

technical vocabulary do not seem to fit. Only the most stalwart general reader would even think of trying to digest this work. Either Doubleday should change its description, or such a commentary should be published in a way that it can be labeled for what it is—a major scholarly work mainly for specialists.

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Morris, Leon. *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986. 448 pp. \$20.95.

This volume plays a major role in Zondervan's attempt to broaden its scholarly market. Leon Morris is well chosen to represent this image. He offers scholarship of the first rank, while approaching the biblical text as the Word of God. Thus he considers the gospels to be reliable accounts of Jesus' words and deeds. Being relatively uninterested in the historical approach, he deems it to be his task to describe the teachings of the NT documents and the theology that lies behind those teachings, rather than to speculate on how those documents got into their present form.

A central point of Morris's book is that the writers of the NT were unique individuals in their expression of Christian theology. They were not following any "party line" (p. 325). While Morris grants the diversity of the NT, however, he is not willing to assume that variations of expression necessarily point to irreconcilable differences. In his brief summary of the book (pp. 325-333), Morris draws these two aspects together by summarizing both the key contrasts between the various writers and their central agreements. The book closes with the thought that the unity and diversity of the NT teach two things: (1) that narrow dogmatism is "ugly," and (2) that the great central teachings of Christianity are not optional.

The book is divided into four main parts: the Pauline writings, the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, the Johannine writings, and the General Epistles. Although Morris examines the Pauline writings as a whole, he treats Matthew, Mark, and Luke-Acts separately, seeking to distinguish the unique theology of each evangelist while maintaining, nevertheless, that they compositely offer a reliable picture of the theology of Jesus.

Morris does address some major issues in NT studies. Although he believes that the Gospel of Mark was the first Gospel written, he does not think that one's position on the Synoptic Problem makes a great deal of difference theologically. He regards the thirteen letters which carry Paul's name to be "Pauline" in at least a broad sense. Morris opposes the trend to see the writings of Paul in terms of "apocalyptic categories," agreeing with Bultmann that justification and the Christ-event are central to Paul. He

also rejects the idea that the primitive church lived in daily expectation of the Parousia, an expectation which the church supposedly lost in its "early Catholicism" stage (a stage whose existence Morris denies can be demonstrated in the NT documents).

Morris's intention is to provide a "compact introduction to the theology of the New Testament" (p. 7). He proceeds book by book through the NT (treating Luke-Acts and the Pauline and Johannine letters as units), examining the texts relevant to each major topic as expressed in the language of the NT writers. A fairly typical example of his approach to a specific theme is his treatment of the "son of man" in the Gospel of Mark. After surveying the use of the phrase generally in the NT, he examines the background of the son-of-man concept in contemporary Aramaic and the OT. He then notes that the concept is associated with three aspects of Jesus' career in the Gospel of Mark: (1) his earthly authority, (2) his eschatological authority, and (3) his lowliness and suffering. While none of these ideas is unique to Mark, Morris's examination of the topic in the context of that Gospel illuminates the theology of Mark in a way that a general discussion of the son of man in the Synoptic Gospels could not.

Although Morris did not intend to write a book at the cutting edge of NT scholarship, his *Theology* does make significant contributions. While Morris's conservatism will automatically disqualify his book in some circles; nevertheless, his skepticism of the "assured results" of historical criticism is healthy. We know far less about the first century than one would gather from reading the secondary literature. Tentativeness is always appropriate where the evidence is not all in or can be read in more ways than one. In treating Mark, Matthew, and Luke separately, Morris helps to clarify the unique perspectives of the Synoptists without relying heavily on questionable presuppositions, as, for example, Conzelmann does. His simplistic textual approach allows the reader a quick handle on the extent of the material, thus providing a basis for further work, as well as avoiding the ever-present danger of imposing a dogmatic system upon the NT through the use of language that carries 2000 years of theological baggage.

Unfortunately, however, the book does not excite the reader. It often comes across as a mere restating of collections of texts on various topics. His insights are rarely as fruitful as Ladd's *Theology*, an equally conservative work with which Morris's will often be compared. While his treatment of Luke-Acts is extensive (even more pages than on the Gospel of John), there is much less coverage given to such important books as Matthew, Hebrews, and Revelation. Morris's *Theology*, therefore, leaves a reader with mixed feelings.