

especially in his work on biblical narrative, and by his colleague George Lindbeck with his notion of expressive-linguistic communities. While this notion gave inner coherence to a postliberal theology, it did not entirely satisfy the claims for truth: did truth have any referent beyond the community?

K. then turns to the question of meaning as articulated in liberal and postliberal approaches, and finds a resource in William P. Alston's work on meaning as a possible bridge between liberal and postliberal approaches to truth, and the limitations of each. K. does not pursue the works of those who have used Alston's insights to resolve the problems in this area; rather he analyzes the philosophical differences that have been at the basis of liberal and postliberal theology from the point of view of understandings of religious language and truth. And in so doing he has made a signal contribution to our understanding of twentieth-century theology.

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*Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was.* By Gerhard Lohfink. Translated from the German by Linda M. Maloney. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2012. Pp. xvi + 391. \$39.95.

Lohfink, professor of New Testament at Tübingen from 1973 to 1987, resigned his position to live in the Integrierte Gemeinde after the model of Acts 2:42–47. This volume is the fruit of 50 years of scholarly research and faith-filled living.

Chapter 1 is decisive. Against many “historical Jesus” critics, L. demonstrates what Carl Becker had shown American historians in 1931: there are no uninterpreted facts, and bald facts communicate no meaning. The evangelists did what documentary filmmakers do—cut, recombine, allude, and comment—to interpret the meaning of Jesus for their community. The task is to find not “the facts” but the right interpretation of Jesus’ life. For this, faith is indispensable. L. interprets Jesus not against the Gospels, but as a member of a community that has given us the only credible interpretation of the facts.

L.’s 18 chapters follow the usual outline of Jesus books. The first 12 chapters describe what Jesus wanted, under the topics of the proclamation and meaning of the reign of God, the gathering of Israel, and the call to discipleship in many forms: Jesus’ parables and his miracles, his warnings about judgment, and his view of the OT and the Torah. The next six chapters describe who he was, living his Father’s will unconditionally, his commitment to the reign of God, and the ways his life and death for Israel laid a sovereign claim to which the church responded in faith. In brief, Jesus wanted a response to the reign of God breaking into history through his proclamation, teaching, and healings. His absolute commitment to that reign was both the eschatological fulfillment of Torah and the basis for his scandalous claims to ultimate authority. Those claims ground the church’s calling him Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, Lord.

Like Ben F. Meyer, E. P. Sanders, and N. T. Wright, L. finds Jesus not understandable apart from his identity as a first-century Jew. Against those who identify the reign of God as a spiritual realm within individual subjects, Jesus' reign had to be visible as a new society in the experimental field of a small nation, so that it could be apprehended by the whole world. The reign Jesus announced is already powerfully present for those who commit themselves to it in faith. L.'s pervasive emphasis on Jesus' gathering of eschatological Israel corrects the dispensationalism of older exegetes. Jesus' teaching, then, is seen not as a new law but as the interpretation of the center of the Torah. Finally, it was monotheistic Jewish Christian communities, not Greek ones, that made Jesus Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, and Lord.

Jesus' absolute commitment to God's reign breaking in with eschatological power leads to his "reckless" life and to harsh demands on his disciples. These can be explained only by the joy and fascination of a treasure found in the field, one that produces the Gospels' hundredfold—houses and family, liters of wine, and baskets of food. When the church is totally committed, it is a new society, enjoying, amid persecutions, the abundance of the new creation (86). This fascination makes the church not a utopia, but a concrete historical society in which people support one another in Jesus' radical selflessness, which alone can bring peace on earth.

Beyond the innumerable insights of each chapter lies the sheer readability for the layman. L.'s Jesus as a first-century Jew is much closer to the historical Jesus than is the cynic of J. D. Crossan. Incorporating faith into interpretation enables L. to see Jesus' reign "already" fully present in God's omnipotence and "not yet" operative because of human refusal to commit in faith, both in Jesus' ministry and in the contemporary church.

There are exegetical problems, such as an occasional proof-texting, as with Romans 3:13 (212). L.'s "representation" may explain atonement, but not "substitutional" atonement (262–65). His admirable locating of Jesus' teaching at the center of the Torah ignores Jesus' negation of many of its laws and so diminishes the striking novelty of his teaching, which was as countercultural to his Jewish world as it is to every culture (122).

L.'s Catholic faith is implicit and crucial throughout the book. The fundamental problem of his subtitle is that Jesus' claims, or even his "self-understanding" implicit in those claims, are not all that Jesus was. Once L. admits the authenticity of the Gospel interpretations, he must deal with what Mark says about Jesus in the voice from heaven in 1:11 and 9:7. "My beloved Son" may mean the Messiah, but L. does not say so. And what of Jesus' self-understanding expressed in the "thunderbolt" of Matthew 11:27/Luke 10:22? Once L. has (rightly) admitted faith as an element of his quest, what are his criteria for excluding texts that the Synoptics considered important for their "authentic" interpretation of Jesus? To answer this question we must go even beyond Meyer's method (in his *The Aims of Jesus* [1979]) of interrelating history and theology to a more formal collaboration of exegesis and systematic theology.

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