

Chilton, Bruce, and McDonald, J. I. H. *Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988, xii + 148 pp. Paperback, \$8.95.

This collaborative effort was written for the Biblical Foundations in Theology series, whose announced aim is "to bridge the gap between biblical scholarship and the larger enterprise of Christian theology" (ix). The authors are to be commended for the manner in which they have been able to integrate their efforts into one coherent and stylistically unified whole. Whether they successfully attained the series' goal is less clear.

Two developments in NT studies serve as the framework within which the argument of this book is presented. One is the debate as to how best to understand the relationship between eschatology and ethics in the teaching of Jesus. On this issue, the authors contend that modern presentations have understood Jesus either as a preacher of the Kingdom who has little to say about how to live in the world until the Kingdom arrives in full power (thus rendering his message intellectually stimulating but practically irrelevant) or as the proclaimer of an ethic of Love who wished to effect the brotherhood of all human beings, but failed to communicate the transcendence of God.

The second debate the authors wish to enter centers on how best to understand the parables of Jesus. It is in this area that the book's argument is more directly involved. Here Chilton and McDonald place themselves in the tradition of Jeremias, Linnemann, Via, and Crossan, from whom they eclectically chose their building blocks. Basically, they wish to build on the understanding of parables as metaphorical narratives that create an existential "crisis" and are in themselves a "language event." Proponents of these views, however, present the parables as Christological claims, but this is precisely what they are not (p. 29). The parables came to be the basis for later Christology, but they were not the means for its expression. In order to be understood correctly, the authors argue, the parables are to be understood as "performances."

The parable as performance is offered by the authors as the solution to the proper balance between eschatology and ethics in the teaching of Jesus. Performance, however, has to be understood in its bivalent unity. "At one end is the divine performance of the Kingdom, an inceptive reality which attracts hope. At the other end is human performance, an enacted response which itself elicits action. Hopeful action and enacted hope characterize the parable as a whole" (p. 24). According to this view, Jesus in his preaching and other activity performed the transcendent power of the Kingdom within the immanent circumstances of daily life and elicited from some among his audience the response that continues to perform the Kingdom within daily life, thereby creating communities of disciples. Thus the parables unify the transcendent power of God's future (escha-

tology) with the life of communal discipleship here and now (ethics). Another way in which the authors view this is to say that, acting upon his vision of the Kingdom, Jesus performed both motifs and themes. By analyzing a few parables and other selected sayings, the authors argue that the "eschatological motifs are cognate with the ethical themes" (p. 114). In order to properly understand the ethical teaching of Jesus, therefore, it must be recognized that "explicitly moral instructions, most notably the commandment to love in its various forms, arise out of an underlying understanding that God is eschatologically active" (p. 114). This is offered as the formal solution to the problem which modern theology has so far, according to the authors, left unsolved.

This book's argument must be recognized as a worthy contribution to the discussion of an important theological issue. Still, as is bound to be the case with any book which claims to have recovered "the *ipsissima vox Jesu*" (p. 115), it raises many questions in the mind of the reader. First of all, it must be asked whether the authors have really argued their case on the basis of the evidence. In some ways the book presupposes Chilton's earlier *God in Strength: Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom* (1979) and McDonald's *Kerygma and Didache* (1980). The way in which the argument is built here, however, does not give the reader a sense that the exegesis done is sufficient to the argument or that enough of the evidence in the Gospels has been considered. That the parables are pervasive in the ministry of Jesus and that all the parables are parables of the Kingdom are stated but not demonstrated.

Also problematic at the core of the argument is the very notion of "performance," which is stretched to the limit in all directions, and in some cases to the breaking point. At one point it would seem that performance for these authors is what "feeling" was for Schleiermacher—that original unity that exists before thought and act are separated, making possible the connection between transcendence and immanence. Also confusing is the authors' choice of the notion of *praxis* as a way to describe the human performative response to the divine performance. This term does have a rather well-known technical history in Marxist thought and in Liberation Theology. To introduce it here, without any connection to its technical usage, seems rather disingenuous. The authors stress the need for the communal setting of all performance and tip their hats in a passing way to Liberation Theology with a reference to Ernesto Cardenal. But their presentation leaves this reader asking whether the Kingdom Jesus performed had any universal significance. Certainly that is the case with regard to the Kingdom the Gospels talk about.

One may also wonder whether Chilton and McDonald's foray into James Fowler's theory of the six stages in the development of faith is at all helpful. At best it seems to be distracting, and at worst counterproductive. If no one is to enter the kingdom unless he or she becomes like a

child/servant, does this mean that this saying represents the first stage in faith development? Finally, the absence of Amos Wilder among the main protagonists in the modern debate about the relation of eschatology and ethics is most puzzling.

The value of the book is linked to its argument that the teaching of Jesus is performance, rather than its presentation of Jesus' teaching. For that point, *Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom* merits serious reading.

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Dumbrell, William J. *The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988. 286 pp. Paperback, \$12.95.

There are various types of texts through which the beginning college or seminary student can be introduced to the OT. There are surveys of the OT that mix in a lot of different types of material; technical introductions that treat especially the matters of date, author, and composition; and historical surveys that trace the course of Israel's development. *The Faith of Israel* fills a need by taking a distinctly religious approach to OT introduction. It treats the different theological themes of the OT books as they appear. Since the OT books are ultimately religious in their outlook, this is a natural and logical approach that has been neglected in previous introductions.

As far as format is concerned, there are no footnotes or endnotes, but the author does use in-text referencing. The book also contains a modest bibliography. There are no maps, illustrations, or photographic plates, but there is a brief outline of each book at the beginning of each chapter.

*The Faith of Israel* follows the order of the books in the Hebrew canon. This may cause something of a problem for the beginning reader in that he or she ends up reading about David and Solomon in the last chapter of the book. Since the beginning student most likely will be using an English Bible for parallel reading (and a considerable amount of that probably will be necessary), its more historical order might have been preferable.

Proportions of text allotted are generally in balance. Major prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are dealt with in about thirteen pages of text each, while most of the minor prophets are treated in about three pages. In an occasional case, however, there is an imbalance. The call of Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 takes up three pages, while the entire books of Joshua and Judges receive only three pages each. The call of the patriarchs