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In the Study

HUMAN insight into the Christian message is inevitably partial and distorted. Churches and their theologians seize upon one doctrine and make it central to and regulative for a confessional position. A perspective, once adopted, opens one horizon but conceals another. So it is that one group stands upon the Resurrection and personal communion with a living Lord, while another stands upon the Atonement and appropriation of a redemption won; and if the Catholic is preoccupied with the reproduction of the gospel in the church, the Protestant stresses the finality of the work of the incarnate Son. Similiarly, East and West divide in the relative importance they attach to the problems of sin and guilt, of corruption and death; and if the West looks primarily to Calvary and Pentecost, the East harks back to Bethlehem, to christology and incarnation. Can we, in our day, advance beyond this fragmentation of the gospel? Can we take up again the endless task of seeing things clear and seeing them whole? Can we reintegrate incarnation and atonement? Even a measure of success would involve a closer approach not only to truth but also to ecumenical understanding.

It is along this fruitful path that the Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary would lead us.[1] He finds the link between incarnation and atonement to lie, both logically and historically, in the life and ministry of the incarnate Lord. Certainly the early church, by collecting, preserving, and making central the four gospel records, posed for all time the problem of the significance of the Jesus of history within the pattern of orthodoxy. There is laid upon us the necessary duty of thinking together christology and soteriology, of imparting life and dynamism to the Chalcedonian categories by explicating and interpreting their assertions in terms of the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth.

Professor Hendry offers us illuminating studies of the humanity of Christ in Eastern and Western theology, and grapples profoundly with the new questions raised by the post-Reformation age. His twofold concern is with the idea of the consubstantiality of Christ

[1] *The Gospel of the Incarnation.* By G. S. Hendry, S.C.M. Press, Ltd. 15/-, 1959.

with mankind and with the basis of the vicarious principle involved in the atonement; and the two are really one. An examination of relevant gospel material leads on to a consideration of theories of the atonement and of the contemporaneity of Christ with men through church and sacraments. The whole is a notable contribution to theological understanding.

The conclusion to which we are led is that "the reality of forgiveness is found in the personal relations that the incarnate Christ established with men at the human level." If this sounds complace and disappointing a reading of the book will soon correct such an impression. The demolition of the conventional conflict between the justice and the love of God would alone have made it worth the writing. It is of tremendous importance that our orthodox formulations should be painted in the colours of the gospel records. God ever is as we see Him in Jesus.

Only at one point does the writer fail us. He never quite comes to terms with the Cross. He sees quite clearly that his incarnationalist exposition raises large questions about the necessity and importance of the death of the Lord; and these he attempts to answer. But he seems unable to advance beyond an understanding of the death in terms of "end and fulfilment", as the climax of the suffering which forgiving grace inevitably undergoes. Is this enough? Is there not demanded some clearer recognition of the implications of the biblical correlation between death and sin?

Few great theological problems are exclusively modern. Indeed, the title of Professor Hendry's work might serve as an apt description of the central thought of the famous second century bishop of Lyons. The theological stature of Irenaeus has never gone unrecognized; and he stands sufficiently close in time and expression to the New Testament to speak to us in accents that our age finds particularly meaningful. So it is that we turn to this translation of a standard study in the biblical theology of this great figure with a sympathetic expectation.[2] The scope of the examination is comprehensive; the treatment is judicious; the conclusions are clear. Three balanced sections guide us in expert fashion from the Creation to the Last Judgment. The first of these deals with the Creation and the Fall, with man's pilgrimage from life to death. The third speaks of the Church and the Consummation, of the movement of man from death to life. Between them is the inevitable confrontation with the Incarnation, with Christ incarnate, crucified and risen. The whole constitutes an unveiling of a theological interpretation of man which provides a satisfying key to the whole thought of Irenaeus.

[2] *Man and the Incarnation.* By Gustaf Wingren, Oliver & Boyd, 21/-, 1959.

Wingren finds there to be two distinctive characteristics in the theology of Irenaeus, best summed up by the keywords "growth" and "conflict". On the one hand, our humanity is the ground of a ceaseless conflict between God and the Devil. On the other hand, that humanity is continually in process of change, growth, and development. And the two are basically independent, however real may be the actual and inevitable interconnection. Further, it is in the context of these central concepts that the familiar notions of *Image, similitude,* and *recapitulatio* are rightly understood. Man is created in Christ, in the image of God. But he is created as "child"; he must grow towards full humanity. By the Fall his humanity, perfect in its measure, is injured and impaired; henceforth he is less than truly human. It is by incarnation that the Son engages irrevocably in the conflict, wins the victory, recapitulates man's history, and so reverses the movement from life to death. So the decisive battle is won, though the warfare in man continues. Henceforth, in Christ, the growth towards fullness is possible, till the Son surrenders his kingdom, and God is all in all.

This is an attractive presentation of the thought of an attractive theologian. It reconciles divergent emphases, bringing pattern and order out of what sometimes appears to be confusion. Perhaps it imposes too much coherence. For the Irenaeus that emerges bears a startling resemblance to a modern biblical theologian with an ecumenical background and a leaning towards Aulén. It may be that this is the truth of the matter. But it would make us pause, read critically, and ponder long. In any event, Wingren gives us a profusion of material. It is only to be regretted that since this is a translation of a work published in1947 it can make no reference to the contribution of Lawson or the more recent studies of Lundström.

Wingren informs us, somewhat surprisingly, that the idea of the world as having been created in the Son "has disappeared in modern theology". Certainly this verdict is not reinforced by a reading of Barth's exposition of the Work of Creation. This is the theme of the latest part-volume of his Church Dogmatics to be translated.[3] It amply and richly associates Christ and creation. It is an exasperating mixture of insight and perversity.

I suppose that the really tremendous things Barth has so far provided are his treatment of election in Vol. 2 Part 2, his development of anthropology in Vol 3 Part 2, and his exposition of atonement in Vol. 4 Part 1. It is not to such heights as these that the present study attains. But it does offer us a profound and illuminating discussion of the correlation of covenant and creation. The ex-

[3] *Church Dogmatics,* Vol. 3, Part I. By K. Barth, T. & T. Clark, 45/-, 1958.

ternal basis of the covenant is creation: the internal basis of creation is the covenant. That is to say that creation is no isolated act of God. It is the presupposition of the realization of the divine purpose of love to man which the covenant enshrines, the way and means to that covenant. And it is the nature of that covenant that determines the nature of the creation. For the covenant is not only creation's goal; it is also creation's meaning.

These two facets of the all-important truth are worked out in detail by way of a prolonged exposition of the two "sagas" of creation that Genesis records. Probably Barth could have done no other than concentrate on these familiar chapters, and certainly much of his interpretation is penetrating. The essential conjunction of creation and redemption is never lost sight of; the determinative position and importance of Jesus Christ is never forgotten: the essence of man as male and female is strikingly proclaimed. For all this, and much more, we must be grateful. It is the detailed exegesis, especially of Genesis I, that makes us pause and question. Many times it borders on the arbitrary, and occasionally on the fantastic. It raises again the whole question of Barth's attitude to Scripture and his hermeneutical principles. We are left with the uncomfortable feeling that this volume, short as it is in comparison with most of its associates, might with profit have been made even more brief.

But to move from the Dogmatic to the Barthian studies in eighteenth and nineteenth century European philosophers and theologians[4] is a surprising experience. Stylistically speaking, we discover a new world. In vain do we brace ourselves against the familiar cascade of words and the endless flow of repetitive sentences; there is no shock to sustain. For here the current is strictly controlled, the pace is even, and the impact is unhurried, if decisive. Partly this is due to a difference in methodology, partly to magnificent work from the translators. But behind it all is Barth himself, presenting new and prepossessing facets of his personality to the English-speaking world, and proving himself to be in the end less skilful with the bludgeon than with the scalpel.

By way of prologue, we are offered a chapter on eighteenth century man which sets the stage for the appearance of the great actors with whom the book is mainly concerned. The age is seen as one of "absolutism", in the general sense of a system of life based on the certitude of the omnipotence of human powers. There was a restless striving for the reduction of everything to absolute form, in art and architecture, literature and education. The humanism of the era found its embodiment in Leibnitz. In his teaching about the self-sufficient monad, reflecting the divine in

[4] *From Rousseau to Ritschl.* By K. Barth, S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 42/-, 1959.

harmony with its world and its fellows, we discern the accurate portrait of the man of the eighteenth century.

The essays on Rousseau and Lessing, on Feuerbach, Strauss, and Ritschl, have all their interest and value; but it is the central section of the work that gives it its importance and definitive significance. The publishers have given us only selections from the great *Die Protestantische Theologie Im* 19. *Jahrhundert,* and choice must inevitably have proved difficult. But certainly no translation could have afforded to omit the brilliant studies of Kant and Herder, Schleirmacher and Hegel. The student will be foolish to pass this by on the plea that he has H. R. Mackintosh's familiar volume on his shelves.

Adequate summary is impossible at any point. But the interpretation of Hegel demands at least special mention, both for its intrinsic importance and for the corrective it provides to an unbalanced Kiergegaardian polemic. Here is a philosophy of utter confidence in mind and thinking man, assured of the equivalence of thinking and the thing thought, of the ultimate identity of self and mind and (in some sense) God. Thus an essential insight of Romanticism is confirmed, whilst yet being placed under criticism by the affirmation of the sovereignty of pure thought. The result is Titanism, a philosophy of unqualified, self-confidence, where everything stands under the rubric of movement, process, act, event.

For the "heart-beat" of the Hegelian system is the "endless circling" of the dialectical method. Reality is reality only as "conceived" by reason. And the absolute concept—reason, mind, God—must interminably posit itself in the triple movement of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Within the hospitable borders of so tremendous a structure everything could and should be included. It meant the end of the conflict between reason and revelation; for the object of philosophy was eternal truth, and the law of truth was contradiction. No longer was the de-historicizing of Christianity demanded; for truth was understood as event, and reason itself was understood historically. When modern man rejected Hegel, he turned his back upon the ultimate human possibility of unifying the Christian and the man.

This is discerning exposition, the fruit of a rare sensitivity and sympathetic understanding. It is as amply displayed in the study of Schleiermacher that follows. Here is the great theological figure of the nineteenth century, beside which Ritschl is a pygmy and his theology an episode. Barth is entirely right in referring us back to Herder and the Romantic emphasis upon experience, feeling, and history for our understanding of Schleiermacher, his problems and his programme. Indeed, it is this constant attention to cross-

reference and interrelationship that gives the book its visible unity and not a little of its value.

Nevertheless, it is not the learning this work displays that provides it with its ultimate significance, but the spirit in which it is written and the approach to truth that marks its author. On each thinker studied two verdicts may be registered, one provisional, the other final. Because we know Karl Barth, we know what the latter verdict must be. But it is never intruded, and never arrived at prematurely. All that is noble is set before us; all that is attractive and sober is presented; all that can be defended is defended. Only then are we invited not to hear an epitaph but to pronounce one. Perhaps this is Barth's own greatness: that in true humanity and humility he lays before us the immense range of man's achievement before placing the whole under the judgment and mercy of God.

It is partly due to the widespread influence of Karl Barth that the contemporary scene is marked by an interest in dogmatics and in its writing; but, as always, a renewed concern has brought with it fresh problems. For scholarship within the Christian Church in this modern age is characterized by two disastrous tendencies. The one is the confusion between the historical and the theological; the other, the cleavage between scriptural exegesis and dogmatics These constantly combine to bedevil discussion. It is with the problems bound up with them that the Professor of Theology at Tubingen University finds himself involved in his recent exploration of the approach to dogmatics.[5] His discussion moves from a relevant examination of the views of such thinkers as Bultmann, Barth, and Schlier to a sustained enquiry into preaching, teaching, inspiration, the canon, apostolic tradition, and the unity of Scripture. It will be apparent that the concern is with prolegomena and methodology rather than the writing of dogmatic theology. Certainly the reader will gain much in understanding if he places alongside this study J. M. Robinson's *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*. It is regrettable that the publishers have not seen their way clear to providing us with a translation of the whole of Professor Diem's work. What we are here offered is the second instalment of a two-volume opus.

Nevertheless, here is prodigality of riches. The modern situation is faithfully portrayed. On the one hand stands the exegete plying his trade without even a sideways glance at the dogmatician; on the other is the theologian doing despite to historical criticism through his fettering of biblical exegesis by the application of rigid dogmatic criteria. It is true that a thinker such as Barth will define dogmatics as the testing of the Church's doctrine and proclamation by reference to the original Word of God enshrined in

[5] *Dogmatics.* By Hermann Diem, Oliver & Boyd, 30/-, 1959.

Scripture. But Barth too quickly assumes the unity of the Scriptural canon and too easily restricts the liberty of historical enquiry. By what criterion are the theological assertions of Scripture to be examined as to their unity? By what measure are the values of individual texts to be appraised? What is the norm for dogmatics? These are the searching questions that demand an answer.

Perhaps advance must come by way of enquiry into the meaning of the historical Jesus for the preaching and doctrine of the Church; for the historical locus and the starting point of all Christian theology is the self-proclamation of Jesus in the Gospels. If the Gospels enshrine a tradition of preaching, then the essential task of criticism is not to penetrate behind the texts to some presumed historical facts but to enquire into the formation of the text wherein is mirrored the history of the proclamation. Here and here alone shall we reach a confrontation with the history of the revelatory process itself. This is not a matter of conventional textual criticism, but a question of the way in which and the extent to which the biblical writings attest the history of the Christ who in his preaching proclaims himself.

If all this seems vague and ambiguous, we must read Diem further and more closely. He would have us give a central place to the biblical concept of *akoē*, which is both the preaching and the hearing. Testimony is authenticated by its object; it is verifiable solely by that to which witness is borne. This does not involve any neglect of the problems of historicity. In a memorable phrase, Diem reminds us that we must never ignore " the historical contours of revelatory events ". But it does mean that the disastrous confusion of historical and theological arguments must be eschewed, that—*pace* Kummel and Cullmann—"in the empirical use of the canon in preaching lies the only theological possibility of defining it against Church tradition ". And it does imply that exegesis must be orientated in its approach to the biblical text by the dogmatic point of view. To the practical exemplification of this conclusion, the final pages of this notable study are devoted.

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