

biographical information is available this should be included (perhaps as an appendix). A more elusive group are those who left in formation but who contributed greatly to the life of the Province during their stay; the review pages of *Blackfriars* and *New Blackfriars* abound in OPs who have sunk without trace. Statistical tables, so much easier to produce with modern IT, would also illuminate, although some illustrations are included; there were none in Gumbley.

The book, appropriately produced in Dominican colours, deserves a wide market and provides an invaluable addition to the increasing library of English Catholic biography.

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THE CHALLENGE OF JESUS by NT Wright *SPCK*, London, 2000. Pp. 163, £9.99 pbk.

It is a little surprising that this book is published under the name NT Wright, since it clearly belongs with the less academic, more popular works usually found under 'Tom Wright'. Like others under that name, his latest offering's broader appeal by no means precludes a thoroughgoing academic approach, in this case reflecting the impressive breadth of scholarship behind the excellent, if contentious, *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Indeed, the first five chapters — somewhat over half the book— are an undisguised abridgement of that much larger work; as such, I hope they will encourage the reader understandably wary (or weary) of 'the historical Jesus' to look at one portrait of Jesus that successfully avoids the errors of agnostic minimalism and of inexcusable anachronism.

Wright's portrait of Jesus, which builds especially on the work of Ben Meyer and EP Sanders, might broadly be called neo-Schweitzerian: the conclusion that Jesus was— at least—a Jewish apocalyptic prophet and would-be Messiah is inescapable from any reading of the sources, canonical and otherwise, that takes seriously the backdrop of First Century Palestinian Judaism. Where Wright differs fundamentally from Schweitzer is in his refusal to conclude either that Jesus' eschatological apocalypticism was mistaken, or that the early Church came to believe so. Wright's self-confident assertion is that the open-minded use of the tools of historical research enables the Christian to discover the truth about the historical Jesus, and moreover that the Jesus thereby discovered will be one that the mainstream Christian can and must follow in discipleship.

This last point really represents the purpose of this book. Because it recapitulates Wright's understanding of the historical Jesus without either fully justifying it or addressing the questions it raises, the first half of the book, useless to anyone who has already

read *Jesus and the Victory of God*, will be unsatisfactory to anyone who has not, unless he is prepared to take Wright's view on trust. We are constantly told in the footnotes to see *Jesus and the Victory of God* for supporting arguments, a slightly irritating but perhaps inevitable problem with a brief summary of such a substantial work. *The Challenge of Jesus*, then, must ultimately be judged by its last three chapters, in which Wright asks, if this is an accurate picture of Jesus in his time, what are the implications for Christian discipleship two-thousand years later?

In facing this problem, Wright takes on a task vital to the work of any scripture scholar for whom that scholarship is more than an academic exercise, yet a task often neglected in a retreat into a fideist over-distinction between the historical Jesus and 'the Christ of Faith'. It is pleasing, therefore, that Wright begins in exactly the right place for rejoining the two, namely in the empty tomb. He is currently working on a large-scale work on the Resurrection for his ongoing *magnum opus*, and the chapter in *Challenge* entitled 'The Challenge of Easter' bodes well, being undoubtedly the most useful part of the book. He debunks a number of attempts, scholarly and otherwise, to 'explain away' the resurrection of Jesus, before establishing a clear line from the purposes of Jesus, through his death and resurrection, to the life, work and teaching of the early Church. 'Jesus... had gone through the climax of Israel's exile and had returned from that exile three days later... his followers, in being witnesses to these things, were thereby and thereupon commissioned to take the news of his victory to the ends of the earth.'

It is unfortunate, after this highly promising beginning, that the last two chapters fail to build convincingly on Wright's vision. The difficulty is two-fold: first, he is wary of going beyond the broad, symbolic exhortation—impressive enough in its homiletic way—to specifics. He tells us that 'we are to be the bearers of [Christ's] redeeming love... to celebrate it, to model it, to proclaim it, to dance it', but we are not told how; inasmuch as he does hint at the practicalities of discipleship, it is on the model of the individual Christian in a post-Christian world, without—and this is his second problem—any ecclesiological dimension. This is particularly unfortunate since his picture of discipleship is built around the motto 'as Jesus to Israel, so the Church to the world'.

If Wright had explored the nature of a Church constituted by the resurrection of Jesus as his body of disciples, one would be able to applaud more wholeheartedly this attempt to take on the essential theological task of relating the historical truth of Jesus to the Christian life.

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