This is the fifth volume of the series Issues in Religion and Theology, and like its predecessors it offers a collection of significant pieces on its subject. These range from a 1934 contribution by Rudolph Otto to two recent views first published in 1979. There is also a 26-page introduction by the editor, charting the progress of the debate, and a four-page bibliography (with, alas, a sizeable percentage of the titles in German). Modern authors and New Testament references are indeed.

It would be possible to offer at the selection offered – no Schweitzer (nor any of his predecessors), no Dodd, no Jeremias – but what is here offered is a good sample of high points of the discussion.

Otto’s essay is the only one of the eight over twenty years old, and the rest reflect aspects of the wide variety of approaches which have been brought to the attempted elucidation of the phrase in contemporary study. M. Lutter is discussed the Jewish background both to the phrase “Kingdom of God” and to the idea of God’s kingship. T. F. Glasson (1971) roundly condemns all followers of Schweitzer’s eschatological interpretation of the kingdom, and pronounces his influence beneﬁt. N. Perrin (1976) uses the categories ‘sing’ and ‘symbol’ as developed by the linguistic philosopher P. Ricoeur: Here Chilton has skillfully extracted much of the meat of Perrin’s book, presenting short extracts stitched together with brief summaries of the intervening argument. There is also an extract from the end of Chilton’s own contribution to the debate, God in Strength (1979).

This is certainly a valuable way for a student to immerse himself in the literature rather than relying on one scholar’s view in a standard Theology. If I have a complaint, it is that the form of the introduction does not make it particularly easy to put the individual essays into their historical context as one reads them; nor are we offered any critique of the views presented here. A brief introduction to each essay would have been a real help. It would also have been very valuable to have some reﬂection on the extent to which the contributors actually differ in substance. Are they not, to some extent, saying the same things in different words? That may perhaps be left as a valuable exercise for the reader.

D. R. Lacey, Ridley Hall, Cambridge.


Pinchas Lapide is an orthodox Jewish theologian who has worked hard in the cause of Jewish-Christian relations and in recent years has become the favourite Jewish conversation-partner for German Christian theologians. A few years ago he took the unprecedented step of accepting (without becoming a Christian) that the resurrection of Jesus was a real historical event, and, in this book explains why. If I understand him correctly, there are three reasons: (1) The historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, while not unambiguous enough to convince the determined sceptic, is very, very good. In particular, Lapide is impressed by the transformation of the disciples from a frightened and despairing group on Good Friday to a conﬁdent missionary society: only a real historical event can explain this.

(2) The discussion on the resurrection of Jesus must be understood as a genuinely Jewish faith experience. Its preconditions (especially the Jewish expectation of resurrection) are Jewish beliefs which Lapide as an orthodox Jewish shares.

(3) Following Maimonides (and some modern Jewish theologians such as Franz Rosenzweig, Lapide sees Christiendom as part of God’s providential purpose to spread the knowledge of the God of Israel. In this Lapide is in agreement with the New Testament, in that case the resurrection of Jesus, without which there would have been no Christianity, must have been a real act of God in history. It does not make Jesus Israel’s Messiah (and so Lapide has not become a Christian), but it gives Jesus a prominent place in God’s preparation of the world for the coming messianic age.

Whether or not other Jewish theologians find Lapide’s argument acceptable, he seems to me to have moved Jewish-Christian dialogue in a significant direction. Modern Jewish assessment of Jesus and Christianity would seem to have two major features. There has been, in the ﬁrst place, an attempt to retrieve Jesus as a Jewish teacher with Jewish (as opposed to Christian) signiﬁcance, and, secondly, there has been a positive assessment of Christianity as serving, in God’s providence, to bring Gentiles to faith in the God of Israel. But between the historical Jesus and Gentile Christianity lies, historically, the faith of the ﬁrst Jewish Christians in the risen Jesus as Messiah. Lapide has rightly seen the need for serious Jewish assessment of this original Jewish Christian faith in Jesus, without which there would have been no Gentile Christianity. What he attempts to do is to assess it positively as the historical root of Gentile Christianity. But there is a problem here with regard to Jesus’s signiﬁcance for Jews, which Lapide seems to have missed but which may make other Jewish theologians reluctant to follow him. Acceptance of Jesus’ resurrection establishes, as Lapide’s book repeatedly shows, a fundamental continuity between Jesus himself and the earliest Christian message about Jesus, i.e., between Jesus the thoroughly Jewish ﬁgure with a mission to his own people alone and the ﬁrst Jewish Christians who called their own people to faith in the risen Jesus. It becomes difﬁcult to see where a line can be drawn between the retrieval of Jesus himself for Judaism and a Jewish assessment of Jesus as Christianity as having only Gentile signiﬁcance. I do not mean this as a polemical point, but to indicate that Jewish theological assessment of Jesus and Christianity must involve itself rather deeply in the question of the historical continuity between Jesus and the rise of Christianity. As far as further dialogue is concerned, Lapide’s book points in the direction of the need for both Jews and Christians to look rather carefully at the reasons for and the meaning of the original Jewish Christian belief in Jesus’ messiahship; this is not so obvious a matter as Christians have tended to think.

The fact that this book has been written is signiﬁcant. But I have to say that I found it in detail an unsatisfying book: it is a very brief and lightweight treatment, which fails to press the important theological issues and which seemed to me inconsistent in places. Carl Braaten’s introduction is useful particularly in placing in some of the background to Lapide’s thinking from his earlier works.

Richard Bauckham, University of Manchester.


The question of Luke’s political perspective has been debated with increasing vigour in recent years. Now, in this short study, Professor Walaschak attempts to turn the whole debate upside down. Where generations of exegetes have claimed that Luke is concerned to commend the church to the Roman state, he is convinced that Luke’s work can better be understood as aiming to commend the empire to the church. After helpfully surveying previous work on Luke as political apologist, Walaschak (ch. 2) turns to the text aiming to demonstrate three things: firstly, that Luke includes a good deal of material that could be politically dangerous if read by a Roman ofﬁcally; secondly, that even in passages which have been read as anti-Roman, Luke is in fact glossing over the more negative aspects of Roman rule found in Luke’s own sources; thirdly, that in a stinging passage in the Gospel, Luke presents a wholly positive view of Roman authority best understood as conscientious apologia pro imperio.

Roderic A. Whitacre, Johannine Polimie: The Role of Tradition and Theology (SBLLS 67; Chico: Scholars Press, 1982). 278 pp., $13.00 ($8.75 for members).

This book is a photo-reproduction of a PhD dissertation successfully defended at Cambridge University. Whitacre follows the modern consensus in many critical areas: the author (or authors) is (are) unknown; it is unclear whether the same person(s) wrote the fourth gospel and the Johannine epistles; opponents claimed to share many of the author’s beliefs and traditions, but developed them so forth.

Whitacre’s contribution is the dilution of that conﬂict. He argues that the author’s (Whitacre rather tiresomely always writes ‘author(s’ instead of ‘author’ or ‘author’?) opponents claimed to share many of the author’s beliefs and traditions, but developed them so forth. He argues that the author’s (Whitacre rather tiresomely always writes ‘author(s’ instead of ‘author’ or ‘author’?) opponents claimed to share many of the author’s beliefs and traditions, but developed them so forth.
If he had dealt with these books separately, and then considered how far they agree with, and how far they add to, the picture given by the other sources, no one would complain; but to exclude them is really to make the tacit assumption that they either add nothing to our knowledge of Jesus or Paul, or nothing that can be relied upon. Whether the author really thinks this, one wonders; but if he does not, he ought to realise that to exclude these books actually invalidates his comparison of the teaching of Jesus and Paul.

These exclusions are symptomatic of the general approach of the book, which (at least for practicalitiy's sake) seems to be that of the man who is not in mind the saying of Mark 13:10, as he has other possible echoes of Jesus' eschatological discourse to deny any idea of Christian mission here? I wonder ifthe author has written against certain itinerant charismatics who saw the grace of God's gracious love; while in 1 John the christological issue comes - to the present tense - the false prophets have already come. In both, the latter, how this affects the comparison of Paul's teaching on ministry, as found in the synoptic gospels and the fourth gospel, the author insists Jesus is Messiah, of ministry, 'the role of the Spirit', is again extremely vague, and the word 'ministry' itself, which should bind the reader's faith to the narrative of ministry today. He also brings similar material together from different sources to demonstrate common strands.

In his final chapter, Verhey considers the question of the authority of New Testament ethics for us today. He presents a 'modest proposal' which in his view steers between the poles of fundamentalism and liberalism, viz. fundamentalism's tendency to discern in Scripture only timeless truths perennially binding upon Christians in all cultures, and liberalism's tendency to stress the cultural relativity of what is written in Scripture that it releases itself from any challenge contained therein. Verhey argues that the New Testament is authoritative on the level of motivation, showing why Christians should believe in a certain way and in respecting certain ethical principles like love and freedom, but to inquire of Scripture at the 'moral-rule' level is inappropriate. This is because the rules found in the New Testament were intended to answer specific questions of conduct in the particular communities they were addressing, not for all times and places.

I agree with Verhey up to a point. Women's roles do not have the same significance for us that they had in first-century Corinth, so it is meaningless to insist on their being worn now. But it is irrefutable that the New Testament contains a strong ethic of love, and value substantially intact. The principles of sincerity of marriage and the simple rule prohibiting adultery. The fact is that there are rules and rules, i.e. rules of short-term, limited validity and rules of long-term, more permanent nature, e.g. rules about the church's apostolic (including Petrine) doctrine. Pseudonymous 'testaments' of tradi-tions are bound to benefit its readers, but whether this book is


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Verhey's book is the more comprehensive in scope. The first three chapters are an extremely thorough survey of the ethical material found in all the New Testament books. Sometimes this descends to a rather tedious recital of texts and description of different scholars' viewpoints. But Verhey's judgments appear generally sound. He spotlights the different emphases of, e.g., the synoptic writers (Mark's Jesus is seen as proclaiming a heroic morality, Matthew's a sur-passing righteousness, Luke's an ethic of care and respect, but he also brings similar material together from different sources to demonstrate common strands.

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