

excellent scholarship. It is a much-needed tool for the student of religion, and is indispensable for the scholar who wants to keep abreast of his colleagues' field of study.

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Barr, James, *Old and New in Interpretation*. New York: Harper and Row, 1966. 215 pp. \$ 5.50.

Barr's Currie lectures for 1964 deal with the basic problem of Biblical studies: the unity of the Bible. Undeniably the OT is the one which in a more definite way creates the problem; thus even though the sub-title reads "A Study of the Two Testaments," Barr concerns himself primarily with the Old. The question is this: Since to do what the NT did with the OT is no longer possible, understanding the OT as we do today, how do we establish a valid relationship between it and the NT (pp. 129-131)? Barr's main thesis is based upon the "soteriological function of the tradition" (p. 27). It is the tradition that "provides the matrix for coming divine acts and the impulse for their very occurrence" (p. 156). Therefore, it is "basically a simplistic approach" (p. 19) to see the uniting link between the testaments in acts done by God. The function of the tradition "is not mainly to point back to a series of events from which the tradition has originated, but also to form the framework within which an event can be meaningful" (p. 20). The structure of tradition is supported, according to Barr, by "situations." "It is in situations that God moves to call for a response, a response which in turn moves the tradition in some new direction" (p. 26).

These situations are "real in themselves" (p. 155). They do not form part of a wholly preplanned scheme. They are not prefigurations; neither are they promises waiting for a fulfillment, least of all if all Israelite history is understood as promise. One reads: "There is no actual prediction or prophecy of which we can say that Jesus is the intended content" (p. 153). Barr introduces the term "situations" in order to maneuver himself into a position in which "the multiplex nature of the Old Testament tradition" becomes more manageable. A situation may be indeed an act of God in history, but it can also be an event in the consciousness of a prophet, a social confrontation, a crisis in thought, a cultic situation, or indeed the almost unmanageable development of questioning and answering in the circles of the wise.

*Old and New in Interpretation* is Barr's latest book produced in America; and it was written, he tells us, with two things in mind. The procedure for writing was "motivated ultimately by my perception of my students' problems and difficulties" (p. 12). More directly, the book represents an attempt to enter into dialogue with the authors of the essays which appeared in B. Anderson's *The Old Testament and Christian Faith* and C. Westermann's *Essays on Old Testament*

*Hermeneutics.* Barr admires Pannenberg's solution to the dilemma of revelation and history because it represents a "Herculean effort" to maintain the centrality of history and at the same time overcome the paradox that history either is plain history, and thus hardly "revelation" in any normal theological sense, or history is invested with a kind of religious mysticism. Barr here affirms that to use history as a central and mandatory theological concept necessitates the above antinomy (p. 68).

Against Eichrodt, Barr argues that "the need to separate Old Testament theology from history of religion, understandable as it is in the circumstances of some decades ago, has now begun to be a source of damage rather than success" (p. 169). He challenges von Rad and Noth for their defense of typology on methodological grounds. Barr suggests that the argument on behalf of "good" typology on the basis of a contrast with "bad" typology and allegory which use "history" as the measuring rod breaks down because the etymologizing interpretations of Biblical words (here comes James Barr!) are a good example of an "allegorical-historical" approach. He would prefer value judgments grounded on the "resultant system" rather than a particular methodology (p. 108). In the case of the NT the resultant system would be the Christological kerygma, which is affirmed by the confessing church. The methodology for arriving at it, however, may be questioned, since it slips from typology into allegory with amazing ease (p. 110). Against Baumgärtel it is argued that to make the OT promise a timeless assertion by taking something out of the language of prophecy which may be worked into a scheme which seems theologically satisfactory, but forgetting "the way in which promise and fulfillment were actually historically understood in the New Testament period" (p. 123), is to do violence to the *linguistic* character of the tradition. The words were important in themselves, not on account of their place in a *heilsgeschichtliche* scheme. Zimmerli, on the other hand, is charged with taking the *language* of prophecy, not for its value, but in order to build the framework for a relation between past and future by working at "the deepest level" (p. 123).

Barr admits that the tradition which bridges the testaments played both a positive and a negative role. The coming of Christ produces a "crisis with tradition" which "forms an integral part of the atonement, just as the part played by Judas, or by Caiaphas." But his views in this respect are not to be confused with Bultmann's understanding of the OT as a history of failure. Barr lists six ways in which he disagrees with Bultmann (p. 162). The dialogue with Vriezen concerns the starting point of a Biblical theology. Here his concern is to establish the place of the OT within a theological construct. A Christian theology of the OT is suspect, according to Barr, not only from the point of view of objectivity but also from a theological point of view (p. 165). It may be well to recall at this point that Barr laments that "though I still feel that it is Barth's God whom I seek to worship, the intellectual framework of Barth's theology has in

my consciousness to a very great extent collapsed in ruins" (p. 12). Thus one reads that "the idea that the Old Testament cannot be understood without Christ seems a doubtful one." What the church has is the OT, and the Christ is to be interpreted in the light of it. This is the proper strategy, according to Barr, and this book represents an attempt to work it out in outline (p. 141). This means that our knowledge and conceptions of the Christ must be placed on a hypothetical status in order that they may be fully informed by the OT. Therefore, "Christian theological 'starting-points' can be reached only *after* account is taken of the Old Testament" (p. 168, italics his).

Vriezen's introduction to his *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* is, no doubt, one of the best essays on the definition of the task of OT theology. Barr would like to follow Vriezen, yet he translates him into his own terms. This means that he is rather skeptical of the legitimacy and value of an independent discipline called "Old Testament Theology," since "all attempts to develop an 'Old Testament theology' must be very partial and incomplete undertakings" (p. 167). With this, I am sure, most would agree, especially those who have produced a book whose title-page bears that name. The question here is whether or not Steuernagel's reasons for conceiving of an OT theology distinct from *Religionsgeschichte* are still valid. ("Alttestamentliche Theologie und alttestamentliche Religionsgeschichte," *ZAW*, Beiheft 41, Marti-Festschrift, pp. 266-273.)

Barr understands that the study of the OT, therefore, should not be primarily theological; instead it should be exegetical. He asks for a "relative objective" exegesis. This "ideal of objectivity" (pp. 186-87) is not one built on the scientific method; rather it is built on the claim of theology to be based on scripture. This note at first reminded this reader of Cullmann's interest in "the objective ideas expressed in the text" ("The Necessity and Function of Higher Criticism," in *The Early Church*, p. 4). But Barr's objectivity refers to the fact that he conceives exegesis itself differently. Exegesis does not "work from the text to one interpretation, but *with* the text in discrimination *between* a variety of interpretations" (p. 186, italics his). In this way scripture fully informed by *Religionsgeschichte* provides the objective ground on which one may evaluate the interpretation alleged to be the text's meaning.

Here Barr is reacting, I think correctly, to the obsession observable in some quarters to decide all questions of exegesis on the basis of presuppositions. To suggest that exegesis is dependent on presuppositions rather than on evidence is to breathe a stifling skepticism on the possibility of exegesis. Yet this, we are told, is "one of the most obvious problems of the American theological campus," which is diagnosed as "interpretative anxiety" (p. 189). Barr is not over-concerned with presuppositions because they operate at different levels and therefore there is no agreement as to what constitutes one. A methodology, for example, is at times thus judged, yet it is determined more by the nature of the evidence than by presuppositions. Moreover,

and at a more profound level, Barr is not worried with presuppositions because he does not think that the question of ways of thinking is a controlling question (p. 61). Therefore to draw up a system of ideas and urge that only such a system can function as a legitimate medium of revelation, and to demand that theological arguments in order to be valid must operate within this framework, is to "radically depart from the position of the New Testament" (p. 58).

To Intertestamental Judaism, or to the Early Church, the Greek was not a problem on account of his thought patterns. Judaism and Christianity adopted Greek culture as a new vehicle of communication without leaving evidence of a conflict at this level. The Greek constituted a challenge by his presence, his needs, his interests, and his acting as a catalyst to reveal basic conflicts within the people of God. The conflict with the outside was political rather than intellectual. The conflict inside was not on cultural patterns of thought but rather on belief. On the contrary, Greek ideas proved helpful in "concept formation" (p. 61). In fact "it can be argued that classical Trinitarianism, within certain limits, did . . . state the truth about God better than the Bible does" (p. 163-64). This could be interpreted as placing the Bible in a rather dubious position within the soteriological tradition. Barr offers as "a suggestion" that the battle of the Bible should be continuously waged because "the centrality of the Bible for the Church is not that its statements are necessarily superior but that they are the ones through which the conflict and victory have in fact been won" (p. 164).

This book is a most stimulating one. The insights gained through Barr's keen analytical mind will have to be faced by anyone who wishes to participate in the Church's task to use the Bible for the salvation of men. The argumentation in these few pages is so tight that at times it is difficult to follow, especially when a "first" (p. 141) is followed by another "first" (p. 144), or when the author indulges in Paul-like argumentative digressions. This reviewer felt that at times Barr was overdrawing the picture of "purist theology" in his nervousness about an identification of revelation with Hebraic thought patterns. Yet Barr is to be commended for the lucidity of his thought and the new horizon he has tried to open up with his pregnant suggestions. This book does not represent an argument packed with caustic criticisms. When he voices disagreement, most often Barr is suggesting, not an opposite, but a more balanced emphasis. One is gratified to see the repeated use of qualifiers such as "not only," "but also," etc. Barr has attempted to remove the hermeneutical discussion away from the stagnant waters in which it had been caught and into a stream that promises to make progress easier. For this he is to be commended. He tells us that he is working on an exegetical commentary; we are anxious to see it in order to find out where the stream leads.