

Spolek přátel ETF
Association of Friends of the PTF

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Review of some works of contemporary teaching
at the Protestant Theological Faculty in Prague
(from the last 3 years of the *Theologická Reflexe* – the magazine of this faculty)

Jindřich HALAMA, Christian Ethics, Eschatology and Utopian Thought (2003,1)

In spite of post-modern disappointments, resignations and the lack of a compact conception – there is the wish of hope and the orientation to the future. The reformation has emphasised the eschatological perspective including the criticism against the present behaviour of the present settled church. But the contemporary wish to understand the present culture as a harmonious compact unit may lead to the loss of this eschatological perspective.

Some the radical movements in history did not hesitate to introduce a kind of utopia into its theology. The same is valid of the theology of liberation. The critics of it (most outstanding of them P.Tillich) warn against the danger of identifying the promises of the kingdom of heaven with any present conception. How to live with the hope and still to keep a realistic view? The utopia undoubtedly wakens up the creativity. But the concentration on utopia has counterproductive consequences in the long-term.

To follow the cross means to be open to hope. Protestant ethics always remain in the middle between absolutisation and resignation.

Martin PRUDKÝ, Old Testament Studies in the Last Decade of the 20th Century(2003,2)

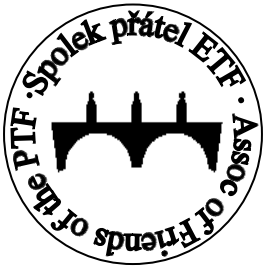
Contemporary research in Old Testament studies cannot offer an easily definable survey, as it was the case until the 1960s. But a number of specific studies can be offered.

Everything is in movement and provides an open picture, it is on the stage of redefining. Traditional historiography is shaken by critical investigation both from inside and outside of theology. Archaeology no longer offers a proof of historical events, there are quarrels between hermeneutical and historical explanations, and contemporary research shows both uncertainty and readiness for a new point of view.

Literary studies no longer ask about the origin of the texts. This was the synchronic approach, which left the effort for structural analysis, but the combination of both synchronical and diachronical is possible nowadays. The general agreement between the two sources (Priesterschrift and Deuteronomical) remains, but the statutory authority of about 450-400 was most decisive. Canonical necessity started to play a role already at the time of the origin of some texts. And intertextuality was the result of all these influences.

Attention has been paid also to the history of reception. The Jewish community has been introduced into this research and the tension between the Judaist and Christian anti-Judaist explanation brings remarkable fruits.

In the theology of the OT the restructuralization of the whole field is obvious. (Five authors are named.) The broadening of perspectives and the plurality of contexts cannot be overlooked. Anyway these deconstructory elements introduce new hopes and the answer for a number of new questions is to be expected.



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Ladislav BENEŠ, Pastoral Care in the 1990s and its Continuing Development (2003,1)

Pastoral Care experienced a kind of turning point in the 1960s, when it opened itself to the influences of social sciences and adopted a lot of methods of psychology and psychotherapy. It could have been described as a dispute between the "kerygmatic" and the "counselling" pastoral care. Later on the Clinical Pastoral Care has been introduced, but the theological foundations for pastoral care must not be abandoned. The counselling means the dialogue including the learning of the pastor. To understand the client requires the whole context of his relationships and to help him to observe his life from a different perspective.

Many authors still confront their discoveries with the work of Eduard Thurnaysen, who strongly represented the "kerygmatic" approach.

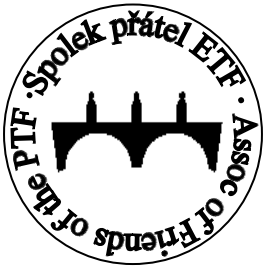
Petr MACEK, What kind of Theology? (2003,2)

The article asks about the manner and the task of theology as an academic discipline and as a project of Christian self-understanding. Theology vis-à-vis the church, the academic public and the whole society. The author opposes the distinction between confessional theology as a private matter and as a neutral religionistic matter. He names five possible types of theology – from very actual, coming out from the present view of the general human experience, through to the classical traditional approach, including fundamentalism. The author pleads for more levels of responsibility on the part of theologians and their readiness to meet several contemporary challenges, but they must not leave the core matter – the Gospel.

Ladislav HEJDÁNEK, Reflexions on Faith and Metaphysics (Is Theology possible Without Metaphysics?) (2004,1)

Christian Theology has been very much influenced by the old Greek metaphysical thinking over many centuries. But this way of thinking has been much shaken to its foundations nowadays. Therefore it is necessary to avoid this kind of use of it, but theology cannot function without some sort of philosophical apparatus.

So contemporary theologians try to follow this break with the old metaphysics and make steps to abandon "objective" thinking and start to reflect the faith – to articulate the reality which is "not yet" and still "coming".



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Jan KRANÁT, Philosophy on the Threshold of the new Millenium (2005,1)

The author provides an overview of the current philosophical discussion. He does not find any mainstream of philosophical thought in the last decade, but he names the three-fold characteristics of the contemporary thinking: post-analytical, post-structuralist and post-phenomenological. These are the authors who serve him as the most outstanding examples of these characteristics: Richard Rorty, Francois Lyotard and Emmanuel Levinas. Special attention is given to the "theological turning-point" (M.Henry, P.Ricoeur, J.L.Marion and J.L.Chrétien).

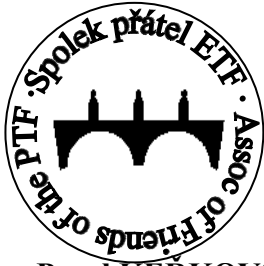
The present criticism must not be overlooked, for which Peter Sloterdijk is a notable representative. Criticism, irony to the point of self-destructing sarcasm. It seems to be a kind of final exhaustion of philosophical thinking, which offers also a kind of achievement of peace, the mundane wisdom. It is Asia which may be the future center of responsible thinking.

Milan BALABÁN, Justice in the Old Testament (2005,1)

Justice- ZEDAQUA is in the OT subordinated to God's will. It is more a kind of metaphysics than a matter of ethics. It is close to peace and mercy. It is a manifestation of God's presence among his people and it's proper location is the sacramental room. It was the prophets who promoted this justice with its social consequences. Where it is introduced, it helps even the fertility of the earth. Thóra is understood more as a lesson than as a juridical term. Full justice may be realized only in the eschatological future.

Petr MACEK, Scientific Theology of Alister McGrath (2005,1)

Al. McGrath, teacher in Oxford, theologian and natural scientist, deals with the topic of the mutual relations between the two fields. He is the author of the book of Scientific Theology, which contains 3 volumes: Nature, Reality and Theory. He works out systematically a method by which he investigates the parallels between theological doctrines and scientific theories.



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Pavel KÉRKOVSÝ, Human Dignity and the Language of Biblical Reflection in the Work of Božena Komárková (2005,2)

Božena Komárková (a Czech lady-philosopher 1903-1997) contributed to a close relationship between philosophy and theology. She observed that many biblical authors make use of legal terminology for proclaiming the word of God. The use of legal terms (justice, covenant, law, grace, debt, forgiveness etc.) is to be found in many biblical narratives, sayings, hymns, parables and in the Torah.

This kind of language is appropriate for expressing God's will, because it uses anthropomorphic metaphors and it is theology, who transcends the possibilities these methods. The last aim is the expression of God's mercy and love. We cannot avoid this way of speaking, because this is the way how to express that we are the partners of the dialogue with God. We are called to responsibility.

Thanks to Christ a dignity is offered to all of us. For Komárková it was her starting point for a critical view of all human institutions on one hand, and for her strong intervention for human rights on the other.

The most important event in the publicistic of Czech theology of last many years was – after decades – an essential Czech theological book of about 400 pages. It is

Jakub TROJAN, Jesus' Story – a Challenge for Us (Prague, Oikoumene 2005)

Trojan deals with the core of the christological topic: what is the center of the confession of Jesus Christ? Is it his death and resurrection or his whole life?

He describes in his extensive Introduction what is the church's confession of Christ during history – in the patristic church, in the catechisms, in the hymnary books and what are the questions of our time.

Then 4 parts of the book follow:

The theology of the cross in the Czech protestant tradition of 20th century

The Dispute with european theologians

The systematical intermezzo

The authors interpretation of Jesus' story

Trojan deals with the traditional doctrine of the cross as the center of Christian confession and dares to explain this statement as historically conditioned, and therefore out of date. He analyzes the present way of life and the contemporary questions of life and comes to conclusion, that a number of historical statements of catechism and teachings of the church have lost their meaning.

The most doubtful object of his attack is the understanding of the death of Jesus as the substituted sacrifice, as the old-testamental redeeming ritual sacrifice. In this regard the Epistle for Hebrews for instance has lost its value of meaning. He interprets the sacrifice in a very civic way, like the challenge for any human being to be ready for small or greater offers in every day.

According to Trojan the center of Jesus' meaning is not his death on the cross, but his whole life – and the passion was only the practical consequence of the obedient life, but perhaps not necessary. It could not have been God's will, planned in advance. The whole life of Jesus is a challenge for all people's relation to God and to their neighbours.

Blahoslav Hájek 28. January 2006