

interest in riddles. The last chapter deals with the tragic dimension of the narrative, discussing it in conjunction with interpretations of venerable authors of the past. Milton's *Samson Agonistes* is given the most generous treatment.

Crenshaw, adopting the view that the book of Judges is part of the Deuteronomistic history, attributes the theological ideas found in the book to the creative work of that school: God punished Israel for her sins, which were mostly of a cultic nature, and he used foreign powers for punishment. Although God does not ignore evil, he is compassionate; and in the Samson narrative it is a compassionate God, not Samson, who emerges as the real hero of the story.

One of the major contributions of this book is the identification and classification of the literary themes in the story of Samson. Yet, exclusive concentration on expounding themes as literary creations carries with it the tendency to neglect the possibility that some or many of these concerns actually grew out of the historical life of a specific individual, and are not necessarily merely common characteristics of ancient literature. The book could perhaps have made even more of a contribution to our knowledge of the narrative if Crenshaw had discussed the possibilities of how Samson's life transported him out of history and into legend.

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Dunn, James D. G. *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977. xvii + 470 pp. \$19.50.

Any student of the NT is aware of the diversity that exists, e.g., in the picture of Christ in the Synoptics compared to the Christ of the Gospel of John, the difference in eschatological expectation in 1 Thessalonians and 2 Peter, the difference in soteriology between Romans and Hebrews, and the difference in church order between 1 Corinthians and the Pastorals, to point out only the most prominent areas. Yet with all these differences, the feeling in the past was that the differences were not overly extensive and above all not contradictory; they could be fitted into a NT theology under major themes. In recent years, however, scholars have pointed out differences that appeared to be major — so serious, in fact, that the canonicity of some books was being questioned and serious doubts were raised concerning the possibility of writing a NT theology.

James Dunn has taken this theme, which had been treated in a limited fashion, and dealt with it in a comprehensive way. His thesis is that there is great diversity in the NT but there is an underlying unity. However, the basis of this unity is not a broad foundation of doctrines but has been reduced to

belief in Jesus Christ, that the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ were one and the same person. W. Bauer's thesis in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* that there was no orthodoxy or pure form of Christianity, but only different forms of Christianity in the second century, is affirmed by Dunn for the first century. There was not only one orthodox form of Christianity but many divergent forms, all of which were orthodox.

In Part I, the author investigates the diverse elements in the preaching, teaching, organization, and worship of the earliest church to ascertain whether there are any unifying elements that bind them together. These include the kerygmas of Jesus, Acts, Paul, and John; the primitive confessional formulae; the role of tradition; the use of the OT; concepts of ministry; patterns of worship; sacraments; spirit and experience; and Christ and Christology.

In part II, the author treats the range and scope of the diversity as witnessed in the major groups or currents found in the NT: Jewish Christianity, Hellenistic Christianity, Apocalyptic Christianity, and Early Catholicism.

Throughout the book the author, because of his thesis, sometimes exaggerates the presence of diversity. Regarding the attitude of the Jerusalem Christians to Paul, he argues from silence when he accuses them of not coming to Paul's aid when he was taken prisoner in his last visit there. His comment is that "it looks very much as though they had washed their hands of Paul, left him to stew in his own juice" (p. 256). Again, he concludes that the Jerusalem church rejected the collection which Paul brought. Obviously there were differences between Paul and the Jerusalem Christians, but on the basis of the evidence can we conclude that there was such a radical rupture? The same thing can be said about the existence of "an intra-Hellenist conflict" and a "schism" between the Hellenists and Hebrew believers at the time of Stephen. The issue concerns not the presence of differences but the description of these differences with such strong terms as "schism."

The emphasis throughout the book is unity in diversity. Yet it is interesting in Dunn's discussion of Jewish Christianity that he identifies heretical Jewish Christianity of the second and third centuries very closely with the earliest Christian community in Jerusalem, the differences being only those of time and of tone (the faith and practice of the earlier community were not thought out but a first stage). Ebionism was heretical and "was rejected because in a developing situation where Christianity had to develop and change, it did not!" (p. 244). This is a very insightful observation; and yet, how does this relate to the limits of acceptable diversity which the author gives: "diversity which abandons the unity of the faith in Jesus the man now exalted is unacceptable; diversity which abandons the unity of love for fellow believers is unacceptable" (p. 378)? This earliest Christian community in Jerusalem either met and came under these criteria or it did not. If it did not,

it was heretical from the very beginning; and if it did, time should not alter its acceptability in the form of Ebionism. Could this same kind of observation be made with other groups such as enthusiastic Christianity or apocalyptic Christianity? Perhaps these types in our time must be classified as heretical.

In the concluding chapter entitled "The Authority of the New Testament" Dunn deals with the implications of the diversity uncovered. The center that integrates all the diversity is the unity between the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ. The presence of different forms of Christianity raises the question of the value of the canon. Dunn sees that all books in the NT "can claim to be justifiable interpretations of the Christ event" (p. 386). And the fact that the canon with all its diversity testifies to the unifying center confirms its continuing function. The canon recognizes this diversity, marks out the limits of acceptable diversity, and approves the development of Christian faith and practice.

However, this concluding chapter would have been more helpful if the author had been more specific in showing what Christian manifestations today, if any, would go beyond the limits of acceptable diversity or development. Even with the qualifications he sets forth, one gets the feeling that "anything goes."

The author has given us a good treatment of the subject with good bibliographies for each chapter. There is much with which one can agree and much with which to disagree. The book will provoke discussion in the wide range of areas it treats.

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Ellis, E. Earle. *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978. xvii + 289 pp. Paperback, \$15.00.

Ellis's work is always characterized by painstaking observation and collection of data, and this collection of essays is no exception. The essays center around two main themes: The role of pneumatics in the missionary enterprise of the early church and the formation of a Christian theology of the OT.

In actuality, the essays on the first topic go far beyond the role of pneumatics and include a broad reconstruction of the early church and its leadership. According to Ellis, from an early time Paul (as well as the other apostles) was surrounded by a group of co-workers who were pneumatics *par excellence*. *Pneumatikos* was a technical term used for those with the gift of inspired utterance who were led by a plurality of good spirits associated with angels. The work of these pneumatics was a fusion of the work of the OT