

ARCIC Preparatory Commission, indeed so much so that a separate sub-commission took it off ARCIC's shoulders. The latest FOAG Paper GS 661, responding to Lima/BEM and the ARCIC *Final Report*, concludes: 'Further, we should like to see encouragement given to ... the alleviating of difficulties caused by mixed marriages' (p. 106). For the Anglicans, this subject became a token of ecumenical trust; but Rome could not see it that way, regarding it as a problem low in the hierarchy of moral truths. Fr Coventry gives it a high valuation: he deals with permission to marry, the promise about the children, the marriage ceremony, joint pastoral care, joint prayer, baptism, communion. He asks that 'merely mixed' marriages should be encouraged to become true interChurch marriages.

The best I can do as to the provenance of the last of the three selected chapters is to say that on 20 April 1983 Fr Coventry was guest speaker at the AGM of the Movement for the Ordination of Married Men (MOMM), on 'The theological implications of married clergy'; and that days later my diary states (to a blank memory): 'To + BCB, John Cov's "Theology of Ministry" paper'. It was printed thereabouts in *The Sower*. Twenty-one pages long, it begins: 'The theology of Christian ministry is essentially very simple; it can be set down in comparatively few words. But then mountains of words are needed to clear the ground and to allow it to operate freely'. He offers three statements central to the theology of the ministry. 1. 'All ministries in the Church serve and mediate the continuing ministry of Christ the Lord'. 2. 'Christ gives gifts of his Spirit to all in his body (and indeed outside it)'. 3. 'At any point in history there is only one "theological absolute" about patterns of ministry, only one categorical imperative: the Church must so structure its ministries as best to fulfil the mission given it by Christ in the circumstances of here and of today'. Pages 22–29 are given to Today's Questions—celibacy and marriage, priesthood in *aeternum* and laicisation, women priests and deacons, authority and service, conserving and innovating. It is all properly for Christ 'the Lord, encountered in and mediated by the ministers of his body the Church'.

In the ARCIC Canterbury Statement on Ministry and Ordination, two key words have been steadily stressed, community/fellowship/*koinonia* and reconciliation (which appears in 7 of the 17 sections): section 4 describes the church as 'a community of reconciliation'. Fr Coventry has done well to write on such a subject.

ALBERIC STACPOOLE, OSB

BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS: THE UNITY OF GENESIS, 1–11. Isaac Kikawada and Arthur Quinn. *Abingdon Press (Nashville, Tenn.), 1984. 144p.*

Theories which are well entrenched and elaborately articulated have the habit of being suddenly upended and replaced by quite different hypotheses. This has happened often enough in the physical sciences (witness the sudden demise of Newtonian physics at the beginning of this century) and there is no reason to suppose that it should not happen in other fields as well. At least this is the view of Kikawada, Lecturer in Near Eastern Studies, and Quinn, Professor of Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley. In the field of biblical scholarship perhaps no theory is as well established as Wellhausen's multiple document theory. This well-known hypothesis holds that the text of Genesis (and the other books of the Pentateuch) is a compilation of several separate documents, or traditions put together by an editor, or better a group of editors over a long period of time. Contemporary Scripture scholars, like Gerhard van Rad and Martin Noth, state quite simply that there is no fundamental dispute that Genesis is to be assigned to three documents, known as J, E, and P. There may be some disagreements about which verses are to be assigned to which document, or about the existence of additional documents, but the theory itself is basically accepted. Kikawada and Quinn pay a great deal of tribute in their book to the scholarly work done in the past century since Wellhausen wrote, and they take great pains to point out that no

scholarly advance can be made in Scripture studies without taking it into account but they think that it is now time to put forward an entirely new hypothesis to explain the construction of Genesis. To justify doing this Kikawada and Quinn call attention to the work being done on primeval history stories in ancient Near Eastern literature, and to the structuralist interpretation of literary texts that is now making headway. Developments like these in the field of hermeneutics, they feel, will make much previous biblical scholarship obsolete. In paying attention to these techniques first in Genesis, 1–11, a narrative unity of a highly sophisticated sort which could only be produced by an author gifted with exceptional literary and psychological skills.

Devotees of the document theory, which I suppose included nearly all of us, will probably smile inwardly and think we have here yet another pair of religious fundamentalists, or else very naive Bible readers, setting out into the wilds of biblical scholarship without map or compass. But the authors are by no means naive in their approach. They begin by observing that the “document” theory rests largely on an interpretation of duplications found in the Genesis text. Various names are used for God, for example, —the plural form Elohim and the singular personal name Yahweh; there are frequent repetitions of the same basic story along with inconsistent details; different genealogies for the same individual; and the like. While all this is true enough, Kikawada and Quinn point out that the same duplication can be found in Near eastern primeval history accounts which are far older than anything in Genesis. This discovery might simply seem to suggest that the “documents” used in Genesis are earlier than we had previously suspected. Kikawada and Quinn argue that this is quite beside the point. The point is that the author of Genesis was using material which was *already* in a composite state, and furthermore he was using the material to draw new and different conclusions. They bring forward a number of cases which show that the author of Genesis modified and even reversed the import of the primeval history stories before him in order to refute the conventional wisdom found in the ancient Near Eastern literature. The stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noe’s Flood, certainly had earlier parallels (already told with varying names for God or the Gods, and with narrative doublets), but the author of Genesis was using this well-known material to produce a book which is “an extraordinary literary achievement inspired with consummate subtlety and skill”.

What are the themes central in Genesis which its author has presented with such exceptional skill? For Kikawada and Quinn they are the theme of human reproduction, “Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth;” and a nomadic, wandering style of life which Yahweh has enjoined upon mankind. In Genesis, we see Adam, as a sinner, expelled from the civilized Garden and sent to eat the plants of the *fields*; Cain, the founder of cities, a murderer whose sacrifice is not accepted; Noe falling into sin after the Flood when he begins to plant a vineyard, the typical work of a *sedentary* man; and those who try to build the tower of Babel prevented from finishing it and being sent off to wander. But why is the theme of wandering and the injunction to be fruitful so closely associated in Genesis? Kikawada and Quinn argue that this association makes a special point not found in contemporary literature. A common theme of Near Eastern literature, and of the Classical era, too, was the burden laid on the *Earth* by the sheer weight of mankind. As the number of people grew their raucous noise even ‘disturbed the repose of the Gods’. In classical mythology Zeus solved that problem by inciting mankind to wars (e.g., the Trojan War). Other ancient narratives have rulers of cities impose long hours of work on slave peoples to impede their excessive growth, or resort to infanticide (e.g., the fate of the Hebrews in Egypt under Pharaoh).

Throughout Genesis, Kikawada and Quinn discover the themes of the deadly city with its murderous ways standing over and against fulfillment of the command of God to multiply and fill the earth. The skillful weaving of these themes suggests that Genesis is a carefully constructed whole, not a patchwork gathering of some disparate traditions.

While Kikawada and Quinn skillfully exploit the thematic material, how can we be sure that this is the only way, or even a *legitimate* way of reading Genesis? The authors argue that Genesis is literature using standard literary devices, such as repetition, *irony*, and more importantly the structure known as chiasmus. One can quarrel endlessly, of course, whether the double narratives found in Genesis are put there for rhetorical emphasis or simply the work of a ham-handed editor putting things together with scissors and paste. The structure of chiasmus is something quite different, it is hardly the result of scissors and paste. Kikawada and Quinn find that this structure is a favorite one for the author of Genesis, both to arrange individual verses when telling a single story, and when organizing the story units into a reasoned sequence. The simple chiasmus introducing us to Noe, for example,

Noe
 found favour
 in the eyes of the Lord
 These are the generations of Noe
 Noe was a righteous man
 perfect he was
 in his generations
 with God
 walked
 Noe

is a structured pattern undertaken quite deliberately. The same kind of figure is to be found in organizing the stories themselves in larger (and in this example, later) units:

Sarah and the Pharaoh (chapter 12)
 The saving of Lot (chapter 14)
 Covenant for land (chapter 15)
 Covenant with Abraham (chapter 17)
 Covenant for seed (chapter 18)
 The rescue of Lot (chapter 19)
 Sarah and Abimelech (chapter 20)

Isolated examples of structures of this kind might be set down to coincidence, but Kikawada and Quinn find that the book of Genesis (and the whole of the Pentateuch), they believe, is a construct of such structures. In the face of this the document hypothesis of Wellhausen and similar critics cannot stand, for the *literary* unity of Genesis is simply too complex to be accounted for as a juxtaposition of various traditions. rather it is the work of a single mind weaving a story with extraordinary sensitivity and care.

As so often happens with new hypotheses its proponents claim to be able to solve problems which have baffled the ages. Kikawada and Quinn are no exceptions as they offer new ways of explaining the presence of apparently inconsistent and misplaced genealogies. Their treatment of the Tower of Babel story (the Generation of Human Divisions) as a summary of the three previous stories and a fitting conclusion of primeval history is refreshing and convincing.

When a new hypothesis is sketched out for the first time it often appears naked and a bit amateurish when compared with the scholarship available to support the older thesis. Galileo's inaccurate measurements and simple statements seemed no match at first for the highly complex speculations of the followers of Ptolemy. New hypotheses have to solve the difficulties which their theories raise, and it is easy enough to catch out their proponents at first. Only further research will tell whether the structures which they seem to have found will be confirmed. We suspect that this book will be received with reservation and perhaps with scorn, but the hypothesis they present in favor of a unitary approach to Genesis has much to recommend it. In the light of recent developments in hermeneutical theory, it will undoubtedly not be the last book of its kind.

JOHN HILARY MARTIN OP