

historical and ecclesiological questions. After all, if Jesus belonged to a group-oriented, collectivistic society which respected boundaries and valued hierarchy, this surely has implications for the society *he* founded, whether it be called a 'post-Jesus group' or the Church?

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ISAIAH ed Brevard S. Childs *Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 2001. (The Old Testament Library). Pp. xx + 555. £35.00 Hbk.*

The publication of Brevard Childs' commentary reflects a major shift in recent Old Testament scholarship, not only with respect to the book of Isaiah, but to the Old Testament in general. Previously, commentaries on Isaiah followed the historical-critical or diachronic division of the book into First Isaiah (chs. 1-39), Second-Isaiah (40-55) and Third-Isaiah (56-66). Commentaries and studies examined each of these 'Isaias' separately, often with little or no comment about the potential relationship between them. To see something of this, one only has to consult *The Old Testament Library* list on the dust cover of this volume to see that Otto Kaiser covered Isaiah 1-39 while Claus Westermann covered Isaiah 40-66. In contrast Childs is concerned to treat the 66 chapters as a unified whole even though he readily acknowledges that it 'cannot be formulated in terms of single authorship' (p. 3). Despite what some might suspect, this is not due only to Childs's well known interest in the final or canonical shape of biblical books or to the current popularity of synchronic analysis of the Bible (of which Childs is critical). It is, as he acknowledges, also a response to the majority of recent diachronic studies of Isaiah which show a marked interest in how the book was shaped by redactors. This shift of focus from the earlier to the final stages of composition is gathering momentum across the spectrum of Old Testament studies and raises challenging questions about the relationship between diachronic and synchronic analysis.

Even though Childs's intention is to examine the book as a unified whole, he retains the classical historical-critical division outlined above. His aim however is to demonstrate the integral relationship between these three parts of the larger whole. At 555 pages, his commentary initially looks a formidable tome. But, when one considers that 286 pages are devoted to Isaiah 1-39, 150 pages to Isaiah 40-55 and 108 pages to Isaiah 56-66, it is, in comparison to the earlier volumes of Kaiser and Westermann in this series, remarkably compact. Perhaps only a scholar of Childs's calibre and breadth of knowledge could have undertaken such a task and executed it so well. He demonstrates throughout that he is conversant with contemporary as well as past scholarship. Selected bibliographies are provided for each section of the book and each unit discussed, there are concise introductions to each section, and at strategic intervals a summary of his understanding of the text to that point (cf. for example p. 49 for his summary of Isaiah 1-5). Childs also provides 'a few probes' (p. 5) on the impact of Isaiah on the New Testament and Christian tradition but acknowledges this is too vast a topic for a commentary of this kind to tackle in any detail.

Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings, perhaps determined by the

constraints of a one-volume commentary. There is practically no discussion of the Hebrew original. One would also like more background to some sweeping statements made by Childs. For example, he is highly critical of literary/synchronic approaches which he finds 'are theologically inert at best, and avowedly agnostic at worst' (p. 4). Some synchronic studies may stand so accused but to dismiss them all in one sweeping statement?

There are impressive and thought provoking passages in this book, such as his summary of Isaiah 2-4 on p. 55, and his analysis of Isaiah 40 and its relationship to the 'call' of Isaiah in chapter 6. Childs is willing to discuss significant issues concerning the composition of a text but always with an eye to how this helps his understanding of its final (canonical) shape. There are of course some interpretations with which I would disagree or seek to modify in some way. But, rather than comment on these, which may seem like nitpicking, I would prefer to devote some comment to the hermeneutical issues that Childs raises. One is grateful to Childs for raising them but I found some of his remarks puzzling.

According to Childs, the critical hermeneutical issue is 'determining how the diachronic and synchronic relate' (p. 440). For him the two approaches cannot simply be joined. Diachronic study aims at an 'objective' analysis of 'what really happened'. For redaction criticism I presume this refers to how the book of Isaiah was shaped—the particular editor(s) who worked on the text and the social and historical contexts within which this work was carried out. It is, Childs claims, a view from 'outside' and a different perception of reality from what is in Isaiah, that is from 'inside'. 'Here reality is understood not only as including the divine, but also requiring for its perception a particular stance and faith perspective of the viewer' (p. 441). One can formulate this difference in terms of the text as 'source' and as 'witness'. It is in the area of faith stance and acceptance of the divine that Childs would see himself differing from synchronic analysts.

I find the 'requiring' of a particular faith perspective puzzling. Which particular perspective does Childs have in mind among the many professed by Jews and Christians? Does 'a' or 'the' faith stance offer any better perspective for getting inside Isaiah than an openness to discovering the meaning of the text? Childs does not explicitly say it but his use of 'outside' and 'inside' terminology implies that it is the inside running that really counts. I fail to see how a faith stance in itself can be shown to give one an edge over other approaches. Childs no doubt believes it helps him and that is well and good. But, how can one verify it? One would hope that Childs's use of 'outside' and 'inside' terminology does not mean that he rules out the contribution of historical and sociological contexts to Israel's faith. Surely one of the enduring insights of historical-critical analysis has been to show how such contexts influenced Israel's faith and its articulation in books such as Isaiah.

At times Childs expresses irritation at the way redaction critics explain the growth of the text as a series of competing viewpoints, the outcome of sociological and theological conflict in the community. This goes against his conviction that the final text has been shaped by faith as a unified whole (p. 449). But he also states that 'the retention of elements of tension within the

canonical texts has been judged to be essential to Israel's authoritative scriptures' (p. 441). Depending on how broadly one understands 'elements of tension' most redaction critics could live with this statement. Is Childs hedging his bets here? I prefer to think he is too good an exegete not to pay due attention to different viewpoints in the text. As they say, the devil is in the detail and the more one delves into a biblical text, the more tricky things become. The Bible has a wonderfully wicked way of undermining our cherished hypotheses, whether they be diachronic or synchronic.

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THE BATTLE FOR THE CATHOLIC MIND edited by William E May and Kenneth D. Whitehead *St Augustine's Press, South Bend, IN., 2001 Pp xxiii + 538, £18.00 pbk.*

While the title of this formidable book sounds old fashioned and woolly, the thirty-one essays or conferences of outstanding thinkers featured in it are not. The essays are the result of culling by the editors from the annual meetings of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars held since 1978. They show how the undermining of Catholic theology across the Atlantic came from the failure to submit to the teachings of the sacred magisterium. As a result of the dissent which occurred, theologians failed properly to understand both the teachings themselves and the consequences of refusing to give assent to them.

Therefore, during the last two decades among theologians in the United States, if not Europe itself, *fides quaerens intellectum* has become *intellectus quarens fidem* to the detriment of the science of theology and the slow corruption of pastoral practice. It then continues to the papal magisterium's teaching negatively and then attempts to synthesise ideas completely contradictory in the name of becoming authentic, creative and original.

The last conference by the distinguished professor of the Catholic University of America, Fr Robert Sokolowski, sums up the problem when he says that reason is seen as self-authorising and autonomous, generating its own principles and not accepting anything on authority. This reason sets itself up as the beginning and the judge of thinking. In this perspective, accepting things on faith has 'the tinge of gullibility and uncritical submission, of what Kant called heteronomy, which he saw as the deepest betrayal of reason (p.528).

The Catholic professors whose writings are gathered here teach in various fields at universities and colleges both Catholic and non-Catholic throughout the United States. Some twenty years ago, a society was established of Catholic scholars which now numbers over two thousand dedicated to understanding and defending the official teachings of the Catholic Church. It was not a knee-jerk reaction to a scholarly and yet erroneous theology but a conviction among its leaders that dissenting theologians and meek if not 'milk-toast' bishops and priests who said nothing about the essentials of faith and morals, were causing an erosion of the Catholic faith among the Christian faithful as well as praxis on the individual and institutional level of the Church in the United States, or a 'reverse exodus' as Sokolowski puts it. Hence the bitter fruits of these revisionist thinkers have