

Craddock, Fred B., *The Pre-Existence of Christ in the New Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968. 192 pp. \$ 4.50.

Christology is a live topic among NT scholars. What Fred Craddock has done is to treat with greater fulness one aspect of this larger topic. After setting down his methodology and aims, the professor of NT and preaching at the Graduate Seminary of Phillips University treats first the NT background materials dealing with pre-existence, secondly (the major portion of the book) the NT references to pre-existence, and thirdly the meaning of the NT affirmation of pre-existence for men of the 20th century.

Having pointed out the weaknesses of the treatments of Oscar Cullmann and W. D. Davies as due to the method of "definition by source," he proposes to employ the method which he calls "definition by function; that is, what each writer in each situation is intending to say by using the category of pre-existence." What Craddock opposes is the method which permits the source of the idea to dictate its meaning wherever the idea may be used. He maintains that the writer's intention must be seriously considered, since that intention can modify the meaning found in the source. Each writer has a definite intention and this is the controlling element in the definition of the meaning of pre-existence. This means that the pre-existence of the Torah to which the Messiah is compared must not pre-determine the meaning of pre-existence for the Messiah, but the writer's intention in the use of the category of pre-existence must be investigated before any judgments can be made.

From the study of NT background materials such as the Logos doctrine of Philo, the Sophia of the wisdom literature, the Son of Man of Enoch, the Torah of the Rabbis, the Logos of the Stoics, and the myths of the Gnostics, Craddock concludes with the interesting observation that the category of pre-existence is modified, or does not appear at all, if men feel at home in their present existence. Pre-existence is emphasized, on the other hand, if men feel alienated in the world. The alienated feel that salvation can come only from outside the boundaries of present existence. His second significant conclusion is that the "specific definition of pre-existence is determined in each case by the particular location of man's problem" (p. 79). If man's problem is with the created world, he defines pre-existence as precreation; if it is in regard to the problems of history, its inequities and injustices, he defines pre-existence as prehistorical or nonhistorical; if the problem is the body, pre-existence is defined as pre-embodiment. The third conclusion he draws is that pre-existence when it moves beyond the realm of an idea or principle requires the language of mythology to convey it. He seems to mean by this that beings which are not observable in human experience must be described.

The author seeks to apply these three conclusions to the affirmations of pre-existence in the NT. Paul speaks of the pre-existence of Christ in relation to creation, incarnation, and history; the Fourth Gospel, in

relation to creation in both temporal and spatial sense. Christ was before creation and came from outside the world. The Epistle to the Hebrews treats of pre-existence as the larger context for understanding the theological significance of the life and death of Jesus, and in the Apocalypse pre-existence is the context for the understanding of the suffering and death of Christians.

The conclusions which Craddock derives from his investigation of the category of pre-existence in the writings mentioned above may be a bit too facile. The process by which the idea of pre-existence comes to light seems more complicated than he makes it out to be. He takes no account of the evolutionary development of ideas or the influence of foreign ideas. Alienation in the world does not always lead to the development of the idea of pre-existence (the history of the Jews shows this). Pre-existence in mythological form developed only in the immediate pre-Christian period, even though the mood of despair and alienation was present at various times both before and afterward. The determining element here does not seem to be the presence or absence of the feeling of alienation, but dominant theological ideas. The Jewish concept of monotheism allows only for an eternal being and totally excludes a pre-existent being. Pre-existence there can only mean pre-conceived or predestined.

When Craddock speaks of the Stoic system as one of continuity and harmony, while at the same time describing it as a religion for the oppressed and arising at a time of flux and uncertainty, he fails to see that pre-existence is only one alternative to the problem of discontinuity in the world; the other is to create a system that would remove the discontinuity, as Stoicism did. In other words, it is not that discontinuity inevitably leads to the idea of pre-existence, but that it leads men to cope with it either through the idea of pre-existence or by some other means that will bring security to the individual, *e.g.*, the Stoic system.

In his discussion of 1 Cor 8:6 Craddock says too much when he says that it "is the summary of [Paul's] entire answer" to the spiritual gnostics of Corinth. The significance of this text is overplayed because of its affirmation of pre-existence. When Craddock says that the Stoic formula ("from . . . , through . . . , unto . . . ") on which 1 Cor 8:6 is based presupposes the cyclical view of reality and then assumes that Paul accepts this view, he thereby falls into the same error for which he criticizes Davies and Cullmann. It is not difficult to assume that Paul could have taken over the Stoic formula without accepting the cyclical view.

To say regarding the book of Hebrews that "the Platonic categories of pre-existence, the real world of the idea or form and its material, earthly shadow or reflection, are obvious throughout the argument" (p. 131) is to fail to take account of the eschatological motif of the Epistle. Much here can be explained purely from Hebrew eschatological ideas, such as type and fulfilment. One cannot deny that Platonic influence is present, but the dominant motif is Hebraic. The contrast

is not so much the distinction between the material and the real, but that between the typical and the reality which takes place historically at the coming of Jesus.

It seems to the reviewer that the cautions the author belabors on pp. 102, 103 and 109 are not necessary in a work of this nature.

In his excellent final chapter the author discusses some attempts to translate the pre-existence category into modern terms but rejects these as de-historicization or de-transcendentalism. Nevertheless, he feels that "the term 'pre-existence' is not sacrosanct and essential to the gospel." He looks wistfully, though I think vainly, for new terms which will capture the meaning of pre-existence for modern man.

He does not take into account the fact that the functional use of the category of pre-existence with its various emphases in the NT is completely explicable without any real adaptation of its meaning. However, he seeks to alter its functional use in quite a different way than that found in the NT. How this would be is not clearly given, though some suggestions are presented. The question here is whether these alternatives are really alternatives or an entirely different category. It seems highly unlikely that the term is translatable to any other category.

Andrews University

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Cullmann, Oscar, *Vatican Council II, The New Direction; Essays Selected and Arranged by James D. Hester*. "Religious Perspectives," Volume XIX. New York: Harper & Row, 1968. 116 pp. \$ 6.00.

Few NT scholars are as widely respected in Protestant and Roman Catholic circles as Professor Cullmann. Few, either, have accomplished what he has by entering into the ecumenical dialogue with a desire to develop a theological position that is relevant to life. This latest volume is a collection of previously unpublished articles on Vatican II, more evidence of his serious concern for Protestant and Roman Catholic relations. Besides the editor, Faith E. Burgess, Carl Schneider and Robert Holland have acted as translators from the French and German originals.

Some of these essays are quite specific, dealing for instance with questions addressed to the author concerning the Council texts on Revelation and the Virgin Mary. Others, such as "The Role of the Observers at the Vatican Council" and "Have Expectations been Fulfilled?" are Cullmann's reflections on side lights of the Council and his plea for a proper understanding of ecumenism.

As might be anticipated from a collection of Cullmann's writings, one of the most provocative chapters deals with salvation history and its ecumenical implications. Originally presented before an audience of bishops and cardinals during the third session of Vatican II,