

particular reading of the truth of Judaism.

Perhaps the key issue however, to which another three chapters are devoted, is that of Christology versus monotheism. Did early Christian claims for Jesus mean an end to monotheism? Dunn's answer is an emphatic negative, concluding that even John is guilty simply of pushing familiar categories rather hard. The Christology of the entire New Testament, he argues, can still be understood in terms of intra Jewish debate, of extending the boundaries of well established thinking about Wisdom by applying it to Jesus. Here paradigmatically a Judaism which was trying to draw in boundaries after the catastrophe of 70CE was met by a Christianity insisting on pushing them back and from this tension the division between Judaism and Christianity sprang.

The importance of all this for many current debates will be obvious. Much of what passes for Christology is, in Dunn's view, Jesusolatry. We cannot begin with the social Trinity but should rather continue to learn from the Wisdom Christology. On the issue of election the problem of exclusion and inclusion is still with us, with many contemporary types of Christianity adopting exactly the exclusivist claims that Paul fought against as contrary to God's revelation in Christ. When considering Torah we find ourselves caught in ongoing debates about tradition and interpretation, debates which provide a paradigm for understanding Judaism and Christianity together, as variant interpretations of the original traditions of Israel. The most ironic reversal comes in the implication of New Testament teaching on the Temple, where Dunn finds that the rabbis were able to dispense with priesthood and sacrifice in a way in which Christians could not. He calls us, therefore, to rethink much of our Christian liturgical theory and practice. One may not agree with these conclusions, but the arguments which lead to them all need to be reckoned with. This is a well argued and important book, for New Testament studies, for contemporary doctrine, and not least for the future of Jewish Christian relations.

T J GORRINGE

KARL BARTH, BIBLICAL AND EVANGELICAL THEOLOGIAN by Thomas F. Torrance. *T & T Clark*, Edinburgh, 1990. pp xii, 256.

This book sheds valuable light as much on its author as on his subject. It consists 'of papers originally produced as lectures or articles' presenting Barth's theology 'from the centre of his Biblical and evangelical convictions'. In the different chapters, with inevitable and sometimes useful overlap, Barth's views are examined in relation to philosophy—idealism and realism—natural theology, the patristic and mediaeval tradition, liberalism and fundamentalism, and not least science, where parallels are seen in the methodology which lets reality determine reflection, and not *vice versa*.

A former doctoral student and lifelong disciple of Barth, Torrance describes him as 'the greatest theologian ... for several hundred years',

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rivalling Athanasius and Augustine, Luther and Calvin, comparable with Shakespeare, Mozart, Newton, Clerk Maxwell, Einstein et al. Such enthusiasm is both the strength and weakness of this book.

To start on a negative note, less than fully convinced Barthians who survive the hyperbole may still feel frustrated by the evasion of serious difficulties raised by Barth's views. For example, 'that Jesus is God incarnate and that there is no revelation and no other salvation than that embodied in him' (p.10 and *passim*) may be 'the essence of the Gospel' as well as of Barth's theology, but raises real difficulties in the context of religious pluralism. Readers not entirely at home in the Barthian family may also be less readily swept along by such language as 'in the Holy Scriptures God speaks to us in Person' (p. 43) even if the authority of Calvin is claimed for it. For all his faults, Marcion's 'antitheses' had a point, which is not resolved by claiming that 'God has uniquely and sovereignly coordinated the biblical word with his eternal Word' (p. 88). One might also wonder if the virgin birth and bodily resurrection can be presented without critical reflection as 'constituting together the mystery and miracle of divine revelation'. Yet it would be unfair to dwell too long on unexamined issues in what is a collection of essays, not a systematic theology.

Much more can be made of the positive value of Torrance's enthusiastic and profound engagement with Barth's thought. It enables him to illuminate both its rationality and religious depth in somewhat smaller compass than the original, and with the added confidence of one whose interpretation and critical comments received, as he tells us, the stamp of Barth's own approval. Indeed, such criticism as Torrance offers arises 'out of the inner substance of Barth's theology through sharing in the movement of his thought and the growth of a deep sympathy with his mind'. Out of this sympathy, he can draw critical attention to the element of subordination in Barth's doctrine of the Holy Trinity and identify the grounds for the (unjustified) charge of docetism. More positively, on the basis of Barth's realist doctrine of the incarnation, he advocates further exploration into the relation between our fundamental concepts in theology and natural science, and of incarnation to creation—both major themes in Torrance's own work.

However, the main objective in these collected articles is to highlight the revolutionary significance not only of Barth's theology but of his methodology, above all (justifying the comparison with Einstein), his escape from the dualistic mindset not only of the Enlightenment but of the Western tradition reaching back through the Reformation and Aquinas to Augustine and beyond, and his opposition to static views of revelation. In contrast, Barth maintains a dynamic understanding of revelation and reconciliation, holding that God's being, speaking, and acting are one and the same (p.90).

The final chapter offers a profound and illuminating analysis of Barth's resistance to the dualistic 'Latin heresy', as Torrance calls it. Rejecting a dualistic and deistic idea of God distanced from creation,

Barth takes his stand on the *homoousion* in proclaiming an 'interactionist' God, distinct but not distant, free to be himself in revelation. Through the Son and in the Holy Spirit knowledge of God through *internal* relations is possible, which is impossible in terms of the external relations of the Latin heresy, where attempts to overcome the problem, whether Catholic, Protestant, liberal or fundamentalist are doomed to failure. (It is interesting here to reflect on the similarities as well as the differences in Tillich's attempt to show knowledge of God to be possible in terms of internal relations which, however, embrace the created order panentheistically rather than being extended to humanity miraculously.)

This chapter sheds light retrospectively on the recurrent theme of Barth's attempts to liberate theology from the shackles of alien preconceptions in philosophy or natural theology—'We can never think of going behind the back of Jesus Christ in order to know God', else revelation is domesticated and subordinated to human ideas instead of being allowed to shatter them.

Yet the account given of revelation, especially in the chapter, 'Theologian of the Word', remains problematic in respect of the revelatory value ascribed to Scripture. Despite disclaimers (e.g. 'there is no hypostatic union between the Word of God and the word of man in the Bible' p.91), the explicit parallels drawn between God the Word actively revealed in Christ and in Holy Scripture amount to a virtual doctrine of 'enbibliation' alongside the doctrine of incarnation. With the Bible almost elevated to be co-redemptrix alongside Christ, (analogous to the Virgin Mary in some traditions), the Trinity almost becomes a quaternity. If Scripture was not ascribed such an exalted position in relation to the person to whom it witnesses, a way out of Barthian exclusivism might be found without sacrificing his Christological foundations. At the same time, the idea of the Holy Spirit as 'the freedom of God to be present to the creature' (p.180) might gain more substance than Barthian constraints allow.

Whether one shares Torrance's enthusiasm for Barth or not, he has provided not only an invaluable guide to the theology of two profound and influential Christian thinkers, but a challenging account of what Christian faith means.

TREVOR WILLIAMS

THE NONCONFORMISTS: IN SEARCH OF A LOST CULTURE, by James Munson. *SPCK*, 1991. pp viii + 360, £17.50.

James Munson subtitles his study of the last great days of Nonconformity: 'in search of a lost culture'. His aim 'is to show the influence which Nonconformity had on English society, literature, education, religion and politics -the culture behind the phrase, the Nonconformist Conscience'. He has even claimed (in *The Guardian*, 5 August 1991) that Nonconformity 'decried and despised as narrow-minded and provincial, has had a lasting effect denied both to

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