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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

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Gospel and Law. (C.U.P. 10s. 6d.)

For those who are familiar with Dr. C. H. Dodd's 'The Gospel and the Law of Christ' (William Ainslie Memorial Lecture, June 1946), the publication of his Bampton Lectures, entitled 'Gospel and Law', will satisfy their desire for an elaboration or development of the earlier theme. That it is accomplished in only 83 pages should not disappoint us, for many a longer treatise has cost much more and contained much less learned and stimulating material.

Let me try to review very briefly the substance of the argument in his treatment of the subject. In the first chapter, entitled 'Preaching and Teaching in the Early Church', Dodd indicates that along with the primitive proclamation of the Gospel there was a primitive Christian code of conduct. As he expresses it, 'The order of approach, first the proclamation, then the beginning of instruction in morals, first *kerygma*, then *didaché*, seems to have been thoroughly characteristic of the Christian mission; it is precisely this order . . . which we have seen to be general in the New Testament writings.' He substantiates this theme by considering, first, how the commandment of the Torah must be set in the context of the mighty acts of God revealed unto His chosen people, which same acts established a 'covenant' between God and the people of Israel; and the later distinction which can be made between *haggada* and *halakha*, which is analogous to the primitive Christian distinction. Then, taking his evidence from the New Testament Epistles, he considers the evidence for a definite form of ethical instruction in the earliest days of the Christian mission.

In the second chapter, entitled 'Principles and Motives of Christian Ethics in the New Testament', he suggests four features which the Christian ethic did not share with contemporary ethical programmes or theories. These are Christian eschatology, the idea of the 'Body of Christ', the imitation of Christ, and lastly, the true nature of Love. Before I pass on, it is helpful to find Dodd emphasizing the dangers in translation concerning the New Testament usage of *agapé*. To replace 'charity' by 'love' doesn't solve the matter! One of the great tasks of preaching is to help our people to brush aside the sentimental associations they gather around this word by proclaiming Love incarnate. So we are reminded that 'the governing concept of Christian ethics, love or charity, cannot be understood except out of the Gospel'.

His third chapter is entitled 'The Ethical Teaching of the Gospels', where he examines the importance attached to the tradition of the sayings of Our Lord in the Church's ethical teaching. In this, Dodd

considers the obvious difficulty that these sayings appear to be on a different level compared with the ethical precepts of the Epistles. In other words, the precepts in, say, Romans seem straightforward general rules of conduct, but can you say the same thing about the Gospel precepts? Not in the sense that they could not be applied; but that they might not be considered suitable for general application as a plain guide to conduct, that is, taken literally. He considers that they must be put in their right setting, that is, in the context of the teaching of Jesus as a whole. Then he finds, as T. W. Manson expressed it, 'a stress on the parabolic concreteness of the ethical precepts of our Lord, their urgency, and the fact that they are a guide not only to right conduct but also to repentance'. This question of urgency seems to me to be particularly important, and it is surprising that the great emphasis on decision should be so evident in the Sermon on the Mount for example, when we remember the words of our Lord at the beginning of His ministry (Mark 1:15)? Certainly decision and repentance must follow in man's encounter with, and acceptance of, Christ. Considering that this is the real function of Christ's precepts, he further concludes that 'they become not only the standards by which our conduct is judged, but guideposts on the way we must travel in seeking the true ends of our being under the Kingdom of God'.

Finally in the last chapter, 'The Law of Christ', he considers how far the ethical precepts of Jesus are intended to constitute a law, bearing in mind the arrangement of the ethical sayings of Jesus by Matthew (Sermon on the Mount) which suggested a parallel with the promulgation of the law from Mt. Sinai, when the new law, the law of the Kingdom of God, superseded the law of the Old Testament. He cannot accept the attitude which repudiates at all costs any understanding of Christianity as a new law, or that there is no law for the Christian except his own 'inner light'. Any true understanding of the idea of the 'covenant' implies not only that God has done something for men, but also obligations which must be carried out. So with the new covenant in mind, he finds his essential thesis on the Johannine texts (Jn. 3: 16; 13: 15, 34). The first tells us not only what God did, 'but also what is the *quality* of His act and what is its *direction* or purpose'. And the second, 'Love one another, as I have loved you', states the basic obligation of the new covenant. So it is 'an obligation to reproduce in human action the quality and the direction of the act of God by which we are saved'.

Dodd concludes by putting a very vital question before us; namely, is the law of Christ (thus conceived) meant only for members of the Church, those consciously committed to His allegiance, or has it a general application to human relations at large? When he argues that 'the law of the new covenant, which is correlative with the act of God in Christ . . . is the law of our creation—the God of our redemption is the same as the God of creation'; he believes that its application is as wide as the creation itself, and the Church is bound to pronounce moral judgments in the name of Our Lord in the world beyond its immediate membership. But it is quite another question when we consider how the law of Christ must be carried out in the lives of men. The point is that the ethical precepts of Jesus have a very definite reference to the

life of every man in this world ; and His life and teaching constitute an essential judgment upon man: but they cannot be fully regulative of, or fully realized in, the life of man except in acceptance and dedication to His will and purpose.

This is certainly a book which doesn't come our way every day, and I am sure many will enjoy reading it.

The Image of God in Man. (S.C.M. 18s.)

'There is no more fundamental debate in the world today than that about the nature of man.' So Prof. Cairns introduces his examination of the Christian doctrine of man, which, in his particular treatment, carries the story from the early attack by Gnosticism in the second century to the modern movements of racialism and communism. There is surely general agreement that he has chosen a subject which is worthy of considerable thought and study. I have no hesitation in recommending this book ; for not only is it a remarkably comprehensive treatment of the subject in 250 pages, but it is an effective preparation for the Christian Apologetic in our own day. I said just now that it was a remarkably comprehensive treatment of the subject. Considering the limits placed on his treatment—for the material is largely the substance of his Kerr Lectures in Glasgow—it does give a good review of the history of the subject of the image of God in man. In this review he gives a short account of its Old and New Testament sources. Then he considers the contribution of the early Church theologians including St. Irenaeus, St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Athanasius and St. Augustine, not actually in succession, but relating their contributions to certain special questions they faced and different aspects of the doctrine of man. He hopes to achieve some continuity in his method, and to prepare the ground for the contributions of later theologians. After the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, he develops the main part of his study as an examination of the reformed teaching according to Luther and Calvin, and, coming to our own times, in Barth and Brunner. Before his final chapter, summing up his own conclusions on the subject, he gives a short account of modern concepts of man, namely, the Marxian and Freudian, which the Christian writer must answer in our own time. I think his selection in this review has been wise and helpful, and especially in bringing to our notice a good deal of material which, in the German, has not been translated. Students and ministers in India who read the *Scottish Journal of Theology* will already have some idea of the development of Barth's thought in the latest of his published volumes of Dogmatics. In this connection Prof. Cairns does us a service in bringing things up-to-date by his frequent quotations and summary of some of Barth's teaching in two books which complete the third volume of his Dogmatics. (In this connection readers may wish to refer to *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 1949, where Rev. W. A. Whitehouse gives a very full review and commentary on the second book of the third volume of Barth's Dogmatics.)

It is obvious that Prof. Cairns has a good deal more sympathy with the views of his old teacher, Prof. Brunner, than Prof. K. Barth. And he also draws attention to the change in Barth's views from the early thirties, and the way in which the two great theologians have now a

good deal of common ground between them, apart from their many decisive differences. Yet he does attempt to deal fairly with Prof. Barth's views in criticism, and has no hesitation in recognizing Barth's work to be of the highest order.

So far I have mentioned his review of the history of the doctrine, and his useful summary of the relevant work of Barth and Brunner on this subject. And while there may be criticism of his criticism in respect of these writers, yet more attention will be drawn to his own conclusions. In this respect an important part of his study is to define the universal human image in its relation to God, and in his conclusion he accepts a good deal of Brunner's argument. He accepts the term 'formal' image, yet prefers to call it the Old Testament image. And this, to use his own words, for 'man is in the universal image of God because he stands in an inescapable relation of responsibility to God and man . . . his responsibility does not change, though the form of his response may change to an almost infinite extent'. He goes on further to argue that the Christian doctrine of man demands a general revelation, and criticizes Barth for his confusion of general revelation with a valid natural theology. Thus, with Brunner, he concludes that the existence of a general revelation, or revelation in creation, does not imply a belief in the existence of a valid natural theology. Then he considers the transition from the Old Testament image to the N.T. image, formulating it according to man's nature as endowment in response. These then seem to be some of his main conclusions, although it is a pity that he found himself unable to make his own contribution to the vital question of whether a point of contact exists in the natural man for the preaching of the Gospel.

Finally, he makes a grand plea for the essential dignity of man in God's sight, with suitable qualification of the term used. And this has added importance in view of his brief discussion of the Marxian concept of man. He gives a summary treatment of the views of C. S. Lewis and Prof. Kümmel on their particular views of human dignity to give strong expression to his own position. He feels that the Christian Church must proclaim the essential sacredness and worth of man in the sight of God in the face of the inhuman doctrine of man expressed in the thought and action of totalitarianism. Recalling the saying of Muretus ('Dost thou call that soul vile for which Christ was content to die?'), he stresses the command of our Lord that we love one another, and that our love must embrace all His children everywhere.

Schism in the Early Church. (S.C.M. 21s.)

Professor Greenslade, in a very useful introduction to his book, indicates the plan and scope of his work. This makes it easy for the reviewer whose first task is generally to indicate the contents of the book under review. Prof. Greenslade has not been able to suffer the implication often made that the early Church was undivided. Any careful reading of Church history could hardly arrive at such a conclusion; yet he is careful to point out a relative truth in such statements if the schisms were accepted as being really outside the Church. So in the first chapter he considers the kind of questions that the early Church asked; such as, whether the schismatic body was within or without the Church, or

the difference between heresy and schism. And he is at pains to emphasize how seriously the early Church regarded any breach of unity, and how in its teaching schisms were regarded as outside the Church proper. In the next five chapters he goes on to discuss some of the principal causes of schism, distinguishing those which could be called ecclesiastical—liturgical disputes and problems of discipline, and those which were essentially secular—personal rivalry, nationalism and social and economic influences, and the rivalry of the leading churches (the so-called non-theological factors in Church disunity). In the next three chapters he considers how the early Church tried to deal with the problem of schisms; first, from Constantine's reign, by coercion, that is, calling upon the State to suppress or penalize the schismatics. Secondly, by negotiation and discipline, that is, dispensing with law and custom in the greater interests of the restoration of unity. Thirdly, theological changes introduced to meet the pressure of schism. Finally, Prof. Greenslade ends with his own conclusions regarding the consequences of schism in a general summary of the movements he has described. And he includes a most valuable 'personal statement of faith' on the problem of Church Union which may be more valuable than many 'worked-out arguments'! There is a most valuable appendix on the schismatical movements and bibliography to interest most students of the subject.

The synopsis of schisms (appendix 1) was introduced for a definite purpose. He indicates in the preface or introduction that he changed his mind on the actual treatment of the subject when he wrote his lectures. Instead of taking each major schism separately, he decided to consider the principal causes of schism and their treatment. For those who listened to the lectures I could imagine they appreciated the difficulty, and their own deficiencies! Now that the lectures are published, it will be a more rewarding study. Not only with the synopsis mentioned above, but with the necessary references available, they will be better equipped for the task. From this point of view the method becomes, as Prof. Greenslade hoped, 'more interesting and more fruitful'. It is, therefore, a book which needs to be re-read, and, if that is true, it surely counts as a good recommendation.

Prof. Greenslade speaks of the object of this work as twofold. He has an academic interest in finding out just what happened—what schisms are and how they arose; and on the basis of this work, trying to relate the experience of the early Church to the situation of the Church today. This aims at making a necessary preparation for a good deal of discussion that is going on just now on the question of Church Union. For that reason I was tempted to read the last chapter first, and found it a thrilling and courageous 'personal statement of faith'. It is extremely healthy and helpful, and I would like many to read it. So a few words on what may be the most important chapter:

The question that he puts forward at the end of his book is, 'Should we still take as our point of departure the conception which ruled, almost without challenge, in the early centuries of Christianity, that the Church is a single visible communion, and that all schisms are outside it, or should we now believe that the one Church is inwardly divided by schisms?' In attempting to answer this question he says that 'we

must face the facts of divided Christendom and evolve a theology of disunity' in the sense that the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church exists, on earth, in its divisions, comprising a number of communions which unequally manifest and live by various elements in full Christianity. Thus we might expect him to discuss the question how shall the validity and efficacy of the ministry and sacraments of these communions be judged? Or where shall we draw the line in acknowledging acceptable churches, ministries or sacraments?

His starting point is that as soon as we acknowledge efficacious ministries and sacraments in other communions, then we acknowledge them as, in some real sense, 'churches' within the one Church. And further, to quote him in full, 'If we find a denomination so far sound in faith that it preaches the Gospel on the basis of the Bible and affirms the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds, if we find that it uses the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and that it solemnly sets apart men to be ordained by Christ, through the prayers of the Church there represented, as its ministers, and if we find that this denomination, so far as we can judge, has produced the fruits of the Spirit and shown its power to survive, then we ought to assume that Christ has given it a ministry endowed with His own authority and we ought to acknowledge it to be within the *Una Sancta*.' Thus he makes the plea for intercommunion, even though there may be (as there will be) important differences between the denominations.

Then he tries to envisage such agreements which will make intercommunion possible, and believes most strongly that this type of approach will help to relieve any tensions of hostility that may exist and prepare the way to a growing together which in God's gift may lead to union. While he is thankful for the measure of reunion brought about in the Church of South India, he feels that in the West corporate unity will only succeed a greater measure of this growing together. With that I wholeheartedly agree; and I agree that intercommunion is a vital part or step in such a process of growing together. While the situation in India is admittedly very different and a strong case has been put forward for a more rapid transition, yet I feel it to be true that even here a deeper understanding of our different communions, doctrinally and theologically, is absolutely necessary. There may be good reasons for settling things quickly; but surely there would be real value in the gradual preparation of growing together as Prof. Greenslade envisages in his book. Perhaps then we might have a deeper understanding (and here I am thinking on the congregational level) of our own distinctive contributions, as of other denominations that we join in deeper fellowship. 'We ought to be in communion with one another; the case against it is not good enough. Is not God calling us to have the courage and faith and humility to take THIS step?' We pray this may come soon.

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