

opposition to the structures of the Empire within the framework of Jewish apocalyptic traditions. The apocalyptic aspects of Pauline theology have until recently been largely ignored, and yet are central to any understanding of Paul's vision; Horsley's combination of them with the rhetorical-critical approach provides a fascinating new reading of 1 Corinthians.

Inevitably in a collection of fifteen essays not all are as valuable or as enjoyable as Horsley's. The essay by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza requires perhaps more hard work than it repays, though some readers no doubt have more patience than I with phrases such as 'politics of otherness' and 'rhetorics of othering', which seem to me to mystify rather than clarify concepts that are really fairly straightforward. The same readers may also not be irritated by the appearance of 'G*d' in this essay. Of rather more use is Robert Jewett's attempt, broadly successful, to find specific exegetical evidence of the position Schüssler Fiorenza wishes to take. Short essays by three American academic whose names were new to me – Sheila Briggs, Cynthia Briggs Ketteridge and Antionette Clark Wire – provide valuable correctives to the traditional picture of Paul's addressees, who have too often been made in the image of the highly educated, affluent and (of course) male scholars who reconstruct them. To see them instead as a ragbag of slaves, the dispossessed and the unacceptably eccentric, with a high proportion of women, inevitably draws our attention to the socially explosive implications of Paul's claim that these are the elect of God.

It is, finally, pleasing to read contributions from N.T. Wright, always an entertaining and provocative, if sometimes over-confident, writer, and from Mark Nanos, who offers a clear and persuasive summary of the thesis of his just-published book, *The Irony of Galatians*, which concludes that the argument in this most fascinating letter is to be read as an intra-Jewish debate rather than one between Christians. For the Pauline scholar there is bound to be something in this collection to stimulate both delight and passionate objections, and for the rest of us, though occasionally a little opaque, the collection offers an intriguing introduction to the new approach to Paul and his letters.

RICHARD OUNSWORTH OP

MORE ABOUT MARK by John Fenton, *SPCK*, London, 2001 Pp. vii+119, £9.99 pbk.

Canon John Fenton, tutor to generations of Oxford undergraduates (b.1920), is best known for his Penguin commentary on *Matthew*. While respected for its careful attention to literary patterns, this commentary does not have a reputation for breaking new ground. But now Canon Fenton is in a valedictory mood. He reminisces about the tutorials he received from R.H.Lightfoot, one of the two pioneers of of form criticism in England (the other was Vincent Taylor). He reveals that his favourite gospel is Mark, whom he interprets here in a boldly ironic, postmodern way that I am inclined to call nihilistic. Canon Fenton would prefer no doubt to call it apophatic, existentialist or mystical. For one of the surprises and original contributions of this book is its exploration of the links between Mark's

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gospel and the mystical writings of St John of the Cross. Chapter 4, where this link is directly worked out, is particularly fresh and full of insights into Mark, even if the reader cannot accept every detail, and even if the typesetter mis-set the last paragraph of p.42, as though it were part of the citation of Mark 13.

The book takes the form of a collection of 11 essays, some previously published. It concentrates on redaction criticism: how Mark differs from the other three evangelists. (He gives full honour to J.H.Ropes of Harvard for pioneering this approach in 1934). Several times he makes brisk comparisons of the four. Because he is pastorally engaged, he brings this discussion down to the level of the lectionaries used in the Sunday liturgy: the old one; the new common one after Vatican II, with the three-year cycle of Matthew, Mark and Luke (John fits into the Lent-Easter cycle every year); and the Anglican modern churchman's Alternative Service Book of 1980 with its clear bias in favour of John. This subject is of enormous importance because it affects how the Scriptures reach the people, and how the clergy must tackle the preaching ministry. Canon Fenton is to be commended for tackling this issue.

In regard to Mark, Fenton is out to shock (he even becomes jokey at p.53). He repeats several of his insights three times or more. This is good pedagogy as he is intent on hammering home some bitter truths: (a) the consequences to be drawn from the fact that Mark ended the gospel at 16:8; (b) the centurion's confession in 15:39 is ironical, not sincere; (c) Joseph of Arimathea asks for the body (*soma*) and only receives a corpse (*ptoma*); (d) the Marcan salt saying at 9:49 means that the disciples must be destroyed as were the sacrifices of Leviticus 2:13; (e) Jesus's cry of dereliction at 15:34 means that he dies in total despair. But Fenton also makes an important concession (pp. 51, 62) - this is *one* way of understanding Mark. Fenton adds a chapter on Matthew to sharpen the contrast with Mark; another, very original, on the eucharist as meaning that the disciples are responsible for Jesus's death; and a very beautiful one on the Blessed Mother Mary as being the pure expression of divine grace. The concluding chapter is on Christ the King as the reversal of all our values and expectations.

Among the weaknesses of the book one might consider the muddle on the kingdom of God, with no trace of light from Moltmann; the embrace of eccentric views on the synoptic problem (Goulder's rejection of Q as an early source); and the idea that only the stimulus of controversies could have produced the New Testament canon (this is too simple, as von Campenhausen could have shown him). The sort of epistemological despair that reigns over the book is all the fashion yet seems as unnecessary to one of Matthean sympathies or to one who reads Mark with historical interests.

The book expresses itself in terse, provocative assertions which keep the reader's interest high. It is not fitted out with nuances for the academy. It is much more challenging than Marxsen (though not so much as Weeden), and is to be recommended as shock-therapy for the jaded.

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