

## BOOK REVIEWS

**WHAT NEXT?** G.A.F.Knight. The Saint Andrew Press,  
Edinburgh. pp.128 £2.75

This skilfully told story of an eventful and industrious career will not disappoint readers who expect that the autobiography of an author will provide some clues to the development of the thinking reflected in his published works. As the narrative progresses it becomes increasingly clear that Dr Knight's Commentaries on the Prophets, his reply to Klausner's From Jesus to Paul no less than his magnum opus A Christian Theology of the Old Testament, to mention no other volumes from his pen, were all considerably influenced by his experience while working among the Jews or on their behalf. Some visitation of Jewish homes in Glasgow as a divinity student was followed by an intimate acquaintance with their religious beliefs and exacerbated sense of injustice, during the five years of ruthless Nazi propaganda and antisemitic activity, prior to World War II, when Knight was Director of the century-old Scottish Mission to Jews at Budapest. At that disturbing time Jews who were aware that he lectured extensively to Hungarian-speaking Christians with a view to promote good relations between them and their Jewish neighbours, were ready to listen sympathetically when he spoke to themselves of God's covenant love to Israel, revealed in the Book of Exodus, Hosea and so-called Deutero-Isaiah.

In the first two post-war decades Knight held successively teaching posts in Old Testament at Knox Presbyterian College, New Zealand, and McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, with a brief interlude between when he lectured on Old Testament at St Mary's College, St Andrews, Scotland as a member of the Semitics Staff of the University. Then in 1965 his appointment as founding Principal of the Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji, brought him a welcome opportunity of acting on his belief that in the case of many non-European cultures the Gospel can be more intelligibly communicated through the door of Semitic thought

forms than that of European cultural expression.

On his retiral and recent return to his native land, at an age when most men are glad to be free from official duties, Knight undauntedly accepted the General Editorship of the new series entitled the International Theological Commentary and undertook to contribute three volumes and translate five.

So far as the book discloses the theological opinions of the author, his position is seen to be more independent and conservative than that of some of his contemporaries in the field of Old Testament scholarship. He affirms that any theology which fails to take account of God's activity through the covenant he himself made with Israel has gone astray, and therefore he deprecates that Christian theologians are at present entertaining the idea of some sort of unity with Hinduism and Buddhism.

But mention may be made of two points that remain unclear. (1) How does his assertion that there "were not two natures in Christ", on page 37, relate to his anti-unitarian statements in the book? (2) What implications for the evangelization of the Jews in general does he see in the account given on pages 59-60 of the conversion of some at Budapest?

Principal W.J.Cameron, Edinburgh.

THE DISSENTERS

M.R.Watts Oxford U.P. 1978

562 pp £15.00

In the preface to his book, M.R.Watts says: "This book constitutes the first volume of what will be, when completed, the first substantial history of English and Welsh Dissent to appear for more than sixty years". In this first volume, the author shows that if the Puritans were "the hotter sort of Protestants", the Dissenters were the hotter sort of Puritans. He traces their origins back to the first English Anabaptists and Separatists of the sixteenth century, before dealing more extensively with the formation of the Baptist, Independent, Quaker and Presbyterian denominations in the seventeenth century; he concludes with an analysis of the period of decreasing influence 1689-1735 followed by the "revival" of Dissent, 1730-1791 during the Evangelical Awakening. He has therefore set himself a sub-

stantial task, especially as he has included the history of Welsh dissent as well. It is the measure of his achievement that not only is the book one of painstaking and judicious scholarship, but that it also sustains the reader's interest throughout. Its content is impressive; its style elegant and easy.

From the very beginning, Mr Watts shows both his willingness and his competence to deal with bones of contention as he argues, on circumstantial and geographical ground, for some connection between the English General Baptists and the continental Anabaptists. He also attempts to interpret events of significance. Sometimes he does so with a real sense of assurance, as, for example, in his analysis of the reasons for the decline of Dissent after 1689. But, at other times, he seems less certain of himself: this is particularly noticeable in his section on the phenomena and experiences of the Evangelical Awakening where he speaks of "the revivalists" "producing" convulsions and trances and "playing on" their audiences' fears of death and hell. He seems, at this point, to confuse the techniques of revival with the experience of revival.

Obviously, in a work covering such a long period, about which the literature has been extensive, the author has been forced to restrict himself. He has, therefore, concentrated his attention upon the general history of the Dissenting Churches. There is very little, for instance, about Puritan preaching or piety, an area crying out for further research. Also, he has little to say about the doctrinal developments and disputes of the period, although he does comment on the cleavage between the Wesleys and Whitefield. It would have been helpful also if some reference had been made to the revival of 1727 in Bethelsdorf in addition to the remark that "in 1727 Zinzendorf asserted his authority over the community". And one looks in vain for a section on the hymnology of Charles Wesley and William Williams. But it is obvious that some at least of these omissions were due to the inevitability of historical selection.

It is, therefore, to his credit, that Mr Watts has been able to survey a very large field in such a masterly

fashion. There are many touches of detail to whet the appetite of future researchers. For example, Richard Davis, the fiery Welsh preacher with "a good voice and a thundering way of preaching" who ministered so powerfully in Northamptonshire at the turn of the eighteenth century, is mentioned several times. His evangelistic labours and their effects would repay further study. The book is full of such "leads"; in fact it opens out the whole period in a most stimulating way.

The author's interest in the social implications of Dissent is obvious at a glance. There are thirteen valuable tables scattered throughout the book, dealing with the numerical strength of the Dissenters at various periods, the incidence of Dissenting congregations in urban and rural areas, and the occupations of male Dissenters according to the Dissenting registers. The book itself describes the position of women, the relief of the poor, the payment of ministers, and the social structure of Dissent. There is also a valuable critique of Max Weber's theory that there was a connection between "the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism". As Watts puts it: "When success came to Dissenting traders and craftsmen, it was not because they had been conditioned by their religion to make profits, but because they applied their minds and hands to the tasks which they and their Separatist forbears had always pursued".

Here, then, is a work of meticulous and comprehensive scholarship. It is not only interesting; it is also, on occasions, surprising. How many realise, for instance, that when John Smyth reconstituted his church in Amsterdam in 1609, he baptised first himself, then Thomas Helwys, and the rest of the company by the pouring of water over the face and not by immersion? And what do we make of John Berridge's remark that "Matrimony has quite maimed poor Charles (Wesley), and might have spoiled John (Wesley) and George (Whitefield) if a wise master had not graciously sent them a brace of ferrets"?

"The Dissenters" should become the standard text book on the subject for many years to come. The second volume will be eagerly anticipated. If Mr Watts deals with nineteenth century Dissent - an era of considerable interest - and

with the sharp decline of this present century, with the same accuracy and fairness as he has shown in this first volume, then our understanding of the entire period will indeed be greatly enriched.

Rev Andrew Davies MA  
Chessington, Surrey

### INTRODUCTION TO THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH

Geoffrey W. Bromiley T & T Clark, 1979 253 pp £3.60

The author and publisher are to be congratulated on providing us with this readable and useful introduction to Barth's theology as expressed in the twelve-part volumes of his 'Church Dogmatics'. The material is collated and summarised accurately and directly.

There are four main sections: (1) The doctrine of the Word of God, pp. 3-53; (2) The doctrine of God, pp. 57-106; (3) The doctrine of creation, pp. 107-172; (4) The doctrine of Reconciliation, pp. 173-243. There is also a brief Conclusion and then Indexes of Scripture references and Proper names. In his conclusion, Professor Bromiley acknowledges that the 'Dogmatics' suffers from obvious defects such as verbosity, overstatement, imprecision, lack of inner arrangement and a patchiness in the use of supporting Biblical and historical materials yet he also and rightly points to such positive features as the freshness and vigour of expression, fertile thinking and skill in interweaving various doctrines.

To justify the need for this type of straight-forward introduction to Barth, the author suggests the following reasons. First of all, to read the 'Dogmatics' and other writings of Barth would, for reasons of time and energy, be impracticable for most people. Secondly, Barth's theological method makes it difficult to understand individual passages. He does not systematise neatly and consecutively because of his conviction that God, and not doctrines, is the subject of theology. This means that all the doctrines are inter-related in his theology. For example, to understand Barth's teaching on Justification, it is inadequate merely to read the appropriate section in IV,1 because he

also refers to it in II,2 under the heading of the divine command and he has more to say on it in IV,2. In these cross-references there are sometimes important modifications of previous statements. This type of introduction then to Barth's theology can be invaluable to those seeking to understand and evaluate his theology. Thirdly, Bromiley describes secondary works on Barth as frequently deficient and unreliable either because they are too technical or reveal a superficial acquaintance with, and misunderstanding of, the actual text. Secondary works on Barth must be read cautiously.

Although aware of the dangers in preparing this kind of introduction to Barth, the author feels that his life-long encounter with Barth and the necessities of detailed study have given the work some objectivity in the reliable exposition of Barth. If one looks for a critical appreciation of Barth's theology here one will be disappointed for apart from some questions and suggestions there is neither commendation nor condemnation. This is due to Professor Bromiley's conviction that "Barth's theology is worth studying, knowing and grasping whether or not the verdict goes for or against it" (p.xiv).

As an introduction to Barth's 'Dogmatics' this book is, in the reviewer's opinion, reliable, helpful and also stimulating. If you want to grapple with Barth's theology then buy and read this book.

Eryl Davies, Bangor.

**CORRECTION** We apologise for the typing error on p.60, line 7, of our last issue. 'MASSORETIC' text should have read 'MAJORITY' text.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

Permit us to present an alternative and critical assessment of W.N.Pickering's 'IDENTITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT' to that which appeared in the last edition of 'Foundations'.

Pickering argues that, right from the beginning (from the time of the autographs), the majority of the manuscripts were free from serious error. Only a few rogue manuscripts were produced (whether by deliberate corruption or by carelessness), so that these bad manuscripts always constituted a minority. At every point in the history of the church, the majority of manuscripts have been in broad agreement with one another, and this 'majority text' has been a very good representation of the autographs. The present 'majority text' is therefore the best representation of the original manuscripts. The ancient texts still extant survived only because they were bad copies, they were not used and hence (unlike the good manuscripts), did not wear out. The variations between these ancient manuscripts are symptoms of their inferior quality; they were not representative of the 'majority text' in their own day, and their contribution to the critical reconstruction of the original text of the New Testament is therefore minimal.

The alternative explanation (that favoured by the majority of contemporary scholars) can be summarised thus. During the first two centuries, careless copying was the norm rather than the exception. Hence a great number of errors were generated during this period. By the time that careful efforts were made to regulate and supervise the copying of the text, there were already a multiplicity of readings without any clear 'majority text'. The textual families developed not as the various descendants of one common ancestor but as local attempts to produce standard texts from the sea of variants.

From the fact that most of the variants were generated at an early date (see i above), this second theory reasons

that there was a period of multiformity before a period of local uniformity, and a period of local uniformity before a period of empire-wide uniformity. According to this theory, the variations between the extant ancient manuscripts (recognised by all), reflect the true situation at this early date and not an anomalous situation to be explained by the supposition that only bad manuscripts could have survived. The theory explains the present 'majority text' as the result of a process by which one form of text became the universally acknowledged standard of the Eastern Empire.

Here, then, we have two alternative (and very different) theories, each of which is consistent with the manuscript evidences outlined in i-iii above. Either theory could therefore be a correct explanation of this evidence. Pickering argues his case by an appeal to a theory of textual transmission. Given, he argues, the early recognition of the New Testament writings as Scripture, and the consequent reverence of the copyists for the text, it is not reasonable to suppose that the majority of manuscripts would have become corrupted. But such an argument, however reasonable it might seem and however much it might commend itself to those who love the Scriptures, is entirely conjectural: it is simply an argument as to how we might expect the New Testament manuscripts to have been copied if certain other conditions applied. On the other hand, those advocating the second theory outlined above might equally argue that their theory is the more reasonable. Is it not more reasonable to suppose that the extant ancient manuscripts are a fair representation of the state of the text at that date than to introduce the hypothesis that only bad manuscripts survive? Faced with these alternative theories, is there any objective way of choosing between them, or must we simply opt for whichever we happen to prefer?

There is one unambiguous way of settling the argument, and that is by appeal to the text used by the fathers of the early Christian Church. According to the theory of Pickering, the variations in the readings of the still extant ancient manuscripts are abnormal. From the



beginning, the normal transmission of good copies of the originals constituted the universally recognised majority text (see pp.106-107). The text used by the orthodox fathers of the Christian Church would therefore have been very little different from the present 'majority text'. According to the second theory, since the existing ancient manuscripts are a fair representation of the state of the text in the early centuries, we would expect to find a similar broad variety of readings in the writings of the Christian fathers (including, of course, those readings which later made up the current 'majority text'). Here, then, is a method of judging between the two theories. If the readings of the fathers show a small range of variations, similar to those within the current 'majority text', then Pickering's theory is to be preferred. But, if the readings from the fathers show a large range of variations, similar to those found within the ancient manuscripts still extant (papyri and uncials), then the second theory is to be preferred.

The patristic evidence is not, of course, without its problems. Nevertheless, the general character of the readings in the early fathers is also not in dispute. Pickering presents us with a catena of quotations which show that the Christian fathers display a wide variety of textual readings (pp.62-68). It is quite true that they do give readings agreeing with the current 'majority text', but they also present us with a wide variety of variants, in every way similar to those found in the extant ancient manuscripts. According to the theory of Pickering this should not be so: he argues that the autographs were still in existence at the beginning of the third century! (p.103) and that the correct text was therefore unambiguously well known among the orthodox during this period. The evidence from the writings of the fathers (the diversity of their readings) demonstrates that the correct text was certainly not unambiguously well known among the bishops and Christian leaders of the church in the second to fourth centuries. We may regret this, we may wish that it were otherwise, but the evidence will really not permit us to avoid this conclusion. In short, then, Pickering's theory simply will not stand up to the test of the evidence.

At this point we ought to make it very clear that the alternative theory which we have outlined above does not depend for its validity upon any of the conjectures of Hort - not on the Lucianite origin of the 'Syrian text', nor on the superiority of the Alexandrian text, nor on the late date of the Peshitta. The theory does not depend upon our ability to reconstruct the genealogical connections between the various manuscripts, neither is the theory embarrassed by the degree of disagreement between the ancient manuscripts - on the contrary, it fully acknowledges this diversity. It is precisely for this reason that detailed refutations of the textual theories of Westcott and Hort, such as that presented by Pickering, are neither arguments for the superiority of the Received Text, nor are they arguments against the alternative textual theory which we have outlined above.

Be sure that we write to you out of a genuine and loving concern. We see our churches divided by the issue of the various human translations of the Word of God..... May God enable us to contend for the truth in a spirit of love, but may He keep us from contentious defence of our personal prejudices and traditions for these can only lead to enmity and strife.

With sincere greetings in Christ,

Revs R.J.Sheehan, S.P.Dray and  
Mr P.M.Misselbrook, London.

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**CHURCH AND NATIONHOOD: a collection of papers**

Edited by Lionel Holmes    Published  
by World Evangelical Fellowship  
Theological Commission  
pp.88    Paperback    £1.00

This small volume is made up of nine papers given at Basel in September 1976 at a "consultation", together with a brief foreward, by the editor, and what is called "the

Basel Letter", which is the key to the papers which follow. In this letter we discover the *raison d'etre* for the consultation, and here too are set out the basic Gospel principles which recur throughout the papers.

All men bear the image of God and, even though marred by sin, that image is being restored in those who believe through the redemptive work of Christ. Men are transformed into new creatures by the grace of God, and this bears on the present as well as the future. The Church is God's new community, His new people. "Loyalty to this new community does not preclude loyalties to nationhood". Through His people God is working out His purposes for the world. We are to be salt that has savour, and light shining to God's glory in the world's darkness. We are more than conquerors now, and "we look forward to God's final triumph in history."

In the light of these principles we need to consider the diverse situations the people of God currently face: many are called to suffer as well as believe (Phil.1.29). How do we respond to hostility from authorities and governments? We are to be good citizens, seeking justice, and "the peace of the city" (Jer.29.7). We are to pray for those in authority. At the same time we must refuse "to grant to Caesar what is God's alone", even though this may lead to direct conflict with the state. We can only do this in the power which God gives, and by "living every day with eternity's realities in view" (Col.3.1-2).

Four-fifths of mankind live in situations of confrontation between Church and State: the papers are intended to provide guidance and encouragement to Christians in such situations. There is occasional overlapping and repetition, and the papers vary in quality somewhat, but these things are inevitable in a symposium of this kind. The brief notes on the contributors are most interesting, but they suggest a predominance of academics (five) and administrators (two) with one bishop and only one working pastor.

Despite this, the book is far from being academic in emphasis: the writers are very much in touch with present realities, and the papers are grounded in present day situations; they also cover a wide section of the world-

scene.

For several reasons this book deserves to be commended to British Evangelicals at this time:

1. It raises issues and asks questions which are all too often treated with disinterest and even brushed aside as "worldly" or "merely political". These are social and practical problems which Christians are having to face now in many places. We shall probably have to face them ourselves, and it may be sooner rather than later.

2. The situations described in other parts of the world today demand our attention and our concern; after all, it is members of the same body who are suffering. In many areas Christians are a suppressed and persecuted minority: in Pakistan, Malaya, some African states, and East Germany, to name but a few of those areas. We can become far too parochial in our outlook, and it is high time we knew what our brethren in such places are having to pay for being Christians. Some of the facts about the persecution of Asian Christians are highly disturbing. The execution of five hundred ministers in Korea (1950-53); the disappearance of the visible church in China during the Cultural Revolution (1966-69); the massacres in Cambodia (since 1975); and reports from Vietnam; these ought to shock us out of our sleepy complacency. (All these are referred to in Dr Bong Ro's paper, a most challenging and thought-provoking analysis of persecution under hostile governments).

3. We have present duties and responsibilities as Christians. We are to pray for rulers: how seriously do we take God's word in this matter? We are to live the Christian life faithfully, no matter what the circumstances.

We are to be faithful to the Lord even if persecuted to the point of death. There is a striking illustration of such faithfulness in the case of the Cambodian major who left wife and family in Britain, and returned to help the infant Cambodian church in face of certain death (p.58)

4. We need to be prepared for persecution: even trained, so that we know how best to deal with it when it comes. This

involves working out Biblical principles to help ourselves and other Evangelicals face such a situation. We need to formulate a theology which includes this whole matter. In doing so one principle must regulate our thinking: the vertical, spiritual relationship (i.e. with God) must never become subordinate to the horizontal relationship between men and men.

These matters may sound unimportant to some; even strange for Evangelicals to be concerned with. All the more necessary for us to read this book and to consider thoughtfully and prayerfully its lessons and warnings; then we should work out its implications in the Evangelical church life of Britain today.

Rev Gwilym Roberts BA BD, Wrexham

**HANS KUNG - HIS WORK AND HIS WAY** Edited by H.Haring &  
K.J.Kuschel.  
Collins 1979 252pp £1.50

This is a most useful book particularly for the person who wants a reliable and stimulating introduction to the Swiss Catholic theologian, Hans Kung. The aim of the book is to 'sketch a portrait of this theologian, to outline the basic characteristics both of his work and of the man himself and to indicate what has been constant and what has changed in his development'(p7). Through essays, an interview and comprehensive documentation the book admirably achieves its purpose.

There are four parts to the book. First of all, a chronological summary from his birth in 1928 at Lucerne up until 1978. This summary helpfully sets out on facing pages data about his life and work then key events in the history of the church and world at that time with reference to the basic elements in Kung's conflict with the official church.

The second section, consists of essays chosen in order to provide an introduction to his major writings. Subjects dealt with include Justification, the nature of the church, Christology and infallibility. In the third section nearly 60 pages are given over to a detailed interview with Kung in which he speaks in detail about his background, conflicts, motives, influences upon him (especially

Barth) and the future task of theology and the Roman Church.

The final section provides a complete bibliography of Kung's published works from 1955-1978 .... the list is almost endless!

This is a most readable and informative book, providing us with important background to the present turmoil within the Roman Church. Read it!

Eryl Davies

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Contributors to this Journal enjoy reasonable liberty in reverent exposition of the Word of God and in the expression of their personal convictions within the context of the Doctrinal Basis of the B.E.C.

The views expressed, therefore, do not necessarily form definitive statements of B.E.C policy.

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Those wishing for further information about the aims, activities and Doctrinal Basis of the B.E.C. are invited to contact its General Secretary (Rev Roland Lamb) at 21 Woodstock Road North, St.Albans, Herts AL1 4QB Telephone: St Albans (0727) 55655

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