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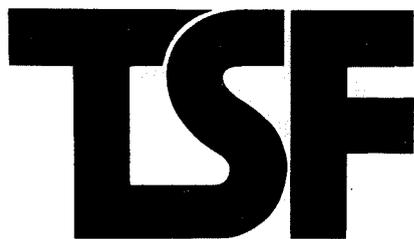
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faith, and authority.”

What this understanding of tradition really does, however, is to force the vagaries of later religious experience back into Scripture on the grounds that what is experienced religiously later must have been implicit in Scripture in the first place! Because Mary is thought, many centuries later, to have been assumed into heaven, it is argued that such a belief must lie implicit in some of the texts relating to her! The concern to have religious authority is anti-liberal; to treat Scripture in this way is precisely what liberals always do. By type, Dulles is a liberal on this issue but by species he is a Catholic.

My conclusion therefore is that the structure and function of authority in Pinnock's thought and in Dulles' are as different as night and day. Pinnock believes in an authoritative Scripture that exclusively contains God's special revelation; Dulles does not. Dulles believes in the unfolding of revelation within the people of God; Pinnock does not. Pinnock and Dulles both want something that is authoritative and in this both are anti-liberal. And both employ tradition to secure the proper functioning of this authority. They do it so differently, however, that it would be true to say that in this Pinnock is not catholic. And on the matter of revelation, Dulles is not evangelical.

The longing for certainty, made all the more intense by our experience in a chaotic and bedlam world, has lured many a theological sailor to destruction. As long as we are dealing with human interpreters, there

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Not even in Rome.***

will never be any absolute, hermeneutical infallibility. Not even in Rome. There may be greater comfort in numbers but there might also be greater danger of theological defection in numbers, too. Ultimately, we are cast back onto God that in his goodness and by his grace he will lead us, despite our many prejudices and sins, into a sufficient understanding of his infallible Word. There are no other alternatives. It is the absence of alternatives that leaves the room we need to develop our daily trust in the God who, having given us his Son, will not withhold whatever else we need to be his faithful children.

INQUIRY

(Questions, proposals, discussions, and research reports on theological and biblical issues)

Jesus and the Historians: The Discussion Broadens

by Scot McKnight

A Future for the Historical Jesus: The Place of Jesus in Preaching and Theology

by Leander E. Keck (reprint ed. with Afterword, Fortress, 1981, 283 pp., \$10.95).

Jesus and the Constraints of History

by A. E. Harvey (Westminster, 1982, 184 pp., \$23.00).

New Approaches to Jesus and the Gospels: A Phenomenological and Exegetical Study of Synoptic Christology

by Royce G. Gruenler (Baker, 1982, 261 pp., \$13.95).

In the last three years, the historical Jesus debate has again surged to the fore in gospel studies. Ben F. Meyer, in *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), an altogether neglected but highly valuable book, made the bold claim that the intentions of Jesus could be discerned by a critical appraisal of the synoptic gospels. His book has been followed (not necessarily in agreement) by the translation of Schillebeeckx's provocative volumes *Jesus* and *Christ* (Crossroad,

1979, 1980), J. D. G. Dunn's *Christology in the Making* (Westminster, 1980), John Riches' *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism* (London: DLT, 1980) and a promised work by E. P. Sanders of McMaster University. Into this debate we now have new works by A. E. Harvey (Oxford) and Royce G. Gruenler (Gordon-Conwell). By examining these two works, with the reprint of Leander Keck's 1971 volume as our starting point, we can conveniently assess the paths taken in the last decade.

Although *A Future for the Historical Jesus* is called a "progress report" rather than a "finished product," Keck has not changed his views in the time between printings. Analyzing the interrelationships between "the historian's Jesus" and faith, the gospel, salvation and the character of God, Keck concludes that the historical Jesus (as reconstructed by critics) does have a role in preaching, both now and in the future. He debates Lessing, Kierkegaard, Bultmann, Jeremias, Ebeling and Fuchs and proposes "trust" as the crucial category because it is personal, social and experiential. He argues that Jesus, in preaching, must be presented as Question: by responding in trust, the hearer finds salvation (freedom from self, openness to the future and the establishment of a community). An understanding of Jesus will lead finally to an understanding of God because Jesus is the "Parable

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of God.”

I admire Keck's courage to reinstate Jesus into the pulpit and his sharp, often devastating, critique of his opponents. Nevertheless, I disagree with most of his proposals. First, the book is rooted in a dated discussion and filled with all its old jargon (“new hermeneutic,” “new quest”). Second, because Keck's critical term, trust, is never defined by exegesis of the texts, the net result is that one responds to Jesus on one's own terms. Third, Keck never delineates the “contours” of the historical Jesus. Although he surveys the debate well and proposes a sound methodology, he never seems to arrive at a point where he can show us the real Jesus. Who is this Jesus whom we are to preach and trust? Fourth, it seems that instead of a program of de-mythologizing, Keck has proposed one of mythologizing even the “brute” facts, whether historical or not. He dodges the facticity of the resurrection, wanting instead to discover its *function*. “The resurrection of a corpse has nothing to do with resurrection. . . . Rather, resurrection has to do with creation of a new mode of existence as a response of God to the irradicable perverseness of history.” Thus, one “can come to terms with . . . the non-validated character of his own existence.” How this actually can ever come to pass is not substantiated. Keck asks a good question about the historical Jesus and preaching. En route to an answer he makes many astute observations, but his overall solution is no longer satisfactory.

A. E. Harvey contributes to our discussion in *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, his Bampton lectures delivered in Oxford. Harvey finds in the synoptics considerable material about the historical Jesus. Thus, “we have every reason to think that, in broad outline. . . , Jesus whom [the evangelists] portray is the Jesus who actually existed.” Harvey comes to his conclusions by taking into account the “constraints of history”: “No individual . . . is totally free to choose his own style of action and persuasion.” Jesus, in order to communicate, had to be a part of his society. Furthermore, because of the vast research on the social fabric of Jesus' time, Harvey contends that we are now in position to understand Jesus much more clearly. Harvey's method, not at all new, is to take a fact (say the crucifixion) and, in light of our knowledge of the political constraints of that period, make salient inferences about Jesus. The constraints of history Harvey examines are politics (the crucifixion), prophecy (Law and Time), miracles, the name “Messiah” (an ingenious, but improbable, suggestion) and monotheism.

To review, or even summarize adequately, all of Harvey's arguments would exceed the limits of this review. Only a few observations can be made. First, in contrast to Keck, Harvey feels a greater freedom to accept “the basic historical reliability of the gospels,” defending it using the criteria of multiple attestation (“consistency”) and dissimilarity. Obviously Harvey is indebted to R. S. Barbour's *Traditio-historical Criticism of the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1972). He perceives the similarities between Jesus' concerns and those of the Pharisees, and can further note their utter incompatibility when critical differences emerge. He finds in Jesus one who does not fit into a stereotyped category. Harvey has broken out of the mold of anti-supernaturalism by seeing miracles as sometimes authentic. Miracles are seen as attacks by Jesus on physical constraints which impede the kingdom. Expansion on this idea would be greatly appreciated. Also noteworthy is his willingness to use John to inform the synoptics historically. Finally, what is vitally important is Harvey's refusal to be a minimalist and, at the same time, his readiness to fill in gaps in our knowledge of Jesus with material from other sources. Although this is as old as the History-of-religions school, many NT scholars are intimidated today and refuse to say more than what is painfully obvious.

Although Harvey emphasizes the “constraints of history,” he often notes that Jesus exceeds these boundaries. As a result, the methodology of Harvey's study, at least applied to Jesus himself, does not work: Jesus is always more than the category being used. After reading his careful and penetrating chapter on the constraint of monotheism, and in light of Gruenler's book (described below), not all will allow Harvey to stop short without recognizing the implications of Jesus' Son-consciousness. I also have a few more minor points with which to quibble: Harvey regularly cites later rabbinic evidence without defending its legitimacy for the first century (contra Jacob Neusner); the book often lacks direction and disciplined control of the discussion; Harvey's use of modern sociological and psychological theories on prophecy seems faddish; and numerous

careless errors have found their way into the text. Nevertheless, these criticisms do not undermine the central focus of the book, which is to provide an explanation of Jesus in light of the “constraints” of history. I hope Harvey will eventually complete what he has called a “preliminary report.”

In contrast to Keck and Harvey, Gruenler's style in *New Approaches to Jesus and the Gospels* is so clear and demonstrative, being somewhat polemical, that even a casual reader cannot miss his concern. When one applies Wittgenstein's phenomenology of persons (as Gruenler understands it) to historical Jesus research, one immediately sees the inadequacy of redaction criticism for a complete understanding of Jesus and his purpose. As described in Part I of the book, Gruenler's method works as follows: (1) Taking the minimal, authentic passages so designated by Norman Perrin (a radical critic) and (2) applying the phenomenological approach, (3) one discovers profound, but implicit, christology on the lips of Jesus. Then, (4) assuming that a person's intentionality is expressed in words and deeds and (5) that what is implicit would very likely also be made explicit by the same person, one can extrapolate from this implicit christology to a high christology on the lips of Jesus (consciously and intentionally disclosing himself as divine). Furthermore, (6) if one can accept the recent study of David Hill on early Christian prophets, which argues that they did not create sayings and attribute them to Jesus, then the way is clear to (7) use the criterion of coherence to conclude that everything consistent with both implicit and explicit christology, whether in John or the Synoptics, is from the historical Jesus.

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Gruenler's system is as strong as the inferences he makes concerning what is implicit. Part II is a running application to the synoptic gospels of various modern authors' hermeneutical systems (those of C. S. Lewis, I. T. Ramsey, M. Polanyi, G. Marcel, J. R. R. Tolkien and C. van Til). Obviously, the book opens up Pandora's box: from presuppositions to individual interpretations of select verses.

I appreciate what Gruenler has contributed by bringing redaction criticism's hermeneutical foundations to the fore with such clarity and candor. When will critics learn that the dissimilarity test gives only what is unique to Jesus and not the entire portrait? Gruenler has provided persuasive evidence that all exegesis is presuppositional and that objectivism through distance is pure fantasy. His fair and courteous criticisms of biblical studies at the American University is erudite, though it will probably prove divisive. Gruenler trusts the text, and so he proceeds with a fiduciary mode of interpretation; his concern for joy, enchantment and attentiveness is noteworthy. Nevertheless, the following are some reminders that the end is not yet.

First, Gruenler never establishes the legitimacy of Wittgenstein's phenomenology, nor does he substantiate his appeals to other hermeneutical systems. Is Wittgenstein's phenomenological approach self-evident? Is a fiduciary mode defensible or simply chosen? I, too, am dissatisfied with the established “system,” but to embrace Wittgenstein's phenomenology necessitates a forthright demonstration and *defense* of its legitimacy. Do we need to become Marxists to understand *Das Kapital*? If not, why do we choose one system over another? Second, Gruenler's logic in Part I is not without its weaknesses. He waffles between cautious assertion and overstatement. Is it always so clear precisely what inference to draw? To make stupendous claims is not necessarily to claim divinity as a self-conscious assertion. Gruenler needs either to be more cautious or, better yet, to define more precisely his logical progression from what is implicit to what is “ineluctably” deduced. Third, I am not convinced that all of Jesus' claims

are more than what was expected of a prophet, though some are unquestionably so. Gruenler may be going too far at times. Finally, in his running application of the hermeneutics of other authors, one gets the feeling that at times he is exploiting the ideas of a writer who may not agree with such an approach to a different genre of literature.

Even so, Gruenler has made a forceful, if not always compelling, presentation of what appears to me to be the most important issue in the historical Jesus debate: presuppositions in one's hermeneutics. This book is a signpost for future studies. Read it, but do not forget

-Harvey.

What is the situation today in the debate? Three points emerge immediately: first, scholars have reopened the question of the *intentions* of Jesus (Meyer, Riches, Gruenler); second, there is a willingness to make *deductions* to fill the gaps in our knowledge of Jesus (Harvey, Gruenler); finally, the reduction of the basic issue to *hermeneutics* is promising (Gruenler, Meyer). Henceforth, any study which assumes Cartesian, epistemological objectivism will have to defend itself carefully.

Speaking of Parables: A Survey of Recent Research

by David L. Barr

There are perhaps fifty parables in the synoptic tradition—perhaps fifteen to twenty pages of text. This review will look at some 2,500 pages of analysis of these parables—works published over the last two years. The sheer bulk of this material illustrates both the fascination of the parables and the difficulty of reading them aright. This collection of works also illustrates the current debate over how one makes a valid (or a useful) interpretation of a literary work—a question of central importance to all of us who deal with texts.

The works under review form a veritable spectrum of hermeneutical options: from a positivist reading of the text which takes meaning as obvious and referential to a semiotic reading which takes meaning to be polyvalent and autonomous—with several shades in between. And here I think we are well advised by the father of literary criticism to seek the mean between the extremes.

One such mediating work is that of **Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*** (Westminster, 1981, 180 pp.). Stein teaches New Testament at Bethel Theological Seminary and has written a very useful introduction which both explores the major theoretical issues (chaps. 1–6) and interprets specific parables (7–10). Concise and informed discussions of the nature of parables, the purpose and authenticity of the synoptic parables, and the history of parable interpretation from Marcion (c. 150) to the twentieth century give the reader the essential background needed to interpret the parables today.

From his review of previous scholarship, Stein formulates four principles which guide his interpretations: 1) seek the one main point of each parable, not allegorizing the details unless necessary; 2) seek to understand the parable in its original social setting within the life of Jesus; 3) seek to understand how the gospel writer interpreted the parable; and 4) seek what God is saying to us today through the parables.

Stein presumes that the meaning discovered in all these levels of analyses will be coherent and harmonious. In fact he regards both levels 2 and 3 as having divine authority, a conviction which also causes him to ignore the other traditional levels of analysis: the social contexts of the parables between the time of Jesus and the time of the gospels. Further, his conviction that the meaning uncovered at levels 2 and 3 is “usually a single meaning” does not allow him to take the differences between Jesus and the gospel writers with sufficient seriousness. We are almost always talking about the parables of *Jesus*. The most frequently cited author is Jeremias, followed by Linnemann and Dodd.

This is a valuable introduction to the main contours of parable research today and a worthy example of informed and critical interpretation. Its lack of serious dialogue with the full range of modern interpretations (e.g., Norman Perrin is not mentioned) is a limitation, but it will at least prepare the reader to understand such a dialogue. It is an excellent place to begin.

Pheme Perkins in *Hearing the Parables of Jesus* (Paulist, 1981, 224 pp., \$6.95) is strong precisely where Stein is weak: she enters into extensive dialogue with other contemporary interpreters (for example, citing Crossan almost as often as Jeremias) and gives serious attention to the diverse interpretations each gospel writer gives to the parables, including the Gospel of Thomas. More than Stein, she is apt to ask specifically literary questions of the parables. For example, how are they put together as stories? How are the versions related? Where does each focus our attention? How does a parable compare to other stories, metaphors, and proverbs of Jesus' day? Like Stein, she pursues their historical context and religious significance.

Perkins has a knack for useful comparisons of her own: Jesus' parables are “home movies” compared to the cosmic scale on which most wisdom and apocalyptic literature discuss the Kingdom of God; the woman's search for the lost coin reminds her of an experience in a supermarket checkout line; tax-collectors remind her of the “white trash” pointed out to her as a child in the South.

The book is organized thematically: after reflections on the nature of parable, proverb, and story, the reader is given “hints” for reading parables. Her method proceeds in three phases: 1) close textual analysis including both comparisons of various versions and literary analyses, 2) contextualization (history, gospel, methodology) and 3) interpretation (human significance and religious significance). Though her discussions of each of these is too brief, the ample illustration of her method in her examples should clarify her meaning. Chapter three, “Religion and Story,” will have to be read several times by those unfamiliar with rhetorical and structuralist analysis, but could provide a very useful entry to this terminologically confusing approach. She lacks the sort of general discussion and historical survey that makes Stein's book such a useful place to begin.

Most of the book consists of her own creative interpretations. She considers parables of growth, portrayals of God, allegorization, love, reversal and equality, ethics and the community. Her interpretations achieve a stimulating balance of literary analysis, historical information and religious insight which does much to achieve her goal not to “stand between the reader and the parable,” but rather to clarify and make acces-