

its various components—sequence, syntagm, statement, actantial model, function, actant. Patte illustrates narrative structure by use of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Admittedly there are only limited results, but this analysis of the narrative serves as a prelude to the analysis in terms of mythical structure.

In the fourth chapter, mythical structure is explained and its use illustrated. In studying myths, Levi-Strauss concluded that "the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction," and that "mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution" (p. 56). These fundamental metaphysical oppositions graduate into secondary oppositions which reflect every aspect of culture. The myth seeks to transcend the oppositions and disclose wholeness. But this mythical structure is also at work in non-mythical texts, including the Bible. And this is illustrated by Gal 1:1-10 and the parable of the Good Samaritan.

It is not possible in this review to present the kind of detail that is necessary for a full understanding of the method. Perhaps too much detail is presented which confuses the reader and makes the system appear to be overly complicated. Whether the method will prove fruitful remains to be seen. No doubt the future will see much more of the results of this method.

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Robinson, John A. T. *Can We Trust the New Testament?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977. 142 pp. Paperback, \$1.95.

The ordinary reader will find it difficult to believe that the man who wrote *Honest to God* is also the writer of this book. Robinson's answer to the question in the title is a very definite, Yes. As in the case of most of Robinson's books, this also is addressed to laymen and is written in the simple and clear style for which the author is well known. The reader should know also that Robinson is a well-respected NT scholar in his own right.

He explains first the four attitudes that people take toward what can be believed about the NT: the cynicism of the foolish, the fundamentalism of the fearful, the skepticism of the wise, and the conservatism of the committed. He then deals with the original language, manuscripts, and modern versions to show that while some insignificant errors may creep in through these, in essence the NT can be trusted. He also deals with textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism. He is much more conservative than might be expected in the kind of results at which he would arrive in the use of these methods, and he is in no way persuaded that the words and acts of Jesus are irrecoverable.

His most interesting chapter deals with what he calls "The Generation Gap," that period between the time of Jesus and the writing of the documents of the NT. He deals with this in a more detailed and scholarly way in his book, *The Redating of the New Testament*. He dates the entire NT, including the Pastoral Epistles, the Catholic Epistles, and Revelation between A.D. 47 and just before A.D. 70. In NT non-conservative scholarly circles, this is most revolutionary.

Another revolutionary view that emerges as a result of this early dating of the NT documents is that the Gospel of John preserves early reliable historical material. John has been considered the least historical and most theological of the Gospels. In Robinson's words, "In fact John is at his most theological when he is most historical, and most historical when he is most theological. . . . His method is, as it were, to project two colour transparencies at once, one over the other" (p. 91).

But the crucial question is, Can we trust the NT in what it says about Christ, his preexistence, virgin birth, person, and miracles? Yes, says Robinson, but not in a literal and direct sense. What the Gospel writers did was to make explicit what was implicit in the words and work of Jesus. In the words of John as placed in his mouth by Browning, "What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars." As the Gospel writers reflected upon the life of Jesus, they were led to speak of preexistence, virgin birth, etc., in order to bring out his true significance. "But if we can learn to trust the New Testament for what it is trying to say, rather than for what it is not trying to say, then we may find ourselves concurring with the claim of St. John as much as any of the others, that 'his witness is true'—the real, inner truth of the history" (p. 112).

Robinson believes that the account of the trial and arrest of Jesus is trustworthy and that the empty tomb, while a solid piece of tradition, does not prove the resurrection. The appearances of Jesus to the disciples are difficult to discredit, but more important was the corporate awareness in the Church that Christ was a living presence. Yet all three must go together since there must not be too great a credibility gap between this awareness and the attestable historical phenomena. "The scholarship does not give me the faith; but it increases my confidence that my faith is not misplaced" (p. 134).

While the book is conservative in outlook, some will not be satisfied especially with Robinson's treatment of Jesus' person, preexistence, miracles, etc. Also while his dating of the NT is conservative, the evangelical must not gullibly accept it because of that fact, but must examine the evidence for himself and may even place the dating of some of the books at a later period. At any rate, Robinson has set forth his thesis clearly and persuasively, as usual, and invites serious dialogue.

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Stohlman, Martha Lou Lemmon. *John Witherspoon: Parson, Politician, Patriot*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976. 176 pp. Paperback, \$2.95.

Although few Americans know who John Witherspoon was, this man who served for many years as President of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) and played an active role in Revolutionary government deserves attention. Because only two biographies have been written, the last in 1925, Princeton Theological Seminary commissioned Martha Stohlman to write for the bicentennial "a compact, readable account of Witherspoon—something that Presbyterians, both clergy and laity, and Americans with any interest in history would enjoy" (p. 13). The author has fulfilled her commission admirably.