The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel. By John P. Meier. New York: Paulist, 1979, pp. vii + 270, $5.95 paper. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew.* By Robert E. Obach and Albert Kirk. New York: Paulist, 1978, pp. iv + 296, $4.95 paper.

These two publications both deal with Matthew, but their concerns and emphases are rather different. The *Commentary* by Obach and Kirk is a study guide to Matthew, designed for the Roman Catholic diocese of Memphis. The lay orientation is amply attested by the simple prose, attractive line drawings taken from the *Good News Bible* (as is the text of Scripture) and the brief glossary at the end of the volume. It is quite uncluttered with footnotes. Designed to be used over an eight-week course of studies, the book is a welcome sign that there is an increasing interest in lay Bible study among modern Roman Catholics.

There is a mild use of modern critical orthodoxy. For example on 16:17, where Jesus tells Peter that his insight into who Jesus is came by revelation from the Father, the authors comment: "From every indication of the Christian Scriptures, the recognition of the complete identity of Jesus did not come until after His death and resurrection. What we have here, then, is an instance in which Matthew reads the post-resurrection belief of the Church back into the ministry of Jesus" (p. 175). Some readers of Matthew may think of another possibility.

The other book, Meier's *Vision of Matthew*, is an intriguing attempt to link modern ethical questions with a critical study of Matthew. At the technical level Meier disputes the thesis of J. D. Kingsbury to the effect that the crucial title in Matthew's Christology is "Son of God." Meier thinks "Son of Man" is no less central and that the heart of this gospel

is not Christology per se but the bond between Christ and his Church.

The second pole of the book is generated by concerns springing from *Human Sexuality*, a report (1977) submitted to the Catholic Theological Society of America. Meier is upset that there is not more solid exegesis and theological reflection in the report, and his book is in part an attempt to meet this need.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 introduces Matthew and his gospel. The stance taken accepts the moderate conclusions of contemporary critical orthodoxy. "Remodeling" is the term Meier uses for the changes Matthew had apparently made on his sources, and redaction criticism is the means of retrieving them. Part 2 is a running commentary on the gospel with the express purpose of showing the nexus between Christ and the Church. Part 3 then turns to crucial moral questions, focusing first on Matt 5:17-20 and then on 5:21-48.

The book deals with fairly technical questions at a level the proverbial well-read clergyman can grasp. But this, of course, means that some things are seriously oversimplified. One of the biggest weaknesses of the book, I think, is that it is really two books: It does not hang together very well. But perhaps we should not complain about getting two for the price of one.

D.A.C.