recent scholarly contributions. Professor Marshall in his introduction observes that the phrase, 'the kingdom of God' has been the subject "of much biblical research in recent years, and although it is bandied about with great frequency in discussions of social action, it is unfortunately often the case that it is used in a very vague manner and that there is a lack of clear biblical exposition in the churches on the meaning of the term" (p5). This article is part of a new Book, **The Spirit in the New Age**, edited by L. Shelton and A. Deasely and published by the Warner Press of Anderson, Indiana, U.S.A.; it is one of a five-volume series of Wesleyan Theological Perspectives available only from the Warner Press at P.O. Box 2499, 1200 East Fifth Street, Anderson, Indiana, 46018.

The **Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society** has also published some interesting New Testament material. I enjoyed reading Robert Cook's contribution, **The 'Glory' Motif in the Johannine Corpus**. Relating 'glory' (Greek *doxa*:LXX and the Hebrew: *KABOD*) to God's self-manifestation and its impact on man, he discusses the primary objects of glory and then the forms of glory in the Johannine writings. Concerning the former, apart from two exceptions (John 5:44; 17:22) the 'glory' is directed toward the first or second Person of the Godhead while, in the latter, the focus of glory is largely Christological although a small number of references relate to the Christian life and a few are eschatological. In his conclusion, the author remarks: "The focal point of much contemporary theology is man. In marked contrast, the theme of a genuinely Biblical theology is the God of reality. Among the NT writers John's theology is Christological in emphasis, and one of the chief themes of his Christology is the incarnation. This particular emphasis is highlighted in the introductory section of John's three major works (the gospel, the first epistle, and the Apocalypse). Thus John's intent is not merely to call our attention to God as God but to his personal self-disclosure ... the ra-

diance of God's many-splendoured character is seen in his redemptive work (the gospel), in the life of his redeemed people (the epistles), and ultimately in the triumph of the kingdom of God in history and beyond (the Apocalypse). It does not seem extravagant, then, to say that 'glory' is not merely a motif **IN** the Johannine corpus, but rather that it is the motif **OF** the Johannine corpus" (p297, Volume 27, No.3).

Another helpful article is by Kendell Easley and entitled, **The Pauline Usage of Pneumati as a Reference to the Spirit of God**. "Apart from the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit", argues Easley, "there is no Christianity ... this study probes a particular aspect of the NT witness to the experience of the Spirit: that experience designated *pneumati*, "in the Spirit" (idem, p299). Two factors suggest the need to study this subject carefully. First of all, terms like "in the Spirit", "walking in the Spirit", "singing in the Spirit", "baptism in the Spirit" and even "slain in the Spirit" are often used carelessly and un-biblically. Secondly, Easley claims that while considerable attention has been given to specific aspects of the NT teaching about the Spirit (e.g. detailed studies of the phrase "in Christ"), very little study has been given to the category "in the Spirit". "The fundamental issue", Easley wisely observes, "is exegesis. Do the writers of the NT use *pneumati* as a technical term with one consistent meaning, or is the meaning of the term determined purely by contextual considerations? Or is the truth perhaps somewhere between?"

There follows a detailed table and analysis of the 91 instances of *pneumati* in the Greek N.T. and another diagram indicating the distribution of Paul's usage of the form *pneumati*. His conclusion is that Paul uses the term "not as a precise technical term but rather to refer generally to that effective agent of the power of God whereby certain Christian experiences come to pass and whereby believers are enabled to fulfil certain expectations" (p313).

## **Details of Journals**

### **Theological News**

Published quarterly by World Evangelical Fellowship, Theological Commission. Donations invited in lieu of subscriptions. Available from: Paternoster Press, 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter EX2 4JW.

### **Evangelical Review of Theology**

Published in January, April, June and October by the Paternoster Press for the World Evangelical Fellowship. Annual subscription: £7.20.

### **Themelios**

An international journal for theological students. Published three times a year by the Theological Students Fellowship of the UCCF and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Annual subscription: £3.00; two years £5.80; three years £8.40. Available from: TSF, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP.

### **Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society**

Published in March, June, September and December. \$4.00 per copy or \$15.00 per year. Subscriptions should be sent to: Dr. Simon J. Kistemaker, Reformed Theological Seminary, 5422 Clinton Boulevard, Jackson MS 39209, U.S.A.