

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF EARLY JEWISH CHRISTIANITY by Richard N. Longenecker, *SCM*, 1970. £2.

A fair number of treatments of biblical Christology already exist, ranging from the classic but now rather dated work by Cullman to R. H. Fuller's Bultmannian discussion, not to mention sections of any number of Theologies of the NT. Professor Longenecker's work is more in the nature of a monograph than an exhaustive treatment, in that he concentrates on the aspect indicated in the title, giving references to rather than repetitions of discussions of e.g. OT background. The project is obviously an interesting one, in spite of the difficulty of defining early Jewish Christianity; L's definition is perhaps theoretically rather messy but pragmatically quite satisfactory, being by ideology: Jewish Christian theology is that theology which is in fact rooted for its imagery and terms in the OT; the works of the NT which fall into the category are rather generously enumerated, but whether particular ideas fall into it is ably discussed—and is of course one of the chief points of discussion of the book.

One great interest of the book is the rigour with which the author attacks commonly accepted theses which are, on insufficient evidence, transferred like stale tea-leaves from one book to another, e.g. the pan-Hellenism of Bultmann and his scepticism about the authenticity of sayings of Jesus, or the facile assumption that the Similitudes of Enoch can be used as examples of pre-Christian theology although no extant MSS of them can be dated before the sixteenth century, and the earliest date *guessed* for their translation is the fourth century.

The author works by means of the titles of Jesus, which he classes under two heads, those derived from the Messiahship of Jesus and those associated with his Lordship. He establishes with cogent succinctness that Jesus did think of himself as Messiah, though the basic datum of his self-consciousness was that of being Son of God, and he seems to have claimed to be Messiah only after the resurrection. This accounts for his reticence with regard to the title during his earthly life; one of the attractive features of L's approach is that he gives due prominence to the resurrection as *the* important moment in the development of

Christian thinking, as opposed to Bultmann, for whom the important factor is the delay of the parousia. But Jesus' chosen self-designation is as Son of Man, and the reason why it went out of favour is that in the circumstances of the nascent Church it was understood to apply more to the suffering Son of Man as he had been, and to the triumphant Son of Man as he would be, rather than to the Son of Man as he was now, between the resurrection and the parousia (L. here and elsewhere leans heavily upon the important article of Moule in *JTS* 1959, 'The Influence of Circumstances on the Use of Christological Terms'). In this it is similar to the concept of a priestly Messiah, which features so little in the Christian tradition, but which was clearly an important current at least in some circles of Judaism. Much more difficult to explain is why the description of Jesus as *the Suffering Servant* appears so little in the NT; it seems so apt to describe his person and work, and can be felt to lurk beneath the surface, but explicitly occurs with inexplicable rarity.

The other growth point of Judaeo-Christian Christology is 'Lord', around which the author groups other concepts dependent on it. To Jesus himself the title was given with a variety of meanings ranging from simple respect to reverent worship, but the events of the cross and resurrection showed him to merit it in a deeper sense. It was from the use of *kyrios* by the LXX that the title of God began to be given to Jesus (in opposition to Brown's excellent essay L, points out that it is primarily in cosmological rather than liturgical contexts that it begins to be used, and in Jewish rather than hellenistic circles; Paul could have avoided both this and the title 'Son of God' because of the possibility of their misleading the polytheistic gentiles).

The book serves as a useful corrective to the excessive stress on hellenistic pressures in the development of NT theology which the Bultmannian school has inherited from German liberal thought of the last century, making full use of the increasing knowledge of the Jewish milieu gained from Qumran and allied studies.

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