

CHRIST AND SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. Studies in Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule, edited by Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley. *Cambridge University Press*, 1973. 440 pp. £8-30.

This substantial volume contains twenty-seven essays by prominent scholars from all over the world, most of them written in English, five in German and one in French, but these latter are furnished with English summaries.

Obviously one does not expect from a publication of this sort a complete and systematic treatment of the subject. Contributors were chose for their association with Professor Moule and their articles mostly reflect their own special field of interest and actual research. The New Testament is fairly well covered, but the editors ought perhaps to have seen to it that an article on Hebrews was included so as not to leave the priesthood of Christ unmentioned altogether. There is an index of Bible References, but no subject-index.

One theme discussed by several authors is the unwillingness of the world to accept that Jesus is the Christ and Lord. The enemies of the Church are not in the first place gnostic teachers who have deviated from the true doctrine about Christ. The attack comes rather from outside the Church, from Judaisers who, although they might claim to speak in the name of Christ, deny that the fulfilment has come in Jesus and try to lure the believers back to observance of the law and obedience to the ruling powers of this era (Lampe on 'Grievous Wolves'). In this connection one ought to read the interesting article by Manek on Matthew 25 where Jesus, the Judge, does not identify himself (as we always thought) with the hungry and naked as such, but with his disciples who are sent into the world with nothing but the Good Tidings and are not received. This is also related to Moule's consideration that the prayer 'Maranatha' entails a curse on all those who reject the claims of the Eucharistic community—a view supported by the articles of Black (on Jude 14, 15) and of Bruce (on 'The Spirit in the Apocalypse'). It was the maintaining of this confidence in the fulfilment rather than anxiety for 'orthodoxy' that inspired most of the New Testament writings. Colossians was therefore not so much a polemic piece directed against false teachers within the Church, but rather a letter of assurance to Christians that, despite evidence to the contrary, they are no longer in bondage to the spiritual powers of the cosmos (Hooker). The Spirit of God is not in these powers but in Jesus Christ (Ellis on 'Christ and Spirit in I Corinthians'), and to make this point there is a clear shift in Colossians from pneumatology to christology (Schweizer).

The Spirit is no longer divided but is one as the Spirit of Christ, which is reflected in the unity of the ministries in the Church (Schnackenburg). Jesus is therefore not a tool of God through whom his Spirit is bestowed, but the Spirit of God is his Spirit (Stählin).

The point is therefore not so much that there is a Spirit but that God's Spirit becomes the Spirit of this individual man, Jesus of Nazareth. And this brings us to another of Professor Moule's favourite themes. The content of Jesus' life and teaching is highly relevant to the central affirmation of the resurrection, which is not an isolated and unexpected event but the outcome and God's approval of the life of this Jesus. Recognition of the risen Lord involves a loving and loyal response to one who had proved himself worthy of such response (Rowlingson; see also Styler on 'The Basis of Obligation in Paul's Christology and Ethics'). This emphasis is of course most evident in the Synoptic Gospels. Trocmé opposes the view that Mark had his own Hellenistic ideas of Christ to add to others. He rather tried to tone down some of the more abstract christological claims by concentrating on what effect Jesus' personality had on his followers. The rough tales about him were meant to create awe, encouraging the disciples to give up their lives for Jesus, who is the opposite of an aloof figure hiding himself behind the messianic secret. This emphasis on the actual life of Jesus is again underlined by Stanton's study of the christology of Q. Q knows of the christological titles, but these are not considered from within the final act of death and resurrection, but from within Jesus' actual life. In fact Q originally existed independently of the passion narrative. Even John cannot be quoted in support of a metaphysical christology. Indeed, the Gospel looks docetic, static and unhistorical, but it nevertheless emphasises the relevance of the life of Jesus for his eternal relationship, which is not an absolute title but a functional relationship marked by character, which is shown up in his actual life (Robinson).

This leaves many articles unmentioned for the sole reason that this review should not extend beyond its proper bounds. However, I would like to call your attention to Mbiti's article on 'Our Saviour as an African Experience'. It takes its evidence almost completely from the African Independent Churches, and is apparently reconciled to the fact that here the true pattern of African Christianity is set, in spite of the fact that many would doubt whether these churches can really be called Christian. Although they

show a susceptibility to the person of Saviour, he is not someone who takes upon himself the sin of the world, but a healer and deliverer from immediate hardships. I wonder whether this view does justice to the phenomenon, and I would rather think that these

African Christians are really concerned with radical evil (see my article in *New Blackfriars*, June & July 1972). In that way they may be nearer to the essence of the Christian message than Mbiti's article suggests.

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ETHICS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT, by J. L. Houlden. *Penguin Books*, Harmondsworth, 1973. 125 pp. 35p.

If the characteristic question of ethics is 'What must I do to be good?', that of religion is 'What must I do to be saved?'. The rich young man of the gospels makes the transition when he finds that merely being good is not good enough. The second question demands a genuine religious answer: to lay oneself open in some way to the salvation which is offered. The answer given in Acts 16.31 to the frightened jailor who asked it was, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household'. Clearly then, insofar as the books of the New Testament are written with the intention of answering this question they are not ethical documents. Ethics in the strict sense did not emerge until Christians began to ask the subsidiary questions about how they should conduct themselves until the day of their salvation arrives. Then a diversity of ethical sources were called upon to do service, from the remembered words of Jesus himself to the generally accepted conduct of decent Hellenistic society.

The book we have here is accordingly not an *Ethics of the New Testament*, but an essay on *Ethics and the New Testament*. It is not an account of what the New Testament 'teaches' about morals but a sketch of the place, if any, that ethical concerns have in the writings of the various authors. We are well used by now to the idea that the gospel writers as well as the other authors each have their own distinctive interpretation of the mystery of Christ, which results in a theological pluralism at the very outset of Christianity. Among other things, this makes a harmonised 'New Testament Ethics' an impossibility. Pluralism is not, of course, to be confused with relativism and the discovery of the variety of ethical outlook among the different authors is salutary in that it forces us to go deeper and search out the underlying unity shared by them. In the end this search is synonymous with the search for Christ. Besides justification by faith, there are other influences which tend to make ethics a non-starter; among them the devaluing of the world, particularly prevalent in the Johannine writings, and the expectation of the imminent end of the world, wonderfully disruptive of ethics in Paul. Writings in which these

influences are relatively weak show a correspondingly strong ethical interest. So we have a whole spectrum from the almost complete lack of interest of Mark to the conventional moralising of the Pastoral Epistles. Mr Houlden is excellent on the diverse outlooks of the writers, showing how their ethical statements fit the overall interpretation of Jesus or of the Church which they are trying to convey. Thus, on the perennial problem of the New Testament teaching on divorce, he shows that some original words of Jesus, whose context is unknown, have been used for a variety of different purposes, all highly coloured by a particular theological outlook. Meanwhile, as he points out, we have traditionally been content with 'enforcing the Markan teaching in a Matthean spirit', with very little concern for any kind of context or theology.

The attempt to trace detailed ethical teaching back to Jesus himself is complicated by the fact that the earliest writers such as Paul and Mark seem not to be interested in it. However, they all agree that Jesus, in his teaching and his life, instituted a critique of the Law. But even here there are different interpretations, from Paul's version of replacement of the Law by faith and the love which flows from it, to Matthew's picture of Jesus the reforming rabbi bringing the law to perfection. But the fact that even in Matthew Jesus seems sometimes to be more lax and sometimes far more rigorous than the old Law forces us to search for something more than ethical directives. It is in the significant acts of Jesus and in the parables that the truth is to be found. And this truth is of a theological and rather elusive kind, though none the less demanding for that. What one is looking for is a theology from which Christian ethics can be generated afresh. This certainly means breaking loose from the letter of the ethical teaching which we find already developed in the New Testament. Mr Houlden thinks that the respect paid to the canon of the New Testament has often led to a departure from the true message of Jesus. It has encouraged the view that Christian ethics is a static code merely to be read off the sacred pages. This is certainly true. The discovery of theological plurality in the New