

role of theology in the church, and this is another reason for reading the book.

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Merkel, Helmut. *Die Pluralität der Evangelien als theologisches und exegetisches Problem in der Alten Kirche*. *Traditio Christiana*, Band III. Bern: Verlag Peter Lang, 1978. xxx + 172 pp. Swiss Francs 39.00.

This useful volume, like its predecessors in the *Traditio Christiana* series, presents an industriously assembled anthology of patristic texts—in this case from Papias to Augustine—dealing with the problems presented by the existence of four gospels and differences among them. The author, a young professor of NT and patristics at Erlangen, had written his doctoral dissertation on this subject (*Die Widersprüche zwischen den Evangelien: Ihre polemische und apologetische Behandlung in der Alten Kirche bis zu Augustin*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 13 [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1971]), and this collection is doubtless a by-product of that work.

*Pluralität* begins with a twenty-page introduction which is sensitive, informative, and usually judicious. We may assume that it provides us with a careful resumé of Merkel's dissertation. Then follow forty-one texts from sixteen patristic sources (i.e., Papias, Irenaeus, Muratorian Fragment, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Julius Africanus, Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius, Ambrosiaster, Apollinaris of Laodicea, Epiphanius, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine). The original language and German translations are on facing pages; and in the case of Origen, the Greek is given when extant, as well as Rufinus' Latin version. Two indices, scriptural and general, complete the volume.

Merkel's rich but compressed introduction well points out the main trends and types of approaches taken by the Fathers in seeking to explain away or harmonize the tensions and discrepancies between the gospel accounts. As one reads this and the texts themselves, he is again impressed how difficult it has been to advance beyond what was already proposed in the first five centuries of Christian thought. The Christian thinkers represented in this collection anticipated most, if not all, of the solutions available to conservative scholars working on Synoptic and Johannine problems even today. Merkel astonishes us, however, when at one point (p. xxiii) he seems to fault the Fathers for not using text-critical or redaction-critical explanations!

Several points in the trajectory of the problem are worth mentioning. An acute awareness of the problem, with a desire to resolve it, was possible only after the fourfold evangelic canon had become firmly established in the latter half of the second century, before which time a great deal of gross manipulation of the gospels was common practice. In other words, where there was only one gospel there was no problem, and there were at least two ways of achieving such a monolithic situation. One way was to produce a synthetic gospel which cannibalized and melded together earlier models. Thus Tatian's *Diatessaron* merely carried on the tradition begun by Matthew (which may have been intended to supersede Mark as well as other earlier sources) and Luke (whose prologue seems to advertise his gospel as a great improvement upon antecedent narratives). Another way was to deny the authenticity of all the gospels but one. This was an approach for which Irenaeus reproached the heretics, insisting that nature and revelation alike show that in the divine will there must needs be four gospels, no more and no less. But the heretics buttressed their position by pointing out all kinds of differences between the gospels. It is from this point on, at first as part of the anti-heretical polemic, that the church catholic began to apply itself seriously to the problems. The grosser freedom was gone; the fourfold gospel was the given.

Few wrestled so manfully with the problems or wrote so extensively about them as did Origen, who approached the matter on two levels, historical and theological. On the historical, or literal, level he sought out ingenious harmonizations. When this method failed or led to confusion, which he readily confessed, he found refuge in theological, or allegorical, explanations. These were not lacking in profundity, sometimes to the point of inscrutability.

A more uncompromisingly historical approach was characteristic of the Antiochian school, of which the most remarkable representative was Theodore of Mopsuestia. His concern for the problem—judged by the amount of writing which is here preserved about it—was rivaled only by Origen and by Eusebius, the latter of whom was apparently the originator of the so-called *Ergänzungs*-theory of the origin and nature of the fourth gospel. Theodore seems strikingly modern in his appeal to the human aspect of the gospel record. He even sees positive apologetic value in the minor discrepancies between the gospel accounts, for they prove that the writers were independent witnesses not in collusion with each other.

Augustine appears as the first to deal comprehensively with all the problems, using almost exclusively the method of *secundum historiam* harmonization, availing himself of all the suggested solutions of his less allegorically minded predecessors. He further concerned himself deeply with the interrelationship between the gospels as a whole and pronounced

them to be in a relationship of complementarity. Augustine is thus in this matter a culminator and a tradent to subsequent generations.

It is clear that Merkel's slender work should hold deep interest, not only for students of early Christian *Dogmengeschichte*, but also for NT scholars, especially those engaged in gospel research. As Merkel rightly says in his preface, such studies and anthologies as this one perform a great service in making us aware of how historically conditioned our own exegetical judgments are.

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Müller, Richard. *Adventisten—Sabbat—Reformation. Geht das Ruhetagsverständnis der Adventisten bis zur Zeit der Reformation zurück? Eine theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung*. Studia Theologica Lundensia, No. 38. Lund: Gleerup, 1979. 251 pp. Paperback. Swedish Crowns 50.00.

The question of Adventism's relationship to the Reformation is undoubtedly of considerable interest. In the present study Richard Müller, a lecturer at Newbold College, England, explores this relationship in terms of the question of the Sabbath. "Can the Adventist understanding of the Sabbath question be traced back to the time of the Reformation?" Müller asks in the subtitle of the volume here under review.

It was the contention of English Seventh Day Baptists that their Sabbath beliefs derived from the continental Anabaptists, and since Seventh Day Baptists were in fact instrumental in bringing the belief in the seventh-day Sabbath to the attention of the early Adventists, it might be assumed that a direct line of influence extends from the Reformation, i.e., from some section of the reformed camp, to the Adventists of the nineteenth century. Müller is obviously convinced that such a line of influence does in principle exist, and he sets out to document it in this study (actually his doctoral dissertation for the University of Lund, Sweden, photomechanically reproduced from the typescript). It is a long line, and in a relatively short study such as the present one, selectivity of primary source material, as well as brevity of description, is the order.

The book is divided into three parts. The first—and most substantial one—deals with the question of the Sabbath at the time of the Reformation. An introductory chapter provides some perspective by outlining the medieval as well as the sixteenth-century Roman Catholic position on the question of the day of rest (Sunday).