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Editorial: Radical Discipleship

The coming of Jesus Christ into the world was the coming of a wonderful revolution: the sick were healed, the hungry fed, the possessed were cured, sinners were brought back into fellowship with God, social and racial barriers were broken down, rich and poor began to share, the dead were raised. And this revolution was achieved not by violence and hatred, but through the power and love of God working through Jesus.

But what has happened to that revolution? The church of Jesus Christ today, at least by comparison, seems anything but a revolutionary force.

Was Jesus’ revolution, like so many revolutions, just a short-lived and exciting experiment that soon burned out, and that lost momentum as soon as it became institutionalized in the church? No Christian can accept that diagnosis.

Three things deserve to be said: first, the Jesus revolution never was an unqualified success. The time of his ministry certainly was a very exciting time; but Jesus faced intense opposition from outside his community and stubborn selfishness and materialism within his community. His ministry was a struggle with Satan, and, although the resurrection was proof of his final victory, his death was a measure of the fierceness of Satan’s attack; his enemies killed him, and his friends deserted him. Jesus warned his disciples that they would face the same sort of thing: lack of response to the sowing of the Word of God, people falling away under the heat of persecution and through the choking effect of riches, and personal suffering and danger.

This was, of course, what happened in the New Testament church: although the church was in many ways a sensational success, it was not all like that. It only takes a reading of Paul’s epistles or of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation to show that the early church experienced many of the problems and sins that we face today.

A second thing to be said is that, although today’s church has its full share of problems and sins, the light of Jesus’ revolutionary love is still shining brightly in many parts of the church. Sometimes we may be inclined, because of the difficulty of our particular situation, to accept the popular and distorted image of the church as an irrelevant and outmoded institution; but in reality in many places and in many ways Christ’s revolution is going on: people are coming to new life in Christ and are being wonderfully changed; missionary work is increasing, not decreasing, in some parts of the world; Christians are living lives that are different—both famous people like Mother Teresa in Calcutta, and unknown people like the saints in your church and mine who cheerfully sacrifice themselves for others.

But to point to the problems of the New Testament church and to encouragements in today’s church situation must not lead us to complacency. The early church and Jesus’
own fellowship of disciples had plenty of faults; but these were not regarded as things to be tolerated, but as denials of the gospel and as meriting judgment. Jesus warned against religiously saying ‘Lord, Lord’ without acting accordingly. So the third and most important thing to say about the church’s failure to live out Jesus’ revolution is that the situation poses an urgent challenge to us and to our churches: we must repent—really and not only in word—and follow in Jesus’ revolutionary footsteps—really and not only in word. That challenge is a costly one: it was the path that took Jesus to the cross.

The title of this editorial is borrowed from a recent book written by a former Themelios contributor, Chris Sugden, who is at present working in India. In his book he takes further the thinking of Ronald Sider and others about the social implications of the gospel and the relationship of social concern and evangelism (providing plenty of thought-provoking ideas and a very useful bibliography). He notes interestingly how ‘the proposers of radical discipleship’ have often come from evangelical churches with very conservative views of the Bible. This is surely as it should be (but not as it always has been): no-one who takes the Bible seriously and Jesus Christ seriously should be content with a comfortable undemanding form of Christianity (though many of us and many evangelical churches easily slip into that). We may not find all of Sugden’s suggestions applicable to our situations; but we do need to hear the challenge to follow Jesus radically—in every aspect of our lives, and not only to hear but also to begin to work it out in practice. This might seem a hopeless task; but it is not: Jesus inaugurated the revolution of the kingdom of God; he gives us his Spirit so that we may live the revolution here and now, and he will one day bring what he has begun to completion.

Weakness — Paul's and ours

Richard Bauckham

Dr Bauckham, author of this expository study, is lecturer in theology in the University of Manchester.

2 Corinthians has for a long time seemed to me among the most impressive documents of early Christianity. When I need to remind myself that the Christian message is convincing — still convincing today in spite of our great chronological and cultural distance from its first-century origins — I turn as readily to 2 Corinthians as I do to the gospels, and cannot remember failing to be impressed. The key to this impressiveness I find in the insight 2 Corinthians gives us into the way Paul integrated his message and his life. Remarkable as Paul's expositions of his message are, in Romans and Galatians, I find myself needing also to see, in 2 Corinthians, how Paul lived that message. A critical reader of Paul might wonder whether a message as exclusively concentrated on the death and resurrection of Jesus as Paul's gospel was could actually have the power to interpret and direct a man's actual living experience in a life-enhancing way. 2 Corinthians shows how in Paul's own instance it did.

To say that Paul's autobiographical reflection in 2 Corinthians is impressive may be a little paradoxical, because Paul's obsession in this letter is with how unimpressive he is, or at least with the fact that the only impressive thing about him is his weakness. In this rambling apologia for his life and work as an apostle, Paul's weakness is the recurring theme. In chapter 4, for example, Paul writes of the glory of God revealed in the gospel and of his own call to be a minister of that gospel, when the glory of God in Christ shone in his heart (4: 6). But the thought of the glory and the power of the gospel entrusted to him immediately, by contrast, suggests the thought of his own frailty: 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels' (4: 7). The clay pot is both a very ordinary and a very fragile container for treasure. What makes this theme of the apostle's weakness so arresting and intriguing is that Paul is not in the least apologising for it or mentioning it only for the sake of honesty. In chapters 11-12 (with deliberate irony, of course) Paul boasts of it, as precisely the qualification which validates his claim to be an apostle of Christ. Hecatalogues his sufferings (11: 23-33), not as heroic ordeals, but as evidence of how his ministry was marked by the physical and psychological frailty of an ordinary human being, ending the catalogue with a vivid memory of the ignominious occasion when he had to flee for his life from Damascus by being lowered in a basket from the city wall (11: 32-33).

This weakness of Paul was the occasion for the power of God to be active and evident in his ministry: 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us' (4: 7); 'I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me' (12: 9). The power of God evident in Paul's ministry, not least in the transforming effect of the Gospel he preached, could be seen to be no merely human achievement of Paul's but divine power which found its opportunity in Paul's weakness. In his weakness Paul was obliged to trust in God and his converts to recognize God.

Some modern readers might begin to feel uneasy about this Pauline motif of the apostle's weakness and God's power. Someone may recall Bonhoeffer's famous passage about the religion which exploits human weakness:

Religious people speak of God when human knowledge . . . has come to an end, or when human resources fail — in fact it is always the deus ex machina that they bring on to the scene, either for the apparent solution of insoluble problems, or as strength in human failure — always, that is to say, exploiting human weakness or human boundaries . . . . I should like to speak of God not on the boundaries but at the centre, not in weaknesses but in strength.

That might, at first glance, seem like a direct rejection of Paul's idea. Is Paul's God to be found only at the end of human resources, when human strength runs out?

Or it might be thought that Paul falls victim to Dorothee Soelle's incisive critique of Christian masochism (as she calls it), that attitude which calls for willingness to suffer because suffering demonstrates human impotence by contrast with God's omnipotence. 'Suffering is there to break our pride, demonstrate our powerlessness, exploit our dependency. Affliction has the intention of

reflecting in his own ministry and used it as the key to his own experience. If he experienced the dying of Jesus in his frailty and sufferings (1: 5; 4: 10-12), he also found in every escape from death, every encouragement after anxiety and depression, every convert made in the midst of persecution, a participation in the resurrection of Christ, God's ability to bring life out of death (cf. 1: 5, 9-10; 4: 10-12). Such experiences were not necessarily dramatic or miraculous deliverances, like the escape from death to which 1: 9-10 refers, but were often relatively ordinary events. One example Paul gives is the arrival of Titus, after a worrying delay, with unexpectedly good news about affairs in the church at Corinth (7: 5-7; note the echoes of the language of 1: 3-7). In 4: 8-9 Paul gives a rhetorical list of 'cross' and 'resurrection' aspects of his experience:

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.

The second member of each pair here seems strikingly understated: just the negative point that Paul's weakness had not yet put an end to his ministry. The demands of his ministry had almost proved too much for him, but, by God's grace, not quite.

Thus Paul's experience might often seem outwardly unremarkable. But because he sees the death and resurrection of Jesus as the key to his life, as to everything else, he can find there a pattern which makes Christian sense of his experience. The shape which everyone needs to give to his experience in order to understand it Paul found in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. This pattern, however, was more than an interpretation of the experience: it also made the experience what it was for Paul. All the ups and downs of his ministry were for Paul experiences of God, events in which he experienced an identification with Jesus in his dying and rising: 'always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies' (4: 10).

To identify with Paul's experience we do not need to be shipwrecked or imprisoned or lowered in a basket from a city wall. Even without the physical dangers of Paul's career, anyone who throws himself into the work of Christian ministry of any kind with half the dedication of Paul will experience the weakness of which Paul speaks: the times when problems seem insoluble, the times of weariness from sheer overwork, the times of depression when there seem to be no results, the

depression when there seem to be no results, the emotional exhaustion which pastoral concern can bring on — in short, all the times when the Christian minister or worker knows he has stretched to the limits of his capacities for a task which is very nearly, but by God’s grace not quite, too much for him. Anyone who knows only his strength, not his weakness, has never given himself to a task which demands all he can give. There is no avoiding this weakness, and we should learn to suspect those models of human life which try to avoid it. We should not be taken in by the ideal of the charismatic superman for whom the Holy Spirit is a constant source of superhuman strength. Nor should we fall for the ideal of the modern secular superman: the man who organizes his whole life with the object of maintaining his own physical and mental well-being, who keeps up the impression of strength because he keeps his life well within the limits of what he can easily cope with. Such a man is never weak because he is never affected, concerned, involved or committed beyond a cautiously safe limit. That was neither Jesus’ ideal of life nor Paul’s. To be controlled by the love of Christ means inevitably to reach the limits of one’s abilities and experience weakness.

Of course, I am not suggesting that the Christian minister should not take sensible precautions against overwork or reasonable steps to maintain his physical and mental health. Nor am I suggesting he should not do his best to be efficient in his work. He owes it to his Lord to do so. But a Pauline perspective on Christian service takes us further than that. The Christian minister should be sensible, but above all he must be whole-hearted. He should try to be efficient, but even when his efficiency runs out the effectiveness of his ministry need not do so. His efficiency may actually need sometimes to run out — by necessity, not neglect — if the power of Christ is to prove effective in his ministry.

That the Christian minister’s life should match his message is a common enough thought. But the content which Paul gives to it is not so commonplace. For Paul the Christian minister’s weakness is not the point where he is failing, but the point where the deepest integration of his life and his message is possible. If he can respond to God at that point in his experience as Paul did, then it will be for him an experience of Jesus Christ, and for his ministry an occasion for God’s power to be most evidently and characteristically at work. The impressiveness of his ministry will not be his own impressiveness, but that of his message which matches up to the experience of human weakness and makes it the vehicle of God’s power.
A new Tübingen school? Ernst Käsemann and his commentary on Romans

T. N. Wright

Dr Wright, who is now Assistant Professor of New Testament at McGill University in Canada, contributed an excellent piece on C. E. B. Cranford’s commentary on Romans. Now he guides us expertly around one of the most important German commentaries, which has recently appeared in English translation.

In 1925, as a student of 19 years old, Ernst Käsemann attended a lecture course (by Erik Peterson) on the Epistle to the Romans. Looking back from the vantage-point of 1973, he could write with satisfaction that this experience determined his course of study and in some sense, as a theologist, his life. ‘The basic problem was posed. In the follow-

ing semesters I then listened to the expositions of H. von Soden and R. Bultmann. I then turned more and more to Käsemann, Luther and Calvin, studied them critically, and was led by them into interpretation ancient and modern. No literary document has been more important for me.’

Certainly for Käsemann the desire (and calling?) to ‘liberate the church for decisive action’ is so strong that in many passages Paul is made — forced, some might say — to speak directly to the twentieth century. His work marked all of Käsemann’s life with the fundamental question of ‘New Testament Theology’ (‘Are we doing history, or normative theology, or both?’) and the tension that results from giving the answer ‘both’ is clear through Käsemann’s work, as it was, though in different ways, in the writings of Rudolf Bultmann.

But the world to which Käsemann believes that Paul must be related is not a world in which many readers of the new English translation of his commentary will feel at home. It is the world of post-war German Lutheranism, bruised and shocked after the ‘church struggle’ of the ’30s and ’40s, horrified by the Holocaust, bewildered to discover that Nazism is still not eradicated, fearful lest the church also be seducing and working the gospel. Those who know little about Bonhoeffer and nothing about the Barmen Declaration will find themselves at sea in passage after passage of Käsemann’s polemic. He not only fights battles which are now historical lost (say) for Englishmen or North Americans (we have our own battles: some of them may have analogies with the German situation; but they are not the same ones: he does so allusively, like Dante, so that the unidentified need almost a running commentary to see what lies behind the sharp remark, the sudden outburst, the sustained polemic, indeed the whole massively thought-out reinterpretation of Paul and Christ). Perhaps the most revealing of his books in this respect is his Jesus Means Freedom (subtitled A Polemical Survey of the New Testament). There we see — though still in flashes — what Käsemann is really worried about. He discerns in contemporary German Protestantism a comfortable bourgeois mentality that seeks from the gospel not a challenge to radical obedience but a prop for the status quo. He sees in the rediscovery of ‘salvation history’ a relapse into the old theological theology that is too respectable (‘find out what God is doing in our nation, and do it with him . . .’). He opposes a

3 Of the six volumes of Paul’s Letters, Handbuch zur Kritik des christlichen Schrifttums, 2, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1974.) Page references below to this work unless otherwise stated; and, unless otherwise noted, the German and English publishers of Käsemann’s other writings are the same as for the commentary. There are some small changes between the first and third German editions, though they involve some renumbering of pages.


depression when there seem to be no results, the emotional exhaustion which pastoral concern can bring on — in short, all the times when the Christian ministry feels that it has stretched to the limits of its capacities for a task which is very nearly, but by God's grace quite, too much for him. Anyone who knows only his strength, not his weakness, has never given himself to a task which demands all he can give. There is no avoiding this weakness, and we should learn to suspect those models of human life which try to avoid it. We should not be taken in by the ideal of the charismatic superman for whom the Holy Spirit is a constant source of superhuman strength. Nor should we fall for the ideal of the modern secular superior: the man who organizes his whole life with the object of maintaining his own physical and mental well-being, who keeps up his impression of efficiency and success, and who keeps his life well within the limits of what he can easily cope with. Such a man is never weak because he is never affected, concerned, involved or committed beyond a cautiously safe limit. That was neither Jesus' ideal of life nor Paul's. To be controlled by the love of Christ means inevitably to reach the limits of one's abilities and experience weakness. Of course, I am not suggesting that the Christian minister should not take precautions against overwork or reasonable steps to maintain

For those with ears to hear, that quotation says it all. Käsemann is self-consciously a Protestant; a pupil of Bultmann; an avid historical critic; and one who was interested long and hard with Paul, and with the problems of Romans in particular. His large-scale commentary is the result. It breathes the air of the sophisticated German Protestant criticism of the last 50 years, with all its dialectical tensions and magnificently conscious, and equally concerned to maintain the true (i.e. Reformation) heritage and tradition. It is doggedly set on producing, through ruthless historical criticism, both an interpretation of what Paul was talking about and the message which Romans has for the church in the twentieth century.

There is already a tension in this double aim which is perhaps all the healthier for never being realised in Käsemann's writings. On the one hand the commentary gives constant support to an earlier statement of intent:

My questioning and my listening have never been directed exclusively to academic theology. ... Theology has both the commission and the capacity to summon the church to take up the promise which is given to her ... my work is intended to have doctrinal implications. On the one hand, less than a periodization, it would be merely pretentious ... it is for the very purpose of liberating the church for decisive action that theology has to carry out its work of radical and critical questions.

On the other hand, the commitment to rigorous historical-critical exegesis — already invoked, in fact, as part of the hermeneutical task — is stated with equal vigour:

The impatience, who are concerned only about results or practical application, should leave their hands off exegesis. They are of no value for it, nor, when rightly done, is exegesis of any value for them.

One can see what he means, even if the expression is a little harsh. The distinction between the practical value of theological exegesis which Käsemann commends and exemplifies and the "practical application" which he despises is, in the last resort, a subtle one, and the reader will have to decide whether it can be consistently maintained.

Certainly for Käsemann the desire (and calling?) to 'liberate the church for decisive action' is so strong that in many passages Paul is made — forced, some might say — to speak directly to the twentieth century. Is this not in accordance with the fundamental question of 'New Testament Theology' ('Are we doing history, or normative theology, or both?') and the tension that results from giving the answer 'both' is clear throughout his work, just as it was, though in different ways, in the writings of Rudolf Bultmann.

But the world to which Käsemann believes that Paul must be related is not a world in which many readers of the new English translation of his commentary will feel at home. It is the world of post-war German Lutheranism, bruised and shocked after the 'church struggle' of the '30s and '40s, horrified by the Holocaust, bewildered to discover that Nazism is still not eradicated, fearful lest the church also be seducing them into the gospel. Those who know little about Bonhoeffer and nothing about the Barmen Declaration will find themselves at sea in passage after passage of Käsemann's polemic. He not only fights battles which are perspicuous (say) for Englishmen or North Americans (we have our own battles: some of them may have analogies with the German situation: but they are not the same ones). He does so allusively, like Dante, so that the uninitiated need almost a running commentary to see what lies behind the sharp remark, the sudden outburst, the sustained polemic, the whole massively thought-out reinterpretation of Paul and New Testament. Perhaps the most revealing of his books in this respect is his Jesus Means Freedom (subtitled A Polemical Survey of the New Testament). There we see — though still in flashes — what Käsemann is really worried about. He discerns in contemporary German Protestantism a comfortable bourgeois mentality that seeks from the gospel not a challenge to radical obedience but a prop for the status quo. He sees in the rediscovery of 'salvation history' a relapse into the same fundamental theology that he finds respectable ("find out what God is doing in our nation, and do it with him... "). He opposes a

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1 Ernst Käsemann, Commentary on Romans (ET Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and London: SCM, 1980), p. vii. (ET of An Introduction to the New Testament, T. N. Wright, C. B. Moir (Paul Siebeck), 1974.) Page references below to this book unless otherwise stated; and, unless otherwise noted, the German and English publishers of Käsemann's other writings are the same as for the commentary. There are no small changes between the first and third German editions, though they involve some renumbering of pages.


3 See his article on 'Justification and Salvation History' in Perspectives on Paul (hereafter PPP: London, 1971), pp. 68-78, reprinted in A. Heschel, ed., Paul and Modern Judaism (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), pp. 28f, 134f, etc. Käsemann is here close to Barth and Bonhoeffer in his emphasis on the first commandment (see E. Busch, Karl Barth. His Life from Letters and Autobiographical
theology of resurrection' with the old Lutheran theologia crucis: God is not the God of the godly, the devout, the comfortable, those who are at ease in Zion, but is the justifier of the outsider, the ungodly. God is a friend of sinners and set comfortable society by its ears. (It would be to miss the point entirely to object that Christianity is based on the cross and the resurrection. Käsemann knows that perfectly well; he is here contending for a wider notion of the atonement, which he, and those he opposes, have characterized in this sometimes unhelpful fashion. The question is not or not directly whether Käsemann 'believes in the resurrection', but whether it is to be seen as a unifying theme, with the cross merely as its preliminary, or as the next chapter in the theology of the cross itself.)

Thus Käsemann can write of Jesus that 'the revolutionaries had their eye on him, and felt able to set the whole world straight for a time. We are now paying heavily for the fact that German Christian people (original: deutsche Christenheit) failed to appreciate this and made him a bourgeois after their own image: and in exactly the same way his laments over the decline of the Christians of his own time have never been taken seriously enough by those who had every occasion to do so.' It might be thought that Käsemann is fighting out-of-date battles, seeking merely to exorcise ghosts from the past. It is true that some of the things he says are not very persuasive; that I do know the concerns which most fire him are not, and for all sorts of good reasons simply cannot be, pressing concerns for those who have not shared the struggles of German Protestantism – unless we as Germans as Käsemann thinks Paul saw Israel, as somehow paradigmatic for the rest of mankind. If these remarks serve to distance English readers from Käsemann, they should, I hope, do so in doing so, rather than lessening, their respect for him. Germany has signaly refused to allow the academic to be isolated from the 'real world', and Käsemann stands in the noble tradition of those who are determined to integrate their theological concerns within the different sides of a theologian's existence. And because Käsemann, by conviction, an exigeat first and foremost, one who has struggled long and hard to think Paul's thoughts after him, his work remains fascinating, even when it seems at times distant from those for whom such thoughts are not, as though born out of time, are unable to feel the last war as part of their own experience. For those who can remember, and for those who wish to continue to retake the New Testament to what Barth called 'theological existence today', his lifework has already provided a great stimulus and will no doubt continue to do so.

Before launching into an exposition and critique of Käsemann's theological position, some remarks are in order: it is important not to allow the tool for a study of Romans, perhaps the most telling thing that can be said about it is that its tone is very reminiscent of Barth's famous commentary. It is more like a theological treatise, which happens to know by heart the text of the epistle, than a commentary as usually understood; but because it does follow the text of the epistle it is a difficult treatise to read. (This is of course the result of the tension we noted earlier between his influence on Käsemann's work.) The tool used by each individual commentator for each in the list of the old theological discussions jostles with minor textual or verbal notes, without any signposts or crossheadings within the long sections into which Käsemann divides the epistle. Forgoing this practice, and writing of exegesis and the writing of exegesis as a tool for understanding the text of the epistle, there are plenty of shadowy excuses in all-but-name, confusing in their unheralded appearance. There is no introduction or conclusion; nor are there any index entries in the book, and the thought of a separate cheap exegetical discussions or theological question-marks would undermine the whole thing. We must deal, as Käsemann himself emphatically does, (in contrast with many English-speaking writers on Paul) with the large issues and their correlation.

The background: apocalyptic. The over-all task which Käsemann has set himself, both in his commentary and his other writings on Paul, is clear: to place the apostle against the background of the history of religions, in such a way that his theological emphases stand out and can be heard afresh today. And as soon as we ask what the 'proper background', we realize just what a change has come over historical critical orthodoxy in the last generation. Paul used to be regarded as the great helenizer, the man who found Christianity Jewish and left it Greek, the apostle who translated the gospel into terms that the non-Jewish world could understand, into concepts that broke free from legalistic Jewish shackles. This model dominated German research all through the 1930s and 1940s (providing incidentally a silent support for quite different notions of thought), and continued to do so until W. D. Davies registered his protest in Paul and Rabbinic Judaism. Since then the lines have not been so easy to trace. Already Bultmann was not so sure as Bardenhewer had attempted to set Paul against a background neither hellenistic nor rabbinic, but strictly apocalyptic. This suggestion, scorned at the time, has now come to roost in the work of the new Tubing school, whose followers. Though some of Paul's ideas (e.g. his baptism-theology in Rom. 6) are still held to derive from the mystery-religions, the great emphases can only be understood in terms of apocalyptic. Käsemann's reading of Paul's thought is now the commentary, and this shows us just what it means in practice, namely that 'Christianity is not just a Jewish sect which believes in Jesus as the Messiah. It is the breaking in of the new world of God characterized by the lordship of the Spirit' (p. 191). Käsemann finds in the apocalyptic writings a vision of God's triumph over the rebellious world, and of God's righteousness as both his saving power and his gift of salvation, and this understanding-proving滑雪theological background is the basis of the life and work of Jesus and the beliefs of the primitive community: and how did the early Greek theology arise out of Paulinism? But instead of the old answer, that Paul has handed on and developed a tradition (and provided a bridge between Jesus and second-century Christianity) Käsemann is offering a new solution, that Paul exploited hidden depths in Jewish apocalyptic to be used as the Christian mould and create a gospel for the world.

Unlike Schweitzer, who from an apocalyptic background deduced that 'being in Christ' (which he called, perhaps misleadingly, 'Christ-mysticism')

Texts, ET London, 1976, pp. 224-227, 257, 271, 273; the whole of ch. 5, pp. 199-262, provides interesting background for this theme, and a clear version of Paul's view of himself.  
1 Freedom, p. 29; see too e.g. pp. 40ff, 64, 81, etc.
2 See the remarks of John Barton in JTS n.s. 31, 1980, p. 572.  
3 See too my forthcoming brief review complementary to this essay in Church Times for important reviews of the commentary, of e.g. J. Riches in SJT 27, 1976, pp. 537-574; N. D. Gibbs in Evangelische Theologische 21, 1976, pp. 80-94; K. P. Donfried in Religious Studies Update 2, 1975, pp. 1-2; and W. Lewandowski, 'An Introduction to Ernst Käsemann's Theology' in Encounter (Indianapolis, Indiana) 35, 1974, pp. 222-242.
4 I have my doubts about words like 'non-interchangeable' (p. 384) (especially as applied to God!); and, though it may sound strange, to put the question in a formal way (E. Evangelyische Theologische 21, 1976, pp. 80-94; K. P. Donfried in Religious Studies Update 2, 1975, pp. 1-2), I think that the whole debate on the Bible and the political and social form of the church is the question that is being discussed. I think that the whole debate on the Bible and the political and social form of the church is the question that is being discussed.
5 I am grateful to the editors of these volumes for the permission to quote.
6 Quoted (from a review in The Guardian) on the back of the proper background in the history of religions, in such a way that his theological emphases stand out and can be heard afresh today. And as soon as we ask what the 'proper background', we realize just what a change has come over historical critical orthodoxy in the last generation. Paul used to be regarded as the great helenizer, the man who found Christianity Jewish and left it Greek, the apostle who translated the gospel into terms that the non-Jewish world could understand, into concepts that broke free from legalistic Jewish shackles. This model dominated German research all through the 1930s and 1940s (providing incidentally a silent support for quite different notions of thought), and continued to do so until W. D. Davies registered his protest in Paul and Rabbinic Judaism. Since then the lines have not been so easy to trace. Already Bultmann was not so sure as Bardenhewer had attempted to set Paul against a background neither hellenistic nor rabbinic, but strictly apocalyptic. This suggestion, scorned at the time, has now come to roost in the work of the new Tubing school, whose followers. Though some of Paul's ideas (e.g. his baptism-theology in Rom. 6) are still held to derive from the mystery-religions, the great emphases can only be understood in terms of apocalyptic. Käsemann's reading of Paul's thought is now the commentary, and this shows us just what it means in practice, namely that 'Christianity is not just a Jewish sect which believes in Jesus as the Messiah. It is the breaking in of the new world of God characterized by the lordship of the Spirit' (p. 191). Käsemann finds in the apocalyptic writings a vision of God's triumph over the rebellious world, and of God's righteousness as both his saving power and his gift of salvation, and this understanding-proving滑雪theological background is the basis of the life and work of Jesus and the beliefs of the primitive community: and how did the early Greek theology arise out of Paulinism? But instead of the old answer, that Paul has handed on and developed a tradition (and provided a bridge between Jesus and second-century Christianity) Käsemann is offering a new solution, that Paul exploited hidden depths in Jewish apocalyptic to be used as the Christian mould and create a gospel for the world. Unlike Schweitzer, who from an apocalyptic background deduced that 'being in Christ' (which he called, perhaps misleadingly, 'Christ-mysticism')

At the same time, the book is an exegetical tool of great value. Its grasp of detail, as well as of whole arguments, is massively impressive. Käsemann has done a monumental task with this book, and I have to speak with the utmost respect and reverence for him. He has provided a great stimulus to all those who work in the field of New Testament studies, and I have no doubt that his work will continue to be the standard work for many years to come.

Before launching into an exposition and critique of Käsemann's theological position, some remarks are necessary about certain aspects of the text itself. The book is notable for its length and the density of its argument. It is a work of great subtlety and complexity, and it is also a work of great scholarship. Käsemann has drawn on a wide range of sources, both ancient and modern, and he has developed his arguments with great care and precision.

One of the most striking features of Käsemann's work is its use of the concept of 'speech'. He uses this concept in a way that is new and original, and it is this that makes his work so powerful and so challenging. The concept of 'speech' is not just a metaphor for the act of speaking, but it is also a way of thinking about the nature of language and of thought itself. Käsemann uses this concept to argue for a new understanding of the relationship between language and thought, and he uses it to challenge the traditional view of the relationship between language and reality.

Käsemann's work is also notable for its use of the concept of 'theological method'. He uses this concept to argue for a new way of thinking about theology, one that is not just a matter of abstract speculation, but that is also grounded in the concrete realities of human experience.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Käsemann's work is a landmark in the history of New Testament studies. It is a work of great importance, and it is a work that deserves to be read and studied by all those who are interested in the study of the New Testament.

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1 See my forthcoming brief review complementary to this book in [JETS], the best journal in the field, and for some important reviews of the commentary, see e.g., J. H. Green, in JETS 29, 1976, pp. 537-540. The volume is a work of great scholarship and a worthy tribute to the memory of a great scholar.

2 For an introductory essay, see E. W. Batchelor, "An Introduction to Ernst Käsemann's Theology" in Encounter (Indianapolis, Indiana) 35, 1974, pp. 222-224.

3 I have my doubts about words like "noninterchangeable" (p. 384) (especially as applied to God) and, though it may sound a bit too fine a point, in the context of Käsemann'ss 'speech' and his jargon, I think that I can be more explicit about what I mean by 'speech' and what it is that I am arguing for.

was the centre of Paul's thought, Käsemann from the same background puts forward a view of God’s righteousness', focused on the crucified Christ, as the chief point in the whole scheme of redemption, with the link between God and man now taken not from God or with God, but to God’s ‘salvation-creating power’. This somewhat compressed phrase denotes God’s saving activity seen both as power (God’s own power with which he conquers evil and establishes the new cosmos) and as gift (the same power, now given to the believer so that he is recaptured for radical obedience to God). In Käsemann's view it is thus basically an activity of God, and theos is therefore a subjective genitive.

This leads inevitably to a new view of justification and faith. If ‘the revelation of God’s righteousness’ means God’s triumph over the world in the cross of Christ, faith is the liberating knowledge of the truth of that event and the effect of that happening. For Bultmann, faith and radical obedience are real the same thing; though, in sharp contrast to Bultmann, the meaning of that faith and obedience is understood in the context of the individual and his experience. Only the individual can be saved. Just as in the work of God by which the believer is brought into this new position of faith/obedience.

Christology

Underneath all this is Christology. Käsemann uses this word not primarily to refer to the question of Jesus' "divinity" and/or "humanity", but rather as a shorthand for the theologia crucis, the revelation of God’s righteousness in the cross, by which the world is defeated, and because of which the believer is challenged, and enabled, to live by faith rather than in the false confidence of petty and religious respectability. Just as the cross was, for Luther, the weapon to be used against all human righteousness and cleverness, so for Käsemann it becomes the centre of his whole polemical position.

Christology stands over against anthropology and ecclesiology. By ‘anthropology’, Käsemann refers to Bultmann’s reduction of Paul’s message to the analysis of ‘how one is justified/saved’; by ‘ecclesiology’ he seems to mean theological positionings towards Roman Catholicism. Here again a certain amount of ground knowledge may help. Käsemann is very conscious of the fact that some of his fellow-pupils under Bultmann have made a different pilgrimage to Rome and the Roman Catholic Church, the only alternative to Bultmann’s version of Protestantism.

Heinrich Schlier, himself the author of a large recent commentary on Romans, is the most obvious example. Käsemann sets out a third alternative which enables him – indeed, requires him – to remain a radical Protestant while avoiding the many dangers which he, like Schlier, sees in Bultmann. Here we encounter Käsemann’s characteristic Reformation battle-cry: his understanding of the modern theological situation in Germany is that the radical historical criticisms such as himself represent the genuine Lutheran tradition, protesting against a theologia gloriae, a theology of the church triumphant, of worldly development and arrogance of religion such as Käsemann sees not only in Catholicism but also in many churches – not least those which in England would be called ‘evangelical’ – which like to consider themselves within the Reformation heritage.

Thus the basic human problem, which in Käsemann’s theology takes the place occupied, in Bultmann, by the analysis of man’s inauthenticity, is that man precisely in his religion is in rebellion against God.

Here is the heart of Paul’s teaching. It is not just that

24 This theme crops up frequently in Rechreibung. See particularly D. Lührmann, "Christologie und Rechreibung" (pp. 35-57) in his Hominis Theologia (Jerusalem: The Pauline Society’s press, 1970) and his "Paul’s theology of the cross" (pp. 509-526). M. Hengel’s massive article “Moris Touristisztica Crucis” (pp. 125-184) has now been employed as a basis for the separate book (Crossenbest in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross. London: SCM, 1977), all the more harrowing for his sober historical tone. It is dedicated, significantly, to the memory of Käsemann’s daughter Elisabeth, who died in 1977, aged 23.

25 See, for example, M. Reith’s "The Crucifixion in the History of the Church History" in Paul, and (to my mind unfortunately) proposes different interpretations of the centrality of the centrality of justification as liberation.


was the centre of Paul's thought, Käsemann from the same background puts forward a view of God's righteousness", focused on the crucified Christ, as the chief point in the whole Christian morality or religious life. The church then requires a turning down of Paul's polemic, and Käsemann finds in this the 'deutero-Pauline' and 'early Catholic' writings. Questions remain about the meaning of this and, in particular, whether the Church could be no doubt that it is a thesis of this scope and breadth, and originality, which is being advanced.

The righteousness of God
The most striking result of Käsemann's position is the reinterpretation of dikaiosynē theou. Just as he initiated a new phase of gospel study with his essay on the historical Jesus, so Käsemann launched a whole research programme with his short paper on 'The Righteousness of God', originally delivered in Oxford on 14 September 1961. Teaching experience suggests that, even though several accounts of Käsemann's thought are available, English-speaking students still find it difficult to grasp. Yet another attempt at explanation may therefore be in order.

Käsemann develops his view in sharp contrast to the more southerly, south German tradition with Bultmann, Conzelmann, Cranfeld and others, who hold that dikaiosynē theou in Paul usually refers to that 'righteousness', i.e. that righteous status, which the believer has as a result of God's action in Christ and by faith on the part of the subject. For Käsemann, the 'righteousness' is predicated of the believer, and theou is either a genitive of origin (righteousness from God) or an objective genitive (the righteousness which counts before God). Käsemann rejects this, along with the whole individualistic sociology, for which he sees as its context. In its place he suggests a new meaning for dikaiosynē and a new understanding of theou, based (quite consistently with his soteriology) on an apocalypse phrase now reinterpreted by Paul in the light of Christology. This phrase, found in the Scrolls and elsewhere (e.g. 1QS 11.12; CD 20.20; Test. Dan 6.10) is, according to Käsemann and his followers, 28 a technical term, and refers neither to a moral quality of God nor to a moral status of the believer. Rather, God's righteousness is a salvational, creating power. This somewhat compressed phrase denotes God's saving activity seen both as power (God's own power with which he conquers evil and establishes his kingdom of light) and as gift (the same power, now given to the believer so that he is recaptured for radical obedience to God). Dikaiosynē is thus basically an activity of God, and theou is therefore a subjective genitive.

This leads inevitably to a new view of justification 29 and faith. If 'The revelation of God's righteousness' means God's triumph over the world in the cross of Christ, faith is 'the liberating' 30 acknowledge of this triumph as the condition of the consequent Lordship of Christ. 31 For Bultmann, faith and radical obedience are really the same thing; though, in sharp contrast to Bultmann, the meaning of that faith and obedience is understood in the context of the contemporary theological situation in Germany that is the radical historical criticism such as himself represent the genuine Lutheran tradition, protesting against a theologio gloriae, a theology of the church triumphant, of worthy development within the religious heritage such as Käsemann sees not only in Catholicism but also in many churches - not least those which in England would be called 'evangelical' - which like to consider themselves within the Reformation heritage.

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28 Such as Müller, Stuhlmacher, etc.; see Brauch, op. cit.
29 See O. Bette in Reihegriffen, pp. 17-36, on justification at Qumran; an interesting discussion of law and grace, and present and future justification, in the Scrolls.
30 See U. Wünkens, Re却griffen als Freihet: Paulus und der Auseinandersetzung mit den Judentum (Darmstadt: V. Böhme, 1974) and G. Streekert in Reihegriffen, pp. 479-508 - a traditional histoirotheology that hardly does justice to the centralizing role of Jesus in the first century CE and Pauline thought. Streekert finds different layers embedded in Paul, and (to my mind unsuccessfully) proposes a differentiation between 'liberation' and 'justification' as liberation.
31 The work of H. H. Schmitt, represented in Reihegriffen by an essay on the Old Testament entitle, 'Charakteristik: Reihegriffen als Schlußgeschichte' ('Justification as Creation-Event', pp. 403-414)

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27 Paul is thus made to fight, like Luther, against 'nominism', against the great victorious religious establishment, against human righteousness of all sorts. This is why, though Käsemann is far too sophisticated to go the 'salvation-history' in Paul, that perspective is to be seen very definitely in the light of Christology, and of the justification (not of those who stand in the 'right' tradition or succession, but of the ungodly. And also simultaneously with Paul's second running battle on his hands: that against the 'enthusiasts'. This convenient category, with its German overtones of the radical reformations, is perhaps too hard to transfer to the English-speaking world as the word enthusiasm is to translate. Paul would be very interesting to find out just which English Christians, if any, Käsemann would put in this category. I suspect it would be a sort of

28 209, ad Rom 7: 14ff.
29 209, idem.
30 209, idem.
31 209, idem.
32 209, idem.
33 209, idem.
The Spirit and the Letter

This analysis of Christology and the battles to which it commends the theologian goes some way towards explaining a constant theme of Käsemann which often appears in a different sort of Protestantism. For Käsemann, as we have already hinted, radical historical criticism is not a necessary evil, undertaken in response to the apologetic need to trim one's sails to modern thought. The rejection of the supernatural elements in Christianity. It makes a virtue out of the declaration of 'historical grounds for faith', seeing such grounds as the attempt to base faith on history and so turn it into a 'work', or as the claim of the 'doctrina' to stand within a particular historical tradition and thus to be automatically justified. The 'acid bath of criticism' (into which young theological students are to be plunged) is a purifying baptism, a death to 'pious' or 'secure' theological positions which so obscure the whole of Scripture, which Käsemann sees as attempting to imprison God's word, to shut up the Spirit in the letter.

This emerges particularly in Käsemann's exposition of God's promise to the human plight. On the one hand, God justifies the ungodly - those who, like Abraham, simply hear and believe the bare word of the promise in the teeth of the evidence. No attempt must be made to base faith elsewhere. On the other, the true and radical freedom, freedom under the sign of the cross, freedom for radical obedience which sits loose to all ecclesiastical pressures and comforting structures, freedom from reading the Scriptures as

gramma,'letter'. With this last move, the whole scheme ties some of its own loose ends together: the Jewish scriptures are read by Paul as a radical historical critic would have them read, with a special stress on the concept of sarkhhrhik ('material criticism', i.e. the sifting of the material on the basis of a central theme, a sarmhrt). In one of his most significant non-excerpts, placed under the heading of 10-5: 23-24, Paul describes his own position as a whole critique of Israel and the law and as part of his view of the freedom of faith and the Spirit.

We stand here at the commencement of a theologially reflected Christian hermeneutics. Its mark is that it is not a criticism of faith. It demands critical exposition, with the message of justification as the decisive criterion. Since what is at issue in the message of justification is not just the salvation of the individual but the lordship of God over the world, Israel's history is also seen from this perspective.

And the antithesis of the last sentence is further expanded in another passage, this time in exposition of 8: 18-22, speaking of 'the pledge of eschatological liberation':

'If Marcin was forced by the inner logic of his theology to cut out vs. the single didactic knowledge of an existentialism which individualises salvation and thereby truncates Paul's message by describing freedom formally as openness to the future. In fact, this is a term for the earthly reality of Christ's lordship. The truth in the existential interpretation is that it recognises in pride and despair these powers which must deeply trouble the world. Its theological derivation comes from a world view which no longer knows what to do with Pauline apocalyptic, allows anthropological conclusions to the future, losing sight of the biblical history, obscures the antiquity of the aeons in 1.0ff by natural theology and here through the assertion of morality and theology, and forgetting that 'good I want' is life, or salvation, and the 'passions of the flesh' are the desires for self-justification which lead the religious man to attempt to earn that justification by doing what the law requires (pp. 194-204).

According to this view, chs. 9-11 then recapitulate the train of thought of the first eight

chapters, in order to show in the case of Israel how God deals with the problem of religious man. Chs. 12-16 apply the theological positions thus outlined probably to the threat of the danger of self-assertive 'enthusiasm', which according to Käsemann is the real theme of 12-3ff. Within this framework, Käsemann gives a positive wealth of detailed exegesis. In the absence of space let us only mention several hundreds of passages to refer back to for useful discussions. Among the particularly interesting passages we can only indicate a handful. The proposal of a liturgical and an anti-enthusiastic background for at least one passage of 17: 1-16 may surprise many; and, if Dodd found the Achilles heel of Romans in 9: 19ff, for Käsemann the weak spot is 10: 18, where Paul (he thinks) has deceived himself into constructing a salvation-historical programme for himself - a programme which was never carried out and which, consequently, indicates theological misjudgments which cannot be adopted by those who come after him. Here is the paradox both of Paul and of Käsemann. The Pauline theology must itself be treated critically, since it contains profound inconsistencies - and yet even when this is done it remains a dynamic thing. Paul has left us a theological concept which cannot be poured out and filled in. Even when they have fallen apart, have again and again had an impact on world history. Thus the Adam-christ picture of 5: 12-21, and the vision of the final restoration of 'all Israel', are further ramifications of the original promise which the apostle should, for the sake of consistency, have forsworn - just as the (hypothetical) formulae in 1: 3ff; 3: 24ff reflect a pre-Pauline understanding of the apostle who has now radicalised the salvific promises made by suppliers of both internal alterations and a new context. Exegetical details thus reflect, at point after point, the basic history-of-religions thesis and polemical theological position. Paul's theology is only comprehensible in terms of Jewish apocalyptic thought now radically reworked in the light of the cross. Glimpses of that process of rethinking are visible within the epistle itself, and indicate both the fragile nature of the solution which Paul has imposed and the need for sarkhrhik in present-day exegesis of his writings.

32) See e.g. G. Klein's article on Paul and the Jews in Rechtuffeitung, pp. 229-243. Klein strongly re-asserts the fundamental thesis that Paul is the first person who, since the Second World War, has been trying to see Israel in a different light. P. 296.
The Coherence of Romans

Possibly the most striking exegetical achievement to result from this theological understanding of Paul is that Kössenmann integrates the Epistle to the Romans into its own strictly self-contained, self-enclosed, self-explanatory Buddhistian position. Even if we may conclude that the job is still not completely, it is good to see programmatic statements like these:

Until I have proof to the contrary I proceed on the assumption that the concern of Romans is that of a remarkable inner logic that may no longer be entirely comprehensible to us. ... Viewed as a whole, the Epistle to the Romans reveals a closely knit argumentation which is hidden only to those who do not exert enough effort over it.

We have already seen how this work is conducted in relation to the question of Israel, which becomes relevant for justification because Judaism is the classic example of 'religious man'. The same holistic approach, characterized by the apocalyptic interpretation of Paul, enables Kössenmann to integrate the Adam-Christ-framework of thought into the whole of Christ and to incorporate also the sacramental language of ch. 6, and the apocalyptic vision of ch. 8 clearly belongs to the same world of thought. In particular, this hermeneutical key guides Kössenmann as a base on which to build his version of the Künzel-Bultmann view of ch. 7. This view, often misunderstood by English critics who think that the main question the Germans are asking is 'who is here being spoken of', holds that the 'I of Romans 7 is the Christ-theory level', the Jesus-theory level, the Adam, thinking to find life in 'religion', in the law, and finding instead only death. The 'good' and 'evil' spoken of in the passage, including even the 'passions of the flesh' in 7:5, are not 'morally right and wrong, and formativ', and if the 'good' is not life, and the 'passions of the flesh' are the desires for self-justification which lead the religious man to attempt to earn that justification by doing what the law requires (pp. 194-204).

According to this view, chs. 9-11 then recapitulate the train of thought of the first eight chapters, in order to show in the case of Israel how God deals with the problem of religious man. Chs. 12-16 apply the theological positions thus outlined to the problem of Gentile Christianity, largely centered on the danger of self-assertive 'enthusiasm', which according to Kössenmann is the real theme of 12:3ff.

Within this framework, Kössenmann gives a positive wealth of detailed exegesis. In the absence of other comparable attempts, it may be valuable to several hundred pages of passages to refer back to for useful discussions. Among the particularly interesting passages we can only indicate a handful. The proposal of a liturgical and anti-enthusiastic background for the whole of the Epistle to the Romans has, for example, been moved a step further by the suggestion that, with a surprise many; and, if Dodd found the Achilles heel of Romans in 9:19ff, for Kössenmann the weak spot is 10:18, where Paul (he thinks) has deceived himself into constructing a salvation-historical program for himself — a programme which was never carried out and which, consequently, indicates theological judgments which cannot be adopted by those who come after him. Here is the paradox both of Paul and of Kössenmann: Pauline theology must itself be treated critically, since it contains profound inconsistencies — and yet even when this is done it remains a dynamic thing. Paul has left us a theological concept which cannot be divided into parts and which, even when they have fallen apart, have again and again had an impact on world history. Thus the Adam-Christ picture of 5:12-21, and the vision of the final restoration of 'all Israel', are of the remains of a Pauline apocalyptic speculation which the apostle should, for the sake of consistency, have forsworn — just as (the hypothetical formulae in 1:3f.; 3:24f. reflect a pre-Pauline understanding of the apostle has non-revised material modified by supply made by both internal alterations and a new context. Exegetical details reflect this, at point after point, the basic history-of-religions thesis and polemical theological position. Paul's theology is only comprehensible in terms of Jewish apocalyptic thought now radically reworked in the light of the cross. Glimpses of that process of rethinking are visible within the epistle itself, and indicate both the fragile nature of the solution which Paul hopefully opposes and the need for a sachkretik in present-day exegesis of his writings.

32a Ps. viii. 324a
32a See also the article on Baptism and Justification by F. Hahn (Rechreibung, pp. 95-124). Hahn, il k Strecker (above, p. 96), is one of the few to give a reconstruction of the Canon in the Canon in recent German discussion, in Rechreibung, pp. 415-442.
32a P. 236.
32a See J. Jeremias' article on Paul as the 'Weak Charismatic' in Rechreibung, pp. 185-198.
32a blend of 'fundamentalists' and 'charismatics': the characteristic marks of their 'enthusiasts' are not merely outward things such as glosolalia but the more fundamental belief that salvation is a present possession to be enjoyed in triumph through all the battles, including that with sin and death, can be regarded as past. Against this triumphalism, just as against the 'pious' or 'eclesiastical' sort, the theologia crucis must be used ruthlessly, by Paul in the first century and by Kössenmann in the twentieth. (We might raise the question at this point, whether there is in the last analysis any theological difference between being a 'nomist' and being an 'enthusiast', and if not, why is it that they do in fact appear so different in terms of the varieties of the same breed, how Kössenmann can justify this in terms of a history-religions analysis of both positions.)
Questions and problems

It would not be difficult to point to exegetical details which lay themselves open to challenge. But more important, and more interesting, are the general questions in which Käsemann’s large ideas force us upon — not least in their effect upon exegetical details.37

To begin with, there are all sorts of questions to be asked about Käsemann’s use of the term apocalyptic (as well as gradually) that this word has a particular theological meaning for Käsemann: it is, in fact, more a hermeneutical term than an historical one.38 That is, it does not refer to a literary form, nor to the tradition (as most Jewish apocalypticists) that God would act soon and decisively on behalf of the Jews. Nor does it include such well-known features of ‘apocalyptic’ as visions and interpretations, as well as the verbal and structural dualism (as exemplified by the ‘two ages’ doctrine). Rather, in Käsemann’s writings it comes to mean a particular belief about God, namely, that he is the Lord of the world and is establishing that kingdom in and through the cross of Christ. But in asserting this theological position, and in labelling it ‘apocalyptic’, intending thus to use it as a means of demonstrating Paul’s worldwide vision over against a particularist or covenantal Jewish idea, Käsemann in fact thoroughly demythologized the very background literature to which he is appealing (just as Bultmann’s demythologizing programme was the servant of a larger hermeneutical concern). In so doing, he invites the question: what if a covenantal, and non-negotiable, feature of ‘apocalyptic’ as it actually was was in fact just such a nationalistic hope? What if the vision of God as Lord of the world in the apocalyptic literature was invoked precisely in order to guard Israel’s eventual triumph over her national enemies? The question has only to be put for the answer to be clear. It was just such a vision, and hope, that motivated the Jewish writers of ‘apocalypses’. If Paul shared the apocalyptic question of the Jewish writers, and so of Israel’s vision of a kingdom, how could Israel cannot be merely an example of something else. It begins to look as if Käsemann has pressed the idea of ‘apocalyptic’ into service in order to perform the same task that the earlier Bultmann school set as a result in its own interest. But this would be a category ‘helenium’ — namely, that task of showing how Paul’s theology transformed a Jewish-Christian message into a gospel for the world. And the apparent rationale behind this — the vision of God as not only Israel’s Lord but also the world’s — is in fact irrelevant for this, because it presents the vision of God not as a God of sovereignty and saving rule over against the apocalyptic vision of God of sovereignty lordship is not revealed (according to the apocalypticists) in order to save the world, but precisely to condemn it and to deliver Israel. The very history of salvation, for Paul the Spirit, Käsemann was to demonstrate, is the history of Paul’s Käsemann appeal in fact tells heavily against him. It begins to look as if his ‘cosmic theology is simply Bultmann’s anthropology writ large. The actual concerns of first-century Jews are in fact in such cases put aside.

This becomes especially apparent in Käsemann’s interpretation of dikaiosünen theou. He is well aware that a natural meaning of the phrase in early Christianity would include God’s sovereignty and saving rule over against the apocalyptic vision of God. But he has also deliberately altered the sense of the phrase so as to exclude that element, appealing to a supposed ‘technical’ use of the concept in the apocalyptic writings. But precisely this meaning of ‘God’s faithfulness to his covenant with Israel’ was (arguably) uppermost in the many instances cited by Käsemann and others in the background literature as evidence of the meaning of ‘God’s salvation-creating power’; in fact, God’s righteousness and sovereign salvation of Israel is forced upon Paul in his strange dealings with Israel and the world, and that to which Israel can appeal for help in time of need. And Paul, in rejecting the nationalist view of the covenant, does not reject covenant salvational theology. And it is clear from the context that Paul purpose of Romans 4 is not merely ‘proof from scripture of justification by faith’; it is a re-examination of the meaning of the covenant, aimed at demonstrating that God is faithful to his promise of saving all Israel (Rom 4:25). It is the basis of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, into true membership in Abraham’s family.39 The difference between Paul and the Jewish writers who appeal to the same concept is that the apocalyptic vision of God is to be understood correctly now that he sees it in the light of Christ. I agree with Käsemann that the ‘apocalyptic’ background is all-important, and that it has been vitally modified by Christology: but I think that Käsemann has interpreted the category of ‘apocalypticism’ in such a way that it underestimates the role of Israel and the covenant with continuing seriousness. And within this context the way is opened for a rather different exegesis of justification and of Paul’s whole critique of Israel.40 Can it be that Käsemann, when he uses the phrase ‘God’s righteousness’, is really referring to something else? God’s sovereign and saving rule over against the apocalyptic (and however closely the two are correlated, as in Matthew 6:33, they are hardly to be identified); and the gift, and power, that creates salvation, for Paul the Spirit. Käsemann has perhaps been under a Pauly influence, and used a different (Pauline) concept, or even two different concepts. Hence there follow both the initial plausibility and appeal, and the subsequent pull of the evidence that is decisive.

A fuller understanding of the apocalyptic background would have also pointed towards a more satisfactory solution of the religiöngeschichtlich, theological and exegetical problems of 5:12-21. It is not the fault of the text 1 Thessalonians 4:17 that the Jewish writers such as the Scrolls, Adam’s glory would be inherited by the true Israel.41 By saying that it is in Christ that Adam’s sin and its effects are undone, Paul is saying that God’s plan for Israel has been fulfilled in the achievement of Jesus. Abraham’s people (Rom 4) have indeed been the place, and the means, of God’s dealing with the problem of Adam’s sin (3:23): but this people of Abraham are now to be understood not kai sarca but as the people of God who are also part of the covenant. And from this perspective the difficult and complex blend of ‘anthropology’, ‘sacramentalism’ and the problem of the law in Romans 6:8-23 all fall into place. Ch.7 deals, not with the ‘pious’ man whose faith is authenticated, but with the Jew, despite the great privilege of possessing the law, finds, like Adam, that the commandment is the place where sin gains a foothold (cf. 5:13). The problem is not ‘the hidden Jew in all of us’ (there are not precisely carved out categories of war Germany that even now need to be exercised here), but rather the hidden ‘Adam’ in Israel.

Thus Romans 5-8, by transferring to the Messiah and thence to his people all that the apocalyptic visions promise, brings the world is sure Israel’s kingdom, not his—is, unlike Käsemann’s analysis, provides a unifying theme for 8:12-30), complete Paul’s argument about God’s dealings with humanity’s sin and death, and precisely in so doing raise the question: the, then, about Israel? (The same sequence of thought occurs in 2:17-29 and 3:1-9.) And from that perspective new solutions to the problems of 9-11 become apparent. The conclusion of the argument (11:25-27) is no apocalyptic dream (nor, I believe, does it refer to the parousia).42 Paul is arguing from the premise that Israel is still the people of the Messiah, even though ‘according to the flesh’ (9:5), and that she must follow her Messiah through the ‘death’ of the flesh to zoe ek nekeia, i.e., as an example of homo religiosus; she is the bearer of God’s promises, in whose paradoxical fate we see, reflected on a large screen, both the problems of Adam in Israel, and the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ (which perhaps he does not see). And, just as the world will be renewed when Adam is renewed (8:18f.), so Israel’s re-acceptance (whatever that means) will signal the resumption of the world. This view arguably ties the whole epistle together much more tightly than Käsemann is able to do.

Conclusion

It is a measure of the stature of Käsemann’s achievement that it has succeeded in raising, in a new form, almost all the basic questions about Pauline theology. I have indicated that I disagree with many of his detailed solutions, but that he has posed the questions in such a way that these questions Paul against the background of Jewish apocalyptic thought, and by placing the cross, and the revelation of God’s righteousness, at the centre — seems to me now beyond dispute. The largest question unanswerable or self-contradictory, which we can judge, is whether we can make justice to his own statement, itself admirable as a programme for exegesis: ‘History is the field of reconstructions, and whether these are right or not depends on how far they overcome the problem posed’. I have suggested that the loose ends which remain in Käsemann’s scheme are there because he has not carried through his apocalyptic understanding of its natural conclusion. Seeking to make Paul relevant by abstracting him from the context of Jewish apocalyptic, he has not been able to live through the apocalyptic, and so new only what the exegete wishes to hear. To restore the ‘Israel’ dimension, both in the background material and in Paul, will not make the apostle less relevant, but it will mean that his the apostle’s place of habitation. Note that Paul is the one who will the ‘cosmic vision be lost, or even modified, since it is precisely Israel’s hope for herself (that the world will be renewed with her in the position of Adam, under God and over the world).

38 See, e.g., JQR 42: 3, 23: 3, 20: 1QH 1.15, 17, 17: 42QpMpt 3.11, for the whole position, see my thesis, pp. 34f.
Questions and problems

It would not be difficult to point to exegetical details which lay themselves open to challenge. But more important, and more interesting, are the philosophical points in which Käsemann's large ideas force upon us—not least in their effect upon exegetical details.7

To begin with, there are all sorts of questions to be asked about Käsemann's use of the term apocalyptic.6 In the sense which Käsemann has in fact used it, only gradually that this word has a particular theological meaning for Käsemann: it is, in fact, more a hermeneutical term than an historical one. That is, it does not refer to a literary form, nor to the use made of it by most Jewish (apocalyptic) that God would act soon and decisively on behalf of the Jews. Nor does it include such well-known features of 'apocalyptic' as visions and interpretations, no, neither is it an historical, secular dualism (exemplified by the 'two ages' doctrine). Rather, in Käsemann's writings it comes to mean a particular belief about God, namely, that he is the Lord of the world and is establishing that lordship in and through the cross of Christ. But in asserting this theological position, and in labelling it 'apocalyptic', intending thus to use it as a means of demonstrating Paul's worldwide vision over against a particular or covenantal Jewish idea, Käsemann has in fact thoroughly demythologized the very background literature to which he is appealing (just as Bultmann's demythologizing programme was the servant of a larger hermeneutical concern). In so doing, he invites the question: what if a covenantal, Jewish, and non-negotiable, feature of 'apocalyptic' as it actually was was in fact just such a nationalistic hope? What if the vision of God as Lord of the world in the apocalyptic literature was invoked precisely in order to guard Israel's eventual triumph over her national enemies? The question has only to be put for the answer to be clear. It was just such a vision, and hope, that motivated the Jewish writers of 'apocalypses'. If Paul shared the apocalyptic question of the Jewish authors, and if Käsemann is correct in saying that Paul cannot be merely an example of something else. It begins to look as if Käsemann has pressed the idea of 'apocalyptic' into service in order to perform the same task that the earlier Bultmann school used Käsemann's thought for. Käsemann does not use the category 'hellenism'—namely, that task of showing how Paul's theology transformed a Jewish-Christian message into a gospel for the world. And the apparent rationalism behind this—the vision of God as not only Israel's Lord but also the world's—is in fact irrelevant for this, because it is precisely this rationalism which is an apocalyptic theme. God's sovereign lordship is not revealed (according to the apocalypticists) in order to save the world, but precisely to condemn it and to deliver Israel. The very history of Israel, in Käsemann's appeal to facts heavily against him. It begins to look as if his 'cosmic theology is simply Bultmann's anthropological writ large. The actual concerns of first-century Jews are in fact at issue when we use the term 'apocalyptic'.

This becomes especially apparent in Käsemann's interpretation of diakosanai
theou. He is well aware that a natural meaning of the phrase in early Christianity would include God's 'covenantal' thinking, since he has taken that Paul deliberately altered the sense of the phrase so as to exclude that element, appealing to a supposed technical use of the concept in the apocalyptic writings. But precisely this meaning of 'God's faithfulness to his covenant with Israel' was (arguably) uppermost in the many instances cited by Käsemann and others in the background literature as evidence of the meaning of 'God's salvation-creating power'; in fact, God's righteousness is the salvific kingdom of the world, and that's what Paul is talking about in his strange dealings with Israel and with the world, and that to which Israel can appeal for help in time of need. And Paul, in rejecting the nationalist view of the covenant, does reject the covenant thinking. And he has done that, in the Jewish sense, with deus ex machina; 'Adam' is, in fact, the Jewish, transcendent and complex blend of 'anthropology', 'sacramentality' and the problem of the law in Romans 6-8 all fall into place. Ch. 7 deals, not with the 'pious' man whose faith is authenticated from the outside, but with the pious person,-depends despite the great privilege of possessing the law, finds, like Adam, that the commandment is the place where sin gains a foothold (cf. 5:13). The problem is not 'the hidden Jew in all of us' (there are variously precisely in the sin problem for the Jew, despite the great privilege of possessing the law), but rather the hidden 'Adam' in Israel.

Thus Romans 5-8, by transferring to the Messiah and thence to his people all that the apocalyptic hope promised, takes account of the covenant context. The apocalyptic context for which Paul was writing was not the Jewish one; in fact, the Jewish context is quite correctly now that he sees it in the light of Christ. I agree with Käsemann that the 'apocalyptic' background is all-important, and that it has been vitally modified by Christology: but I think that the 'apocalyptic' background is all-important, and that it has been vitally modified by Christology: but I think that Jewish background in the Johannine writings, for example, is the case. Jewish background in the Johannine writings, for example, is clear. But Paul is not thinking of a world in which the 'cosmic vision be lost, or even modified, since it is precisely Israel's hope for herself (that the world will be renewed with herself in the position of Adam, under God and over the world).

8 See, e.g., ISO 4: 23, 34; 3: 20; 1Q 1.15, 17, 15; 4Q PSE 7 3: 1f; for the whole position, see my thesis, pp. 34f.
Towards a mutual understanding of Christian and Islamic concepts of revelation

Ida Glaser

Miss Glaser was until recently a student at All Nations Christian College in England.

The Christian looking at the Qur'an will naturally approach it with a pre-understanding shaped by his knowledge of the Bible; and the Muslim will approach the Bible with a pre-understanding shaped by his knowledge of the Qur'an. Because there exist similarities between the two religions, and in particular because of the Muslim concept and emphasis on the completion of the Judaic-Christian tradition, it is sometimes assumed that similar criteria can be validly used in considering the two revelations. It is my contention, however, that there is a wide gulf between understanding a revelation utilized these two faiths, so that such an assumption leads inevitably to misunderstandings.

The Muslim affirms that the message of Jesus was similar in content to that in the Qur'an. Yet when he turns to the New Testament he finds a violation of his idea of a revealed book, and finds it difficult to understand how the Christian can accept it as such. The Christian, on the other hand, finds the Qur'an something of a puzzle. It differs widely from the New Testament in structure and approach, and yet it bears some resemblance to other parts of what he recognizes as revealed writing: namely, parts of the law, psalms and prophetic writings in the Old Testament.

Acquainted to analytical thinking, he is likely to concentrate on discussing and criticizing the content of the Qur'an, avoiding as far as possible consideration of its form. It seems to me that an understanding of the form of a revelation — how it was revealed as well as its present written form — is prerequisite to an understanding of its content. More importantly, the form of the revelation will be consistent with its origin and content, and will be itself indicative of that origin and content. If we use such a proposal as the basis for study of any purported revelation, we shall have some hope of understanding the revelation in its own terms.

I am fully aware that many who adhere to one religion prefer to judge another in their own terms — and in such terms it will inevitably fail to be understood. Perhaps I am concerned here with understanding rather than assessment or criticism, since it seems to me of enormous importance that we understand a thing before we assess it. We are otherwise likely to be guilty of assessing a ligament of our own imagination, and not what we claim to be studying.

Here follows a brief explanation of forms of revelation in Islam and Christianity, and a discussion of their implications. A paper of this length inevitably includes over-simplifications, and many of the statements below would require some balancing comment for completeness. However, since my main aim is to compare the two systems, and to indicate the strangeness of each to adherents of the other, I consider the simplifications not only to be necessary for brevity, but also to be useful in comparison.

A. FORMS OF REVELATION

1. Islam

In Islam, revelation is embodied in the Qur'an, which came as a written message from God to man through the prophet Muhammad. The key here is that God's words came to man, the prophet being only the channel for communication. His title is 'the Messenger of God', which well describes him as one who takes the message and relays it to the recipients.

The mechanism of communication is simple: the Qur'an is considered to have been written in Heaven from eternity. Books have been given to many prophets in different languages and cultures from Adam onwards, but all have, it is said, been lost or distorted. The final revelation of the eternal Qur'an in the Arabic language was given to Muhammad, to be preserved in all its purity for the remainder of his life. The story of the beginning of the revelation is best told in the words of the Hadith, Sahih al-Bukhari 1, 3:

The first revelation that was granted to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God upon him) was the true vision of sleep, so that he never saw a vision but the truth of it shone forth like the bright gleam of dawn. Then solitude became dear to him and he used to recline between the mountains of Marwah, where he would devote himself to Divine worship for several nights before coming back to his family. He would take new provisions for this purpose, then he would return to Karbala under more provisions for a similar period, until the Truth came to him while he was in the cave of Hira. The Angel came to him and said, 'Read, read the words of those who can read.'

And he continued 'Then he (the angel) took hold of me and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any longer. I asked: 'Why do you not let me go?' Then when I replied, 'I am not one of those who can read,' he took hold of me and pressed me a second time so hard that I could not bear it any more, then he let me go and said, 'Read,' I said, 'I am not one of those who can read.'

The Prophet continued: 'Then he took hold of me a third time; then he let me go and said, 'Read, in the name of thy Lord who creates — creates man from a clot, Read, and thy Lord is Most Generous.'" (Sura 1:4)

The Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God upon him) returned with this message, his heart trembling, and he went to Khadijah, daughter of Khuwailid and said, 'Wrap me up, wrap me up'. So they wrapped him up until the swe had left him.

The mechanism of revelation is further clarified in al-Bukhari 1, 2:

Aishah, the mother of the faithful (God be pleased with her) reported that Harith ibn Isham asked the Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God upon him), 'O Messenger of God, how does the revelation come to you?' The Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God upon him) said, 'Sometimes it comes to me like the ringing of a bell, and that is the type of the Holy Spirit of Truth, or the Holy Spirit.' This title refers to the Angel Gabriel, which is the hardest on me; then he (the Angel) departs from me and I retain in memory from what he has said. At times the Angel comes to me in the likeness of a man and speaks to me and I retain in memory what he says.' Aishah (God be pleased with her) also said to me that when the revelation was sent on him on a severely cold day, when it departed from him his forehead dripped with sweat.

There are various points of interest here. Firstly we see a direct mode of revelation, where the angel Gabriel was sent from God to give the exact words of the message. Muhammad then transmitted it to his disciples, who later committed it to writing. Second, it adds itself a means of grace, and the insistence that he could not read. This is taken by many to symbolize and ensure the purity of the message — as the virginity of Mary can be seen as symbolizing and ensuring the divine purity of Christ. Some would even consider Muhammad's purported illiteracy necessary to the faithful transmission of the message: the message must be entirely of God, and not of Muhammad. In a sense, then, the nature of the messenger is unimportant: it is necessary only that his personality does not affect the message in any way. (Of course, Muslims consider Muhammad as much more than a passive messenger. His position as prophet gives his life-style and words a high, and even an authoritative, value. The value of such actions and a level second only to the Qur'an, and see his example as binding, and even inspired.)

Muhammad's illiteracy exemplifies a third emphasis in the record of revelation: that of the miraculous as nature of the revelation. When asked what miracle he wished to validate his prophethood, Muhammad pointed only to the Qur'an; and the stress on his own illiteracy implies the divine origin of the miracle.

Finally, we notice the personal form of language in the above quotations, and see this as an example of the centrality of language in the Islamic revelation. If the wording of the traditions is important, how much more is the wording of the Qur'an itself? It contains the exact words given by God through Gabriel, and represents the eternal Word written in heaven. There is therefore virtue in using its exact wording in prayer, and in reading it aloud or memorizing it: in Christian terms, the Quranic language is the Lingua franca, and has almost sacramental significance. The role of the Arabic language has even been compared to that of
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The Muslim affirms that the message of Jesus was similar in content to that in the Qur'an. Yet when he turns to the New Testament he finds a violation of his idea of a revealed book, and finds it difficult to understand how the Christian can accept it as such. The Christian, on the other hand, finds the Qur'an something of a puzzle. It differs widely from the New Testament in structure and approach, and yet it bears some resemblance to other parts of what he recognizes as revealed writing; namely, parts of the law, psalms and prophetic writings in the Old Testament.

Assumed to analytical thinking, he is likely to concentrate on discussing and criticizing the content of the Qur'an, avoiding as far as possible consideration of its form. It seems to me that an understanding of the form of revelation — how it was revealed as well as its present written form — is prerequisite to an understanding of its content. More importantly, the form of the revelation will be consistent with its origin and content, and will be itself indicative of that origin and content. If we use such a proposal as the basis for study of any purported revelation, we shall have some hope of understanding the revelation in its own terms.

I am fully aware that many who adhere to one religion prefer to judge another in their own terms — and in such terms it will inevitably fail to make them understand rather than assessment or criticism, since it seems to me of enormous importance that we understand a thing before we assess it. We are otherwise likely to be guilty of assessing a fragment of our own imagination, and not what we claim to be studying.

Here follows a brief explanation of forms of revelation in Islam and Christianity, and a discussion of their implications. A paper of this length inevitably includes over-simplifications, and many of the statements below would require some balancing comment for completeness. However, since my main aim is to compare the two systems, and to indicate the strangeness of each to adherents of the other, I consider the simplifications not only to be necessary for brevity, but also to be useful in comparison.

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The mechanism of communication is simple: the Qur'an is considered to have been written in Heaven from eternity. Books have been given to many prophets in different languages and cultures from Adam onwards, but all have, it is said, been lost or distorted. The final revelation of the eternal Qur'an in the Arabic language was given to Muhammad, to be preserved in all its purity for the remainder of history. The story of the beginning of the revelation is best told in the words of the Hadith, Sahih al-Bukhari 1, 3:

The first revelation that was granted to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God upon him) was the true vision of sleep, so that he never saw a vision but the truth of it shone forth like the bright gleam of dawn. Then solitude became dear to him and he used to seclude himself in the cave of Hira, where he would devote himself to Divine worship for several nights before coming back to his family. He would take such provisions for this purpose, then he would return to Katubah, where he would again take more provisions for a similar period, until the Truth came to him while he was in the cave of Hira. The Angel came to him and said, Read, and he recited of those who can read.'

And he continued: 'Then he (the angel) took hold of me and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any longer. He taught me the above sentence. When I replied, I am not one of those who can read', he took hold of me and pressed me a second time so hard that I could not bear it any more, then he let me go, and said, 'Read'. I said, 'I am not one of those who can read'.

The Prophet continued: 'Then he took hold of me as a great burden, then he let me go and said, 'Read in the name of thy Lord who creates — creates man from a clot. Read, thy Lord is Most Generous'.

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The Muslim affirmations that the message of Jesus was similar in content to that in the Qur'an. Yet when he turns to the New Testament he finds a violation of his idea of a revealed book, and finds it difficult to understand how the Christian can accept it as such. The Christian, on the other hand, finds the Qur'an something of a puzzle. It differs widely from the New Testament in structure and approach, and yet it bears some resemblance to other parts of what he recognizes as revealed writing: namely, parts of the law, psalms and prophetic writings in the Old Testament. An analytical thinking, he is likely to concentrate on discussing and criticizing the content of the Qur'an, avoiding as far as possible consideration of its form.

It seems to me that an understanding of the form of the revelation — how it was revealed as well as its present written form — is prerequisite to an understanding of its content. More importantly, the form of the revelation will be consistent with its origin and content, and will be itself indicative of that origin and content. We use such a proposal as the basis for studying the present written form of a message.

I am fully aware that many who adhere to one revelation prefer to judge another in their own terms — and in such terms it will inevitably fail to understand rather than to assess or criticize, since it seems to me of enormous importance that we understand a thing before we assess it. We are otherwise liable to be guilty of assessing a fragment of our imagination, and not what we claim to be studying.

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The first revelation that was granted to the Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God upon him) was the true vision of sleep, so that he never saw a vision but the truth of it shone forth like the bright gleam of dawn. Then solitude became dear to him and he used to isolate himself high above the cave of Hira, where he would devote himself to Divine worship for several nights before coming back to his family. He would take provisions for this purpose, then he would return to Khaybar for more provisions for a similar period, until the Truth came to him while he was in the cave of Hira. The Angel came to him and said, 'Read: In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.'

And he continued 'Then he (the Angel) took hold of me and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any longer.' Hottenroyd said, 'If I may add my own opinion, when I replied, 'I am not one of those who can read,' he took hold of me and pressed me a second time so hard that I could not bear it any more, then he let me go and said, 'Read,' I said, 'I am not one of those who can read.'

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The Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God upon him) returned with this message, his heart trembling, and he went to Khadijah, daughter of Khuwailid and said, 'Wrap me up, wrap me up.' So they wrapped him up until the ake had left him.

The mechanism of revelation is further clarified in al-Bukhari 1, 2:

Ashah, the mother of the faithful (God be pleased with her) reported that Harith ibn Hisham asked the Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God upon him), 'O Messenger of God, how does the revelation come to you?' A reply was given: 'As the Holy Spirit of God (peace and blessings of God upon him) said, 'Sometimes it comes to me like the ringing of a bell, and that is the type


2. The Turkish term is the Holy Spirit of Truth, or the Holy Spirit. This title refers to the Angel Gabriel.
activity do not grow in inverse proportion, but in direct proportion. Thus the biblical writers were not merely channels whose will and intellect were available by God, but rather consciously used their human faculties to co-operate with God in the context of their relationship with him.

B. IMPLICATIONS

The above discussion indicates enormous differences in attitudes and expectations regarding revelation in the two systems. Perhaps the reader is already coming to realize why Muslims and Christians may find each other's sacred books unapproachable. We now need to seek reasons for their divergent views.

In each case, we are considering a process of communication by God to man through man. We have already explored something of the 'through man' aspect, as this is the part of the process most easily studied. But the mechanism of communication through man is likely to be dependent on other factors, namely, the nature of God, the nature of man, and what is communicated. The dependency here is hierarchical: what is to be communicated depends on the natures of man and of God, and the nature of man is determined by God himself.

It would be possible to start from the base of this hierarchy, discussing the nature of God in Islam and in Christianity and then arguing to an understanding of revelation in the two systems. However, I prefer what the computer scientists call a 'top-down' approach: to begin with the situations into which we can see oneself (i.e. the forms of the revelations), and work from them to an understanding of the fundamentals. We shall use the forms of revelation discussed above as our springboard, rather than seeking answers to our dependency here from the content of the texts — although it will also be necessary to look at the texts themselves.

There are several advantages to such an approach. Firstly, it is likely to give a deeper understanding of both the content and the format of the revelations, and secondly, it allows questions and answers to arise in the context of the revelation under consideration. It is unlikely that one religion will give clear answers to the questions asked by another, since the two will consider different matters important. The questions seen as fundamental by one may be considered peripheral by the other, or may be understood differently.

Finally, I would suggest that the major common factor of Islam and Judaeo-Christianity (after their monotheism) is their claim to be revealed. Revelation would therefore seem a starting-point for comparison.

1. What is communicated?

a. Islam

As we have seen, the communication in Islam is essentially a message. That is, it contains information relayed from God to man: information that God has chosen to give to man. The Qur'an is seen as God's greatest mercy towards man, so that the information in it is beneficial to him. What kind of information is given? The Qur'an is characterized as a warning (18, 4), a reminder (81, 27), a guide and a witness (46, 12). It warns of the judgment to come, reminds of sacred history and present responsibility, gives guidance for conduct, and witnesses to God and his messengers.

Perhaps the essential description of the Qur'an as a book of guidance for mankind: a guidance for all aspects of life. Together with the Traditions, it gives a basis for guidance not only in religious matters, but also in matters of personal and family lifestyle and in social, political and economic affairs. Every aspect of human life comes under this guidance from God.

The Qur'an therefore man of all he needs to know about God, and reveals the way God wills man to live, together with witness and warning that urge obedience to that will.

b. Christianity

The biblical writings are seen as having been produced in the context of the writers' relationship with God, and are therefore an expression of that relationship. In few cases do they represent dictated messages from God: they rather express God's relationship with his creatures, and his response to them. This, we have suggested, is the essential revelation. It is not so much a revelation of what God wills man to do, as a revelation of God himself in what he has done, and of how man can relate to him.

This emphasis can be seen even in those portions of Scripture that are concerned largely with instruction or with historical records. Two examples will illustrate this.

Firstly, there is the Mosaic law, which certainly represents a guidance for living. It is given in the context of the covenant relationship between God and his people and his saving acts on their behalf, and serves as a witness to them. In fact, the reason given for acting in a particular way is sometimes that God would also act in that way: it is expected that man should in some measure conform to the moral character of God.

Secondly, we consider the records of Jesus Christ. The gospels do record much of his teaching, but even that — although it is derived from God — is taught by Jesus in his own way and words. It is of interest that the gospel writers do not even record Jesus' words in their original language, and, judging by the variations between the gospels, they are not particularly concerned with recording precise wording. Moreover, most of the gospel writings are concerned with Jesus' actions as well as his words; and this is not so much to give us an example to follow as to indicate his nature and the response of people to him.

Finally, there is great stress on the crucifixion and resurrection.

All this suggests that it is not so much the teaching of Jesus that is being communicated as the person of Jesus, and his work which makes possible relationship between God and man. Jesus himself shows us the essential content of Christian revelation. He shows us God himself is the supreme relationship between God and man, and is also the way to relationship with God for other human beings.

We have suggested that Islamic revelation is essentially concerned with how man should live, whilst Christian revelation is centred in relationship between man and God. We should note that the Bible also gives instruction about living, and that the Qur'an also records God's dealings with man in history. However, the emphases are different and, as we shall see, the notions have different foundations.

2. What is man like?

a. Islam

Man is God's creature, to whom God condescends to communicate. However, the communication must occur in such a way that man does not alter it in any way. His action on the divine Word would invalidate it, so we see that man is completely other than God.

Further, we have seen that what is communicated is essentially information which shows man the will of God and the response of God to him. This has two important implications. Firstly, it implies that what man needs is essentially to be informed. 1 His major predicament is that he is ignorant of God and of his will and mercy. He has

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activity do not grow in inverse proportion, but in direct proportion. Thus the biblical writers were not merely channels whose will and intellect were used by God, but rather consciously used their human faculties to co-operate with God in the context of their relationship with him.

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There are several advantages to such an approach. Firstly, it is likely to give a deeper understanding and a broader picture of a fragmented approach; and secondly, it allows questions and answers to arise in the context of the revelation under consideration. It is unlikely that any religion will give a clear answer to the questions asked by the human, since the two will consider different matters important. The questions seen as fundamental by one may be considered peripheral by the other, or may be understood differently.

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The Qur'an informs man of all he needs to know about God, and reveals the way God wills man to live, together with witness and warning that urge obedience to that will.

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The biblical writings are seen as having been produced in the context of the writers' relationship with God, and are therefore an expression of that relationship. In few cases do they represent dictated messages from God: they rather express God's reaction to his creatures, and their response to him. This, we have suggested, is the essential revelation. It is not so much a revelation of what God wills man to do, as a revelation of God himself in what he has done, and of how man can relate to him.

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The second is the Mosaic law, which certainly represents a guidance for living. It is given in the context of the covenant relationship between God and his people and his saving acts on their behalf, and lived with approval and God's blessing. In fact, the power given for acting in a particular way is sometimes that God would also act in that way: it is expected that man should in some measure conform to the moral character of God.

Secondly, we consider the records of Jesus Christ. The gospels do record much of his teaching, but even this — although all that is derived from God — is taught by Jesus in his own way and words. It is of interest that the gospel writers do not even record Jesus' words in their original language, and, judging by the variations between the gospels, they are not particularly concerned with recording precise wording. Moreover, most of the gospel writings are concerned with Jesus' actions as well as his words; and this is not so much as to give us an example to follow as to indicate his nature and the response of people to him.

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Further, we have seen that what is communicated is essentially information which shows man the will of God towards him. This shows two important implications. Firstly, it implies that what man needs is essentially to be informed.1 His major predicament is that he is ignorant of God and of his will and mercy. He has

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forgotten what he perhaps knew at first concerning God's unity and the coming judgment, and needs to be warned and reminded about these things. He then needs to be exhorted to act in order to serve God and to avoid judgment.

Secondly, it implies that man is able to obey God's commandments. God would never demand the impossible of man. Hence Islam's vehement rejection of any kind of original sin, whether interpreted in the Qur'anic accents, Adam and Eve were forgiven as soon as they realized that they have wronged themselves (2, 35f; 7, 10ff). Sin is seen as something that hurts the sinner, and not as hurting God. Man can forgive directly, without mediation or sacrifice.

Thus Islam gives man a very high position: by God's mercy he has the possibility of obeying God as far as he demands, and needs to be exhorted to please God and to be forgiven, if God so wills. On the other hand, God's demands on the individual are never greater than he is able, with God's help and by God's will, to fulfill.

b. Christianity

Here we see a lower view of man's abilities, but a higher view of God's demands on him. We have already noted that demands in the Bible are often based on the idea that man should reflect something of the moral character of God. This seems a strange demand: it implies either that God requires the impossible of man, or that man is in some way able to be like God. The former suggests injustice, but the latter might appear to border on blasphemy; and it is anyway obvious to most of us that man is not normally capable of reaching such sublime moral heights.

Let us return to our discussion of revelation, to seek clues to an understanding of this problematic view of man and his responsibility towards God. We remember that the Christian view of revelation is centred in the idea of relationship between man and God. God immediately eases the difficulty. If God and man can relate, then there must be some similarity between them. Man, although a creature, must reflect something of the nature of God; and God, although uncreated, must be in some sense like man.

However, this removes only half the difficulty. It is still painfully obvious that man does not meet God's demands. In fact, it was necessary for God to reveal himself, and to reveal also a way for man's relationship with God to be established. In other words, man is only potentially related to God. Outside of the revelation, the relationship is broken, and man cannot satisfactorily respond to a message from God. The revelation leads to relationship between God and man, and gives guidance in the task that God would act in order to serve God and to avoid judgment.

Man's predication outside this relationship is not, then, essentially one of ignorance - or even of weakness. It is not knowledge but blood that makes relationships. Man's predication is that he is out of relationship with God; but the Bible teaches that this was not man's original state. At the beginning, the relationship was there, but it has been broken by man's own action broken not only harmed man, but also severed him from God. Therefore, man needs not information, but restoration; and that can be achieved only by God himself.

In Islam, then, man has no need of salvation: he has already the capability of obeying God, and needs only to be exhorted to order in order to fulfill his responsibilities towards his Creator. He is not potentially related to God, in the biblical understanding of relationship, since he is completely other than God. The Christian, on the other hand, sees man as greater in potential, but only restored - debased in actuality. Unless he is saved through Jesus Christ, he realizes only a glimmer of his potential, and can never by his own efforts please God.

3. What is God like?

a. Islam

There is much said about God in the Qur'an, and his creation is said to give an indication of him; but the essential nature of God is other than that of his creatures, and cannot be grasped by reason which know that God is one, that he has certain names and attributes, and that he is all-powerful to do whatever he wills. But we see only what he has chosen to reveal in his message through the prophets.

Say: Allah is One, the eternal God. He begot none, nor was He begotten. None is equal to him (Surah 112, The Unity, Penguin translation).

God in himself is great, and infinitely other than what he has made. This is one of his attributes appears to be his great power, and his wise. These

Although no equivalent to the biblical relationship between God and man is envisaged - the Qur'anic relationship is essentially that of slave and lord - God is nevertheless very closely related with his creatures. Very close and very clear is the closeness of his attributes. He is also the Knower of all, the Wise, the Hearing, the Aware, the Judge, the Glorious, the Rich, the Independent, the Unique and the Sovereign. 

Such a picture makes sense of our previous discussion. This God would not relate to man as a friend, a brother or a father, and could not be in any way affected by man's actions. The idea that he might be changed or influenced by us, is not blasphemous; the biblical idea of the fall in such a context is nonsensical, and that of salvation superfluous. Since the main effect of sin is to hurt man, and not to sever his relationship with God, no restoration of relationship is required. The God of the Bible can all power can forgive as he chooses: no mediation is necessary, and indeed none is possible, since nothing and nobody can be associated with God.

This, however, is not a complete picture of God. God is the right of man's sin is ludicrous, if it is his creation, but has chosen to speak to man through the prophets. Without this revelation, man would be in ignorance and under judgment; but God has shown mercy to him in his predication. He has revealed not god, the certainty of the judgment day, but also how man should act in order to live well on earth and hope to gain paradise after death.

So we see that God, in his power and wisdom, has chosen also to be the Speaker, the Guardian and the Lord. The Bible speaks of the merciful, Benevolent, the Loving and Provider, the Forgiving and the Merciful. In his beneficence and mercy, he has not only created man and provided for all his needs; he has also given him his reward: he is the God of the Qur'an. It is in his beneficence and mercy that the Muslim remembers repeatedly in his prayers, as he declares that God is Ruler of creation and Lord of judgment, and beseeches his guidance.

Peace to God and the House of the World. The Beneficent, the Merciful. Owner of the Day of Judgment. The alone Who asks for the help. Show us the straight path. The path of those whom Thou has favoured. Not the path of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray (Surah 1; the opening).

b. Christianity

We have noted above the stupendous claim that the biblical writings record the revelation of God himself in relationship with man, and supremely in Christ. This implies that we should be able to say much about God, but it also implies great mystery concerning him. It is the mystery of an infinite God in relationship with finite man. Here follows an attempt to understand something of the mystery of the Bible's description in terms of what God must be like if it is true.

Firstly, God must be in some sense like man if the two are to relate. In biblical language, man is made in the image of God. Of course, that image has been marred by sin, and men may not be able to understand something of God from our knowledge of man. The characteristics of man necessary for relationship include abilities to love and hate, moral consciousness, emotion and language, and all of these are sources of sin. In other words, the characteristics of God. The Christian God is a personal God.

Secondly, the essence of God includes relationship. How can this be, if God is one, and yet exist in three persons? The answer is not that God is a, but we should be able to answer is that from eternity God has related to himself, loved himself, communicated with himself. This is certainly a mystery, which the Christian describes in terms of the Trinity. The Bible speaks of God as one with God as existing from eternity, and as active in creation; and it speaks of the Holy Spirit 1 as existing with and being of one nature with the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. To say that the three are one means that the God is a personal God. This brings problems in itself. Other writers have discussed these: here, we note only the insight it gives to the eternal love, communication and relationship in God. Now that is the one who is revealed in history. Thus we can see what God is like from what he has done. He is more often described as the God of Israel or the Father of Jesus Christ than in terms of his characteristics, so we can expect to understand him through accounts of his actions and through personal experience of his actions towards us. Thus it will often be more appropriate to describe God as one who does something rather than what he is like. Supernaturally, God is the God who creates, who loves, who preserves, who heals. He is also a God who judges and destroys wickedness.

The supreme revelation of God in history is in Jesus Christ. ‘No man has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known’ (Jn. 1: 18). The question, ‘What is God like?’ is ultimately to be answered through a study of the person of Jesus Christ in the New Testament records, which is left to the reader.
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However, this removes only half the difficulty. It is still painfully obvious that man does not meet God's demands. In fact, it was necessary for God to reveal himself, and to reveal also a way for man's relationship with God to be established. In other words, man is only potentially related to God. Outside of the revelation, the relationship is broken, and man cannot satisfactorily respond to a message from God. The revelation leads to relationship between God and man, and gives guidelines in order to act in order to serve God and to avoid judgment.

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Such a picture makes sense of our previous discussion. This God would not relate to man as a friend, a brother or a father, and could not be in any way affected by man's actions. The idea that he might act in ignorance or error is out of the question. The Bible picture, however, is very different: the Bible says of God that all power can power for as he chooses: no mediation is necessary, and indeed none is possible, since nothing and nobody can be associated with God. This, however, is not a complete picture of God. God is not the Right who gives life, but the One who is life. God is necessary to every need and every action. This creates problems with the idea that God is all-powerful. Without this revelation, man would be in ignorance and under judgment; but God has shown mercy to him in his predicament. He has revealed not only the certainty of the judgment day, but also how man should act in order to live well on earth and hope to gain paradise after death.

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Firstly, God must in some sense like man if the two are to relate. In biblical language, man is made in the image of God. Of course, that image is not identical or complete, but it does mean that we should be able to understand something of God from our knowledge of man. The characteristics of man necessary for relationship include abilities to love and hate, moral consciousness, emotion and language, and all of these are somehow present in God. In other words, the characteristics of God. The Christian God is a personal God.

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6 Among some Muslims, Muhammad or Ali or various people considered as saints, are given a mediatorial position. This is not, however, accepted by the more orthodox.

7 The Holy Spirit here refers to the third person of the Trinity (cf. n. 2).
This has been the most difficult section to write. A discussion of the nature of God in a few pages of human writing is no mean undertaking. I have sought only to bring out the main emphases and trust that the reader will proceed to a deeper understanding through his own study of the Qur'an and the Bible.

CONCLUSION

 Doubtless, many criticisms can and will be levelled at what I have written. In particular, many statements require further elaboration and balancing comments, as has been noted already. This paper has been but an attempt to throw some light onto the question of why Christians and Muslims seem so often to misunderstand, and thus misrepresent, each other’s books.

To the Christian, the Qur'an has a monotonous and stylized form. He is not accustomed to the idea of a sacred language, and anyway does not usually have sufficient Arabic to be able to appreciate its poetry. More importantly, it fails completely to do what it expects a revelation to do: it does not relate to man’s need for forgiveness, salvation and relationship with God as he understands it. And, of course, it also contains denials of some of his fundamental beliefs, the death of Jesus Christ, his deity, and the doctrine of the Trinity.

To the Muslim, on the other hand, most of the biblical writings are of obviously human origin, and do not resemble what he recognizes as divine revelation. They look more like the Traditions, but even here they fall short of expectation by their failure to give clear guidelines on life-style. They do not record details of Jesus’ manner of life that can be used to regulate everyday living, and do not even give the original language of his message. Moreover, the position given to Jesus in the New Testament amounts to blasphemy, and the emphasis on salvation through his death is at best superficial.

It is my contention that, if Christians and Muslims are to understand each other’s Book, they cannot do it only by concentrating on points of similarity. Neither can they do it by applying their own criteria to the other’s revelation. They must rather seek to recognize and understand fundamental differences in ways of thinking and then — and this is important — take the different way of thinking seriously.

I am not suggesting that this is likely to bring Christians and Muslims to agree with each other. The two religions are different, and disagreement is inevitable. But let it be a disagreement based on understanding and respect, and not on ignorance.


Mr Theo Donner comes from Holland and is at present doing research on Justin Martyr at Cambridge University. In this article, which started life as a talk to the Cambridge ISF group, he asks some interesting questions about an important issue.

Introduction: the usual approach to the subject

Discussions of the history of the New Testament canon tend to concentrate on the question of when for the first time the early church had an accepted list of Christian books that it set alongside the Old Testament Bible. Von Campenhausen puts it like this, by the beginning of the canon I do not understand the emergence and dissemination, nor even the ecclesiastical use and influence of what were later the canonical writings. One can, in my view, speak of ‘canon’ only where of set purpose such a document is given a special normative position, by virtue of which it takes its place alongside the existing Old Testament Scriptures.

Understood in this sense, the first time our New Testament canon can be said to have emerged in complete form is in Apocalypse and in the Easter letter of Athanasius, but it was not until some considerable time after that that this list was generally recognized in the church.

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Some thoughts on the history of the New Testament canon

Theo Donner

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Some Thoughts on the History of the New Testament Canon

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[p.23]

Introduction: the usual approach to the subject

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Understood in this sense, the first time our New Testament canon can be said to have emerged in complete form is in AD 367 in the Easter letter of Athanasius, but it was not until some considerable time after that that this list was generally recognized in the church.

Although we can no longer speak with confidence of a communis opinio with regard to the question of how the canon evolved (contrast W. Schneemelcher some twenty years ago), broadly speaking we can sum up the usual understanding as follows.

The only Scriptures for the apostolic and early post-apostolic church consisted of the Old Testament. Apostolic writings were obviously known, but did not have the peculiar ‘scriptural’ authority of the Old Testament writings. They existed side by side with an oral tradition which was at least as, if not more, important for the church. Only gradually did the church become aware of the need to have some agreed list of books—a gradual awareness in which the


2 See Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd series, IV, pp. 551f

appearance of Marcion’s canon may have played a greater or lesser role. By the end of the second century the question of the canon was vigorously debated. (The Muratorian Canon, which is usually assigned to this period is is shown as evidence of this debate.) By this time there was no longer any question about the bulk of the New Testament: the four gospels, Acts, the epistles of Paul and some of the Catholic epistles. Doubts about the seven ‘disputed books’ (Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation) continued until the fourth century and even after in some regions. This is, of course, no more than a broad outline of the conclusions that are usually obtained with regard to the New Testament canon. There is considerable variation in the details of the argument in the various authors.

Within one article we cannot hope to deal comprehensively with the whole question of the history of the New Testament canon, or to take issue with all the arguments put forward on this subject. It is possible however to raise a few questions on the way in which the subject is usually treated.

1. Early evidence of NT books seen as having scriptural authority

It should be pointed out first of all that the evidence we have from earliest Christianity does not always support the assumptions or conclusions we have mentioned above.

As regards the statement that the New Testament writings do not have ‘scriptural’ authority until the late second century, the evidence is, to say the least, ambiguous. Anyone wishing to make such a claim has to explain the following facts:

a. In 1 Timothy 5: 18 an Old Testament passage and a gospel quotation are put side by side and introduced by the phrase ‘the Scripture says’. Even if Paul is not referring to a written gospel, it certainly means that he puts a saying of the Lord on the same level as Old Testament Scripture.

b. In 2 Peter 3: 16 the epistles of Paul are referred to and it is said that some people would twist these ‘as they also do the other Scriptures’. Here Paul’s epistles are certainly seen as equal to Old Testament Scripture.

c. We should be careful about drawing any firm conclusions from the Didache as long as there is considerable doubt about the exact date (somewhere between AD 70 and 150) and composition of this document, but it is clear (i) that it regards the commandments of the Lord as of the highest authority, (ii) that it uses a written gospel (cf. Did. 8. 2 and 15. 3, 4) and (iii) that it enjoins its readers concerning the commandments of the Lord ‘Not to add to it, and to take nothing away

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from it’ (Did. 4.13 quoting Dt. 4:2 and 12:32), thus putting these commandments on a level with the law of Moses.

d. The same quotation from Deuteronomy is also found in the Epistle of Barnabas (first quarter of the second century), in Barnabas 19. 11." In the same work we read ‘let us take heed, lest, as it was written, we be found “Many called but few chosen” ’ (Barn. 4. 14). A passage from Matthew seems to be referred to as Scripture (Mt. 20: 16 and 22: 14).

e. Ignatius (martyred between AD 98 and 117) names in one breath the gospel, the apostles and the prophets (a customary way of referring to the Old Testament).

f. The Gnostic Basilides (AD 125-150) introduces quotations from Paul’s epistles as follows: ‘in accordance with what has been written’ (followed by Rom. 8: 19, 22) and ‘concerning which the Scripture uses the following expressions’ (followed by 1 Cor. 2:13). (See Hippolytus Ref. VII 13, 14 in ANF.)

g. Polycarp of Smyrna (martyred probably in AD 155) exhorts the Philippians (PolPhil. 12. 1), ‘as it is said in these Scriptures “Be ye angry and sin not” and “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath”’. In the same epistle (6. 3) we also find Christ, the apostles and the prophets named together.

h. 2 Clement (written perhaps around AD 150) in chapter 2. 4 first quotes Isaiah 54: 1 and then says ‘and another Scripture also says “I come not to call righteous but sinners” ’ (Mk. 2: 17 and parallels)

With regard to the sort of evidence we have produced, R. P. C. Hanson" has argued that it does not prove the point. He claims that only the expression ‘the Holy Scriptures’ is a reliable indication of the status which the writers of the second Century assigned to the books of the New Testament”; and he finds no example of this usage until shortly after the middle of the second century (in Aristides’ Apology 16). But to focus on this particular expression which is used to refer to the Old Testament only once in the New Testament itself (Rom. 1: 2) and which does not reappear until Justin Martyr (writing around AD 160) uses it twice (in more than 70 references to the Old Testament as ‘the Scriptures’), is unjustifiable. So long as we find passages from New Testament writings introduced by the same formula as passages from the Old Testament it will be necessary to give good reasons for distinguishing between the authority assigned to each.

2. Oral tradition not seen as in competition with written tradition

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5 W. C. van Unnik, ‘De la règle mêle prosthainai mêle aphielen dans l’histoire du canon’, Vig Christ 3, 1949, pp. 10ff., does not in fact deny that the instance of this phrase in Didache and Barnabas referred to written commandments, but merely notes the difference with the use of the same phrase in later writings.

Another issue on which the evidence is ambiguous is the question of oral tradition. There is, of course, no doubt about the existence of an oral tradition, but this fact in itself appears to be taken as somehow diminishing the authority of the written tradition.

It is unfortunate that Campenhausen\(^7\) should still see Papias (writing perhaps between AD 110-130) as believing in the ‘superiority of the oral tradition’, because Papias writes ‘That which comes from books seems to me not to be of such service as that which begins as living speech and remains so’ (Eus. E.H. III 39. 4, Campenhausen’s translation). That this is not the most obvious reading of the text in Eusebius has been shown some time ago by J. B. Lightfoot\(^8\) and more recently by others (named by Campenhausen). I seems that Papias was in fact relying upon oral tradition only for his commentary on the words of the Lord, not for the actual content of the words of the Lord themselves. The disparaging remark about books may well be a reference to heretical documents which, we know, sought at this time to do the same thing as Papias, i.e. elucidate the sayings of the Lord from their own perspective. From what Eusebius says about him, the picture we get of Papias seems to be one of a second century fundamentalist, who not only holds to pre-millennialism, but also to the inerrancy of the New Testament gospels, in that he argues strongly that the lack of chronology in Mark’s Gospel does not imply error on the part of the author. (An odd thing to say for someone who prefers oral over written tradition.)

Although there is evidence of the continued existence of some oral tradition, we certainly find no evidence that oral tradition was competing for authority with written tradition.\(^9\)

3. The important question one of authority, not of canonical listing

More important than these points regarding the use of evidence by those who have written on the subject of the canon is the question of their methodology. Are they asking the right kind of questions in their investigation of the history of the canon?

The question that is usually asked seems to be: when do we find the earliest evidence for the existence of an agreed list of books of binding authority for the church? The quotation from Campenhausen we gave at the beginning of this article puts it rather well. One can speak of a canon only where of set purpose a document or group of documents is given a special normative position, by virtue of which it takes its place alongside the existing Old Testament Scriptures. (The assumption that the Old Testament canon was in fact firmly established during the period with which we are concerned is not shared by all scholars.)

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\(^7\) Campenhausen, op. cit., pp. 130ff. Cf. also R. M. Grant in CHB, p. 291.

\(^8\) Essays on the work entitled Supernatural Religion (London, 1893), pp. 156ff.

\(^9\) An extremely useful work on the relation between tradition and Scripture in the early church is the book of that title by E. Flesseman-Van Leer (Assen, 1953).
This means in fact that we take our present understanding of ‘canon’ and seek to find evidence for the existence of such a thing in the early church. We are then particularly interested in finding, or proving that one cannot find (as Campenhausen wishes to do),\(^{10}\) longer or shorter lists of accepted books in certain periods of the history of the early church.

But is the question of official lists really the most important question at issue? It is true that the word ‘canon’ means list, and therefore that in a strict sense canonization may have been relatively late. But it is quite misleading to suggest that the point of drawing up lists was the first time that the books of the New Testament came to be regarded as authoritative.

When Campenhausen tells us that, ‘In the Early Church the term “christian bible” signifies... simply the Old Testament taken over from the synagogue and given a Christian interpretation. As yet there is no mention of a New Testament canon, for the thing itself does not exist...,”\(^{11}\) he may technically speaking be correct. But at the same time he shows the inadequacy of his whole methodology. The real issue is that of authority and if Campenhausen were to claim that the only, or even the highest, authority for the early church was ‘simply the Old Testament’ the absurdity of such a position would be immediately apparent. At no time since the day of Pentecost has it been true in the church that the Old Testament constituted the only or even the highest authority.

In Acts 2 Luke describes the first church for us as a community of people who devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching. The authority of the apostles and the teaching of Christ mediated through them was of a higher order than the authority of the Old Testament, in that the Old Testament now had to be understood in the light of the teaching of Christ and the apostles. Outside the New Testament writings themselves this comes out clearly in a debate Ignatius records for us (Philad. 8. 2), in which some men (probably Judaizers) said to him, ‘Unless I can find a thing in our ancient records (the Old Testament?), I refuse to believe it in the gospel.’ When Ignatius assured them that it was indeed in the ancient Scriptures, they replied, ‘That has got to be proved’, to which Ignatius says ‘But for my part, my records are Jesus Christ, for me the sacred records are his cross and death and resurrection and the faith that comes through him.’ That the authority of the apostles was regarded as paramount by the early Christians, even set above the Old Testament, can hardly be questioned. There is no reason to suppose that this authority only attached to their spoken teaching; it will almost certainly have attached to their writings from the beginning.

This means that our questions concerning the history of the canon have to be formulated rather differently. Our concern is not to track down early

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\(^{10}\) Campenhausen, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 103.

\(^{11}\) \textit{Ibid.}\
lists of approved books, but is to find out whether the writings which later came to be listed were regarded as apostolic and authoritative before then, i.e. whether they were practically, though perhaps not officially, canonized. This is in many ways a more difficult thing to ascertain than tracing lists of authoritative books; but certain observations may be made.

**a. Authority reflected in early use of NT writings**

We have already seen some early evidence for the New Testament being regarded as having scriptural authority (point 1, above). We may here add further evidence about the usage of the New Testament in the early church.

Campenhausen states that the fact that New Testament writings are echoed or utilized or alluded to is not ‘canonization’. This is true, given Campenhausen’s understanding of ‘canonization’, but, if he means that echoes, allusions and quotations do not tell us something about the authority of the books thus referred to, his statement needs to be justified in view of some obvious objections.

His statement would be valid if it could be shown that the early Christian authors echoed, alluded to and quoted texts which we know with certainty were not regarded as authoritative in the same way. As it is, this use of New Testament writings accurately mirrors the way in which the Old Testament is echoed and alluded to in the New Testament writings themselves and in early Christian writings generally. Such allusions and veiled references are found far more frequently than formal quotations.

Is it not legitimate to see this manner of referring to New Testament writings in the way in which Westcott saw it, when he said concerning the apostolic fathers,

> The words of Scripture (i.e. of the New Testament) are inwrought into the texture of the books, and not parcelled out into formal quotations. They are not arranged with argumentative effect, but used as the natural expression of Christian truths. Now this use of the Holy Scriptures shews at least that they were even then widely known and therefore guarded by a host of witnesses; that their language was transferred into the common dialect; that it was as familiar to those first Christians as to us who use it unconsciously as they did in writing or in conversation?

Even in the attempt to ascertain which New Testament writings were known and used by the post-apostolic Christian authors, there has been too little of that close analysis by which such echoes, allusions and veiled references might be discovered. The search has all too often focused on explicit quotations instead. There is room here not only for a much deeper literary examination, to detect similarity of language, vocabulary and grammatical construction, but also for an inquiry into similarity of thought and theology.

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The apparent authority of the New Testament books used by the early Christian writers is strikingly confirmed by the use made of the same books by the second-century heretics.

We have already mentioned above that the Gnostic Basilides, in the first half of the second century quoted Paul’s epistles as Scripture. When Marcion, around the same time, set up his own ‘canon’, this was obviously not meant to give certain books a higher authority, but rather to reject the authority of the other apostolic writings. The Gnostic Valentinus (mid-second century), according to Tertullian, did not invent new Scriptures, but rather distorted the meaning of the accepted Scriptures by his own expositions. W. C. van Unnik argues that the Valentinian ‘Gospel of Truth’ in the Jung Codex tends to confirm the statement of Tertullian. Elsewhere Tertullian argues that ‘(the heretics) actually treat of the Scriptures and recommend (their opinions) out of the Scriptures. To be sure they do. From what other source could they derive arguments concerning the things of the faith except from the records of the faith?’ Irenaeus speaks of the four gospels as follows: ‘So firm is the ground upon which these Gospels rest that the very heretics themselves bear witness to them, and, starting from these (documents), each one of them endeavours to establish his own particular doctrine.’

b. The disputed books: also authoritative from an early date

To focus on the question of the authority and use of the New Testament writings, rather than on the question of formal lists of authoritative books, may also help to put one particular problem with regard to the history of the canon in a different perspective.

We know that the debates on the extent of the canon in the third and fourth centuries were particularly concerned with the status of seven books, the Antilegomena or ‘disputed books’ (Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation) which were not universally accepted by the church. It is usually argued that the exact status of these books was in doubt until the fourth-century church decided to include them in the New Testament canon. The evidence does not necessarily bear out this claim. It would appear rather that allusions and references to these books can be found up to the middle of the second century and that their authority is not challenged until the end of the second century, by which time the flood of heretical literature demanded a conscious reflection upon the authority of certain books over against others. All the evidence points to their acceptance before the end of the second century in those regions where they were known (it is important to stress this point,

since it helps to explain the doubts that were voiced about them at a later stage. We can only briefly mention here the following facts:

(a) Hebrews is quoted extensively in 1 Clement (AD 90-110) and is used by various writers. It is only at the beginning of the third century that we find from Tertullian that the North African church did not have it in its list of New Testament books.

(b) James is attested by 1 Clement and Hernias (mid-second century) among others.

(c) It is my opinion that Jude 18 quotes 2 Peter 3: 3 and there are traces of 2 Peter in some of the apostolic fathers (1 Clem. 9: 3; 11: 1; 23: 3; Hermas Vis. IV 3: 4; Sim. VIII 11: 1). It is generally recognized to be the least well attested of the Antilegomena.

(d) 2 and 3 John present a difficulty of their own. Although there are some traces of them in early Christian writings, it would appear from the records of the 7th Council of Carthage (AD 256) and from two passages in Irenaeus (Adv. Haer. I 16: 3; III 16: 8)\(^{18}\) that at least the First and Second Epistles of John may have been known as one epistle, since we have quotations from 2 John introduced as ‘from the epistle of John’. As long as we do not know in what form the three epistles were known, and the evidence is ambiguous, we can only say that there appear to have been no doubts about the authenticity of these epistles until the end of the second century.

(e) We find traces of Jude in the apostolic fathers, and the way in which Tertullian quotes the book (in De Cult. Fem. 3) suggests that it had long been accepted as authentic and authoritative in North Africa.

The book of Revelation appears to have been accepted widely until well into the third century. The fact that the authenticity and authority of these books were doubted when the extent of the canon began to be debated at the end of the second century is largely explained by the fact that they were known in certain regions only and were hardly known in other regions. The other reason for these doubts may be found in the attempt at that time to limit the concept of apostolicity to mean no more than apostolic authorship. Since the exact authorship of these books (except for 2 Peter) was unknown or ambiguous, it was natural that questions should be raised with regard to them, while the place of Mark, Luke and Acts was already firmly enough established not to cause any difficulty.

**Conclusion**

It is obvious that all this provides no more than a sketchy outline of the way in which the subject of the history of the canon might be approached. Certain points we have mentioned may also help to show the weakness of some standard presentations on the subject.

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It is clear that any discussion on the authority of New Testament writings in the post-apostolic church needs to take into account the wider question of authority in the church at this time. It is also clear that an inquiry along the lines we have suggested by no means diminishes the importance of the investigation into the gradual emergence of a ‘canon’ of New Testament writings; it rather seeks to widen the scope of that investigation and put it in its proper framework.

Our ‘bird’s-eye’ view on the authority of the New Testament writings in the early church suggests that it is by no means impossible, or intrinsically unlikely, that all the apostolic writings which today make up our New Testament were accepted as apostolic and therefore as authoritative by the post-apostolic church and that their authenticity only came to be doubted at a later date for certain recognizable reasons, which do not cast doubt on their acceptance as apostolic by the post-apostolic church. A much more thorough analysis of all the evidence is necessary to confirm whether the evidence supports this suggestion. As yet such an analysis does not seem to be available.


Prepared for the Web in October 2006 by Robert I. Bradshaw

http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/
Talking points

Genesis and evolution

Nigel M. de S. Cameron

'Talking Points' is a new series of short articles surveying issues of current theological debate; the idea is not to break new ground, but to provide readers with a bird's-eye view of the debate in question. Our first contribution is by the Rev. Nigel Cameron, who has just been appointed warden of a new evangelical study centre in Scotland, and is author of a forthcoming Paternoster book, Evolution and the Authority of the Bible.

The background

A recent issue of The Times newspaper of London carried lengthy letters from two well-known evangelical scientists on the question of evolution. One wrote disparagingly of 'creationists as believing in Palsey's divine Watchmaker who retired above the bright blue sky after a week of frenzied activity in 4004 BC'. The other, who happens to be the President of the Biblical Creation Society, suggested that the creationist view had much to commend it, particularly in the light of recent doubt expressed by the scientific community in its traditional belief in evolution.

What are we to make of this debate? In the USA, for many years now, creationism has been gathering strength and is increasingly being taken seriously by the public at large. In Britain, however, it is more of a fringe movement. That doesn't mean, of course, that we can ignore it.

The new articles in this series will be concerned with some of the points raised in that debate, and with the relationship of science and scripture.

The theory

Creationism is based on the belief that there was a literal creation by God from nothing. Science, on the other hand, has advanced the theory of evolution which proposes that living things have been produced through natural processes over a long period of time. This theory is supported by evidence from many different fields of study, such as geology, botany, and zoology.

The arguments

Creationists argue that the Bible is the infallible word of God and that therefore the events described in the Bible must be accepted as historical facts. They also believe that the Bible provides evidence for the existence of God and for the nature of the universe.

Evolutionists, on the other hand, believe that the universe is the result of natural processes and that the evidence for evolution is overwhelming. They argue that the Bible should be interpreted in a way that is consistent with the scientific understanding of the world.

The implications

The debate between creationists and evolutionists has important implications for the way in which we understand the Bible and the world around us. It also has implications for the way in which we teach and learn about science and history.

The conclusion

In conclusion, the debate between creationists and evolutionists is a complex and important one. Both sides have valid points to make, and it is up to us to consider the evidence carefully and to decide for ourselves what we believe.
Talking points

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What are we to make of this debate? In the USA for many years now, creationism has been gathering strength and is currently on the verge of converting to the scientific world the over-aesthetic opposition. In the UK, creationism has made considerable strides in the last few years. There are now many thousands of people who believe in the创世主义 view of the scientific world and the modus operandi of creationists is to dispute the authority of the Bible. They believe that the theory of evolution is incompatible with the Bible and that the evidence for evolution is not as strong as creationists believe.

In fact at this point a whole spectrum of possible options is opened up, and most possible positions find actual proponents within the camp of biblical creation. One of the most advanced in this camp is R. A. F. Morris' 'The Genesis Flood' which has had a remarkable impact on the scientific world. It presents a God-created world that has been subjected to flood, and a God-created man that has been subjected to the Fall. Morris' view is that God created the world in a pre-flood state and then allowed a flood to occur, and that the evidence for evolution is not as strong as creationists believe. Morris' view is that God created the world in a pre-flood state and then allowed a flood to occur, and that the evidence for evolution is not as strong as creationists believe.

The differing Christian positions

There are problems in the very definition of terms. 'Creationists' are so called because they believe in the Genesis account of creation as stated in the Bible. They believe that the earth was created in six days, and that life on earth was created by God. They also believe in the Flood of Noah, the Fall of man, and the Resurrection of Christ. (See also: Christ and the Christian Church)

Creationism is not a new idea, but it is one that has gained popularity in recent years. It is a belief that has been held by many Christians throughout history, but it has been given new life in recent years. Creationism is a belief that is not compatible with the idea of evolution, but it is one that is gaining popularity in recent years.

The conflict between these two views is not new, but it has become more pronounced in recent years. The debate between creationists and evolutionists is not a new one, but it has become more intense in recent years. The conflict between these two views is not new, but it has become more pronounced in recent years. The debate between creationists and evolutionists is not a new one, but it has become more intense in recent years.

In conclusion, creationism is a belief that is not compatible with the idea of evolution, but it is one that is gaining popularity in recent years. The debate between creationists and evolutionists is not a new one, but it has become more intense in recent years. The conflict between these two views is not new, but it has become more pronounced in recent years. The debate between creationists and evolutionists is not a new one, but it has become more intense in recent years.
Creationists are keen to argue that, though they may end up taking 'literal' positions on matters like the 'days' of Genesis 1, their rejection of evolution does not mean that they can claim to maintain that they are faithful to the intentions of the original authors of Scripture, whereas modern evangelical evolutionists have tended to override original intentions and to treat the Genesis narratives as mythical, i.e. as not referential to real events in this world of time and space. On the other hand, it is contended that we must be wary of imposing 'literal' or any other categories of interpretation upon Scripture, since all kinds of literalism are contained within the canon and used there by the Spirit of God.¹

Issues arising

A number of issues arise out of this debate. First, what is the status of Holy Scripture? This is, of course, itself hotly debated. Those who admit there to be actual errors in the Bible presumably find no difficulty in rejecting elements in Genesis with which they may disagree. The question is whether, given a belief in a fully infallible Scripture, Genesis can be shown to be in harmony with evolution and consensus historical geology. Those who claim infallibility must insist that Scripture might disagree with what most scientists think, and that if that were the case they would be bound by its teaching. That much must be common ground among orthodox Christians.

Secondly we face the distinct question, what is the teaching of Holy Scripture? It is, presumably, common ground that the principle focus of the teaching of the Bible lies in what we may ascertain of the intentions of the original (human) author of any given book. What he meant to say, using whatever literary form he chose, is what the Bible says and therefore what God says. We need to use all possible literary and linguistic tools to obtain as near an understanding as possible of what the writer(s) of Genesis wished to purvey. We must avoid the twin dangers of permitting scientific orthodoxy or a certain theological tradition to determine our reading of Holy Scripture. How Genesis is understood elsewhere in Scripture will weigh heavily with us in our reading of it, but we must be wary, in turn, of reading back traditional understandings into these other texts. The Christian is of course committed to the integrity of scientific and theological endeavour. We must create a method which can do justice to both these sets of data.⁴

¹ There has been much discussion of the philosopher of science Karl Popper's suggestion that because evolution deals with something we cannot repeat, it cannot properly be called a theory. Yet, as A. Ayensu's A Study of Evolution (London, 1961) questions many of the assumptions of creationists, so too does England's argument that argumentation about 'Origins', are both worth consulting for concise statements, results and results that can be harmonised with each other. We must never turn our backs upon facts, biblical or scientific. The essential principle does not reside in the limits of these matters as such but is an imposition upon them that they do not require. There can ultimately be no difference between God's revelation in Scripture and the facts of his creation.

Further reading

For a general and informative survey of many of the issues in this and related debates, see Bernard Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture (Exeter, 1955), though especially in his discussion of Creationist geology Ramm is now badly dated.

J. C. Whitcomb and H. M. Morris' The Genesis Flood (Philadelphia, 1961) has been referred to above; it is the most significant creationist work of the present generation, though it too is now somewhat dated. Many scientific works have come from creationist pens, including Evan Shute's Laws in the Theory of Evolution (Notley, NJ, 1961) and a number of books by E. Wilder-Smith, especially Man's Origin, Man's Destiny (Stuttgart, 1974), The Bases for a New Biology (Stuttgart, 1976), and most recently The Natural Sciences Know Nothing of Evolution (San Diego, 1981). For a stimulating attack on evolution from a non-christian source, Fred Hoyle and C. Wickramasinghe's Evolution from Space (London, 1981) is the most recent in a line of questionings from outside of creationism.

On biblical questions, two useful papers are to be found in In the Beginning... , edited by the present writer (Glasgow, 1980), by D. A. Carson ('Adam in the Epistles of Paul') and J. G. McConville ('Interpreting Genesis 1-11'). The Themelios article on 'The Hebraic Problem in Genesis 1-11' (Themelios 11, 1986) is referred to above (in 4.1); briefly sets out the more 'literal' interpretive case. E. H. Andrews usefully discusses exegetical/philosophical issues in his God, Science and Evolution (Welwyn, 1980).


Paul Helm's Themelios article referred to above (4.1) raises some of the methodological and exegetical issues. See also F. Schaeffer's Genesis in Space and Time (Illinois, 1972; London, 1973). Books by non-evangelicals are of course legion, with several volumes by L. G. Barbour touching on these questions, the speculative works of Teilhard de Chardin endeavouring to think out the implications of evolution for theology, and studies like John Hick's Evil and the God of Love (London, 1966) taking account of evolution in their discussion of related theological issues.

Finally, we may draw attention to two major historical works which set the modern discussion in a different context. Reference has already been made to C. C. Gillispie's Genesis and Geology, dealing with the pre-Darwinian debates which in some ways were more important than those which Darwin himself initiated; and James R. Moore's The Post-Darwinian Synthesis (London, 1980), which is a major assessment of the theological response to Darwin (though it is largely uninterested in the vital exegetical questions).

Recent work on Barth

A survey of literature since 1975

John Webster

John Webster is a research fellow at Sheffield University and is the new review editor of Themelios (working with Bruce Demarest).

1. Works by Barth

The Gesamtausgabe (Complete Works) is in progress, and numbers more than a dozen volumes. This work is best introduced to English readers by the translations of various volumes which make available material which offers a fuller perspective on Barth's development than has hitherto been possible. Of these, perhaps the most interesting is the volume of fragments from the CD,² entitled The Christian Life, which compose the unfinished part of the 'ethics of reconciliation'. Barth's main concern is to show how his 'Christocentrism' does not detract from the sense of man as authentic ethical subject and agent. Using the Lord's Prayer as a

² CD = Church Dogmatics.
Creationists are keen to argue that, though they may end up taking "literal" positions on matters like the 'days' of Genesis 1, their rejection of evolution does not mean that they do not maintain that they are faithful to the intentions of the original authors of Scripture, whereas modern evangelical evolutionists have tended to override original intentions and to treat the Genesis narratives as mythical, i.e. as not referring to real events in this world of time and space. On the other hand it is contended that we must be wary of imposing "literal" or any other categories of interpretation upon Scripture, since all kinds of literary elements contained within the canon and used there by the Spirit of God.¹

Issues arising

A number of issues arise out of this debate. First, what is the status of Holy Scripture? This is, of course, itself hotly debated. Those who admit there to be actual errors in the Bible presumably find no difficulty in rejecting elements in Genesis with which they may disagree. The question is whether, given a belief in a fully infallible Scripture, Genesis can be shown to be in harmony with evolution and consensus historical geology. Those who firmly deny that principle admit that Scripture might disagree with what most scientists think, and that if that were the case they would be bound by its teaching. That much must be common ground among orthodox Christians.

Secondly we face the distinct question, what is the teaching of Holy Scripture? It is, presumably, common ground that the principle focus of the teaching of the Bible lies in what we may ascertain of the intentions of the original (human) author of any given book. What he meant to say, using whatever literary form he chose, is what the Bible says and therefore what God says. We need to use all possible literary and linguistic tools to obtain as near an understanding as possible of what the writer(s) of Genesis wished to purvey. We must avoid the twin dangers of permitting scientific orthodoxy or a certain theological tradition to determine our reading of Holy Scripture. How Genesis is understood elsewhere in Scripture will weigh heavily with us in our reading of it, but we must be wary, in turn, of reading back traditional understandings into these other texts. The Christian is of course committed to the integrity of scientific and theological endeavour. We must ensure that a 'thesis' of evolutionary theory does not displace the view that certain elements of Genesis are or are not intended to teach an explicitly scientific perspective. E. H. Andrews' book Is Evolution Scientific?¹ sets out a more popular (and creationist) assessment of the question (Welwyn, 1979).

Further reading

For a general and informative survey of many of the issues in this and related debates, see Bernard Ramm, The Christian View of Science and Scripture (Exeter, 1955), though especially in his discussion of Creationist geology Ramm is now badly dated. J. C. Whitcomb and H. M. Morris' Genesis Flood (Philadelphia, 1961) has been referred to above; it is the most significant creationist work of the present generation, though it is too somewhat dated. Many scientific works have come from creationist pens, including Evan Shute's Flaws in the Theory of Evolution (Nutley, NJ, 1961) and a number of books by A. E. Wilder-Smith, especially Man's Origin, Man's Destiny (Stuttgart, 1974), The Basics for a New Biology (Stuttgart, 1976), and most recently The Natural Sciences Know Nothing of Evolution (San Diego, 1981). For a starting point on evolution from a non-Christian source, Fred Hoyle and C. Wickramasinghe's Evolution from Space (London, 1981) is the most recent in a line of questionings from outside of creationism.

On biblical questions, two useful papers are to be found in In the Beginning, ..., edited by the present writer (Glasgow, 1980), by D. A. Carson ('Adam in the Epistles of Paul') and J. G. McConville ('Interpreting Genesis 1-11'). The Thomist article on 'The Hebraic Problem of Genesis 1-11' (March 1964) referred to above in 4.1.) briefly sets out the more 'literal' interpretative case. E. H. Andrews usefully discusses exegetical/philosophical issues in his book God, Science and Evolution (Welwyn, 1980).


Finally, we may draw attention to two major historical works which set the modern discussion within its historical context. Reference has already been made to C. C. Gillispie's Genesis and Geology, dealing with the pre-Darwinian debates which in some ways were more important than those which Darwin himself initiated; and James R. Moore's The Post-Darwinian Synthesis (London, 1985) is a major assessment of the theological response to Darwin (though it is largely unrestricted in the vital exegetical questions).

Recent work on Barth

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