

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 12

Volume 12 • Number 1 • January 1988

Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews original and selected from
publications worldwide for an international
readership for the purpose of discerning the
obedience of faith*

GENERAL EDITOR: SUNAND SUMITHRA



Published by
THE PATERNOSTER PRESS

sensible to regard African independency rather as one of the many different forms of African Christian initiative.¹⁸

Now the tables are slightly turned in certain circles—namely academia—where it is now in vogue to consider these same groups, albeit from the safe distance of academic and intellectual non-involvement, as the epitome of African Christianity. Either attitude is regrettable. If they are truly Christian, they should not be discriminated against as obsolete and obscurantist. At the same time, it is indecently dishonest for the so-called African Christian intellectuals to endorse them wholesale uncritically for the persons who need the throbbing of the drum while they themselves find comfortable sanctuary in the dull, sleep-inducing music of our elitist cathedrals, churches and chapels. No, we cannot have our cake and eat it too in the hypocrisy of academic research. The religious sphere, particularly in the African context, is the last arena for those seeking mere intellectual titillation.

It was the African political theoretician and practical revolutionary Amilcar Cabral (1924–1973) who said, ‘I am a simple African man, doing my duty in my own country in the context of our time.’¹⁹ We too need to emulate him in our Christian vocation with all that this practical idealism involves in our endeavour to arrive at authentic African Christianity.

Dr. Watson Omulokoli is a Chaplain at Kenyatabi in Nairobi and lectures part-time at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Nairobi, Kenya. p. 52

Recent Trends in Christology

Gerald L. Bray

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Since the heart of Christian theology is Christology, taking stock of this field in every generation is a vital task. Bray does such a survey in a most scholarly way. The issues he tackles include, starting from The Myth of God Incarnate by John Hick, the quest for the historical Jesus, the relationship of the Gospels to scientific history, the nature of new Testament Myth, the validity of the re-interpretation of Chalcedonian formula, the soteriological function of Christ, the question of the Trinity. It is a good summary of the development of Christology in the past couple of decades.

Editor

In the eyes of a British student there can be little doubt that a study of recent trends in Christology ought to begin with the symposium *The Myth of God Incarnate* which

¹⁸ T. O. Ranger, *The African Churches of Tanzania* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972 Reprint), p. 4.

¹⁹ Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches*, edited by Africa Information Service (London: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p. 2.

appeared in July 1977.¹ Ten years later the book is still in print, and although it is neither a particularly original nor a particularly profound Christological study, it did manage to create an atmosphere which has provided a talking-point for the subsequent decade. The ‘myth-makers’, as the contributors to the symposium were irreverently dubbed, were quickly and almost universally criticized by most scholars working in the field, and a number of studies soon appeared which did their best to demonstrate that they were on the wrong track.² Before long there were even secondary symposia dedicated to an examination of the ‘myth debate’, in which proponents and opponents of the original work met each other and agreed to differ, often sharply, from one another.³

The *Myth* was criticized for two main reasons. First, the contributors were not agreed about what they meant by the word itself, and this led to some confusion in the minds of readers. Behind the verbal uncertainty lay an uncertain approach to historical facts which revealed itself in the cavalier approach which some of the contributors took to the evidence of the gospels. On the whole it would probably be fair to say that for most of them, as good post-Bultmannians, the historical Jesus had little or no importance for the development of Christology. But in this respect the symposiasts were out of step with a p. 53 large section of scholarly opinion, and they were criticized for naïvely swallowing an approach to the biblical data which was strongly reminiscent of classical (*i.e.* pre-1914) liberalism and which is now generally regarded as obsolete.⁴

The *Myth’s* influence on Christology had therefore little to do with its actual content. Rather what the book did was to bring into view the problem of whether and to what extent traditional dogmatic Christology ought to be revised in the light of the findings of biblical scholars and the speculations of modern theologians. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that it was precisely the *Myth’s* failure to handle either of these matters satisfactorily which produced a spate of material endeavouring to correct and supplement its shortcomings. To that extent the book opened up an area which had been too long neglected, and which urgently needed serious attention.

HISTORY AND THE GOSPELS

The precise relationship of the gospels to scientific history has long been recognized to lie at the heart of much Christological debate. The authors of the *Myth* were basically complaining that the early church took the biblical texts at face value and out of them constructed a dogmatic structure which, whilst it was internally coherent, was based on a false assumption. In saying this they were following in the footsteps of Rudolf Bultmann, who had died the previous year, but ignoring the widespread reaction to his ideas which had come to dominate Christological studies in Germany. Käsemann’s ‘new quest’ for the historical Jesus, Pannenberg’s assertion that the resurrection must be regarded as a scientifically historical event, and Hengel’s wide-ranging and generally conservative studies of the New Testament church—all these were simply ignored. This astonishing oversight can perhaps be explained by the fact that German historical and archaeological studies have usually fitted comfortably within a liberal theological framework. They have

¹ J. Hick (ed.), *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London, 1977).

² For discussion of this see J. Ziesler, *The Jesus Question* (London, 1980), pp. 108–119; K. Runia, *The Present-Day Christological Debate* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 78–86.

³ M. Goulder (ed.), *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued* (London, 1979); A. E. Harvey (ed.), *God Incarnate: Story and Belief* (London, 1981).

⁴ See A. Heron, article review in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31 (1978), pp. 51–71.

not been designed, as they have been in English-speaking world, to support the historical trustworthiness of the gospels as the chief prop of classical orthodoxy. The myth-makers, coming as they did from an Anglo-Saxon environment, understood only a radically anti-historical approach could serve as a persuasive basis for their theological reconstruction. Thus they were [p. 54](#) obliged to overstate their case and ignore developments in Germany which might be interpreted as evidence against it.

But in spite of its lingering attachment to orthodoxy, the main characteristic of recent Anglo-Saxon historical study has been its relative detachment from theological questions, and this tradition has reasserted itself in the debates of the past decade, which found many in the conservative camp un-prepared to argue on the myth-makers' chosen ground. The *Myth* appeared too soon after John Robinson's *Redating the New Testament*⁵ for the latter to have exerted any influence upon it, but the contrast between them was soon perceived and commented upon.⁶ Robinson was a theological radical schooled in the English tradition of conservative biblical criticism, and in his book he managed to present a case for saying that the entire New Testament canon was in existence by AD 70 without ever suggesting what implications that might have for a radical rejection of the gospels as historical evidence. Robinson subsequently went even further and attempted to demonstrate that the fourth gospel was the one closest to the original *kerygma*, although here he was prepared to admit that there may have been a long period in which John was able to meditate on Jesus and develop his Christology before committing it to writing.⁷

From the conservative side came John Wenham's *Easter Enigma*, which was an attempted harmonization of the four gospels in their accounts of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.⁸ Wenham was criticized for his forays into speculation, but impartial readers also pointed out that this is inevitable if harmonization is ever to be achieved. What Wenham did was to show that harmonization is not impossible, so that the claim of the gospels to historicity deserves to be taken more seriously than it has sometimes been. Furthermore, it was generally recognized that Wenham was writing in defence of traditional orthodoxy, though he nowhere attempted to develop this. Even so, this reaction demonstrates the degree to which it is still assumed that the historicity of the gospels and traditional orthodoxy stand or fall together, and it reminds us why John Robinson failed to carry conviction when he tried to unite a radical theology to a conservative biblical criticism. [p. 55](#)

Specific attempts to unite a conservative view of the reliability of the gospels as historical narrative with a fairly traditional theological position which nevertheless was prepared to take the modern debates into account were made by I. H. Marshall⁹ and C. F. D. Moule.¹⁰ Marshall's study is more limited in scope, being primarily an examination of Jesus' self-understanding, using the main titles of divinity which are applied to him in the New Testament. He concludes that New Testament Christology makes sense only if we posit the belief that Jesus himself taught that he was the Son of Man, the Son of God, the

⁵ J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London, 1976).

⁶ See E. L. Mascall, *Theology and the Gospel of Christ* (London, 1977), pp. 111–120.

⁷ J. A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (London, 1985).

⁸ J. Wenham, *Easter Enigma* (Exeter, 1984). A similar approach to this can be found in M. J. Harris, *Easter in Durham* (Exeter, 1985), which is a scholarly rebuttal of the Bishop of Durham's denial of the historical resurrection of Jesus.

⁹ I. H. Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (Leicester, 1976).

¹⁰ C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge, 1977).

Messiah-Christ and Lord. Moule endorses the same view, though perhaps somewhat more cautiously, and goes on to develop the idea of the 'corporate Christ', in which Jesus ceases to be merely an historical individual and becomes, in the understanding of the New Testament church, a cosmic figure who transcends individual person-hood to embrace a new humanity in himself.

It is at this point that Moule deserts orthodox Christology, which says that each believer has a relationship with Christ, who enables him to approach the Father in the trinitarian communion which is our inheritance in the Holy Spirit, and opts instead for an all-embracing, essentially eschatological view, according to which Christ is the agent of the transformation of the entire creation—a universalism not all that distant from the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, although Moule acknowledges no specific debt to either of them.

Far more radical than Moule is J. D. G. Dunn,¹¹ who reduces his Christological understanding of the New Testament to two fundamental presuppositions. First, he argues that the early church worshipped Jesus as Lord, which soon came to mean God, even if this was not necessarily immediately clear at first. Second, Dunn argues for an ontological continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith; in other words, whatever happened on the first Easter morning, the early Christians believed that the Christ whom they met in the post-resurrection appearances was the same person as the Jesus whom they had known before the crucifixion. These two assumptions allow Dunn to claim a kind of minimalist orthodoxy whilst accepting the main substance of the classical liberal position on the composition of the New Testament writings, the emergence of early Catholicism, and so on. In a sense, therefore, he may be called the diametric opposite of p. 56 John Robinson, and the perceived incongruity in his position has similarly failed to carry conviction.

Finally, representing an even more radical line, there is J. Mackey,¹² who accepted all the most anti-historical beliefs of the myth-makers and endeavoured to give their views a systematic framework rooted in the New Testament. It is Mackey's contention that Jesus was himself a myth-maker propounding a highly symbolic 'kingdom of God', and that the task of his followers, especially the apostle Paul, was to substitute a myth based on Jesus for the one created by him! Mackey's work is valuable chiefly because it shows us how far it is possible to go in rejecting history when constructing a Christological theory. In purely intellectual terms it represents a considerable achievement, but one which is too weakly grounded to be regarded as a serious contribution to theology.

ORTHODOXY

Mackey comes from a Roman Catholic background, which may explain why he takes the myth-building of the early church far beyond the New Testament. According to him the Pauline myth did not finally become orthodoxy until the defeat of Arius, which thus represents a watershed in Christological development.

The attempted rehabilitation of ancient heretics is a recurring feature of modern Christology, though until recently the figures usually selected for this honour have been either Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428), whose case rests on the fact that he was not condemned until 553, and Nestorius, who has been shown to have expressed agreement with the *Tome* of Leo, a document which was used at the Council of Chalcedon to reinforce

¹¹ J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London, 1980).

¹² J. P. Mackey, *Jesus: The Man and the Myth* (London, 1979).

his condemnation at Ephesus in 431. Scholars continue to argue over the merits of Nestorius' case,¹³ but it seems as if the main efforts at rehabilitation may have shifted to the famous arch-heretic Arius. Certainly this was the intention of Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh¹⁴ who argued that Arianism owed its distinctive Christology to soteriological considerations whose strength was such that the 'orthodox' opposition was reduced to a handful of diehards around Athanasius of Alexandria.

The belief that soteriology determined Christology in the Arian p. 57 controversy represents an ingenious attempt to read a modern situation back into ancient times. Gregg and Groh have taken the 'functional' approach to Christology which is common in Germany, where Oscar Cullmann and Ferdinand Hahn have been its leading exponents, and applied it to the fourth-century debate. It is interesting in this connection to note that whereas Cullmann believes that the functional Christology characteristic of the New Testament gave way to a more ontological approach later on, Gregg and Groh seem to be saying that the Arian controversy was the moment when matters came to a head and the 'biblical' Christology represented by the functional soteriology of Arius finally succumbed to the ontological approach now associated with orthodoxy.

This view has been seriously challenged by Rowan Williams¹⁵ who argues that it misrepresents the thrust of Arius' teaching. Arius, says Williams, was primarily concerned to deny the (faulty) ontological assertions of the church of Alexandria, which seemed to him to be raising Christ to such a level of divinity that the person of the Father and his rôle as *fons deitatis* were being compromised. Instead of this, Arius proposed an alternative ontology which would leave the Father's uniqueness intact and at the centre of Christian theology. In general terms, Williams is certainly correct in his assessment of Arius' mind, though he may have underestimated the appeal of soteriological factors to some, at least, of his many followers.

One interesting feature of recent discussion is that traditional orthodoxy has come to be associated with the Council of Chalcedon, perhaps because it is the usual stopping place in university courses on early church history, even though that Council has little claim to such a distinction. This has been forcefully pointed out by E. L. Mascall¹⁶ and two timely, though little known, studies bear him out.¹⁷ More recently, however, there are signs that the neglect of post-Chalcedonian developments is being repaired, at least to some extent. David Calvert¹⁸ extends his rejection of classical Christological terms to the period beyond Chalcedon, and Glenn Chesnut¹⁹ does his best to refashion post-Chalcedonian terminology into distinctively modern p. 58 concepts. Chesnut is particularly concerned to demonstrate that the exponents of Chalcedon, and in particular Maximus the Confessor, had a theology which can quite easily be transferred into existentialist terms. It is a brave attempt, but apart from the fact that it assumes that existentialism is *the* modern philosophy, it is open to the same kind of objection that Rowan Williams has levelled at

¹³ For a full discussion see A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition I* (rev. edn, 1975), pp. 559–568.

¹⁴ R. C. Gregg and D. E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (London, 1981).

¹⁵ R. Williams, 'The Logic of Arianism', in *Journal of Theological Studies* 34 (1983), pp. 56–81.

¹⁶ E. L. Mascall, *Whatever Happened to the Human Mind?* (London, 1980), pp. 28–53.

¹⁷ J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, NY, 1975); P. T. R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451–553)* (Leiden, 1979).

¹⁸ D. G. A. Calvert, *From Christ to God* (London, 1983).

¹⁹ G. F. Chesnut, *Images of Christ* (Minneapolis, 1984).

Gregg and Groh. Once again we are faced with an attempt to graft a modern way of thinking onto an ancient author whose own perspective was rather different.²⁰

MODERN RECONSTRUCTIONS

Nevertheless it is fair to say that 'Chalcedon' is now widely used as shorthand to represent traditional orthodox Christology, and that recent speculative work in the field can largely be divided according to whether it accepts or rejects this heritage. This in turn involves a preference for either an ontological or a functional approach to the figure of Jesus. In view of the tendency of biblical scholars to opt for the latter, it is scarcely surprising that the majority of recent studies have done the same, but the ontological approach is by no means dead and has recently acquired some notable exponents and defenders.

Among the books devoted to a basically functional approach, we may mention the 1980 Sarum Lectures given by Schubert Ogden²¹ who argues for an understanding of Jesus as the man who has given us the key to achieve authentic personal freedom. Ogden's approach is reminiscent of the existentialist morality of the 1960s, and he is deeply sympathetic to the authors of the *Myth*. However his approach is so firmly tied to the supposed desire of 'modern man' for the subjective experience of 'freedom' that any reference to the historical Jesus is obliged to serve this fundamental point. Because of this it becomes difficult to know whether Ogden is really presenting a Christology at all, or merely using Jesus-language as a hangover from the past which might still be useful for expressing human emotions today.

Much less radical than this is the work of Anthony Tyrrell Hanson,²² who rejects the Chalcedonian framework without departing from the Bible or the theological tradition as a whole. Hanson argues that the p. 59 teaching and experience of Jesus which the early Christians received obliged them to develop a theology which allowed for distinctions within God. In particular, they were forced to develop a Logos, or Word, doctrine, according to which God could communicate with mankind through the activities of a particular human being. We appear to be on the road to a modern form of Arianism, though Hanson is careful to reject this. He also rejects the revamped adoptionism of Geoffrey Lampe,²³ though he is broadly sympathetic to the concerns which Lampe raises. In the end, Hanson pictures Jesus as the greatest of the saints, a man in whom God has revealed his Word but who nevertheless remains a finite creature who is not identical with that Word.

Hanson's work is especially notable for the amount of attention it gives to the question of Christ's pre-existence and the problem of the ongoing influence of his sacrifice as a mediatorial propitiation for our sins. Both of these concepts he resolutely denies, though in doing so he opens up the whole field of medieval and Reformation Christology, including the eucharistic controversies of the period, which have largely been left to one side in modern debates.

Roman Catholic theologians have also been prominent in advocating various forms of functional Christology, though their dogmatic commitment to Chalcedon has usually

²⁰ *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings* (London, 1985), gives some idea of his thought. But for a full treatment of the question see P. Piret, *le Christ et la Trinité selon Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris, 1983).

²¹ S. M. Ogden, *The Point of Christology* (London, 1982).

²² A. T. Hanson, *The Image of the Invisible God* (London, 1982).

²³ G. H. Lampe, *God as Spirit* (Oxford, 1980).

prevented them from being quite as radical as their Protestant counterparts. In general they have been content to stress the implications of Christ's complete humanity, particularly in the realm of his conscious self-awareness. 'A humanity completely open to God' is the way Piet Schoonenberg,²⁴ Karl Rahner,²⁵ Hans Küng²⁶ and most profoundly Edward Schillebeeckx²⁷ have described and developed their approach to Christ. For them the psychological experiences of a first-century Jew are all-important to our understanding of Christology, and it is the meeting of Jesus' self-consciousness with ours which makes him the model for us to follow in the pursuit of our salvation. To all of these writers, as to Hanson, the traditional ontological approach suffers from being drawn largely from the fourth gospel, which they all agree is a late and unreliable source.²⁸ p. 60

In opposition to this tendency there is the wide-ranging and solidly based work of Jean Galot, whose earlier writings were introduced to the English-speaking world by Eric Mascall,²⁹ and some of whose major work has now appeared in English.³⁰ Galot tackles the modern Christological debates head-on, and argues that only a return to the ontological categories of Chalcedon, suitably updated to embrace the concerns of modern psychological research, can solve the problems which theologians believe confront them. Galot insists that the biblical witness, taken as a whole, leads inevitably to the ontological definitions of Chalcedon, which he believes are sufficiently opened to accommodate modern concerns. He rightly criticizes many modern theologians for having rejected transitional terminology without either understanding it or bothering to investigate its hidden potential. Galot's work is a first-class restatement of traditional orthodoxy in modern terms, and deserves to be more widely known than is the case at present.

Another defender of the traditional ontological approach is Colin Gunton,³¹ who argues that to neglect it is to fall back into the dualistic approach to reality which characterized ancient tendencies towards adoptionism and docetism. As Gunton points out, modern reconstructions of Christology often bear more than a passing resemblance to ancient heresies, and he attributes this fact to the rather superficial rejection of the traditional orthodox inheritance on the part of modern theologians. Gunton's book is a fresh and learned philosophical approach to the subject and should be taken more seriously than it has been so far. Gunton does not appear to know Galot, but the two men have a good deal in common and their approaches complement each other in a quite remarkable way.

THE WORK OF CHRIST

The predominance of a functional, soteriological approach to Christology is a reminder of the importance of the work of Christ within the framework of the doctrine of his person

²⁴ P. Schoonenberg, *The Christ: A Study of the God-Man Relationship in the Whole of creation and in Jesus Christ* (New York, 1971).

²⁵ K. Rahner, *Theological Writings* vols 1, 13, 16, 17 (London, 1974–81).

²⁶ H. Küng, *On Being a Christian* (London, 1977).

²⁷ E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus* (London, 1979); *Christ* (London, 1981).

²⁸ Hence the importance of J. A. T. Robinson's *The Priority of John* (London, 1985).

²⁹ E. L. Mascall, *Theology and the Gospel of Christ*, pp. 151–188.

³⁰ J. Galot, *Who is Christ?* (Rome, 1980).

³¹ C. Gunton, *Yesterday and Today. A Study of Continuities in Christology* (London, 1983).

and natures. As Colin Gunton points out, modern theologians frequently miss the fact that the classical two-natures Christology had a profoundly soteriological purpose in ensuring that Christ was an adequate saviour of mankind **P. 61** and mediator between man and God. But although the soteriological theme has received great prominence, its content has been left remarkably vague. Very often the most that is said is that Christ is our 'liberator', a term which is usually understood in terms of individual emotional and psychological experience, though of course it has also been applied to social and political freedom in the context of the liberation theology which has grown up on the frontiers of Christianity and Marxism.³²

The most serious critique of this from the traditional Roman Catholic perspective is that by Jean Galot,³³ who attempts a systematic application of Chalcedonian Christology to the saving work of Christ on the cross. Galot does not stop with the atonement, however, but extends his treatment to cover the resurrection and ascension of Christ, as well as the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Unfortunately, the wholeness of Galot's vision is compromised by a limitation of the substitutionary rôle of Christ's sacrifice to allow for a human contribution to the work of salvation, and a universalizing of redemption which has no place for the satisfaction of the Father's justice by the payment of the human debt of guilt.

It has been left to Protestant theologians to defend the classical teaching of the Reformation on the atonement, and this has been done in at least three works of substantial importance which have appeared in recent years. In Germany, Martin Hengel³⁴ has carefully demonstrated the validity of atonement language both within the circle of Jesus' followers and in the wider Graeco-Roman world. As it is often supposed that a concept of substitutionary sacrifice would not have fitted the socio-cultural context of earliest Christianity, this is a contribution of major importance. More strictly biblical in scope is the work of Leon Morris,³⁵ who shows in great detail just what the range of meaning inherent in Jewish and Christian concepts of atonement actually was. Morris' scholarship is unashamedly conservative, with a wealth of biblical reference and a constant concern to answer the charges levelled against the traditional teaching by scholars of an earlier generation like C. H. Dodd and Vincent Taylor.

Complementing Morris' work is the massive study by H. D. McDonald³⁶ who takes us through the traditional doctrine, the **p. 62** evidence of the New Testament for it, and the treatment which atonement has received in history. Complete chapters are devoted to the contributions of Anselm, Abelard, Dale, Forsyth, Aulén and Moberly, and no fewer than 28 theologians are briefly discussed in the last chapter, including Leon Morris (but not C. H. Dodd, for some curious reason). McDonald is a conservative in the Reformation mould, but he is always scrupulously fair to his opponents and his book is likely to become and remain a standard work of reference on its subject.

OTHER APPROACHES

³² A. Kirk, *Liberation Theology* (London, 1979).

³³ J. Galot, *Jesus, Our Liberator* (Rome, 1982).

³⁴ M. Hengel, *The Atonement*. (London, 1979).

³⁵ L. Morris, *The Atonement. Its meaning and significance* (Leicester, 1983).

³⁶ H. L. McDonald, *The Atonement of the Death of Christ in Faith, Revelation and History* (Grand Rapids, 1985).

One might expect, in an age dominated by Karl Barth, that there would be a steady stream of theological studies relating the doctrine of Christ to the Trinity, but although such studies have appeared from time to time, they have been surprisingly rare. No doubt the strong functional approach to Christology has had a lot to do with this neglect, but it is quite astonishing how far the issue has been left to the defenders of traditional credal positions. Since the appearance of James Dunn's *Jesus and the Spirit* there has been almost nothing of comparable significance, in spite of the widespread growth of charismatic and 'renewal' movements in the churches. Ecumenical interests have prompted the World Council of Churches to produce its excellent symposium on the *Filioque* dispute,³⁷ which has been supplemented more recently by Yves Congar,³⁸ but the only major work on the place of the Son within the Godhead is that by Louis Bouyer,³⁹ which has not had the circulation it deserves or will need if it is to make any serious impact on Anglo-Saxon Christology.

On a completely different track is Jaroslav Pelikan's recent work dealing with the place of Jesus in the history of culture.⁴⁰ This is an unusual subject which has seldom been studied, and never put together in such comprehensive detail. Pelikan takes eighteen different pictures of Christ which he sees as having dominated at successive periods in the history of the church, and he deals with each in the light of the theology, literature and art of its time. The book is a very useful p. 63 reminder that Jesus has never belonged to theologians, and it even suggests to us that theology has reacted to the forces of the age in which it has been written more frequently than we have often thought. It is a book which deserves to be read and pondered carefully by all students of Christology, whatever their own particular approach to the subject might be.

Lastly, something should be said about the Statement of the Pontifical Biblical Commission which appeared in Latin and French in 1984 and has recently been translated into English with a commentary by J. A. Fitzmyer.⁴¹ The Commission surveys the different trends which have appeared in modern Christology, and criticizes them for a one-sided approach to the Scriptures. Its remedy is a deeper and more comprehensive use of the Bible, including the Old Testament, for establishing a Christology which will have pastoral relevance in the church today. The document betrays no sign of denominational bias, though its comments on particular theologians are necessarily very brief. Here the commentary is a help because it fills in the background to the Commission's thinking as far as this can be done by one who was not a participant in the discussions. The document is valuable not only as a handy reference tool, but also because of the remarkable Part II, which outlines the framework of what the Commission believes is a truly biblical Christology. This turns out to rely heavily on the covenant offices of prophet, priest and king as the key to an Old Testament Christology, and insists that Jesus can be understood only by giving priority to his filial relationship to God. It is this consideration, says the Commission, which ought to be the criterion of investigation into the meaning of Christ for believers today. The Protestant observer can hardly help wondering whether he has stumbled back into the pages of Calvin by mistake, since that is certainly the impression which this Statement gives.

³⁷ L. Vischer (ed.), *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ* (Geneva, 1981).

³⁸ Y. Congar, *The World and the Spirit* (London, 1986).

³⁹ L. Bouyer, *The Eternal Son. A Theology of the Word of God and Christology* (Huntingdon, Indiana, 1978).

⁴⁰ J. Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries. His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven and London, 1985).

⁴¹ J. A. Fitzmyer, *Scripture and Christology* (London, 1986).

As a call to the church to develop a relevant Christology, the Statement of the Papal Commission makes a fitting conclusion to a survey of the past decade. No-one can dispute that much has been said and written during that time, but it remains very much an open question how much of what has appeared will eventually form part of that great tradition which is the witness of God's faithful saints in every age to the reality of his presence with us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Gerald L. Bray lectures at Oak Hill College in London, U.K. p. 64

Church and State in Socialist China, 1949–1987—I

Jonathan Chao

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We are glad to publish Chao's Church and State in Socialist China in two parts. It is an excellent research analysing not only the historical but also the theological issues in mainland China during the past 40 years. The second part will be published in the next issue of ERT.

Editor

INTRODUCTION

Church and state may seem to be a settled question in Western, Christianized countries. But in socialist countries like China and in other third world countries where revolutions are still going on, church and state is usually the most important issue affecting the life and witness of the church.

In Hong Kong today, as the British colony makes its transition to Chinese sovereignty, church and state has become a matter of primary concern for the Christian church, both Catholic and Protestant. Recently a ghost writer by the name of Hsin Weisu (a Chinese pun for Hsin Hua-she, or New China News Agency) has written two articles suggesting that the principle of separation of church and state should be incorporated into the Basic Law, the constitution for Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Zone of the People's Republic of China after 1997.¹ Hsin's definition of the separation of church and state is essentially separation of religion from politics, and so he suggested that neither the church nor the clergy should become involved in politics and that the Basic Law should only guarantee 'normal religious activities'. Religion, he argued, belongs to the realm of the mind (thinking, the noumenal world), and politics deals with political power. Since

¹ 'Tsung-chiao Tzu-you yu Chi-pan-fa' [Religious Freedom and the Basic Law], *Ming-pao*, Dec. 5, 1986; Fee. 3, 4, 1987.