

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE CHARACTER by James D.G. Dunn. SCM Press. 1991. Pp. xvi + 368. £17.50.

Can the tangled skein of Christian-Jewish relations be unravelled after two thousand years? By patient teasing out of the earliest strands of the argument James Dunn thinks they can. Drawing on much recent research and discussion he sets out his argument with exemplary clarity, and goes on to a range of important conclusions.

Central to the argument is the uncontentious thesis that in the first century there was no one homogeneous entity called 'Judaism', but a lively variety of Judaisms, often in sharply polemical debate with each other. Christianity has its origins within this intra-Jewish debate. All varieties of Judaism rested on the four 'pillars' of Temple, Torah, Election and Monotheism. Dunn's strategy is to examine early Christian attitudes to these pillars to see where the parting of the ways began. In each case he finds Jesus himself well within the categories of second Temple Judaism, though an uncomfortable and provocative fact within it. The crucial factor turns out to be not so much doctrine as group boundaries.

Three chapters are devoted to the Temple in a fascinating piece of detective work which finds that, whilst Jesus' critique of Temple and cult lay within prophetic boundaries, it was the extension of these by Stephen, Paul and the author of Hebrews which produced a tension which led to division. Hellenist Christians could not join in the Temple prayers, but worshipped in house churches instead, and fixed on the critique of the Temple which had brought Jesus himself to his death. Paul took this one step further by insisting that the true temple was either the body of the believer or the church. This change of categories went likewise for sacrifice, the purity code and Jerusalem, changing the notion of sacred space.

The crucial point about such changes was the implication it had for the community's self identity and this was more true still of attitudes to Torah. Torah was *not rejected* but re-interpreted. If the law was used to buttress group boundaries, said Paul, drawing on his Damascus road experience, it was *misused*. Paul insisted on understanding the law as inclusive of Gentiles, whether or not they were circumcised. The issue was not the opposition of a religion of legalism versus a religion of grace, but a contest between different forms of Jewish self-definition, an intra Jewish debate about who counted as a true Jew.

The chapter devoted to election grasps the nettle of whether, as R. Ruether and J.T. Sanders have argued, the New Testament is irredeemably anti semitic. To this reviewer's satisfaction, at least, Dunn argues that what is taken to be anti semitism in the New Testament is the rhetoric of factional polemic. 'The Jews' dismissed by John may well be the Yavneh rabbis, themselves excommunicating heretics, with whom John is contending for the hearts and minds of fellow Jews for a

particular reading of the truth of Judaism.

Perhaps the key issue however, to which another three chapters are devoted, is that of Christology versus monotheism. Did early Christian claims for Jesus mean an end to monotheism? Dunn's answer is an emphatic negative, concluding that even John is guilty simply of pushing familiar categories rather hard. The Christology of the entire New Testament, he argues, can still be understood in terms of intra Jewish debate, of extending the boundaries of well established thinking about Wisdom by applying it to Jesus. Here paradigmatically a Judaism which was trying to draw in boundaries after the catastrophe of 70CE was met by a Christianity insisting on pushing them back and from this tension the division between Judaism and Christianity sprang.

The importance of all this for many current debates will be obvious. Much of what passes for Christology is, in Dunn's view, Jesusolatry. We cannot begin with the social Trinity but should rather continue to learn from the Wisdom Christology. On the issue of election the problem of exclusion and inclusion is still with us, with many contemporary types of Christianity adopting exactly the exclusivist claims that Paul fought against as contrary to God's revelation in Christ. When considering Torah we find ourselves caught in ongoing debates about tradition and interpretation, debates which provide a paradigm for understanding Judaism and Christianity together, as variant interpretations of the original traditions of Israel. The most ironic reversal comes in the implication of New Testament teaching on the Temple, where Dunn finds that the rabbis were able to dispense with priesthood and sacrifice in a way in which Christians could not. He calls us, therefore, to rethink much of our Christian liturgical theory and practice. One may not agree with these conclusions, but the arguments which lead to them all need to be reckoned with. This is a well argued and important book, for New Testament studies, for contemporary doctrine, and not least for the future of Jewish Christian relations.

T J GORRINGE

KARL BARTH, BIBLICAL AND EVANGELICAL THEOLOGIAN by Thomas F. Torrance. *T & T Clark*, Edinburgh, 1990. pp xii, 256.

This book sheds valuable light as much on its author as on his subject. It consists 'of papers originally produced as lectures or articles' presenting Barth's theology 'from the centre of his Biblical and evangelical convictions'. In the different chapters, with inevitable and sometimes useful overlap, Barth's views are examined in relation to philosophy—idealism and realism—natural theology, the patristic and mediaeval tradition, liberalism and fundamentalism, and not least science, where parallels are seen in the methodology which lets reality determine reflection, and not *vice versa*.

A former doctoral student and lifelong disciple of Barth, Torrance describes him as 'the greatest theologian ... for several hundred years',

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