

principles of O.T. legal material remain valid and applicable in the Christian era.

The text itself is thoroughly and helpfully exegeted and each section concludes with suggested typological links. These seem at times to be somewhat facile but at least an attempt is made to meet what is surely an essential (though often neglected) requirement for such commentaries. Several Additional Notes are included within the text. They include discussion on the Route of the Exodus, several able and detailed exposés of the falsity of liberal methodological approaches to Pentateuchal criticism (eg. the detailed analyses of chapters 13-14 and 16-17 and his comments on the history of the priests and Levites) and a discussion of the large numbers in this fourth book of Moses. Reviewing the various explanations offered for these numbers, including that of his father, J.W. Wenham in 'Large Numbers in the O.T.', he suggests that they may be symbolical. His argument requires consideration.

Once again an excellent commentary from Wenham's pen. Its purchase might even inspire the preacher to tackle material in this most difficult book (apart from the story of Balaam!) and will certainly provide a reliable and, often, inspiring guide. A consideration of Wenham's methodology might also inspire a more truly biblical expository ministry among those of us who tackle Old Testament narrative and laws in our preaching.

## REVIEW OF THEOLOGICAL JOURNALS 1981: Part One.

Eryl Davies

While no single, major issue stood out in the theological journals I read in 1981, nevertheless there are clear trends discernible and several important subjects continue to be discussed and, happily, in greater depth.

In suggesting areas, for example, where new evangelical writing is required, Carl Henry specifies "a comprehensive text on Christian theism vis-à-vis the modern philosophies and living world religions; a contemporary systematic theology: perspective on concerns of Christianity and science with one eye on the debate over evolution; a thorough work on the biblical canon and its

significance; a fresh text on the person and work of Christ and a careful study of the problem of revelation and culture" (C.T. p23 6 Feb). In theology generally a reevaluation of systematics continues but without any significant evangelical contribution and the doctrine of Scripture is still rightly receiving special attention both in America and in Europe.

One useful editorial attempts to remove the confusion from the inerrancy debate and warns that "we must beware of red herrings that, whether so intended or not, divert us from the real issue" (C.T. p12 29 May). Emphasising the fact that the focus of evangelical teaching about biblical inspiration has been on the result rather than on the method of inspiration, the writer shows how misleading it is to charge evangelicals with believing that the whole Bible is LITERALLY true. "The Bible may speak in figures or literal language; but rightly interpreted, it is true in all that it says". Inerrancy does not require that the Bible employ contemporary scientific terminology. Another confusion is the identification of inerrancy with 'rationalism' as if we accept inerrancy on the basis of archaeological, empirical or rational proofs. While there is adequate evidence for the doctrine we "come to it primarily because of the teaching of Christ" and, may we add, the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit. A later editorial reports on the Toronto Conference held last August where 'evangelicals' with differing interpretations of the terms 'infallible' and 'inerrancy' met to share their opinions and pinpoint their differences (pp16ff 4 Sep). Jack Rogers of Fuller Theological Seminary acknowledged that he had radically misunderstood what inerrantists were saying and confessed his own "blind spots" and "lack of clear vision". His first misconceptions, he explained, related to the nature of biblical inspiration as defended by inerrantists. He felt that they were speculating as to how a perfect God must reveal himself and consequently viewed the Bible as a book of exact and precise language. In the opinion of Rogers, this overlooked the human and culturally conditioned form of the Bible. He went on to argue that the basis for this false hermeneutic "lay in the slavish dependance by inerrantists upon the common sense philosophy of Thomas Reid, the eighteenth-century Scottish realist." Inerrantists also discovered that, to some extent, they had misjudged Rogers' views. "He was objecting not to their cherished doctrine of the truth of the Bible but to the miscellaneous truths many of them were deriving from the Bible." When questioned further, Rogers stated clearly that

he did not believe that scripture ever states what is false in science or history. "Scripture could be interpreted that way if we insisted on reading back into Scripture our own contemporary ways of saying things, but that would be to misinterpret Scripture. We must constantly remember the religious purpose of the biblical writers and always allow them to speak in the language and cultural medium of their own day. But when we interpret Scripture fairly to mean what it really means to say in its own way, it tells only the truth and never in any part of it errs or guides us away from the truth." The main lesson drawn from this Toronto Conference is "that the first rule in theological controversy is to make sure you understand what the other fellow is really saying. Controversy carried on in low visibility rarely engenders anything more than heat." A challenge is then given to Rogers "to focus his attack not against inerrancy but against encrustations that have grown around it" and also to "put into writing his views on the complete truth and divine authority of Holy Scripture without surrounding his affirmations with so many qualifications that his affirmations are lost in the maze of qualifications".

"How is it", asks Professor Norman L. Geisler, "that evangelicals on both sides of the inerrancy debate can claim the Bible is wholly true and yet one side believes that there can be minor mistakes of history or science affirmed by the biblical authors, while the other side denies that there are any mistakes whatever? ..... One errantist put it bluntly when he wrote, 'We can speak of the Bible as being inspired from cover to cover, human mistakes and all'" (p185 ERT Oct). Geisler's answer is that errantists do not hold a double standard but rather a different theory of truth. "Different theories of truth", warns Geisler, "will make a significant difference in what one considers to be an 'error' or deviation from the truth. In fact, what counts as an error on one definition of truth is not an error on another definition of truth" (p186). Distinguishing between a NONCORRESPONDENCE and CORRESPONDENCE theory of truth, Professor Geisler offers two lines of argument for a correspondence view of truth - one biblical and the other philosophical. The biblical evidence includes the ninth commandment, for example, which depends for its very meaning and effectiveness on the correspondence view of truth. "This command implies that a statement is false if it does not correspond to reality. Indeed this is precisely how the term LIE is used in Scripture. Satan is called a liar (John 8:44) because his statement to Eve, 'You will

not surely die' (Gen.3:4) did not correspond to what God REALLY said, namely, 'You will surely die' (Gen.2:17). Ananias and Sapphira 'lied' to the Apostle by misrepresenting the factual state of affairs about their finances (Acts 5:1-4)" In addition, the Bible gives numerous examples of the correspondence view of truth: for example, Genesis 42:16, Deuteronomy 18:22, 1 Kings 8:26, 22:16-22, Daniel 2:9, John 5:33, Acts 24:8,11. One further consideration is that the biblical use of the word err does not support the intentional theory of truth since it is used of unintentional 'errors' (cf Lev.4:2,27 etc). "Certain acts were wrong, whether the trespassers intended to commit them or not, and hence a guilt offering was called for to atone for their 'errors' (p195). But if this is so, why do many Christians - even some who believe in inerrancy - claim to hold a noncorrespondence (intentionality) view of truth? The reason, in Geisler's opinion, is "often quite simple: There is a confusion between THEORY of truth and TEST of truth. That is, often both parties hold the correspondence theory of truth but differ in their claims that truth is tested by correspondence, by results, or by some other method. In short, truth should be DEFINED as correspondence but DEFENDED in some other way."

Another important and interesting slant on the subject is provided by Dr John Warwick Montgomery when he asks: "What does the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture have to do with revival?" (C.T. 8 May). He establishes a close relationship between the two and illustrates it convincingly by reference to the great French revival of the nineteenth century, a story which begins in Scotland with David Bogue (1750-1825) and who had a profound influence on the spiritual development of Robert Haldane (1764-1842). Both men attached great importance to an orthodox doctrine of Scripture and wrote helpfully on the subject. A number of theological students like D'Aubigne, Monod and Gausson were converted through Haldane in Geneva and they were greatly used of God in the French revival. "The time has surely come to recognise an even greater interrelation between revival and the doctrine of biblical inerrancy", concludes Montgomery. "It is no accident that the great revivalists have been unqualified Bible believers."

Hermeneutics still continues to be a major area of study for theologians and there are welcome signs that evangelicals are entering the field which is still dominated by liberal thinkers. The EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY (ERT) reprinted in D.A.Carson's

excellent article from THEMELIOS entitled, 'Hermeneutics: A Brief Assessment of Some Recent Trends' and this is indispensable reading for those who want a reliable introduction to the contemporary discussion. The same issue (April) includes a stimulating article by Samuel P.Schlorff on "The Hermeneutical Crisis in Muslim Evangelisation". While there exists today a unique potential for significant advance in Muslim evangelisation yet, adds Schlorff, "the mission to Islam is faced with a hermeneutical crisis which risks hampering its advance. A part of the problem lies in the fact that the hermeneutical issues have been clouded by other issues" (p26). One central problem is that of using the Qur'an as a 'bridge' in Muslim evangelisation, that is, giving the Qur'an a Christian interpretation. As Schlorff rightly argues, the validity of this approach must be established on theological rather than on pragmatic grounds. For example, "it is very doubtful that an historical-grammatical exegesis of the Qur'an will support a Christian hermeneutic" (p28). A second problem is that it introduces an authority conflict into the church. Thirdly, this approach approximates dangerously to that used by the World Council of Churches in its syncretistic approach to world-religions and the Christian-Muslim dialogues established by the Vatican since 1964. For example, the Muslim and Catholic scholars in France, Algeria and Tunisia who form a Muslim-Christian Research Group adopted a set of guidelines for dialogue, one of which was that "with regard to the historical facts which found our faith, and with regard to our Scriptures, we accept 'readings' other than our own" (p33). The conclusion seems inevitable that the Christian Qur'anic hermeneutic "favours the creation of the new type of spirituality envisaged by the ecumenical movement, but is not favourable to the planting of the church in Islamic lands." Schlorff then challenges those engaged in Muslim evangelisation to heed Walter Kaiser's call to join evangelical theologians in a "hermeneutical reformation" so as to "avoid getting bogged down in the morass of relativity" (p34)

To be continued

C.T. - Christianity Today

E.R.T. - Evangelical Review of Theology