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Brief Studies

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BRIEF STUDIES

The two brief studies that follow grow out of closely critical reviews of two recent works. The first deals with a new commentary of the Gospel according to St. Luke; the second treats a recent volume on the use of cinema in the ministry of the church. They are enlightening and perceptive studies, speaking to the pastor both as the scholar and the practitioner he is.

DAS LUKASEVANGELIUM: ERSTER TEIL. KOMMENTAR ZU KAP. 1, 1-9, 50. By Heinz Schürmann. (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Band III). Herder: Freiburg, Basel, Wien, 1969. No price.

Biblical criticism in the last decades has come of age in recognizing what literary critics in the days of ancient Greece and Rome knew well—that it is wise to begin with the assumption that compilers of tradition, oral or written, are not parrots. Plutarch's *De malignitate Herodoti*, although as perverse in its Boeotian bias as the deliberate falsification it distortedly ascribes to the historian, is a bold example of awareness of "Redaktionsarbeit," and this German term is a reminder that neologisms may in fact themselves cover up cultural lags and therefore contribute to obfuscation of some aspects of history. The question of such obfuscation, however, belongs properly to the history of hermeneutics, both Biblical and non-Biblical. Of importance is the fact that Biblical writers are with increasing recognition included in the ranks of intelligent and productive people.

In various ways Schürmann's commentary brings Luke's grasp of a mass of heterogeneous tradition into prominence. Summaries of argument preface units of text as apportioned in the elaborate outline. Following summary of the smallest subsection is a translation of the text in that section, which is then subject to verse-by-verse analysis. Reduced type is used to discuss source-critical problems. Footnotes (may the publishers be cited for their sympathetic appreciation of scholars' requirement for quick access to the data and an anathema on all who print them with the index) are numerous on the bottom of each page and document with no parochial scope the history of discussion. Counterpositions are not, as occasionally happens in the craft, dismissed with a magisterial *unerhaltbar*, nor, without serious attempt at

refutation, merely noted by title as existing.

A highly technical work written as well as this is bound to have far-reaching influence. If at the same time the technician deals with a document that forms part of the base of a community's existence in the past and of its self-understanding in the present and the future, his responsibility is vastly increased. For it is not enough to be objective, but the product of such objectivity needs to be set in the context of a larger hermeneutical circle, lest a threat to traditional interpretation lead to actual distortion in understanding of an ancient writer's thought. Schürmann takes seriously, and without apology, the larger theological perspective. The reader will note this fact especially in connection with repeated stress on apostolic tradition and authority, and Schürmann's exposition of Luke's preface to the reader (1:1-4) clearly charts the main directions taken in the commentary.

Schürmann is convinced that in 1:1-4 Luke lauds his predecessors for their fidelity to the Christian message. In my judgment the question of accuracy in the sources is for Luke secondary to the question of correctness of impression created by the documents credited to his predecessors. Data taken out of context or recited apart from the tension that gave them birth may, even while claiming unimpeachable authority, contribute to misunderstanding. What is needed is a well-organized presentation that brings the many data into fresh truthful perspective. Of crucial contributory value to interpretation of Luke 1:1-4 is the parallel terminology in Acts 21:21, 24, 34; but Schürmann makes unwonted short shrift of the evidence in Acts, separating the discussion of *κατέχειν* from that of *ἀσφάλεια*. However, "divide and conquer" is linguistic heresy. What must be observed in Acts 21 is the juxtaposition of, on the one hand, the negative opinions picked up through hearsay (*κατέχειν* vss. 21 and 24, with correspond-

ing agitated expression in vs. 28 and 34a) and, on the other hand, the perplexity of the Roman official (in the welter of voices and charges he could not discern τὸ ἀσφαλές, that is, the facts, vs. 34). It is this juxtaposition that alerts the reader to the precise meaning of the two terms κατέχειν and ἀσφάλεια in Acts 21, with the result that we now have a philological datum paralleling the phraseology in 1:4. Combined with the fact that Luke stresses the "many" reciters and uses the plural λόγοι (vs. 4) in contrast to the singular λόγος (vs. 2), the conclusion is irresistible, that Luke considers his account a more helpful guide for the time in which he is writing.

In *Die Mitte der Zeit* (3rd ed., Tübingen, 1960; transl. G. Buswell, *The Theology of St Luke*; New York, 1960) Hans Conzelmann practically ignored the value of Luke 1-2 as source for the understanding of the line of argument in the succeeding chapters. Schürmann endeavors to remedy an almost universal deficiency in the exposition of Luke as he exposes many of the thematic nerve centers in these opening chapters. However, given his view of the proemium, it is understandable that he should fail to appreciate the problem that comes to expression in Luke's endeavor to be faithful to earlier traditions, while at the same time the evangelist aims to address himself responsibly to theological demands in his contemporary church. It is precisely appeals to various strands in the tradition that bred tensions in Luke's day. Luke therefore considers it his assignment to record the various traditions and positions, especially on messianic and apocalyptic questions, and then through skillful literary point and counterpoint in synthesis to bring out the truth. Thus the crass messianism that might be interpreted out of the tradition of Jesus' Davidic origins is in 1:32-35 refocused in terms of the divine sonship, with emphasis on the Holy Spirit, a dominant feature in Luke's twin-work. The Benedictus, in even more sophisticated literary fashion, encloses the nationalistic hope within a mantle of thematic accents and correctives, especially of an ethical dimension, that anticipate development in depth throughout the subsequent chapters.

Primary is the question of the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus and that of their significance for the church,

and on this score also I think that Schürmann's decision may entertain some modification. Luke's view is that John through a call for renewal readies the people for the Lord their God in order that God may communicate His salvation expressed in Jesus the Messiah. The credentials of Jesus are not validated in terms of John as an apocalyptic precursor (see Conzelmann, Eng. ed., pp. 22-27; German ed., pp. 16-21). Therefore no stress is laid on John preceding Jesus. Instead John goes before the "Lord" (1:15), who is defined as "the Lord their God." αὐτοῦ in the succeeding verse clearly refers back to κύριον τὸν θεὸν αὐτῶν. The fact that κύριος is the community's term also for Jesus dare not therefore obscure (as does Schürmann's analysis, p. 36) the clarity of Luke's diction. Luke indeed directs the precursor-motif in the direction of Jesus insofar as God brings His salvation to expression in Jesus, but this is not the equivalent of the proposition: John is the apocalyptic precursor of Jesus. For John is primarily the precursor of Israel, whose way is to be the way of the Lord their God. Luke 7:27 shows Jesus addressing Israel through the quotation that had been dropped from a citation borrowed at Luke 3:4 from Mark 1:2-3. John is the messenger, and he was to prepare (κατασκευάζω, anticipated by 1:17) the way of Israel, so that her way might be Yahweh's way. (In the Acts the Christians are identified as "those belonging to the way," 9:2; cf. 16:17; 18:25, 26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; the language of 13:10, describing a perverter of the way, echoes Luke 3:4). Thus Luke, through accent on the moral renovation of Israel, shifts his reader's gaze from the traditional apocalyptic distortion. The fact that 7:28-34 is critical of Israel's religious leadership supports the preceding interpretation. Israel did not permit its paths to be prepared, thereby it made impossible God's access (expressed as his βουλή, v. 30).

How important appreciation of Luke's peculiar sensitivity to the problem of apocalyptic is can be seen further at the hand of evaluations made of Luke's (3:6) omission of the words καὶ ἀφθήσεται ἡ δόξα κυρίου (Is. 40:5a). Schürmann observes Luke's christologized apocalyptic, evident in the evangelist's equation of salvation with the arrival of Jesus. But this equation does not sufficiently account for the

omission of the reference to δόξα. The fact is that the δόξα had already been seen—but by the shepherds (2:9). The apocalyptic windup comes in the person of Jesus—and in a manger! Thus the credentials of Jesus are not dependent on apocalyptic speculation. It is idle to look for the apocalyptic δόξα. It will not be seen by all. But God's salvation is available to all in Jesus the Christ. Achievement of that objective will also spell Israel's δόξα (2:32). A similar literary device, but in reverse order, is apparent in the phrasing of Luke 4:4, where words from Deut. 8:3 (ἀλλ' ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι τῷ ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ) are omitted, being substantially found in 4:22. Schürmann (p. 234) takes a different view of the omission in 4:4, hypothesizing a reluctance to apply such an anthropomorphism to God; but note the anthropomorphism in 11:20. It might also be observed in connection with 4:22 that Luke suggests a connection between the wise man whose words are gracious (cf. Sirach 21:16) and one who does God's will. The inhabitants of Nazareth—thematically emblematic of Israel in her response to Jesus—are neither wise nor obedient. Awareness of Luke's wisdom-themes similarly sheds light on the point of Luke 5:9. That the goodness of God ought to lead men to repentance (cf. Acts 17:25-28; Rom. 2:4) is the theme of the Wisdom of Solomon (see especially ch. 12).

Schürmann's constant reference to the Old Testament offers much for further appreciation of Luke's writing. But not everything has been done for the student. For example, there is no reference to Deut. 28:22 in connection with the recital of the healing of the fever (Luke 4:38 f.). Fever was one of the curses pronounced on Israel for breaking the covenant. Jesus ushers in the age of the new covenant. Thus this particular miracle is programmatic. For further details on the subject of Luke's apocalyptic views, see the introductory pages in *Jesus and the New Age According to St. Luke: A Commentary on the Third Gospel* (Clayton Publishing House, 61 Ridgemoor Drive, St. Louis, Missouri).

Despite the vast amount of data included in his works, Schürmann recognizes the ongoing need for the uncovering of relevant facts and for fresh assessment. The

following observations are therefore meant to be supportive of such invitation. In connection with 2:34 (see Schürmann, pp. 127-28) it is probable that Micah 7:7 LXX enters into the formation of the tradition underlying the Lukan passage (note the stress on light in 2:32 and cf. Micah 7:9). πῶσις therefore applies to those who reject the Messiah, and ἀνάστασις applies to the "poor." Consideration of Lukan thematic structure suggests that a solution, different from Schürmann's, is to be found for the reference to fasting in 5:35. Whatever may have been the previous history of the tradition, Luke appears to follow Mark in viewing the logion as a dramatic forecast of Jesus' fate, which in turn is ironically interpreted as the igniting force for national tragedy (cf. Luke 23:31). This interpretation is put beyond question by Luke's redactional work. The apparently awkward addition, in 5:35, of καί, which accentuates the initial phrase with all the effect of a judgment trumpet blast, in fact completes a formulaic phrase that with slight variations recurs in prophetic eschatological oracles (negatively, see in the Septuagint, Is. 39:6; Jer. 7:32; 28:52; 30:2; 31:12; Amos 4:2; 8:11; positively, Jer. 16:14; 23:5; 37:3; 38:31, 38; Amos 9:13). In all these Septuagintal passages the present tense occurs, but Luke preserves Mark's future tense and then echoes the entire phrase with thematic intensity in 17:22; 21:6; 23:29 (on 19:43-44 compare the diction in Jer. 27:27, 31; Hos. 9:7). The fact that 17:22 and 23:29 are peculiar to Luke and that in 21:6 the words ἐλεύσονται ἡμεῖς ἐν αἷς are interpolated into material shared by all three synoptists confirms conscious literary intention. There can be no doubt then that the dominance of nuptial and fasting themes in 17:22-28 is Lukan exposition of the logion in 5:35. Finally, Luke's alteration of the Markan singular (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ) to the plural (ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις) is not merely a stylistic improvement but a rhetorical endorsement of the solemn emphasis made in the opening words of the verse, including especially the plural ἡμέραι.

Finally let it be observed that Schürmann's breadth of erudition, fairness and sobriety in judgment, and critical appreciation of ecclesiastical tradition find in the firm of Herder appropriate channels for communication of St. Luke's message.

The publishers will not regret their partnership in excellence, for scholars throughout the world will appreciate the fact that their own needs and special interests have not been sacrificed to Moloch's altar WONTSELL.

This first portion of Schürmann's commentary is limited to exposition of the text from 1:1 through 9:50; the final installment of the commentary is to carry also the customary isagogical discussion.

Frederick W. Danker

MARQUEE MINISTRY: THE MOVIE THEATER AS CHURCH AND COMMUNITY FORUM. By Robert G. Konzelman. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. 123 pages. Cloth. \$4.95.

Konzelman, Director of Educational Research in the Division of Parish Education, The American Lutheran Church, has, in *Marquee Ministry*, written the success story of his agency's own product: the "Dialogue Thrust in Films." His program offers a method for church groupings to share films in a dialogue setting for purposes of analysis and of group awareness and growth.

Konzelman says he has written a "how to" book. He has, in fact, urged his readers to utilize the "Dialogue Thrust in Films" in their own environments. His own enthusiasm for the program is perhaps the most engaging aspect of the book. He also offers much valuable information concerning the film industry in the United States. If the "Dialogue" materials, however, reflect the theological and esthetic accents contained in *Marquee Ministry*, they will, regardless of immediate practical successes, ultimately contribute to a false view of the form and function of "secular" films in our society.

To provide, perhaps, a theological justification for the use of films in the church milieu, Konzelman attempts what might charitably be called an incarnational method of approaching the divine communication among men. To be accurate, however, we are obliged to suggest that he produces an embarrassingly sentimental pantheism that tends to smother the whole theological issue of such divine communication. In brief: he tends to make the film itself the source and virtual substance of divine revelation.

To quote from *Marquee Ministry* under

the heading: "In the Beginning Was the Film:"

Some [films] are of such stature that, like the burning bush to Moses, they can be the occasion for calling people aside to ponder. Certainly God was using an unusual and compelling method to intrude into Moses' sheep-tending activities. . . . And again today, God may need a modern variety of burning bush to attract attention and make men halt in their frenetic pursuits to ask, 'What's it all about, Alfie?' It is my belief that some secular films may just succeed in being for many twentieth-century people a counterpart of the ancient sign and wonder, serving the same purpose for the people of God in our time: an event, an occasion, a compelling opportunity to ponder, question, explore—above all, to discover who and what they are, and where, at this point in history, they are heading. [Pp. 26-27]

Again: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness for the healing of the people, so the church today must lift up these powerful new media of ours, which if left alone can destroy us, but if raised up can work toward healing" (p. 4). Konzelman exhorts us to struggle with the film as Jacob did with God at Jabbok, in order to wrestle forth a blessing. He asks us to take a "specific film very seriously as a cultural communication, an 'event' in a community—one through which the Most High God may find a means of speaking" (p. 27).

Unfortunately, such identification of God's revelation with the film itself leaves the Christian viewer without resources either for understanding God's judgment on the film or for making a critical response to the film consistent with a state of baptismal grace.

Furthermore, if the film is a means of salvation, even a type of the Christ, lifted up (perhaps upon a screen?), then the film as *means* of grace unto itself will initiate corresponding *experiences* of grace unto themselves for the viewer. These new possibilities are intimated in the book. The film, Konzelman says, offers to a group a unique experience, similar to a dream in which "time is compressed, cause and effect observed, identification made—but for the viewer, judgment is suspended" (p. 28).

The theological presuppositions and methodology implied in this statement lead the author toward a definition of ersatz

religious experience: "In the reprieve from the sentence [judgment] the film provides, man may be opened to the converting, redeeming word that comes from the picture itself or through the miracle of dialogue that follows" (p. 28).

Konzelman, we believe, is able to arrive at such exotic definitions of religious experience via film precisely because he makes no attempt to analyze critically the varieties of art forms employed in serious films of the past and the present. He says that an analysis of the "film as art" is "highly cognitive and often becomes an intellectual game" (p. 25); thereafter he moves toward an exploitation of film for group formation and process. Yet, it is the *art form* of film which makes its "use" as a "means of grace" in group process highly problematic and in our opinion ill-advised.

The serious contemporary movie is an outgrowth of formal experiments in literature initiated by writers such as the French Symbolists, Apollinaire, Joyce, James, Eliot, Pound, Stein, Hemingway, Lindsay, Faulkner, Crane, Dos Passos. The writers interacted with early film directors such as D. W. Griffith, S. M. Eisenstein, Robert Flaherty, and John Grierson to produce new forms of artistic expression, forms reflected in achievements of mature directors in our times.

A comparative study of the mutual efforts of these early giants of the first quarter of our century reveal a common basic objective: the discovery of formal means toward the experience of credible reality consistent with 20th-century sensibilities.

Since the very nature of reality and its meaning are the essential preoccupations of our century, we should expect that different forms of artistic expression would produce different avenues of approach to reality. Such is the case. Time, for instance, is by no means "compressed" in every film. Dependent upon the methodology of the director, it may be expanded, distorted, dislocated, or formally obliterated. Forms for novel and film may effectively eliminate all relationship between "cause and effect" and create the experience of contingency. According to the form and method employed, "judgment" may be lowered by a film upon the viewer, or may be suspended, or by means of the angle of

vision of author or director, be *removed* as a possibility from the viewer.

No viewer of a successful modern film has the dispassionate control of the art form which Konzelman requires for his dialogue sessions. And without such control, or a knowledge of the lack of such control, analysis, whether theological or psychological, of the effects of the art form upon or within the group will tend toward superficiality and sentimentality.

Art of the 20th century is preoccupied with form or method as a means for the apprehension of substance. It is an experiment in the meaning of meaning. With some exceptions (The "Four Quartets" of T. S. Eliot, perhaps), the experimental forms have worked to displace or radically to alter the traditional Christian post-Enlightenment experience of relationship with God. Freudian, Jungian, Marxist, Darwinian, Bergsonian, existentialist, phenomenological, symbolic/allegorical, surrealist, apocalyptic, and eclectic mystical forms have all tended to rework, or reword, redo or undo our traditional apprehension of God and of our possibilities for relationship with Him. Until one of our Christian communicators makes clear for our communities the purposes of contemporary form in serious films, we shall probably succeed with film groups by means of exploitation of the art at the expense of misinterpretation and critical vulnerability to the self-same art.

This is not to suggest that such clarification would automatically become an indictment of modern art forms. However, recognition of the present formal experiments as experiment in the meaning of meaning will preclude, in our opinion, any attempt to identify such forms with God or with His means of salvation.

When one of our Christian students of communication is willing to tackle the job of criticizing forms as a means to new meanings—meaning so new in the 20th century as to be only fearfully admitted by most of us and scarcely comprehended by any—we, as a community of Christ, may be better equipped to understand our posture and function under the cross and the resurrection in the midst of those larger human communities that gather before our contemporary films.

Duane Mehl