

traced back to the last thirty years of the first century A.D.

Though Professor Hengel's arguments represent a 'conservative' approach to historical questions, they are by no means a mere repetition of old positions. His work demonstrates a great deal of the 'common sense' for which Schadewalt appeals, and his insistence that one should adopt a 'both-and' approach rather than an 'either-or' one is likely to be welcomed in this country at least. Professor Hengel is surely right to urge that in reading Mark we do not need to opt for either historical tradition *or* theological proclamation. Paradoxically, however, the more one is persuaded by Hengel's arguments for 'historical reminiscence', the less basis there is for his thesis that Mark's Gospel rests on the authority of Peter and on Peter's own understanding of the Gospel: for are not the references to Peter simply part of the historical reminiscence?

On the question of dating, it is surprising that the discussion of Mark 13 deals in detail with the opening verses, but not with the latter part of the chapter; when the chapter is considered as a whole, the thesis that Jerusalem has not yet been destroyed seems less impressive. Moreover, the argument that the chapter does not reflect the actual events of A.D. 70 conflicts with Professor Hengel's belief that Mark is writing in Rome, and so 'knows very little of actual events' in Palestine. It is also surprising to find on p. 7 a bold reference to 'the fact that it is now established that Mark is the earliest Gospel'; the work of W.R. Farmer (whether one agrees with him or not!) surely deserves a reference in a book which is elsewhere so well documented.

Nevertheless, these careful studies are a welcome reminder that Mark's Gospel deserves to be studied in relation to Christian origins, and that historical questions cannot be abandoned. It is to be hoped that they will not be misunderstood as supporting an uncritical appeal to the historical. For Professor Hengel is concerned to recognise literary and theological factors as well as historical, and though some readers will believe that he has laid undue stress on the 'reliability' of Mark, he balances this with a recognition of the role played by theological reflection: the debate will centre on the question as to whether Hengel has got this balance right—and to that question, the answers are likely to be as many and as varied as his readers.

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**FEMINIST INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE** edited by Letty M. Russell. *Basil Blackwell*. 1985. h/b £17.50, p/b £7.95

The feminist writing in this volume seeks to counter the suggestion that the Bible is to be dismissed as a hopelessly patriarchal expression of religious sensibility by discovering within its books intimations of female liberation which can become a source of inspiration for Christian and Jewish communities. The essays are divided into three parts. The first traces an awakening of feminist consciousness, the second exemplifies feminist interpretations of Biblical texts, and the third examines feminist critical principles. So Christian and Jewish feminists are viewed as prophets, highlighting forgotten traditions in their announcement of judgement on the patriarchy of contemporary culture (chapter 4), and destabilising the ideologies that support the social order (chapter 9). The Bible is understood 'not as mythic archetype but as a historical prototype' which provides a sense both of on-going history and of Christian or Jewish identity (p. 136).

Readers will find this a lucid introduction to the subject, which sheds as much light upon the difficulties of the project as upon its achievements.

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