

appropriate understanding of them within their historical context. And since Paul is now the focus of renewed attempts to understand how and why Christianity separated from its parent Judaism and became a different religion, anything which helps to bring Paul back as a contributor to ongoing Christian/Jewish dialogue is to be warmly welcomed.

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NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY by George B. Caird, completed and edited by L.D. Hurst. *Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994. Pp. xix + 498.*

This was clearly not an easy book to bring to completion. Before his death in 1984, George Caird had completed major portions of the first draft for some 203 pages of the eventual book, three chapters virtually complete (1, 2, and 4), two mostly finished (3 and 5), and one started (6). He also left outlines for three chapters. More than half of the substance of this work, therefore, as well as the final shaping of the whole, is owed to L.D. Hurst. On some points, he used Caird's earlier published works. For the 9th chapter ("the Theology of Jesus"), which Caird intended to be climactic, Hurst got some guidance from Caird's 1975 lectures on "the Teaching of Jesus."

It has taken Hurst ten years to complete the task of editing and completing Caird's vision. In the circumstances, no one will challenge that his labour was indeed a "labour of love" (p. vi), though there will not be equally unanimous agreement with the opinion that "what [Caird] says about New Testament theology continues to be important" (p. xi).

In the opening chapter, Caird defines the task and his approach to it. His first line declares, "New Testament theology is a historical discipline" (p.1). This means, for him, not simply that the NT texts must be apprehended within their historical circumstances, but that their significance is connected to "the belief that God revealed himself in events which happened *sub Pontius Pilato*" (p.2). Among approaches to the NT, Caird rejects what he calls the dogmatic, the chronological, the kerygmatic, and the author-by-author options (pp. 4–18). He adopts instead a "conference table" approach, engaging the NT authors in "a colloquium about theological matters which they themselves have placed on the agenda" (p. 18). He finds the model for such a process in the Jerusalem council, which was able to find unity within diversity (pp. 22–26). For Caird, "the New Testament itself provides a criterion for judging its own unity. The question we must ask is not whether these books all say the same thing, but whether they witness to the same Jesus and through him to the many splendoured wisdom of the one God" (p. 24).

Caird's own principle of arrangement, however, is very much his own, and represents a creative construal of the theological task, which is by no means simply "placed on the agenda" by the NT authors. The failure of either Caird or Hurst to account for or explain the structure of

the work reflects their generally low level of theoretical self-awareness. The work's basic structure derives from what David Kelsey (*The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975]) would call a "theological *discrimen*" or fundamental construal concerning theology.

In this case, theology is conceived of in terms of soteriology. Caird finds an overarching unifying principle in "the divine plan" with which he opens the conference (pp. 27–73). The divine plan, derived first of all from Luke-Acts, has an essentially narrative structure, and centers in the salvation of humans. The heart of this book is therefore devoted to salvation: its need (ch. 3), its three stages (ch. 4), its factual character (ch. 5), its experience (ch. 6), its hope (ch. 7), and its bringer (ch. 8). The focus on Jesus as "bringer of salvation" provides a transition to the final chapter on "the theology of Jesus." What strikes the reader is not that this arrangement is illegitimate, still less insignificant, but that the authors take it so much for granted, as though this would be the way anyone would arrange things, or that this is self-evidently the way the NT authors placed them "on the agenda."

The "conference table" model does come into play when Caird assembles the NT evidence pertaining to each category. What the authors seem not to realize is the way in which the arrangement resembles that of a dogmatic theology: the NT materials serve to illustrate elements of a soteriological schema. The book becomes, in effect, the sort of collection of *loci communes* that served theologians from John Damascene to Melancthon. The advantage is that all voices are allowed to speak when they have something to say on a particular point—thus, Hebrews here finds a place commensurate to its theological weight. The disadvantage is that the categories serve to harmonize the respective witnesses rather than help display their literary, thematic, and perspectival diversity.

The reasonable and fair-minded tone of the volume partially conceals the fact that some things have simply not been thoroughly thought through. In particular the precise relationship of texts and history to the task of NT theology remains hazy. Caird is unclear first of all about the function of the NT literary compositions. What, for example, are the "voices" that should be heard around the conference table? Caird apparently chooses "authors" rather than "compositions" (p. 18), despite the obvious complications this creates. Whose "voice" for example, is represented by the disputed pauline letters? Caird avoids quibbling: "What matters for our purpose is that every book, in so far as it has something to contribute, should be allowed a hearing" (p. 19). Yet in practice, it tends to be "Paul" who speaks rather than the multiple complex voices of his respective letters. The need to come to grips with the intratextual rhetoric of the respective NT writings is not even acknowledged. Thus, there is no recognition that "Mark" or "Luke" have a voice that is found, not in their statements on this subject or that, but uniquely in their literary rendering of the figure of Jesus.

Second, what role is played by history? Here, above all, the question of the relationship of “the historical Jesus” to NT theology comes into question. The authors acknowledge that Jesus’ voice does not fit at the conference table format, and those who insist on the authors’ being self-consistent “will have legitimate reasons for concluding the book at the end of chapter 8.” But why should anyone wish to continue? Because in “the teaching of Jesus, as recorded in the four Gospels, we can see both the starting point and the goal of New Testament theology” pp. 345–346).

What follows is not, however, a carefully critical analysis of Jesus’ voice as distinguished from those of the evangelists, nor even a consideration of the identity of Jesus as constructed by the narratives of the evangelists, but a synthetic rendering of what Jesus’ historical mission (and therefore motivation) must have been in a synthetically reconstructed first century Judaism. For all of its piety and deeply affirmative tone, it must be said that the treatment is not significantly more convincing than the efforts undertaken from the opposite end by the infamous Jesus seminar. Here as there, poor history serves thin theology.

Even if one could grant that the teaching of Jesus is the “starting point” of Christian theology—although in what sense it can be called “Christian” before the experience of the Jesus’ death and resurrection is problematic—it is still a large leap to find in Jesus’ teaching “the goal of NT theology.” Perhaps this is simply poor writing. But it appears to be something more. It is no real surprise to find heavy use of C.H. Dodd, J.D.G. Dunn, Martin Hengel, N.T. Wright, C.F.D. Moule, J.A.T. Robinson, E.P. Sanders, T.W. Manson, and J. Jeremias in these pages. Caird and Hurst, like them, so emphasise *continuity* between the ministry of Jesus and the church that elements of *discontinuity* are downplayed or implicitly denied. The resurrection becomes a validation of what was there all along, rather than a fundamental and eschatological explosion of power. It is perhaps indicative that there is no entry for “resurrection” in the index, and in an otherwise rich discussion of the Holy Spirit (pp. 203–213), the NT’s emphatic way of connecting the Holy Spirit to the resurrection of Jesus is scarcely mentioned.

To call the teaching of Jesus “the goal of NT theology” must mean, then, that all the other voices in the NT are to be understood as explicating what was implicit in the historical Jesus’ words. While that might be a nice sentiment, it is not one that is demonstrated in this volume. And it is difficult to reconcile with another, even more ancient and persuasive opinion, that the other voices in the NT seek to make explicit what was implicit in the story of Jesus. That Caird and Hurst do not seem to be aware of the distinction is an indication of the limitations to this well-meaning testimony to a revered teacher’s memory.

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