

22. SERMON PREACHED AT SALTER'S HALL, MARCH 30, 1792, also OBJECTIONS AGAINST A MISSION TO THE HEATHEN (1795) and THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO SEEK THE SALVATION OF THE JEWS (1806)
23. Sermons mentioned; Iain Murray PURITAN HOPE (Banner of Truth), ch VII
24. Bennett, OP CIT, 130-31. Bennett and John Angell James, with former students published funeral sermons for Bogue! John Griffin a fellow labourer did so and Robert Winter at the request of the family
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Book Reviews

According to Luke

David Gooding

IVP 1987

362pp (paperback) £5.95

Possibly the reader has exactly the same mental reaction as the reviewer when the term 'Form Criticism' is mentioned. Shutters fall across the mind to protect it from the often sterile and seemingly worthless debates that characterise text-book student days. To add to the description, names such as Thucydides and Aristotle may even produce emotional tensions to the point of discomfort!

Yet these are amongst the terms which David Gooding uses as he tries to explain the principles of his exegesis in this book. There is a danger that the introduction could put some readers off the rest of the work, and if it does, it will be a very great pity.

David Gooding is former Professor of New Testament Greek at Queens University Belfast and brings to his commentary on Luke a method that very much reflects that of R H Lightfoot's commentary on St John. It is neither an approach which gets bogged down unnecessarily with textual detail, nor a verse by verse

exposition, but concentrates on the themes, movements and goals of the writer.

To achieve his analysis, Professor Gooding uses the methodology of Form Criticism. It must be emphasised that having explained and justified his use of this approach it has little prominence in the text of the commentary. Like a steel girder giving strength to a concrete pillar, so the method is buried away in the exposition. It is only noticed when the author deliberately reminds the reader of its presence.

To identify the movements of the arguments and events, Professor Gooding divides Luke into two parts. The Coming, 1—9:50 and The Going, 9:51—24:53. Each part is further subdivided into five divisions. In these divisions such exciting themes as 'Christ's way with sinners', 'Christ and the goal of redemption' and 'Preparing to reign with Christ' are explored.

The commentary is liberally scattered with charts which are inserted into each of the ten subdivisions to make sure the reader can see the overall theme of the division and how it links in with the whole.

Perhaps one note of caution might be

sounded; there might be a danger of assuming that the pattern which is presented is part of the inspired Gospel itself. This would be an unfortunate trap to fall into as there are parts of the Gospel that could have a different interpretation or perspective and possibly be even more convincing than that suggested by Professor Gooding.

The commentary ought to be read by Bible Class leaders and lay preachers through to pastors and academics to remind them of the richness and fulness of the love of Christ. May it become a model for future generations to copy in how to handle the scriptures.

Colossians and Philemon

N T Wright

Tyndale N T Comm

IVP 1987

192pp (paperback) £5.95

Tom Wright is a young Anglican theologian. The distinctive feature of his commentary is that he challenges the long accepted position that the Colossian heresy is the product of a range of Oriental/Greek religious and philosophical concepts. Most commentaries over the past hundred years have sought to establish the precise nature of the heresy and have assumed the truth of the accepted origin.

Like a breath of fresh air Tom Wright challenges this long held position. He demonstrates the weakness of the argument which has been long accepted and proceeds to place the Colossian letter into the same arena as that of Galatians and Corinthians. He claims that the problem is due to the presence of Judaisers who are trying to entice the

young Colossian converts into the legalistic and ritualistic demands of Judaism. Wright argues that the master stroke in Paul's argument is that he warns ex-pagans against Judaism by portraying Judaism itself as if it were just another pagan religion (p.24, see also p.101). In other words, Paul refused to concede any divine origin to Judaism as it had betrayed the principles of the Old Testament revelation.

Tom Wright has some very useful insights for the preacher. Commenting on Chapter 1:5 he says, 'The gospel, for Paul, is an announcement, a proclamation whose importance lies in the truth of its content. It is not, primarily, either an invitation or a technique for changing peoples lives. It is a command to be obeyed and a power to let loose in the world (cf Rom 1:16-17) which cannot be reduced to terms of the persuasiveness or even the conviction of the messenger' (p.52). Another of his helpful statements is, 'their knowledge of God and their thanksgiving to him is to be Christ-shaped' (p.56). Many other such truths throughout the book encourage the preacher in his task and clarify the issues he has to deal with.

Wright argues for the unity of 1:15 to 2:10. He demonstrates how Paul sees Christology to be at the heart of an adequate response to pagan seduction. It is who Christ is and what he has done that demolishes the appeal of man-made religion, whether they be Jewish or Hellenistically orientated. Commenting on 2:9, 'have been given fulness in Christ', Wright says, 'The parallels in Ephesians (1:23; 3:19) suggest the

meaning that God intends to flood the lives of men and women, and ultimately the whole creation, with his own love, power and richness, and that he has already begun to put this plan into effect through Christ and by his Spirit. That is the Colossian's inheritance in Christ and they can want nothing more from any other source'.

Wright also claims that the traditional view of Paul's method, that is, first to lay out all of his theological arguments as his foundation in the first part of the epistle and then to make his practical application, is incorrect. He claims there is a much closer interaction between doctrine and practice: more of a quantum interaction. Paul's great difficulty is to resist the significance of a truth and so he immediately launches into its application. Thus Wright argues for a more dynamic flow of argument. which excites the doctrine through its more instantaneous application.

Tom Wright's commentary is full of refreshing theological and practical insights which stirred my mind with some of the excitement its author obviously feels. He makes valuable application to the twentieth century situation in both church, home and private life.

What of the commentary's weaknesses? I found the inevitable woolliness over his dealing with baptism. I felt it was to some extent patronising. I also felt that, in his eagerness to demonstrate the Judaistic background to the Colossian heresy, he spent, for the size of the work, rather a lot of time on related issues to support his thesis. What he says in these related issues is often excellent but it is a pity he did not give the

same energy or space to exploring aspects of Christ's work in depth which the epistle so readily lends itself to. Finally, I was left uneasy with the apparent suggestion that hell was possibly nothing more than the total demoralization of the sinner, such as the total loss of self respect (pp135-136).

I found the commentary one that excited my mind and left me wanting to preach on the marvellous themes in Colossians, and that is what I look for in a commentary.

The Rev Tom Holland BD is pastor of Grange Baptist Church, Letchworth.

Old Testament

Numbers

*B Maarsingh
Eerdmans, 1987
122pp £6.50*

A simple, unadorned and fairly conservative explanation of the book of Numbers in the Text and Interpretation series. The volume shows, perhaps, rather less interest in the literary and theological structure of the book than might be expected in a modern commentary. A useful addition to the growing literature on a much neglected Bible book. However, Wenham remains the best all-round work especially for preachers.

The Covenants of Promise

*Thomas Edward McComiskey
IVP, 1987
259pp (paperback) £7.50*

The relationship between biblical