

AN OUTLINE OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, by Hans Conzelmann. SCM, London, 1969. 372 pp. 50s.

Professor Conzelmann is well known, beyond the limits of Germany, as one of the pioneers of the method of *Redaktionsgeschichte*. His work *Die Mitte der Zeit* (E.T. *The Theology of Saint Luke*), appearing in 1953, was one of the first full-length studies in which this method was used to investigate the theology of one particular evangelist, and the way in which it had led him to edit his sources. The German from which the present work is translated appeared in 1968, and represents the fruit of years of study in many fields of New Testament work. In his preface Conzelmann points out that in Germany the field of New Testament theology has been dominated by Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*, which is not in all respects satisfactory, and which he wishes to supplement. But it should be said from the outset that in many ways Conzelmann's approach is very similar to Bultmann's, e.g. on faith, on hope, and—constantly—in his attitude to historicity. In an age of ecumenism—and ecumenism is vaunted as being nowhere more thorough and genuine than in the biblical field—this book is an object lesson in showing how different presuppositions and attitudes can lead to different conclusions of scholarship.

It would, perhaps, be fair to state at this point that your reviewer has never been an unreserved devotee of Professor Conzelmann. *Die Mitte der Zeit* was full of interesting suggestions and hypotheses, but he seemed to draw conclusions too fast and on insufficient evidence simply because they fitted in with a wider theory. His commentary on the Acts of the Apostles seemed peremptory and dogmatic, a pale shadow of the great commentary of Haenchen from which it made few significant departures. Hoping for enlightenment from so well established a scholar, your reviewer found only the uncompromising statement of a personal point of view, stated with a rigidity and air of infallibility which make *Humanae Vitae* seem honeyed persuasion.

The book falls into five parts, of which the first ('The kerygma of the primitive community and the hellenistic community') is so compressed that there are few discussions which communicate much enlightenment apart from a good bibliography. A good example of the style of argument may be taken from the small-print discussion of Matthew 16, 18–19 (almost every page, if not every paragraph, is interrupted by a little discussion in small print) on page 33: 'In the first place it is questionable whether Jesus regarded himself as Messiah; and secondly, the founding of an organization is not part of the work of the Messiah. Therefore if Jesus regarded himself as Messiah, the saying must be taken as inauthentic; and if he did not regard himself as Messiah, the same thing still applies.' Most significant is a passage on page 102, where he appeals to Kümmel to justify classing Mark 13, 32 as inauthentic; Kümmel himself is much more tentative about the conclusion (and with good reason!), but Conzelmann's staccato dogmatism does not falter. The second part is devoted to the synoptic kerygma, and is ruthless in its pruning away of elements which the author considers to be products of the early Church rather than sayings of Jesus himself. In the section on the question of Jesus's understanding of himself the titles by which the Jesus of the gospels describes himself are lopped away, until we are left only with the miracles (which differ little from magic) as a basis on which we may determine how Jesus understood himself. He describes himself in fact neither as 'the Son' nor as 'the Son of God' nor 'the Son of Man'. Now in many cases Conzelmann has good grounds for his pruning; but for each title there remains a residue, a saying or two, which is sufficient to explain why the community generalized this title, using it also in other sayings of Jesus. Conzelmann cannot, of course, admit this, but in even an outline of New Testament theology should surely have con-

sidered why the community adopted certain titles, and what their significance to them was. Part three, on the theology of Paul, is disappointing for other reasons; it is impoverished by the decision to consider only those letters which are 'undisputedly authentic'; and thus not only Pastorals and Ephesians, but also Colossians and II Thessalonians are excluded. There are again traces of the same cavalier dogmatism: 'The threefold report of the conversion (of Paul) in the Acts is no use as a source, as it is legendary' (p. 163). There is a *granum veritatis* here, but it is allowed to grow into a great tree. The treatment of Paul's theology itself is so fragmentary as to be almost useless: ten pages are given to anthropological

concepts, eight to hope, six to man in the world and thirteen to God's saving action in Christ. Part four deals with the development after Paul and part five with John (two paragraphs on the Logos, two pages on the passion).

This is a disappointing book. The problems are posed from a Bultmannian standpoint which will be unfamiliar to many English readers. In consequence a vast number of important questions are left untouched (e.g. the growth of the New Testament from the Old; there are only thirty references to the Old Testament in the whole book). But the most unpleasing element in the book is its peremptory and dictatorial tone.

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**THE TENDENCIES OF THE SYNOPTIC TRADITION**, by E. P. Sanders. *C.U.P.*, Cambridge, 1969. 382 pp. 90s. (£4.50).

This ninth monograph of a series under the imprint of the Society for New Testament Studies marks a breakthrough in synoptic studies. Let no one say this is only a monograph: it is an important work, and by its structure and content also an *instrument de travail*. A complete reassessment of the synoptic question was needed; and now it has been made, at least in part. The author speaks of his achievement modestly, calling his work 'an individual study of a particular aspect of the early Christian tradition', and in fact 'a contribution to a total view' (p. 27).

The author's starting point is the form-criticism of Bultmann and Dibelius. He then goes on to show how his own approach can be defined over against Gerhardsson, whose method leads to a stressing of the rigidity or unchanging character of tradition, whereas his own is almost wholly concerned with the changing character of tradition.

The major part of the work is then a detailed, meticulous and scholarly attempt to trace the fluctuations of that tradition, as it can be discerned subsequently to the Synoptic Gospels, in the text of the New Testament, in synoptic material and the early Fathers, and in apocryphal literature. These form the principal groups of material which the author undertakes to examine and discuss one by one. Surprisingly enough a group of material not handled at all is that of the joannine writings as representative of a later stage in the tradition of the New Testament. No synoptic study can afford to by-pass the joannine writings. Kurt Aland's Synopsis is significant of a new attitude. Certainly the 'total view' which Dr

Sanders advocates would examine with equal diligence the generality of the New Testament tradition and so the joannine writings.

Each group of material is examined in terms of categories, the principal of which are length, detail, and Semitism. All through the same question recurs: was the tendency of the tradition toward greater length or abbreviation, toward detail or simplicity, toward Semitism or better Greek? Thus, for example, 'we shall see in how many instances the manuscript tradition, the Fathers, and the Apocryphal tradition change a good Greek reading to a more Semitic reading, how many times they change a Semitic reading to a better Greek reading, and finally, how many times Matthew has a Semitic reading not in Mark, Mark one not in Matthew, and so forth' . . . (p. 45). The usual contrast of Semitic and Greek appears all through. Some day we hope to hear more about the Semite who spoke perfect Greek or the Greek who spoke Semitic; I mean bilingualism as it affects the tradition of the Gospel, and the writing of the New Testament generally.

Anyway, the results of the detailed investigation are all carefully tabulated and form the greater part of this monograph. Summaries are given of the Gospel comparisons, and the results provoke thought, e.g. under the heading 'Actions in one Gospel and not in another', it is found that Matthew is longer than Mark nine times; Mark is longer than Matthew 19 times . . . Luke is longer than Mark 11 times, Mark is longer than Luke 22 times . . . etc. (p. 82). Significantly the author goes on to say that 'whatever evidence there is in the category