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IN THE STUDY

In 1977 a book by E. P. Sanders entitled *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* threatened to wreck some deep-rooted scholarly positions. What was said about Paul was not earth shatteringly new: other scholars had directionally foreshadowed some of its key emphases. It was the expert review of Palestinian Judaism in the centuries immediately preceding and succeeding the birth of Christ that put time-honoured presentations under threat and that, by its questioning of a view of Judaism which had provided the congenial foil for much conventional Pauline interpretation, swung the balance in favour of some different reading of Paul. Inevitably there was much fluttering in the dovecotes. Criticism and rebuttal prompted the material now published. [1] Its major theme is the function of the Law in Paul's theology. It elaborates positions earlier adumbrated.

At the end of the day, Sanders abandons the usual attempt to import consistency into Paul's handling of the issue of the Law. Changing preoccupations prompt changing emphases. It is not that the apostle's thought develops. It is rather that his basic unchanging convictions about christology, soteriology, election, when applied to changing problems, lead him to quite diverse statements about the place and function of Torah. It is indeed finally argued that in Romans 2 Paul does fall into self-contradiction when he is found asserting that fulfilment of the law is the basis for salvation. Yet this constitutes a singular departure from a broad coherence of presentation.

What then is the source of Paul's predominantly negative understanding of the Law? It is not that he judges obedience to it to be impossible. It is not that he judges obedience to it to promote boasting in one's own merit. Rather he is wrestling with the double conviction that the law belongs to God's saving plan and yet does not save.

Thus far we may applaud Sander's insistence on giving full weight to the diversity of Paul's arguments about the Law, his unwillingness to press them into some premature and consistent synthesis, and his dogged resoluteness in uncovering the major controls informing Pauline presentation. And we may do this while recognising that some of the individual exegetical judgments remain contestable, even tenuous, and will and must form material for continued debate. There is, however, a further issue arising of more obviously contemporary importance. It is the matter of Paul's understanding of the continuing place of the Jewish people. To it, Sanders turns in a concluding section.

What is God's ultimate purpose for the Jews? The traditional answer has been to the effect that they should become Christians. Of recent decades, however, there has been a broad-based move throughout the World Church to the kind of position that exempts the Jews from normal Christian evangelism and grants them a continued

1 *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* by E. P. Sanders. Fortress Press. £14.50. 1983.

divinely intended elected position side by side with the Christian community. At the heart of this 'two covenant theology' has of course been the Pauline discussion in Romans 11. It may be argued that only at the conclusion of the era of Gentile mission and the dawning of the Parousia will Israel be provoked to jealousy and saved. Even from this perspective, it remains to ask whether Paul envisages Jewish salvation by fiat of God and apart from faith in Christ.

It is obvious that we here confront a minefield of both exegetical and interpretative questions. Long ago, in the Church Dogmatics, Karl Barth jumped a whole row of obstacles simply by asserting that the 'all Israel' that would be saved referred to Jews and Gentiles. Those who in good conscience cannot quite make that leap seem left at the end of the day to decide either that entry into salvation, whether for Jews or Gentiles, is for Paul only possible via faith in Christ or that the apostle grants to Israel a special means of access based on election, the old covenant, and the faithfulness of God. Sanders understands Romans 11 to embody the former option. He adds that he cannot defend such a position and hopes that Paul, if alive today, would not do so either. This mixture of exegetical acceptance and interpretative rejection should clearly signal that the vexed question of continuity/discontinuity between old and new covenant remains at all sorts of crucial points to baffle, divide and perplex. One of the places where it is already surfacing is in the World Council of Churches study of the Apostolic Faith, as Faith and Order Paper 119 ('The Roots of our Common Faith') uneasily and provisionally demonstrates. One more reason why the Sanders discussion merits careful attention.

Practitioners of literary criticism in relation to scripture tend to make exalted and exclusive claims for their art. It is therefore refreshingly encouraging to encounter a craftsman prepared to commend his tools without deriding those of others. Historical and sociological probes have thrown a flood of light upon the Fourth Gospel. In a recent study [2] Alan Culpepper seeks to demonstrate that other kinds of questions can be addressed to it with profit.

The progression of the book reflects the literary critical preoccupations. We begin with the uncovering of the point of view of the 'narrator' of the Gospel, continue with discussions of time, plot, characters and characterisation as the text reveals them, pause over the features of misunderstanding, irony and symbolism that can be detected, and arrive at provisional judgments as to the intended audience and the 'implied' readers. Technical terms are at a minimum, and are always clearly explained.

Is the journey worthwhile? Certainly it is one of the most attractive examples of its kind, partly because the author keeps his own obvious enthusiasm for recent developments in the field of literary criticism properly checked and balanced. Given such restraint, there is everything to be gained from a generous recognition of the importance of a 'literary' reading of scripture. If scripture is to be truly, accurately and powerfully heard, then ears must be attuned to

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2 *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* by R. A. Culpepper. Fortress Press £14.50. 1983.

the precise nature of the text that is being encountered. To misidentify may be to mishear and misread. However we define 'gospel', we have to do with a narrative text. There is thus a proper presumption that the employment of a communicational model that plots the crucial elements of story transmission should prepare us for an acuter hearing of the Fourth Gospel.

In all this there is no necessary downgrading or rejection of the more familiar tools of historical enquiry. Their deployment has shed a flood of light on the Gospel of John and mightily assisted its understanding. Yet the characteristic feature of the historical enterprise was its concern for penetration into and behind the text. The literary product had a past, and the goal was to delineate it. Yet what must additionally be recognised is that the text has a future - as text. We must be concerned not only with what lies behind it but also with what lies in front of it, with that 'reception' towards it which it pressed and continues to press. Hence the necessary preoccupation with the elements of narrative.

One caution and one comment. I hope it will be clear that what is here involved is rather more than the latest trend of restless academics. What is new is the precision and sophistication of the endeavour, not the endeavour itself. Take any of the great enduring commentaries on the Fourth Gospel and it will be found difficult to convict them of failing to discern the literary dimension of which Culpepper speaks. Great commentating has always instinctively practised the literary art. Indeed, one of the curiosities of Culpepper's book and ten page bibliography is the complete absence from them of the name of R. H. Lightfoot.

So to the final comment. The artifice of the gospel's narrative anatomy rests in its power to lure the reader into the narrative and win from him acceptance of the narrative world as portraying reality. But what happens when cultural change puts asunder realism and imagination, history and fiction, and then locates 'truth' on one side only of that divide? How does it then fare with a faithful reading of the Fourth Gospel? Culpepper sees the problem. Indeed, he leaves us with it.

On the whole, Karlstadt is one of the Reformers who has had a bad press. He can be swiftly written off as a revolutionary or as a spiritualiser or, best of all, as both. A study [3] which claims to move him from the murky wings to something more like centre stage has therefore at least an initial attraction. It is sub-titled 'The Emergence of Lay Protestantism'. It is a powerful broadside, if not quite the bold *tour de force* which, at first reading, it might seem to be.

Pater's point of entry lies in an examination of Karlstadt's developing theology in terms of his understanding of scripture, predestination, church, and baptism. This discussion provides an interesting snapshot of the route that leads from the perspectives of

3 *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements* by C. A. Pater. University of Toronto Press. £29.75. 1984.

dawning Reformation to the radical ramparts of Anabaptist theology. The catalyst or - if you prefer - the fly in the ointment is the shift from 'supremacy of scripture' to 'sola scriptura'. Karlstadt trod that road, singlemindedly plotted its implications for church and sacraments, and by 1523 found himself essentially a 'baptist', though not an advocate of 'rebaptism'.

In terms of the Swiss Reformation, Karlstadt emerges as a significant fertilising influence. Pater works hard - perhaps a little too hard - to establish Karlstadt's influence on Zwingli in the early years of Zurich Reform. It is complicated enough to track the emergence of the Swiss Baptists and the exact contours of Grebel's break with Zwingli in the period 1521-25. Precisely to locate the importance of Karlstadt in the tangled story is probably impossible. Parallels and correspondences between Karlstadt and Grebel are undeniable, not least in the realm of sacramental theology. Their weight and significance remain matters for debate.

What then of Karlstadt's relationship to the Baptists of Northern Europe? Inevitably Pater seizes on the fascinating figure of Melchior Hoffman. Once again parallels and correspondences are not lacking. The inevitable difficulties of assessing their significance hinge partly on uncertainties in the establishment of a chronology of the emergence of theological positions, and partly on the necessary recognition that *post hoc* may not mean *propter hoc*. Yet if, in test cases, Swiss Baptist influence on Hoffman cannot be evidenced before 1530, there is a *prima facie* case for seeing Karlstadt as a link man between 'southern' and 'northern' European Baptists.

So finally we are led to ask about the origins of the English Baptists. No surprises here. A line is drawn from Karlstadt via Hoffman to Menno Simons and on through the Waterlanders to John Smyth. Not too much is claimed. English Separatism is given its proper due. Yet if the continental 'line' is at some points faint, the final links in the Pater chain remain as inherently likely and persuasive as they always were. In the end, the strength of this study lies considerably in the source material it unearths and uses. Only the expert can begin to assess whether and where selectivity and bias have distorted argument and conclusion. Certainly more justice has been done to Karlstadt than he has normally received. And in the doing some shrewd and thought-provoking historical judgments are registered. I shall want to spend a while reflecting on congregationalism as the end term of 'the historical evolution of thwarted theocrats', and on continental Anabaptists as 'disestablished Calvinists'.

Some writers amaze us by their restless agility in constantly ploughing new furrows. Others appeal by their ability to dredge yet more ore from ground they have already and constantly mined. Martin Thornton is of the latter kind. His latest book [4] offers to those who have followed his earlier writings little that is new or unexpected. Yet this careful distillation of the familiar is effectively put to work to provide a *vade mecum* for Anglican spiritual directors.

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4 *Spiritual Direction* by M. Thornton. S.P.C.K. £5.95. 1984.

What are the ingredients of the Thornton perspective? High churchmanship coloured by 'remnant' ecclesiology, credal orthodoxy in patristic hue, classic English (14th century) and Anglican (17th century) spirituality, touched in recent years by Macquarrie's brand of theological existentialism and now in active encounter with congenial sociological wisdom. It is from this sort of standpoint that there emerges a fund of practical guidance as to how spiritual direction is to be offered in today's world.

The significance of this sort of study must, for non-Anglicans of the baser Protestant sort, be at best oblique and indirect. Nevertheless, in a time when everybody who is anybody professes a concern with spirituality, it prompts some fascinating questions. Is it inevitable that Free Churchmen who wish to take the practice of spirituality seriously must go outside their own tradition to find satisfactory models? Is the whole business of 'direction' really a basic affront to Christians struggling to free themselves from various brands of paternalism and multicoloured variations of dependency? Is assessment of the charismatic renewal movement from the precise point of view of its 'spirituality' not sadly overdue, and grievously damaging by its absence?

Of course, these are not Martin Thornton's questions. Yet the terrain he traverses makes it inevitable that some implicit judgments begin to surface. For him the beating heart of spirituality is and has always been *regula* (Rule) comprising eucharist, office, and devotion. The possibility that there might be some reputable and effective alternative does not come within his purview. Do we judge that the Puritanism of Baxter and Bunyan (for example) offers no spiritual domicile for their remoter descendants and that a quick skip to some version of the Office is *de rigueur* for the serious? Is it the fact of the matter that the *regula* lives on, while the Puritan option is long since dead? From some Free Church Thornton we need to know.

Thornton is unshakably clear that directors must be trained to perform what is a fundamentally important task. I am glad that he uses the stark term 'director'. More popular current talk about soul friends may divert us from facing real questions about paternalism and dependency. Here Thornton rightly judges that the movement between dependency and independency is part of the rhythm of maturing life. It is the distortion of dependency that cripples - as does the attempt to eradicate dependency altogether. A Free Church tradition is not ultimately a stranger to 'direction'. It tended to call it 'discipline', and to deploy it in the corporate mode. Now that we are answerable only to our consciences and our God, it may be salutary to ponder awhile what direction might mean in the context of dependency.

What then about charismatic spirituality? It is a curious fact that it is only at one point and in passing that Thornton alludes to this phenomenon. His assumption seems to be that it is valid stuff for beginners. Such a judgment might seem the very obverse of what is more conventionally claimed. Either way, we are offered little real argument; and we sadly need it. Meanwhile, we can be grateful to a discerning student of the spiritual life who takes the false mystique out of those classic categories of the purgative, the illuminative, and

the unitive way, and who is ever alert to puncture steamy piety with the deflating pin of earthy commonsense.

To read a recent collection of the writings of Robert Lambourne [5] is to walk down memory lane. The fifties and the sixties were in many respects discouraging decades for those concerned with pastoral theology and its practical outworking. Imported prestige models exalting counselling, and almost unbelievably thin and bounded both sociologically and theologically, were firmly in the pastoral saddle. There seemed little to be done but grind one's teeth and mutter impotently.

Yet, as the sixties dawned, there came awareness that one voice at least, too professional to be wholly ignored, was speaking with authority in places where opinion was forged. Part of Lambourne's strength was his rooting in the field of clinical medicine. That imposed significant anchors on the widespread excesses of contemporary psychotherapeutic 'free fall'. Another part of his strength was his ability to bring some theological sophistication into a field conspicuous by its absence. That unleashed resources long denied to pastoral studies. All in all, it was an impressive artillery that was available for deployment.

But is this trek back into the past really needed? Have the lessons not been learned? Have we not occupied the terrain and irreversibly moved on? At crucial points it must indeed be acknowledged that the contemporary battles are to be fought on different fronts from those where Lambourne was engaged. He is, for example, found combatting the characterisitic positions of a Thomas Oden and a Don Browning. He might have smiled had he been around to scan their writings in the nineteen eighties. Today, the Odens and the Brownings are chastened men. They talk in quite different terms - though not necessarily in terms much more acceptable. Similarly, the rank individualism entrenched in the counselling model has gone into what bears hopeful signs of being a terminal decline.

Yet the range of Lambourne's concerns and the power with which they were articulated, allied with the lack of any quite comparable successor, makes this collection of his occasional writings of continuing worth. His theological presuppositions will not command automatic consent. His use of the New Testament does not always convince. His tendency towards impressionistic generalisation can sometimes annoy. All this, however, pales into relative insignificance as this well-chosen collection of papers, grouped under the headings of 'Health and Salvation', 'Counselling', 'Learning for Ministry', and 'Dialogue between Professions', unfolds.

There are those who would assure us that Pastoral Theology is currently shaking off its malaise and after decades of wilderness wandering is getting back on course for the Promised Land. I only half believe it. Either way, a strong case could be made for the

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5 *Explorations in Health and Salvation* ed. M. Wilson. University of Birmingham. £4.00. 1983.

conviction that effective pastoral theology will come only from those who have their feet in at least as many disciplinary camps as did Lambourne and who are willing to treat his legacy with enormous seriousness and build upon it. And it remains an interesting pointer to the range of his significance to notice how superficial some current criticism of the Health Service looks when set against his chilling insights into the fundamental assumptions about man presently embodied in Hospital care.

There are many ways of looking at the Church of England. To say that may be to do more than indulge in a blinding statement of the obvious. It is at least to signal the fact that perspective and angle of vision are immensely important because they affect what is seen and how it appears. Rupert Davies writes [6] as a Methodist preoccupied with church union. He speaks of Anglican tradition, worship and comprehensiveness, of its canon law as it affects other Christians, of its synodical structures, of the argument over women ministers, of Establishment and the mentality it sustains, of parties blocking ecumenical advance, of its doctrinal pluralism. He concludes with a call for the end of Establishment and establishment attitudes so that the way to reunion all round may be opened.

The result is a readable, interesting, lively, hard-hitting mixture of description, diagnosis, and prescription. It is, if you like, thoughtful journalism, and none the worse for that. Taken on its own limited terms, it should inform and stimulate. If it would but stir an Anglican riposte on Methodism, it might initiate a trend that would mightily enliven the decorous manoeuvres of interchurch relations. Yet I am bound to express the hope that it will not be taken too seriously and uncritically. There are other valid perspectives, other angles of vision than that adopted by a Methodist somewhat too obviously scarred by the failure of the Anglican-Methodist Scheme fifteen years ago. Every presentation will of course be subjective and partial. This one is arguably a shade too superficial to do real justice to a very complex landscape.

Rupert Davies is clear that 'mission and unity belong together'. Indeed he gets the initial question right by asking whether the Church of England is geared to make 'its greatest possible contribution to the whole Church of God and the life of this nation'. The trouble is that his attention is then focussed in quite other directions; mission, society and the nation cease to have any controlling influence on the discussion; reunion takes centre stage. Perhaps the assumption is that union automatically powers effective mission, and/or that what is required of the Church of England to make reunion possible necessarily involves changes that will maximise its contribution to the life of the nation. Yet such an assumption is in no sense self-evident. To justify it would need some probes in depth and a great deal of careful argument. Neither of these is in fact provided. Nor is direct attention really given to arguably more important questions concerning the role and effectiveness of the Church of England in society and nation. Had these been centrally engaged, a subtly different picture

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6 *The Church of England Observed* by R. E. Davies. S.C.M. £4.95. 1984

might have prompted a different diagnosis and prescription. However that may be, classic Dissent at least will do itself and the nation no service if it allows itself to be persuaded that there is little of significance that can be done because Anglican arrogance and irresoluteness are presumed to be part of the ecclesiastical tapestry of England.

NEVILLE CLARK

BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUMMER SCHOOL 1985

The Summer School will be held at Bradford University, 11-14 July. The theme is REGIONAL BAPTIST LIFE, and the lecturers represent a new generation of Baptist historians. They include:

Dr Brian Stanley: '19th Century Liberation Theology: Nonconformist missionaries and Imperialism'

Revd Denzil Morgan: 'Smoke, Fire and Light': 18th Century Welsh Dissent'

Mr Sam Henry: 'Aspects of Baptist Church Growth in Fife'

Miss Karen Smith: 'Calvinistic Baptist Spirituality in Wiltshire and Hampshire, 1730-1830'

Dr John Burgess: 'Baptists in Cumbria'

Dr Brian Bowers: 'Pecuniary Co-operation: Baptists and Money'

Dr Rosemary Chadwick: 'Independence or Co-operation? Yorkshire Baptist Association, 1880-1914'.

Within the programme is a SATURDAY DAY CONFERENCE on Yorkshire Baptists. As well as Dr Chadwick's lecture, there will be other speakers on local Baptist history, and visits to local sites of Baptist interest.

Details of the Summer School and Day Conference, and application forms, are available from the Secretary, Revd Roger Hayden, 37 Woodcote Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7BB. If you have still to book, please act now.