

Erasmus never laid out his *philosophia Christi* in a great systematic work as did Calvin in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* or Melancthon in *Loci communes*, but in *Erasmus of Christendom* the Christocentrism of the Dutch humanist has found its proper place. However, when it comes to a scholarly systematizing of Erasmus' *philosophia Christi*, the honor must go to Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls. Under the auspices of *Theologische Zeitschrift* (sponsored by the theological Faculty of the University of Basel), edited by Bo Reicke, Kohls' very pertinent two-volume work, *Die Theologie des Erasmus*, was printed in 1966. With great profit Bainton could have utilized the findings of this German scholar.

In the future Bainton's name will be closely linked to that of Erasmus not merely because of his biography but on account of the kinship between the two men. Something of what he writes about Erasmus may also be written about Bainton himself and about his response to the transformation of the world in which he and we live.

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Brandon, S. G. F., *Religion in Ancient History*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969. xiv + 412 pp. \$ 12.50.

The author's significance as a thinker is the greater because he has not isolated himself from intellectual discussions with other human beings who may not be academic scholars but whose minds are no less acute than his. Not only has he courageously served as chaplain (1939-1942) and chief chaplain (1942-1951) to the British armed forces, but he has lectured in Natural and Comparative Religion at Oxford University (1954-1957), in Philosophy and History of Religion at Liverpool University (1964), and is currently (since 1951) Professor of Comparative Religion at the University of Manchester. Since World War II, he has familiarized a cultivated public with the vast literary treasures in the history and religion of the ancient world; he has also helped educate a conservative English clergy and laity to the merits of archaeological research and Biblical criticism which seek to confirm, correct, and supplement the history and narrative of early church history.

The present volume under review has grown out of a series of essays on the subject of comparative religion in ancient history which the author has published in the past decade for the popular journals *History Today* and *Horizon*, and for the scholarly *Bulletin of The John Rylands Library*. At the level of description and exposition, this book is a true model of research. He has located and defined the basic problems of the religions of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Israel, Greece, Iran, and early Christianity, and his profound knowledge of the entailed issues, coupled with a searching power of analysis, has enabled him to establish original analogies and distinctions. The result is

impressive, although it may be objected that Brandon's abundant *aide-mémoire* passages are slightly irritating; and the product, illustrated with attractive plates and supported by a rich bibliography, is a first-rate introduction to the religious heritage of Western civilization.

The method selected by Brandon is interesting. The first chapter provides the background by giving an informative, though brief, account of the origin of religion in theory and archaeology. Chapter II is an attempt to study the cosmogonies of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and particularly the Hebrews in their geographic and historical settings stressing the similarities and differences in the respective traditions. The subjects of chs. III and IV, which deal with the personification of death and the religious, quasi-magical significance of time as a positive and negative deity are treated at length by the author in his well-documented book *History, Time and Deity* (1965). Similarly, if one is familiar with Brandon's works, *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions* (1962) and *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East* (1963), he will find nothing new in Chapters V and VI, which treat the idea of the soul in the philosophies of the East and the West. Brandon, here and in Chapter X (a discussion of the Gilgamesh Epic), places too little reliance on the interrelationship between religion and nature in the ancient world. For example, the calm, natural flow of the Nile conditioned the Egyptian belief that the gods were not violent and that nature was an established order guaranteed by the divine Pharaoh, whereas the harsh, unpredictable flow of the Tigris-Euphrates established the Mesopotamian *Weltanschauung* which saw man as a pawn of the gods, constantly attempting to avert the evil decree by astrology and liver divination.

Next is a discussion of a deeply rooted idea in man's cultural history, the posthumous moral judgment, a subject on which the author is an acknowledged pioneer; his *The Judgment of the Dead* (1969) is the only comprehensive study of the subject in English. One misses the various rabbinic *midrashim* which deal with the area, and Brandon is apparently unaware of the medieval illuminated *Shabbat Shekalim Yoşerim* (e.g., the Venice edition of the *Sefer Minhagim* of 1593) which depict a bird-like profile of a judge with scales of justice (shades of the Egyptian Horus or Thoth?) which may have eschatological meaning. Also, one wonders why there is no reference here to the studies of Cullmann, Cadbury, Jaeger, and Wolfson, who have dealt extensively with the theme of death in Western civilization.

His presentation in Chapter IX of the Egyptian Osiris legend as the classic prototype of the savior-god and its influence on Pauline theology is closely argued in Brandon's characteristic lucid manner. Akhenaten's theological revolution is presented in Chapter X and understood as part of the new imperial age. On one hand it was an attempt to uproot the omnipotent power of the priesthood of Amun-Rē, and on the other it was the manifestation of Aton's universalism characterizing the new imperialism of a people whose world view

was no longer restricted by the Nile River valley. Strangely, an analysis of "The Hymn to the Aton" (cf. *ANET*, 369-371) and Ps 104, which is a *desideratum* for the beginning student, is lacking here.

The following chapters are devoted to an interpretation of the distinctive Hebrew-Jewish world view which has had a lasting effect on Christianity—that the ineffable, unqualified God of Israel is absolute and that history itself is impregnated with the divine will of YHWH. A learned description of Zoroastrianism and its influence in Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and the Hermetic and Gnostic literature concludes the first part of this book.

Most of the essays included in the latter half of the book reconstruct the legends, sacred history, philosophy, and events of the early Christian centuries, and are known to us by the author's published works of recent years: *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (1957; 1968<sup>2</sup>); *Jesus and the Zealots* (1967-68); *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (1968). Brandon, writing without theological bias, is at his best in exploring the facts behind the gospel narratives. He evaluates critically the political, social, and economic situation of the first-century Palestine as related by Josephus, and concludes—correctly as far as this reviewer is concerned—that the synoptic portrayal of a pacific Jesus is a *clever* attempt by the Gentile Church to win Roman favor by clearing Pilate from his share in the crucifixion. No one can write such an account without inviting disagreement. The critic who has a profound knowledge of the literary sources in Hebrew and Aramaic feels that Brandon's emendation can be further strengthened by sifting through the pertinent rabbinic material (cf. S. Zeitlin, *Who Crucified Jesus?* [1942], and H. H. Cohen, *The Trial and Death of Jesus of Nazareth* [Hebrew, 1968]) which, *inter alia*, posit the belief of two Beth Dins at the time of Jesus—the political court which tried Jesus, and the Sanhedrin with which Pharisaic tradition was involved, a theory first formulated by Brandon's fellow countryman, A. Büchler. On the other hand, not all scholars believe that the original Markan account was written in Rome *ca.* 70 C.E., or that the Zealots were noble patriots defending the yoke of the Kingdom of God against the tyranny of Rome. Furthermore, the author's often-quoted theory that the disappearance of the Jewish-Christians from the scene of history coincides with the crushing defeat of the Jews at the hands of the Romans in 70 is logically persuasive, but rationally unconvincing in light of the *Minim* prayer composed by Palestinian *amoraim* in the early 2d century. Nevertheless, the second part of the volume is, within its own limits, invaluable as an interpretation of basic problems of literary criticism and as an example of mature research.

This is the kind of study concerning which every specialist might have reservations related to his own field, but will be impressed with the erudite scholarship in the other areas. In the preface Brandon makes it clear that he is interested in reaching in a non-technical manner the intelligent student who is interested in the fascinating human-interest subject of comparative religion in the ancient world.

He accomplishes his task admirably well, and his text can be used for great profit by the advanced scholar as well.

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Bruce, F. F., and E. G. Rupp, eds., *Holy Book and Holy Tradition*.  
Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,  
1968. 244 pp. \$5.95.

At a time when there is such vigorous debate and variance of opinion regarding the relationship between Scripture and tradition and the place of either in the life of the church, the appearance of such a volume as this is particularly welcome. The essays included are, with one exception, the papers read at an International Colloquium on the topic "Holy Book and Holy Tradition," held in the Faculty of Theology of the University of Manchester, November 1966.

Altogether there are twelve papers which seem to fall into two major divisions. The first seven deal with a variety of aspects on the assigned topic—from Christian icons to Islamic tradition—whereas the last five are all primarily concerned with contemporary issues. Specifically the papers belonging to the first group include the following: "The Holy Book, the Holy Tradition and the Holy Icon" by S. G. F. Brandon; "Religious Tradition and Sacred Books in Ancient Egypt" by C. J. Bleeker; "Holy Book and Holy Tradition in Iran: The Problem of the Sassanid Avesta" by Geo. Widengren; "Oral Torah and Written Records" by Jacob Weingreen; "Scripture and Tradition in the New Testament" by F. F. Bruce; "The Ancient Church and Rabbinical Tradition" by Marcel Simon; "Scripture, Tradition and Sacrament in the Middle Ages and in Luther" by Berndt Moeller. The usefulness of the volume is expanded by the provision of plates and figures, an index and good documentation in the footnotes.

One article that particularly interested this writer was that by Weingreen in which he argues persuasively that the adjective "oral" in reference to oral Torah "must be redefined as referring only to its circulation and transmission and not as the means of preservation." This redefinition, of course, would require some rethinking among those scholars who hold that memory was regarded as a much more reliable mode of preservation than written records, at least with regard to the sacred writings of the Israelites. Another stimulating essay is the one by Bruce in which he demonstrates how an established interpretive tradition pervades all strata of the NT. He explains further that however variously this interpretive tradition be treated by the different NT writers, the "core of the tradition is common property." He also expresses the opinion that "the main lines of the tradition were laid down by Jesus Himself."

The five concluding articles dealing with present-day issues are all