

TEN BOOKS TO RESCUE FROM THE FIRE

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When asked to write an article of 600 words on the 10 books which I would wish to rescue from my burning house, I thought it would be a relatively simple decision to make. A little reflection made me change my mind. What of all my Bible commentaries? What of my Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament, plus my Brown, Driver and Briggs Lexicon to the Hebrew OT, Bauer's Lexicon to the Greek NT and Liddle and Scott's Greek Lexicon? Which books of systematic theology and the many related theological works am I to select, and above all, those I have on the life and teaching of Jesus? If I tried to take all I wanted to keep I'd stagger under the weight and be overcome by smoke and flames and perish with the books!

Eventually I decided I would try to choose 10 seminal books on biblical theology, so long as I was allowed to include works which had more than one volume. G von Rad's two volume *Theology of the Old Testament* comes under that category. It is a magnificent survey of the Old Testament and very significant for understanding the New Testament.

Joachim Jeremias set out to write a work on New Testament theology. He completed the first volume, devoted to the teaching of Jesus, but died before writing the second volume. Jeremias was a meticulous NT scholar, with a profound knowledge of Jewish history and thought and his first volume on Jesus concentrates the findings of many of his articles and books.

Wolfhart Pannenburg's *Jesus God and Man* is an excellent summary of christology in all its aspects, including soteriology, the incarnation and the doctrine of the Trinity. I would not wish to be without P T Forsyth's *The Cruciality of the cross*. It is the most moving work on the death of Christ I have ever read. The 1938 reprint of lectures on the same theme, *The Work of Christ*, contains a memoir of Forsyth by his daughter. She pointed out that while he was capable of writing simply for the laity, when writing for trained theological minds, he demanded everything they had of mental and spiritual grasp: "At these times he was wrestling with thoughts almost beyond human expression; and he

wrote with a physical and nervous intensity which shook the desk, and which after an hour or two left him utterly spent, stretched out white and still upon his study couch, until the Spirit drove him back to pen and paper". When Forsyth wrote on the nature and significance of the atonement, his spirit was moved to the limit as he rooted the doctrine in the holiness and grace of God revealed in Christ.

The death of Jesus is complemented by his resurrection - in the Fourth Gospel the two events are one. None has written on the resurrection of Jesus more powerfully and persuasively than Walter Kunneth in his *The Theology of the Resurrection*.

Room can be found in one's pocket for C H Dodd's book, *The Parables of the Kingdom* - I would wish to retain it for the sake of its second chapter. There Dodd set forth the thesis that the message of Jesus is concentrated in the proclamation of the presence of the kingdom of God in his ministry. His death and resurrection therefore fall within the kingdom rather than forming the condition of its coming. This accords with the dynamic nature of the kingdom of God, i.e. God in action for the salvation of the world. Accordingly the kingdom of God is one unbroken process of God the Father saving]y at work in the Son.

This one may learn from W G Kummel's *Promise and Fulfilment*, the most succinct and authoritative work on the teaching of the synoptic gospels concerning the kingdom of God. One NT commentary I would wish to rescue is Rudolf Schnackenburg's *The Gospel According to St John*. It runs to three volumes and is the most extensive, learned and helpful commentary on that gospel.

Two remaining books will complete the ten. IVP has published *A Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* and *A Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, which combine, in a superb manner, introductions to the books of the NT with descriptions of their contents. These volumes are encyclopaedic in size. A third is due to be published at the end of 1997, *A Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments*.

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