EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 13

Volume 13 • Number 2 • April 1989

Evangelical Review of Theology

WORLD EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP
Theological Commission p. 99

Editorial

Is Evangelicalism Eroding?

Evangelical introspection has been the burden of many recent books. And now in yet another (*Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*, by James Davidson Hunter) we find a prophecy that evangelicalism is softening. Hunter, who is a sociologist predicts that in spite of its remarkable growth and influence in the past, the chances of maintaining the growth and self-renewal of evangelicalism in the near future are slim.

Hunter is of course speaking primarily of American evangelicalism. He bases his findings on a survey conducted with evangelical leaders in sixteen seminaries in the USA during 1982–85—and we should remember it is academicians who eventually set the trend of the coming generation. He infers that there has been a dilution in 'four dimensions of the evangelical cultural system': In *theology* he sees a move away from the doctrines of the inerrancy of the Bible, original sin, the wrath of God, and hell. In the area of *work, morality and self*, the change is from self-mortification to self-fulfillment. In the area of *family* and *politics*, he observes that evangelicals are divided, to say the least. All in all, the evangelical pilgrim 'is now travelling with less conviction, less confidence about his path, and is perhaps more vulnerable to the worldly distractions encountered by Bunyan's pilgrim'.

All modern sociological prophecies must be taken with a pinch of salt; sociology is still a controversial science. And many reviewers of the book do take issue with him; but such an analysis as his prods us towards both self-examination and house-cleaning. For there are instances where the difference in outlook between evangelicalism and liberalism has been merely a matter of a time-gap. With the threat of 'future shock' upon us, we must resist the temptation to ideologize evangelicalism.

The well-known systematic theologian of yesteryear, Augustus Hopkin Strong, held that a total allegiance to Jesus Christ is an adequate criterion for evangelicalism. There can be flexibility in any area save this. And although there is no one theme for the articles in this issue, grace, truth, power and creativity are the undercurrents. Beyond an adherence to the supremacy of the Bible for faith and conduct, and the proclamation of the gospel leading to conversion, evangelicalism can be defined as loyalty to Jesus Christ, inevitably including the Church, his body. To put it in the words of John: 'grace p. 100 and truth came through Jesus Christ', and as long as these basics are held on to, there is no danger of a 'softening'. For, after all, it is he who builds his Church.

Editor p. 101

Do Miracles Authenticate the Messiah?

James R. Brady

Printed with permission

This article assesses the role of miracle-working in the authentication of Jesus as 'the Son of God'. In well-documented analyses of the first century expectation of the Messiah, and the

understanding of shalom *among the Jews, the author convincingly argues for the power of the 'Son of God' to do miracles as an authentication of his Messiahship. In our age of supernatural healing, with its increase in occult experiment, the relevance of the article is apparent.*
Editor

When the Scriptures talk of Jesus as the Messiah, probably *the* most significant title they use is 'Son of God'. In passages such as Matthew 16:16 and 26:63 it is clear that these two titles—Messiah and 'Son of God'—stand in apposition. The title 'Son of God' undoubtedly stems from OT texts such as 2 Sam. 7:14 and Psalm 2:7, in its association with the Davidic king.

But when we come to the miracle-working aspect of Jesus' ministry, there is great difficulty in establishing a clear connection with the OT anticipation of the coming Messiah. But it can be shown that this facet of the Lord's ministry was indeed in line with OT expectations of God's 'Son'.

THE WORKING OF MIRACLES IN JESUS' MINISTRY

Robert Fortna reflects the sentiments of many when he says, 'There is surprisingly little direct evidence that the Jewish Messiah was expected to be a worker of miracles.'[1] But the working of miracles was considered by Jesus to mark his work as Messiah. When imprisoned, John the Baptist sent to ask if Jesus was indeed the 'Coming One'. Jesus answered with a declaration of his miracles (Matt. 11:1–6 par.)[2]. Jesus' P. 102 preaching of the 'gospel of the kingdom' is tied directly to his working of miracles (Matt. 9:35 par.). When Jesus sent out his disciples to 'proclaim the kingdom', he gave them power to perform miracles (Lk. 9:1–6 par.). Thus Jesus' Messiahship, the kingdom, and the working of miracles seem to be inexorably linked.

An explanation for this, as it relates to exorcism, is offered by Howard Kee. He says,

> The clue to the significance of the title Son of God in the exorcism narratives is offered in Mark 2:23–27. The images are mixed: a kingdom is divided, a dynasty is ruined by internal conflict.… As the demons' words disclose, Jesus is the agent of God empowered to bring about their defeat and to wrest control of the world from the hand of Satan and subject it to the rule of God. This is not traditional messianic language, according to strict Jewish traditions, but it is Mark's way of understanding the one ordained to be God's viceregent.[3]

At this point, Jeremias' insight into the concept of 'kingdom' is helpful:

> One thing is certain: the word *malkūtā* did not have for the oriental the significance that the word 'kingdom' does for the westerner. Only in quite isolated instances in the Old Testament does *malkūt* denote a realm in the spatial sense, a territory; almost always it stands for the government, the authority, the power of the king … *malkūt* is always in

[1] Robert Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs*, p. 230.

[2] Jesus' words in v. 6, 'and blessed is he who refrains from stumbling over me', is probably a reference to the doubt of John and others who may not have seen Jesus' ministry as perfectly fulfilling that of the anticipated Messiah. The greatest stumbling block, that of the cross, was yet to come.

[3] Kee, *Community of the New Age*, pp. 123–24.

process of being achieved. Thus the reign of God is neither a spatial nor a static concept; it is a *dynamic concept* [ital. his].[4]

Consequently, Jesus' Messiahship and Sonship in His first advent entailed something other than a physical throne and domination over Israel's political enemies. As Kingsbury points out, Jesus' miracles (and exorcism in particular) show him to be the Son of God engaged in eschatological conflict with Satan and his forces.[5]

THE FIRST CENTURY EXPECTATION OF MESSIAH

The term 'Messiah' had come to be something of a *terminus technicus* by the first century BC for the Anointed One who would be God's deliverer in the days of eschatological consummation.[6] Referring to Ps. Sol. chapters 17–18 and 1QS 9:11, Longenecker says, 'What seems to have captured the people's fancy was that the Messiah would P. 103 be a political and nationalistic ruler—even a military leader.'[7] But parallel with this ran the belief that the Messiah would be one who would bring good news and well-being for the people according to Isaiah 52:7.[8] So, although the people would not have expected a purely political Messiah, yet in light of texts such as Mk. 10:37 there was the expectation of political power with respect to the kingdom.

William Wrede postulated that the 'Messianic secret' was evident because Mark needed to insert a rationale in his Gospel for Jesus' life passing without Messianic fulfillment.[9] It seems more feasible to see the apparent 'secret' of Jesus' Messiahship not in a lack of fulfillment, but in the lack of understanding by the people. As is evident from several passages, they were so eager for the arrival of their anticipated Messiah that they wanted to make him king 'by force' (e.g. Jn. 6:15). Thus Jesus exhorted most of those whom he healed to be silent about his Messiahship, including demons (cf. Mk. 1:25, 34). Realizing the mania that could spread among the people, Jesus admonished the cleansed leper to show himself to the priest 'for a testimony to them' (Mk. 1:44). The word 'them' is probably a reference to the Jewish leaders. These were the ones primarily responsible for recognizing the Messiah and designating him as such. Only then could the people be unified in their recognition of and submission to him.

'THE SON OF DAVID'

But the common people did see Jesus in the role of Messiah. Just how they saw him as such in the light of the working of miracles may lie in his function as 'Son of David'. In many references, this title is associated with healing and exorcism (cf. Matt. 9:27; 12:22; 15:22; etc.).

---

[4] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, p. 98.

[5] Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, p. 77.

[6] Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, pp. 64–66.

[7] Ibid., p. 66.

[8] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 'Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11', *JBL* 86 (1967): 40.

[9] William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans, J. C. G. Grieg, *passim*, esp. 211–30.

Kingsbury shows that the title 'Messiah' in the Gospels is equivalent to 'Son of God', 'King of Israel', and 'Son of David'.[10] In the Old Testament, aside from one reference to Absalom (2 Sam. 13:1), the only person designated 'son of David' was Solomon (1 Chr. 29:22; 2 Chr. 1:1; Prov. 1:1; Eccl. 1:1). In each of these contexts, Solomon is not only called 'son of David', but reference is also made to his being the king of Israel. p. 104

Not only is Solomon the definitive 'son of David' in the OT, but he may be the only person in the OT designated as God's 'son'. This is evident when the 'sonship' texts are examined. The reference in 2 Sam. 7:14 (par. 1 Chr. 17:13) is obviously to David's son, later identified as Solomon (1 Chr. 22:9). Psalm 89 is not a Davidic psalm, but is attributed to Ethan who refers back to the Lord's promises to David in 2 Sam. chapter 7.[11] Psalm 2 is anonymous, and for this reason Delitzsch says it cannot be considered Davidic.[12] The only sonship passage that remains is 1 Chr. 22:10. Here a clear reference is made to Solomon as God's 'son'. Thus the only certain referent with respect to sonship is Solomon.[13]

It is also noteworthy that Yahweh himself gives Solomon his name even before he is born. The name thus seems to be connected with the concept of sonship, for they both proceed from the Lord in the same context. Yahweh gives a brief explanation for the name, saying he shall be Solomon because God will give him peace (*shalom*) during his reign.

The word 'peace' (*shalom*) means more than the absence of strife. The Old Testament employs the word to mean 'completeness, soundness, wholeness, health, prosperity'[14]. Von Rad says, 'At root it means "well-being".'[15] Such was the ideal for the ruler in the ancient world. Wolfgang Roth says,

> Behind the notion that the king brings and guarantees peace is the so-called ancient Near East royal ideology. There peace is understood not so much as the opposite of war as … justice and harmony…. Through his rule the king upholds this order.[16] p. 105

This was true because, as Henri Frankfort explains,

> The ancient Near East considered kingship the very basis of civilization … Security, peace and justice could not prevail without a ruler to champion them…. Whatever was significant was imbedded in the life of the cosmos, and it was precisely the king's function to maintain the harmony of that integration.[17]

---

[10] Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, p. 55.

[11] Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, trans. Herbert Hartwell, pp. 590–91.

[12] Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Francis Bolton, 1:89. In Acts 4:25 Peter attributes Psalm 2 to David. However this ascription may be similar to Matthew's attributing the words of Zechariah to Jeremiah in Matt. 27:9. Matthew does this because Jeremiah was first in the group of prophetic books. Gundry calls this a 'Jewish practice [of] composite quotations' (Matthew. A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art, p. 557). Peter may have linked the Psalm to David since he was the most prominent author of the Psalms (Weiser, pp. 94–95).

[13] Note also how both 'his kingdom', i.e. Solomon's, and 'your kingdom', i.e. David's, are used interchangeably in these passages. Thus, although David may seem to have some part in the concept of sonship, this is only because it is his offspring who is called God's 'son'. David's throne, therefore, becomes the throne of God's 'son'.

[14] BDB, s.v. 'shalom', pp. 1022–23.

[15] *TDNT*, s.v. 'eirēnē', by Gerhard von Rad, 2 (1969): 402.

[16] Wolfgang Roth, 'The Language of Peace: Shalom and Eirene', *Explor*. 3 (1977): 71.

[17] Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 3.

But even more important for the present study, J. Maxwell Miller points out that the monarch in the ancient Orient had the above-mentioned responsibility because he was the 'image' of God. Just as God at creation had bestowed upon man (who was his image) the responsibility to care for the creation, so he held the king (who is his image) responsible for the care of the people.[18]

Thus Israel's king was to provide well-being for God's people. This was because as Israel's 'father', God had promised to care for the nation as a father cares for his son (cf. Deut. 1:31). A. R. Johnson observes, '[That] the king held office as Yahweh's agent or viceregent is shown quite clearly in the rite of anointing which marked him out as a sacral person endowed with such special responsibility for the well-being of his people.'[19]

Well-being for Israel was indeed maintained during Solomon's reign. Of this period Bright says, 'Israel enjoyed a security and material plenty such as she had never dreamed of before and was never to know again.'[20] But as the biblical account shows, that harmony lasted only as long as Solomon's heartbeat. In the wake of his death, the strife that followed began at the throne itself (1 Kings 12:1–20, par.). No king thereafter was ever referred to as God's 'son'. Instead, as in Ps. 89, they looked back to Yahweh's promise to David.

Loren Fischer thinks that during the time of Jesus, at the popular level, the title 'Son of David' referred to Solomon.[21] Thus, there may have been something conveyed by the 'son' titles as applied to Jesus which looked back to the figure of Solomon.[22] p. 106

There is evidence to substantiate such a claim. Donahue says that in the Gospels, 'exorcism distinguishes a person as possessor of royal power in David's line'.[23] Klaus Berger goes further and proposes that the Jewish tradition concerning Solomon's power over demons stands behind the understanding of the title 'Son of David' in the New Testament.[24] Vermes shows that in intertestamental Judaism and that current with early Christianity, Solomon was viewed as an exorcist and that exorcisms were performed in his name.[25] In a passage from *Antiquities* Josephus says of Solomon,

> And God granted him knowledge of the art used against demons for the benefit and healing of men. He also composed incantations by which illnesses are relieved, and left behind forms of exorcisms with which those possessed by demons drive them out, never to return.[26]

When and how this tradition about Solomon began can only be speculated. But Fischer claims that Solomon's fame as a great wonder-worker spread into many forms of Near

---

[18] J. Maxwell Miller, 'In the "Image" and "Likeness" of God', *JBL* 91 (1972): 294–96.

[19] A. R. Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', in *Myth, Ritual and Kingship*, pp. 207–208.

[20] John Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 212.

[21] Loren Fischer, ' "Can This Be the Son of David?" ', in *Jesus and the Historian*, p. 90.

[22] That the title 'Son of David' had more meaning for Jews than non-Jews may be reflected by its nine occurrences in Matthew, three in Mark, and two in Luke's Gospel; but is not to be found in the rest of the New Testament.

[23] John R. Donahue, 'Temple, Trial, and Royal Christology', in *The Passion in Mark*, p. 75.

[24] Klaus Berger, 'Die Königlichen Messiastraditionen des Neuen Testaments', *NTS* 20 (1973): 3–9, 13–15.

[25] Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 62–65.

[26] Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 8.45.

Eastern literature.[27] That this was recognized during Jesus' time might be seen in Matt. 12:38–42. In response to the Pharisees' demand for a miraculous sign Jesus replies, 'One greater than Solomon is here.'

Vermes theorizes that the exorcism tradition associated with Solomon may stand behind the dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees in Matt. 12:22–29. Here they accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul. Probably, says Vermes, this is because Jesus does not invoke any human source, such as that most commonly used: Solomon.[28] Thus in v. 27 Jesus retorts, 'By whom do your sons cast them out?'

Jesus continues in this Matthean pericope to declare that exorcism demonstrates that 'the kingdom of God has come' (v. 28). In correspondence with the Old Testament, then, the Son of David and his work are tied to the kingdom. p. 107

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF *SHALOM*

But Jesus' activity as 'Son of David' is more than exorcistic, it is 'therapeutic'.[29] Obviously demon possession was viewed as a plague of evil in Palestine,[30] but the influence of evil from Satan was seen to go even further. As Vermes says,

> In the world of Jesus, the devil was believed to be at the basis of sickness as well as sin. The idea [existed] that demons were responsible for all moral and physical evil.[31]

Loader sees Jesus functioning as Messiah and Son of David to purge Israel of evil and the reign of Satan.[32]

The kingdom of which Jesus speaks and which he manifests encompasses more than a following of people and the changing of lives. It is a cataclysmic restructuring of the fallen created order. Jesus was seen as the 'Son of David' because he was bringing about the anticipated *shalom* which even Solomon—the first king of peace and son of David—did not. As Messiah ('Son of David' and 'Son of God'), he healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead (Jn. 11:27ff.), and calmed the storm (Matt. 14:22–33). Of this last account Otto Betz says, 'Jesus' walking on the water proclaims his victory over the powers of chaos.'[33] Jesus brought order out of chaos, he brought about soundness, health, and well-being. In short, he brought peace. As we have already seen, the provision of peace was the responsibility of the king in the ancient world. In Nolan's words,

> The royal ideology of the Old Testament is certainly tributary to early oriental ideas of the king as mediator of the cosmic order, as guarantor of Maat or *sedeq*. By his righteousness

---

[27] Fischer, p. 85.

[28] Vermes, pp. 63–64.

[29] Dennis Duling, 'The Therapeutic Son of David: An Element in Matthew's Christological Apologetic', *NTS* 24 (1977–78: 409.

[30] Otto Betz, p. 70.

[31] Vermes, p. 61.

[32] W. R. G. Loader, 'Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew', *CBQ* 44 (1982): 570–85.

[33] Otto Betz, p. 69, n. 52. Betz (*ibid.*) also mentions the chaos Jesus overcame by his being with the 'wild beasts' (Mk. 1:13). Hans-Günter Leder, 'Sudenfallerzählung und Versuchungsgeschichte,' *ZNW* 54 (1963): 205–206, 211, referring to Old Testament texts such as Isa. 11:6–8 and Hos. 2:18, sees Jesus' presence in the wilderness with the wild beasts as an allusion to the eschatological age of salvation when men and beasts will dwell together in peace.

(*(s)f daqah*) he triumphs over enemies and ensures the Shalom of his people. He is … the son of God.[34] p. 108

Jesus' righteousness and provision of peace was that about which not even Solomon could boast.[35] And only in the person and work of the king did the ancient Near East see the possibility of security and peace for the people.[36] No wonder the Jews longed for the appearing of their Messiah. Some intertestamental literature summed up the blessings of the Messianic period with the word *shalom*.[37]

But Jesus' ministry *did* involve the changing of lives. As we see foreshadowed in the examples of David and Solomon, the Messiahson was to be more than a political king; he was to be a prophet and priest. Of Jesus' words in Matt. 12:42 ('a greater one than Solomon is here'), Schniewind says,

> Now what kings possessed and what prophets longed for is fulfilled. Here is a summons to repentance greater than the summons of the prophets, and a joyous word greater than the word of the first son of David. Here is God's Messiah who is both king and prophet.[38]

As prophet, Jesus' ministry is religious. But this does not conflict with some uses of *shalom* in the Old Testament. As Roth points out, in Joshua through 2 Kings the word *shalom* has religious as well as political overtones.[39] Von Rad says, '[When] used in its full compass, *shalom* is a religous term.'[40] We see Jesus using this term to proclaim, 'Go in peace (*eirēnē*), your faith has saved (root *sōzō*) you' (Mk. 5:34 par.; Lk. 7:50). The connection of *shalom* with salvation is apparent in much Old Testament usage. Citing several passages in the prophets including Jer. 31:6, Beasley-Murray says that, for the Jew, peace extended to one's existence in relation to God and others, for peace is an all-encompassing synonym for salvation.[41]

Peace was something for which the Jew longed. Van Rad says, 'Expectation of a final state of eternal peace is an element in OT eschatology which finds constant expression in the prophets and other writings.'[42] As the Jews longed for this peace, so Jesus' ministry was characterized by peace. It was prophesied of him by Isaiah ('Price of Peace,' 9:6), announced at his birth (Lk. 2:14), prophesied by Zacharias to define his ministry (Lk. 1:79), an essential part of the p. 109 disciples' ministry as a reflection of his (Matt. 10:13 par.), proclaimed by the people in association with him at the Triumphal Entry (Lk. 19:38), that which was rejected by Israel when they rejected him (Lk. 19:42), and that which Jesus left for those who believe in him (Jn. 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 21–22, 26).[43]

---

[34] Brian Nolan, *The Royal Son of God*, pp. 225–26. Cf. W. Malcolm Clark, 'The Righteousness of Noah', *VT* 21 (1971): 277–79 for a similar discussion.

[35] Thus Jesus says, 'A greater one than Solomon is here' (Matt. 12:42 par).

[36] Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 3.

[37] *TDNT*, s.v. 'eirēnē', by Werner Foerster 2 (1964): 409.

[38] Julius Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, p. 163.

[39] Wolfgang Roth, p. 71.

[40] *TDNT*, s.v. 'eirēnē', by Gerhard von Rd, 2 (1965): 403.

[41] George R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, p. 20.

[42] von Rad, 'eirēnē', 2:405.

[43] Notice Jesus' blessing on the 'peacemakers' who shall be called 'sons of God' (Matt. 5:9).

Thus Jesus announced the kingdom over which neither Solomon—the 'king of peace'—nor any other israelite king had reigned. Jesus showed himself to be God's anointed, God's representative, and God's Son in his conquest of the forces of evil which had prevailed over the cosmos.[44] Betz says Jesus' miracles are essentially 'victories over death and the devil'.[45]

CONCLUSION

The Old Testament clearly stands behind Jesus' working of miracles. Jesus was the Messiah who was bringing the longed-for peace to God's creation. In so doing he was the unique Son of God. But the leaders, whom Jesus would have had recognize his Sonship (Mk. 1:44), were unwilling to accept him. The kingdom was thus taken from them to be given to another generation and time (Matt. 21:43).

These concepts of peace, sonship, and king flow together in Isaiah's prophecy. He says the 'son', the 'prince of peace' is the one who will be born to sit on David's throne, whose kingdom of peace will be without end, and who will be called 'the Mighty God' (Isa. 9:6–7).

———————————

Dr. Brady is an Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at the Philadelphia College of Bible, Langhorne, Pennsylvania, USA. p. 110

Varieties of Pluralism

Paul Schrotenboer

Reprinted with permission from The Reformed Ecumenical Council Theological Forum*, November, 1988*

With the emergence of Christian theologies of inter-religious dialogue and the increasing militancy of non-Christian religions, the concept of pluralism is in the forefront in contemporary theological agenda. The need to avoid the danger of syncretism, while maintaining the unique and absolute claims of Jesus, calls for a creative approach to other faiths. Paul Schrotenboer is former General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council and a long-standing member of the WEF Theological Commission. Here he discusses four aspects of pluralism from a broader perspective: cultural, religious, political and ecclesiastical—and returns the reader to the basic issues in order to develop the valid theology of pluralism which is needed in our time.
Editor

INTRODUCTION

[44] Jesus said Satan was the 'ruler of the cosmos' (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16–11).

[45] Otto Betz, p. 69.