

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Reviews

Philip Carrington, *According to Mark: A Running Commentary on the Oldest Gospel*. 384 pp. 50s. Cambridge University Press.

Archbishop Carrington is known among students of the New Testament for his studies in the Primitive Christian Catechism and the Primitive Christian Calendar. In the latter work he sought to show that Mark's Gospel was arranged by the evangelist to serve as a lectionary, to be read by a congregation during the course of one year. In the present volume the author has produced a full scale commentary on Mark in which he has utilised his previous studies for the illumination of the text. For the convenience of the reader the calendrical theory has been summarised in an appendix at the close of the book; it could well be read by one unacquainted with Dr. Carrington's work before the commentary is begun.

The commentary takes on an unusual character by reason of the author's viewpoint. The introduction itself is unorthodox for a commentary on a Gospel. Questions of authorship and date are speedily dealt with: the writer is content to urge with respect to the former issue, "The simplest of all explanations is that Mark played the part of Boswell to Peter's Johnson," and he adds, somewhat humorously, "And his name *was* Johnson—Simon son of John!" With such a viewpoint the characteristic positions of the Form Critics are more than once attacked, above all the "curious assumption" that personal contact with first generation disciples early ceased, before the material took oral or written shape, and that all reliable memory of the life and teaching of Jesus was quickly erased; this, it is held, is unrealistic, for the disciples of Jesus would have been ministering to the Churches in their fifties, sixties and seventies. (The Archbishop might have pointed out that for disciples of a similar age to Jesus that would have meant the fifties, sixties and seventies of the first century, the period when the Gospel traditions were formed and the first Gospel was written.) It is believed that the disciples of Jesus would have followed the Jewish mode of conveying oral tradition; they would have formed a school or household about Jesus their teacher or Rabbi.

The division of the Gospel is of such a kind as to make one rub one's eyes, as when one watches a conjuror and wonders how he does it. The Gospel is seen to fall naturally into two parts, the Gospel in Galilee and the Gospel in Jerusalem. The latter divides

into three sections, the Ministry in Jerusalem, Little Apocalypse, Passion narrative; the former into four: the call of the four Apostles with the preaching in the Synagogue, the appointment of the Twelve with the parables, the Mission of the Twelve with the Five Thousand, Peter's Confession with the Transfiguration. These four sections are related to the four seasons, and therefore to the popular feasts and fasts: the parable chapter to the season of the sowing, as the parable of the seed suggests, the Five Thousand is placed by John at Passover, and so the rest fall into easy place. These four sections divide into fifty sections; assigning the first of them to the week after the Feast of Tabernacles, when the synagogue year begins, they cover the liturgical year nicely, one reading per Sunday, leaving the Passion Narrative for Passover, as was always done in the early Church. To crown all, the fifty divisions independently worked out by Dr. Carrington are precisely those contained in *Codex Vaticanus*, and the passages he assigned to the seasons of sowing, passover, pentecost and the summer fast are all so related in that ms.!

How does all this work out in exposition? Not so neatly nor so plausibly. But it should be made clear that the commentary is not intended to be a prolonged demonstration of a theory of the composition of Mark. The author rightly and generously closes his introduction with the statement: "The lections, the sequences, the calendar associations, the literary analyses, and so forth, are all useless antiquarian encumbrances unless they contribute to the illumination of the narrative and its central figure; my prayer is that unless they do this, they may be forgotten. The purpose of the 'oral tradition' was to keep alive in the Church the impact of the living Christ in his words and in his acts; the purpose of Mark in writing his Gospel was subsidiary to this. What value is there in a commentary unless it contributes to this end?" Dr. Carrington has undoubtedly written a commentary that fulfils this purpose, though at times, in my judgment, his spiritual insight and critical acumen contribute to that end better than the application of his theories.

The method of lectionary association may be illustrated from the exegesis of the prologue of the Gospel. It is presumed that Mark intended it to be read on the Sunday following Tabernacles. In the synagogue Genesis 1 is read on that Sabbath: its opening words, "In the beginning God . . ." are thus echoed by Mark's opening words, "The *beginning* of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Jesus is baptized and the Spirit descends on Him: the creation story is believed to be in mind, where we read of the Spirit moving on the waters, the voice of the Creator speaking and the breath of life breathed into Adam. (*N.B.*—the Spirit descended *into* Jesus—who is Adam, God's man). My mind is perhaps too prosaic to appreciate subtleties of this kind but I confess that I am not

impressed by them. I doubt that Mark had *Gen. i. 1* in mind when penning his first sentence. We cannot even be sure that he himself was responsible for the word "the beginning," for it may simply be a scribal note to indicate the beginning of another Gospel! The linking of Jesus' baptism with the creation appears to me fanciful and without warrant.

This, however, is not a just illustration of the exposition which Dr. Carrington gives when he deals straightforwardly with the text. It is better seen from a further observation on the baptism of Jesus: "The kerygma . . . began from the baptism of Jesus and included his death and resurrection, but ended with the baptism of the convert. It began and ended in sacrament. It began in Israel and ended in the Church. It was at home in both. It is illuminated by both." Exposition of this kind proceeds from a mind at home in the Gospels and the Gospel and it is not everyday. But there is much of it in this book and for it the reader will be grateful.

G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY

One Lord, One Baptism—Reports of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, with a Preface by Oliver Tomkins, 79 pp. 6s., S.C.M..

The publication of this book, containing two reports entitled "The Divine Trinity and the Unity of the Church" and "The Meaning of Baptism," is both a testimony and a challenge: a testimony to the Spirit of truth who will guide us into all the truth by creating the conditions in which it can be heard and done, and a challenge to listen as the same Spirit declares unto us the things that are to come.

Oliver Tomkins notes in his preface that the Faith and Order Movement worked from its foundation "to draw the Churches out of isolation into conference." After the second World Conference in 1937 it was seen that the roots of division among Christians were to be found in different conceptions of the nature of the Church; and so theological commissions were appointed to study the Church, Ways of Worship and Intercommunion in preparation for Lund 1952. At Lund, however, came a new insight: "We have seen clearly that we can make no real advance towards unity if we only compare our several conceptions of the nature of the Church and the traditions in which they are embodied . . . it is of decisive importance for the advance of ecumenical work that the doctrine of the Church be treated in close relation both to the doctrine of Christ and to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit." As a result the Theological Commission on Christ and the Church—significant nomenclature—was established in 1954, not to suggest the way to

unity from a starting-point of a given disunity but to acknowledge the unity that exists already in Christ and in the Spirit and to draw consequences for the actual life of the Church: the call to unity is a call to Christ.

Both reports were presented to the Faith and Order Commission a few days before the service commemorating the jubilee of Edinburgh 1910. Their contents, as well as their date, bear abundant evidence that the Spirit has taken what is Christ's and declared it to us. Theology, said Lord Altrincham recently, is bunk: on this premise he was able as an Anglican to engage in a "stimulating" discussion with Unitarians! "The Divine Trinity and the Unity of the Church" has thirty pages of Biblical theology for its main section which, going a fair way towards being a miniature introduction to Christian doctrine, makes it quite obvious that "the question of sound doctrine is inescapable." For example, the authors are convinced that the affirmations of the Nicene creed and the Chalcedonian definition are, because of their doxological-kerygmatic character, invaluable for our understanding of Christ and the Spirit. They are also rightly convinced that their approach from the consideration of the one Christ rather than from a survey of the many churches is a real contribution to significant understanding.

The Meaning of Baptism has the same orientation, conceiving it to be its central task to elucidate the connection between baptism and Christology, and thus asking to what extent baptism is bound up with the unity in Christ which is given to us. The position presented is consciously similar to that theology of baptism "written round the two poles of the baptism of Jesus at Jordan and the fulfilment in His death, Resurrection and Ascension"—a sentence quoted with approval from a source all readers of the *Quarterly* will recognise—and considers baptism as the expression of the whole *Heilsgeschichte*. Other rites of the Church thus renew or express its fulness, not depending on the rite of baptism but on that which it mediates.

This book is challenge as well as testimony because the "interim" reports it contains are specifically issued for consideration by the churches. To do this for the second of them will mean, for example, to give attention to the context in which one can speak of regeneration in baptism, namely, Christ's incorporation of man into himself and of the baptised into the continuing life of the Church as an act which covers the whole of life. To do it for the two together will be to share in the important insight of the Lund Conference that the way to unity is through the centre.

MAURICE F. WILLIAMS

Douglas Stewart, *The Ark of God*, 158 pp., 8s. 6d. Carey Kingsgate Press.

In his contribution to the Symposium, "Faith that Illuminates" (1955), T. S. Eliot expressed the view that nearly all contemporary novelists except James Joyce belong to what he called the third phase in the secularization of our literature over the last 300 years. This was the phase of those who had never heard of the Christian Faith spoken of as anything but an anachronism. Modern literature, says Eliot, repudiates, or is wholly ignorant of, our most fundamental and important beliefs; it preaches a gospel of this world alone.

To deny that modern literature—or any literature for that matter—is first and foremost about this world is to deny its worth as literature; but to suggest that our most serious and worthwhile contemporary novelists are not concerned as much as Eliot is about the meaninglessness, confusion and waste within the spiritual life of this world is to make what must be a superficial judgment. Perhaps it depends on how you look at it, and at least Eliot's condemnation of modern literature is in keeping with the attitude of the Churches—an attitude about which Douglas Stewart is deeply concerned. It is this concern which led him, for the W. T. Whitley lectures for 1960, to make analyses of the work of five modern novelists who had over the years "profoundly influenced" him. These lectures now appear under this title, *The Ark of God*.

Unlike Eliot, Mr. Stewart feels that "the great Christian themes of man's moral dilemma, of his spiritual anxiety, of sin and of salvation" are increasingly apparent in the writings of secular novelists. Unfortunately, it seems as though the Churches are suspicious of the secular novelist, or even fail to recognize that Christian themes exist in secular literature. They fail to see that many modern novelists have a message not only for the world, but for the Churches, and that through such writers as these there is a way of making contact with the new generations.

The five novelists particularly dealt with are James Joyce, Aldous Huxley, Graham Greene, Rose Macaulay and Joyce Cary, and Mr. Stewart sees each of them as representing an attitude or belief which throws some light on our spiritual situation. In the essays on Joyce and Huxley which he entitles "Apocalypticism" and "Mysticism" respectively, Mr. Stewart shows that these authors compel a Christian re-thinking. Joyce confronts the world with "the emptiness of its own heart, with its hidden and unspoken despair," he reveals the modern fear of meaninglessness. Equally, all Huxley's novels are concerned with the human condition—"Created sick, commanded to be sound." The answer, or lack of answer, in the work of these two novelists is not important: what matters is the essentially Christian vision of human nature and the human dilemma.

The position of the Churches and their duties are discussed more closely in the essays on Graham Greene and Rose Macaulay. Although, says Mr. Stewart, "it is the glory of Christianity that it possesses a living ethic to meet the living human situation," the Churches are not tackling the right problem, which is man's spiritual disease itself, but are too narrowly concerned with the symptoms only. In a fine analysis of Greene's "whisky-priest" character, the author shows him to be a symbol of the essentials of the Church—faith, hope and charity—the qualities which the Church must use in judging this modern world.

Finally, in his most sympathetic and thorough study, Mr. Stewart discusses the work of Joyce Cary under the heading "Protestantism," revealing, however, Cary as the most truly Christian writer of them all. Such is Cary's charity and compassion that there are no villains in his books; and his tragic vision of the world is resolved in his tremendous certainty of the love of God. This too is Mr. Stewart's final answer to his own view of the spiritual problem which he has revealed through these essays.

I. R. DUNCAN

Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete, Vol. VII. £4 7s. 0d. Patmos-verlag, Düsseldorf.

Volume VII of this journal has now appeared (Vol. VI was reviewed in our last issue) and lists some 1959 articles that have appeared on biblical studies in about 350 periodicals mainly during 1958 and 1959. The references to articles in the accessible journals or in the more remote languages are often accompanied by short summary statements. Like its predecessors the work is well classified and well indexed, and men who are engaged in any form of biblical research will want to have a copy or to ensure that it is available in their local library.