

THE LAST ADAM: A STUDY IN PAULINE ANTHROPOLOGY by Robin Scroggs. *Basil Blackwell*, Oxford. 1966. xxiv+139 pp. 21s.

Professor Scroggs of Dartmouth is testing an assumption. The assumption is that Paul was familiar with Jewish myths about Adam, and that he was reinterpreting them; the test consists in seeing whether or not the assumption leads to a coherent picture of Paul's thought. The other possible test, that of assuming that the Apostle was basing his references to Adam on non-Jewish, or fringe-Jewish, or heretical Christian myths about Adam, is not employed because 'it is impossible to imagine his coming into serious intellectual discussion with either agnostic community or writing' (xviii) and because, in any case, not the source of traditions but their function in the Apostle's context is what is crucial (xxiii; cf. 97).

Scroggs first shows three things about Jewish Adamic myths: (a) that Adam brought sin and death to mankind; (b) that Adam was nevertheless sometimes still seen as a glorious figure, a patriarch in Israel; and (c) that Jews expected restored men in the world to come to be given back Adam's glory, but they did not expect Adam himself to play any part in the restoration. These three themes are found in both the intertestamental literature and in rabbinic literature, and they have their roots in the Old Testament, especially if one distinguishes two traditions behind J in Genesis 2 to 4.

What Paul has done with this tradition (and Scroggs admits that the evidence is at best implicit) is to accept (c), the vision of man's eschatological humanity, and to adopt (a), the diagnosis that Adam originated man's bondage to sin and death, but to transfer the exalted view of Adam in (b) to Christ. 'Christ as Last Adam now plays the role of the portrait and assurance of eschatological humanity. He becomes, furthermore, the means by which the new humanity is attained, a feature Jewish theology never ascribed to Adam' (91).

The theological consequences drawn by

Scroggs are these. An anthropology of new creation is basic to Paul. This anthropology is derived from christology and the christology can by no means be dissolved into anthropology. Christ is the mediator of true humanity and the realization of true humanity, which is already present if incomplete.

I like these theological conclusions, but find the supporting picture of how the Apostle's mind functioned unconvincing. The trouble is that Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5 won't work until Adam is assumed by the Apostle and his audience to be not just the originator of sin but the one in whom all men are held captive, and until there exists the idea of the heavenly man who will rescue what is trapped. Of course these ideas are re-shaped in Paul, but Professor Scroggs does not see that the necessary background of ideas to be re-shaped is not found in the intertestamental or rabbinic literature of Judaism. One of the strengths of the book is that this late Jewish literature is very soberly assessed; Scroggs can find, at best, pictures of Adam as the bringer of sin and death, and Adam as the first patriarch and the image of the coming humanity that God intended in creation. But these pictures are not cosmic in scope; none of these writers said, 'in Adam all die' and none thought of either Adam or the Messiah as one in whom 'all shall be made alive'.

Albert Schweitzer's brilliant hypothesis, that Paul is to be understood on the basis of Jewish eschatological ideas alone, is far as as ever from proof, but Scroggs and his numerous predecessors argue that it is better to keep on digging in that mine until they are shown a better lode to work than Bousset and his followers have been able to uncover. I believe that what is needed is less mining and more prospecting.

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