

themelios

April 1987

In this issue

Rolfing Memorial Library

JUL 7 1987

Editorial: Men and women in the church 73

Jesus and the poor: two texts and a tentative conclusion 80
Hans Kvalbein

Work, faith and freedom 88
John W. Gladwin

Three commentaries on Matthew: a review 89
Gerhard Maier

Book reviews 93

An international journal for theological students
75p

Vol. 12

No. 3

themelios

Vol. 12 No. 3

An international journal for theological students, expounding and defending the historic Christian faith. It is published three times a year jointly by the British Theological Students Fellowship, a constituent part of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. It seeks to address itself to questions being faced by theological students in their studies and to help readers to think out a clear biblical faith.

Editors

General editor

David Wenham, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford OX2 6PW, England

Consulting editors

Jim Stamoolis (IFES Theological Students' Secretary), Paul Woodbridge (TSF Secretary)

Associate editors

John Gladwin, Martin Goldsmith, Donald Macleod, Martin Selman, Tony Lane, David Wright

International editors

Kwame Bediako (Ghana), Samuel Escobar (America), Hans Kvalbein (Norway), Gerhard Maier (Germany), Masao Uenuma (Japan), Chris Wright (India)

Committee

David Wenham, Jim Stamoolis, Paul Woodbridge. IFES representatives: Karl Leung, Marc Schachtler, Geoff Wood, Jacob Thomas. TSF representatives: Andrew Hodder-Williams, Andrew Barker, Jared Hay.
Corresponding members: Fabrice Lengronne, Bill Mangrum.

Contributors

While contributors express their own views, it is expected that they are in agreement with the theological position of the TSF and IFES. Articles should be submitted to the general editor or (in case of North America) to Dr Jim Stamoolis, 154 Frothingham Ave., Jeanette, Pennsylvania 15644, USA

Reviews

Books for review should be sent to Mr A N S Lane, London Bible College, Green Lane, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2UW, or (North American books) to Dr Jim Stamoolis (address as above).

Orders

Great Britain & Ireland (also overseas subscribers to *Christian Arena*)

Themelios, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP

North America and Canada

TSF, 6400 Schroeder Road, PO Box 7895, Madison, WI 53707-7895, USA

All other

IFES, 55 Palmerston Road, Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 7RR, England (subscriptions payable with order forms available from IFES)

Subscription rates

(including postage)

British Isles £3.20

Subscribers in the Republic of Ireland please pay in sterling. (Payments can be made to our National Giro Account Number 5038316, marked for *Themelios*.)

Elsewhere (surface mail, including bank charges) for orders through the appropriate address shown above

1 year £3.20

US \$9.00

2 years £6.40

US \$17.00

3 years £9.60

US \$25.00

(If air mail required, please add for each year's subscription £2.75/\$5.00.)

Back Numbers

Each issue of *Themelios* can only contain a few articles; but there is a wealth of useful material in back issues. Information about the contents and availability of back issues may be obtained from TSF, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP, England.

ISSN 0307-8388

Editorial:

Men and women in the church

Every Christian is committed to the good news that Jesus is a liberator. But Christians are thoroughly divided over the general question of women's liberation and over the particular question of woman's place in the church's ministry. Some believe that Christ's liberating work includes liberation from bondage to traditional male/female roles; others believe that patriarchy is part of the divine design for creation and that liberation lies in recognizing the design not in seeking to escape from it.

What does the Bible have to say on the matter? The fact that Christians, including Bible-believing Christians, are so divided over the issue indicates that it is not easy to establish the Bible's teaching. Three things make the task a difficult one: first, there is the fact that the issue is a very emotive one; second, there are problems in the relevant biblical texts; third, it is not easy, even when one has established the original meaning of a particular text, to think out how the text applies in today's world. These three difficulties are present in all biblical interpretation to a greater or lesser extent; but they are particularly clearly illustrated in this case.

The problem of prejudice

Scholars sometimes tell us that we must approach the Bible without any presuppositions — with a totally open mind. However, although it is both an academic and theological ideal that we should come to Scripture seeking to listen to it and not to impose our own views and prejudices on it, we are foolish if we think that we can or do come with a blank mind to our studies. In fact the scholars who advocate presuppositionless exegesis often in practice betray their own presuppositions very clearly; and their plea that we should discard our presuppositions is in reality an invitation to those with traditional Christian presuppositions to discard those in favour of other more secular ones!

Few people who have thought about the question of the Bible's teaching on man and woman can fail to be aware of the difficulty of approaching the issue with anything like objectivity. On the one hand, all of us have been brought up in churches and families (and in a society) where men and women have had particular roles; and the patterns with which we are familiar may well seem normal and right to us. We will be inclined to seize on the scriptural evidence that appears to confirm the rightness of these patterns, and we will feel threatened by those who question our view of things. Those of us who are men may also feel disinclined to see traditional patterns change, because we rather enjoy them; and, of course, some women enjoy them too, whether rightly or wrongly. On the other hand there are now, particularly in Western society, very strong pressures in the other direction: it is, to say the least, fashionable to argue against traditional male/female stereotypes and to advocate the opening up of traditional male roles to women. The trend is so strong in

some places that it can be very difficult and uncomfortable to question the new 'orthodoxy', even if you think such questioning to be right; and the pressure to read Scripture in a way that fits in with the dominant fashion is strong. Personal factors also enter in again: whereas many men find the feminist trend threatening, many women find it exhilarating and feel really hurt by the traditional patterns that still prevail in church and society; both have vested interests in the outcome of the theological debate.

How is the Christian interpreter to escape the distorting influences of his social situation and background in approaching vexed issues of biblical interpretation? The fact is that we will never achieve perfect objectivity. But we can and should seek to reduce the distortion, *first*, by recognizing our own sinfulness and selfishness, and so coming to issues in humility and prayerfulness. We need to recognize that we are often wrong and that we are constantly tempted to read Scripture in ways that suit us; we need, therefore, to ask God to correct and mould our undertaking, however hard that may be for us. We must be prepared to change. Too often we come to issues with minds made up and in an almost belligerent spirit, which apart from anything else prevents us from really listening to our fellow Christians in the way that we should.

We need, *second*, to be aware of the social pressures that we are under: to pretend to be impartial is dangerous. To recognize that we are children of our times, influenced by our upbringing and by social trends, will enable us to allow for this in our interpretation of Scripture, and so to listen to Scripture more sensitively and accurately. Our goal must be to allow God's Word to be the testing-stone of our ideas, and not (as is so easy) to allow our ideas to be determinative of our understanding of Scripture; a recognition of the social pressures that colour our outlook will help us in this. The teaching of Scripture will not, of course, always contradict the traditions (ancient or modern) of society; many of our traditions are good and God-given. On the other hand, many other traditions and trends are evil, for example the trend towards sexual 'freedom' (so-called), and we must constantly be on our guard against allowing our thinking and our lives to be conformed to the ways of the world (Rom. 12:2). Yet other trends and traditions are a mixture of the good and the bad: for example, it is good that we today have learned to respect the cultures and religions of non-Christians, but it is not good (though fashionable) to regard all religions as equally valid ways to God. The challenge, then, is to allow Scripture to judge us and our traditions — whether our ecclesiastical traditions (e.g. on questions such as baptism or ministry), our economic traditions (e.g. whether we are capitalists or socialists), our ethical traditions and our social traditions.

So on the issue of men and women in the church, the question is whether traditional patterns of male/female

relationships in family and society are supported or put in question by the teaching of Scripture, or whether — and this is perhaps the most likely situation in a sinful world — Scripture affirms certain aspects of the tradition, and puts in doubt other aspects. Similarly with the modern feminist movement, the question is whether the movement is thoroughly biblical, fundamentally secular, or a mix of good and bad.

Although it is valuable to recognize the interests, traditions and trends that influence us, it is, of course, not always easy or even possible to do so accurately. Many of us are conscious of being quite mixed up in our approach: we are influenced by the traditions of the church and of our childhood, and also by the pulls of modern society; we are influenced by our own self-interest and also by a desire not to allow that to dominate our thinking; we are influenced in one direction or the other by people we know — perhaps by women in ministry and/or by advocates of a particular approach. To recognize that we are mixed up is no bad thing, if it leads us to humility, to a seeking of the Holy Spirit's guidance, to a charitable attitude to other Christians and their views, and to a real and earnest desire to know the truth of Scripture. Indeed such an attitude will be positively conducive to an accurate hearing of God's word in Scripture.

The biblical data

It would be wrong to suggest that the problems of establishing the biblical teaching on men and women are only the result of our own subjectivity. The biblical data itself poses problems. The biblical data can be divided into two categories: there are particular passages that discuss men and women and their relationships; there are also more general considerations about how men, women and God himself are described in the Bible.

Specific passages

It is not possible to refer to all the relevant passages, but among the most important are, first, *the creation narratives of Genesis 1-3*. Genesis 1:27 is a key text and relatively uncontroversial: 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them': male and female together constitute God's climactic creation of 'man' in his own image. Genesis 2 raises more questions: woman here is described as taken out of man and created for man as a 'helper suitable for him' — literally 'a help corresponding to him' (2:18). Does this imply that woman is seen as having an auxiliary role to that of man? Many commentators deny this, pointing out that the word 'helper' need have no such connotations, since it is used elsewhere in the OT of God's help given to Israel. On the other hand, other interpreters argue that the over-all context of Genesis 2 does point to woman's 'helping' role as being a supportive rather than a leading one. They can claim Paul's support for this understanding (though see below for further discussion of his teaching). Whichever view is correct, the passage is in no way demeaning to woman: on the contrary, she is a God-given companion, 'corresponding to' Adam, and is joyfully welcomed by him as 'bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'. If her role is seen as different from man's, it is still a complementary and not an inferior one.

Genesis 3 also deserves a mention. In 3:16 the woman is told that 'your desire will be for your husband, and he will

rule over you'. Since this comment is in the context of God's cursing Adam and Eve for their disobedience, 'the rule' of man over woman referred to seems to be an unpleasant fact of life under the curse (like the thorns and thistles referred to a few verses later — a problematic aspect of life after the fall to be controlled, not encouraged) rather than God's original and intended design for male/female relationships. But whether the thought is of married relationships being spoiled by the introduction of attitudes that are entirely alien to God's intended order, or of such relationships being spoiled and made unpleasant by the distortion of God-given tendencies (affection and leadership) — compare the preceding reference to the pains of child-birth — is less clear.

It may be worth adding that the question of the effect of the fall on male/female relationships is an important one. It is possible to argue that the biblical teaching about man being 'head' of woman and about women submitting to men is less an expression of God's created order and more an accommodation to the unideal situation of the human race after the fall. On the basis of this it can be argued that in the church as the new creation of Christ we should not be content to go on living according to the post-fall order of things — with man 'ruling' woman — but should recover the original intention of God, as expressed in the NT, for example, in Galatians 3:28. Whether it is plausible to read either Genesis or Paul's teaching about the order of creation and the place of submission in the Christian life this way is debatable. We shall be looking at the Pauline passages in due course.

The other OT passage that deserves a mention, even though it is not controversial, is *Proverbs 31:10-31*, where there is a description, unparalleled in Scripture, of the noble wife. She is a powerful and impressive person in her own right, an effective businesswoman, though one whose business is the management of and provision for her household.

In the NT it is Paul who speaks most of male/female relationships and who causes most of our exegetical problems. However, before looking at some of the problem passages, various fairly uncontroversial points are worth making. *First, despite some common misjudgments, Paul was a firm believer in male and female equality in Christ*. This is made very clear in the much-quoted verse Galatians 3:28: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' Paul's assertion of male and female equality before God is unequivocal. Within marriage too Paul believes in equal rights and responsibilities: 'The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife' (1 Cor. 7:3-4).

Second, Paul is without question a believer in women's ministry. This is clear from Romans 16, where he first commends Phoebe, 'deacon' from Cenchreae, for her faithful ministry, referring to her as his 'helper' or 'patron' (vv. 1-2). He then refers to the famous wife-husband team of Priscilla and Aquila as 'my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus'. Whether Romans 16:7 shows that Paul believed in female apostles is much less certain, depending both on whether we should read 'Junia', feminine, or 'Junias', masculine, but also more

broadly on how Paul understands the phrase 'they are outstanding among the apostles'. (Compare Col. 4:15, where it is quite likely that the person referred to is Nympha, a woman, rather than Nymphas, a man. Presumably she played a leading role in the church in her home, though exactly how the house churches functioned and related to the wider Christian community is uncertain.)

But, although it is clear enough that Paul believed in male/female equality and in women's ministry, other aspects of his teaching are less clear and more controversial. To return first to *Galatians 3:28*: there has been considerable discussion as to the implications of this Pauline text. The general context of Paul's remarks is a discussion of salvation in Christ and the immediate context is a reference to baptism. It is quite clear from this (and other Pauline texts) that Paul believes that so far as salvation and church membership are concerned there is complete equality between Jew, Greek, slave, free, male and female. What is less clear is what social implications Paul's words may have, particularly for the question of male/female relationships.

On the one hand, it is possible to argue that Paul is not speaking about the organization of society at all in this context, but only about salvation, and that we can see from other passages that his convictions about spiritual equality do not lead him to believe in identical leadership roles for men and women in family or church. On the other hand, it is possible to argue that Paul's teaching on spiritual equality certainly did have social implications for him, as is evident from Galatians itself where he is discussing relationships between Jewish and Gentile Christians. So far as Galatians 3:28 is concerned with its three examples, 'neither Jew nor Greek ... neither slave nor free ... neither male nor female', it is argued that all Christians are willing to acknowledge the social relevance of the first two pairs — 'neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free' — and that it is arbitrary to deny such relevance to the final pair, 'neither male nor female'. It is acknowledged that Paul in his situation allowed for existing social patterns — male/female, slave/free — to be continued (with transforming safeguards), but it is argued that this was an accommodation to a particular situation in an unideal and fallen world, and that, just as Christians came to recognize that the logic of Paul's principles entailed the abolition of slavery, so now we are recognizing the logic of his principles for male/female relationships.

This position is plausible, and yet some would raise questions about it, arguing, first, that Paul's three pairs are not all of the same order, the distinction between slave and free, for example, being the evil creation of sinful man and therefore rightly eliminated, the distinction between male and female, on the other hand, being the good creation of God and impossible and wrong to eliminate. They argue, secondly, that although Paul's principle of spiritual equality must transform all relationships and rule out all exploitation by Christian leaders (including exploitive employment such as slave-owning), the logic of his position is not obviously the abolition of all differing roles in society: Paul believes in the rightness and value of recognized leadership within the redeemed church of God, as well as within the family (e.g. parents and children) and within the state, and does not see properly exercised authority as conflicting in any way with a mutual and loving recognition of each other as equal members of God's family.

In reply to this last point, it might be argued that Paul sees authority structures only as a temporary necessity in a fallen world (see the discussion of Genesis 3 above); but it is doubtful if other Pauline passages allow this view, or whether Paul could ever have envisaged the church outgrowing its need for such structures.

The next important passage to consider is *1 Corinthians 11:3-16*, where according to the most common interpretation Paul argues that women prophesying or praying in the church should cover their heads with a veil. It seems likely that offence had been caused in the Corinthian church by some women who, in response to the real measure of liberation that they had experienced in Christ and in the church, had broken with the churches' convention and prayed, like the men, with uncovered head. (See 2 Cor. 3:7-18 for Paul's explanation of the significance of Christians praying with head uncovered — in contrast to Jewish custom.) In response to this situation, Paul argues that the women should cover their heads. He uses various arguments, appealing to what is 'natural' (v. 14) and to what is conventional in the church (v. 16), but more significantly developing an argument about the man being 'head' of the woman and appealing to the order of creation. The argument about male 'headship' also features in Ephesians 5:23-24. In both cases the male/female relationship is compared to Christ's relationship to God — his 'head' — and to the church's relation to him.

All sorts of questions have been raised about the passage. There are questions of detail: for example, does the Greek word *kephale* suggest a position of authority, as does the English word 'head'? Or should it be understood as meaning 'source' (referring to the Genesis story about woman being taken out of man) without connotations of authority, as some have proposed? When Paul speaks of a woman who is veiled having 'authority' on her head (v. 10), does he mean that in veiling herself she acknowledges her husband's authority, or does he mean that she thus has an authority of her own? Or does he mean both: by recognizing her husband's authority, she has delegated authority (cf. Mt. 8:9 for delegated authority)?

There are broader questions also. For example, is Paul here referring to women in general (as we might surmise from his references to creation) or is he referring particularly to wives (as we might infer from his references to the man being the head of the woman)? If his concern was with the relationships of wives and husbands in the congregation, do his remarks have relevance to women in general (including married women)? The fact that the Greek word *gune* can mean either 'woman' or 'wife' complicates our interpretative task in this and other passages.

A still more fundamental question concerns the theological force of Paul's argument: he is dealing with a particular local problem in Corinth, and it is possible to hold that he is not propounding basic principles on male and female relationships so much as seeking to remove an unnecessary cause of stumbling in the congregation. It can be argued that Galatians 3:28 represents Paul's basic principle on the male/female question — neither male nor female — and that his arguments in *1 Corinthians 11* and elsewhere are not qualifying that in any way, but are rather an application of another of Paul's basic principles, that of not causing unnecessary offence. Just as he can advise people not to exercise their

Christian liberty to eat meat if this will cause others to stumble, so he instructs Christian women to curtail their rights for the sake of harmony, as he also elsewhere urges slaves to submit to their masters. It is true that in the case of men/women relationships he appeals to the stories of creation to back up his case, but, it is suggested, this may be seen as a rabbinic-style argument in which OT texts are used to illustrate a point of view rather than as a profound theological argument about the basis for the view in question.

The alternative view is that Paul is using Genesis in a more than illustrative way, and that his argument in fact reflects a profound theological understanding of male and female relationships (in marriage at least) as patterned on divine relationships: Christ's relationship to the church is the model of the husband's relationship with his wife, and Christ's relationship with the Father, entailing as it does reflected glory, equality and submission, may be seen as the model of the wife's relationship to her husband (*cf.* 1 Cor. 11, Eph. 5 and notably 1 Cor. 15:28. A comparable Pauline use of the creation stories may be the 'one flesh' teaching in Eph. 5 and elsewhere.)

The next debated Pauline passage is *1 Corinthians 14:33-35*. Here Paul appears to take a distinctly negative line on women's ministry in the church: 'women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak. . . . It is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.' The problem with this passage is not simply that most of us today find it uncongenial taken at its face value, but also that it does not seem to fit in with the quite positive things Paul has to say elsewhere about women's ministry and in particular with what he has said in *1 Corinthians 11* about women praying and prophesying in church. Some scholars have seen the discrepancy between Paul's teaching in *1 Corinthians 11* and *1 Corinthians 14* to be so great that they have supposed *1 Corinthians 14:33-35* to contain a scribal addition to the original Pauline text. That, however, is a drastic solution to the problem, or rather an evasion of the problem, that cannot be recommended. What is much more likely is that Paul is dealing with a particular difficulty in the Corinthian worship rather than laying down general guidelines. He has been discussing various problems in the worship of the Corinthian church from chapter 11 onwards, such as their celebration of the Lord's Supper and the use of charismatic gifts. *1 Corinthians 14:33-35* should almost certainly be seen in this over-all context; but exactly what the problem with the women was is unclear. Were wives with prophetic gifts publicly questioning their husbands' prophetic utterances, and so in effect implying that their husbands should submit to them, thus contravening the Pauline teaching about wives submitting to their husbands (*cf.* 1 Cor. 14:32, 34)? It is possible that Paul is sorting out some particular abuse of this sort in *1 Corinthians 14*, rather than prohibiting all open female participation in worship and so contradicting what he said in *1 Corinthians 11*. It would seem probable that in *1 Corinthians 14* Paul had in mind a particular husband/wife problem, even if his advice also has a bearing on the over-all question of men and women in the church.

Colossians 3:18-19 and the much fuller *Ephesians 5:21-33*, with its famous comparison of marriage to Christ's relationship with the church, do not discuss participation in church life, but relationships within the family. However, it should not be assumed that it is of irrelevance to church life, since

Paul in *1 Corinthians* advocates the same sort of submissiveness on the part of women/wives in the context of worship as he advocates in *Ephesians* in the context of family life (*1 Cor.* 14:34), and he appeals to the same principle of 'headship' (with its divine parallels: 'as Christ . . .'). We have already noted the exegetical questions about the meaning of the word 'head' as it is used by Paul. It is hard to avoid the impression that in *Ephesians 5* Paul understands the husband to have a leadership role in the family, which the wife should recognize and 'submit to'.

It is worth noting that for Paul 'submission' is not something demeaning or a mark of inferiority: the Greek word used for 'submit' means literally something like 'order-oneself-under' and is distinct from the word 'obey' used by Paul of children and slaves in *Ephesians 6:1,5*. In fact, immediately before his instructions for wives, Paul urges all Christians to 'submit to one another' (*5:21*). Submissiveness is thus a Christian virtue enjoined on all, but having particular applications within the family, within the state (*Rom.* 13:1), within the church (*eg.* *1 Cor.* 16:16) and even within the Godhead (*1 Cor.* 15:28). Paul evidently believes in divinely given order and leadership structures within human (and divine) society, which all (male and female) are to recognize. Of course, such structures can be oppressive, thanks to human sinfulness and disobedience; but that is not the divine design, as is clear from Paul's very strong emphasis on the responsibility of husbands to love their wives sacrificially in *Ephesians 5*. Far from being the chattel or possession of her husband, the wife is one flesh, one person with her husband, to be loved and cherished accordingly, 'as Christ loved the church'.

The final Pauline passage to mention is *1 Timothy 2:8-15*. Here the topic is again church worship, and the instructions are reminiscent of those in *1 Corinthians 14*, with Paul teaching that 'a woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.' Paul explains this instruction by referring to the order of creation (an argument used also in *1 Corinthians 11*) and then by referring to the fact that it was Eve, not Adam, who was deceived in the garden of Eden (an argument not used before). He concludes: 'But women will be kept safe through childbirth, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety'.

This passage, like the others, raises specific exegetical questions and more general issues. Specifically, does the Greek word *authentēin* mean simply 'have authority' or (more negatively) 'domineer'? When Paul speaks of woman being saved 'through childbirth', does he mean that childbirth in itself is salvific? What then about justification by faith? Does he mean 'through the birth of the child Jesus', as some have suggested? Does he mean that motherhood is the characteristic way (though presumably not the exclusive way, since Paul knew of childless saints!) that women work out their salvation in the context of faith, love, holiness and soberness (*cf.* *1 Tim.* 5:13-14)?

The more general issues raised by the passage are the sort of issues we have noted in the context of the *1 Corinthians* passages. Is Paul addressing a particular problem or laying down general principles? At least we may conclude that he is talking about public worship in particular: elsewhere he can speak about women having a teaching and a ruling role in the

family (1 Tim. 5:10,14; Tit. 2:3). Is Paul ruling out all female leading in worship, and so taking a different line from 1 Corinthians 11, or is his emphasis on the question of authority and is he excluding women from the role of teaching 'overseer', as may be suggested by the following context in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, where the role of the overseer or bishop seems in some respects to be analogous to the role of the father in the family (*cf.* 1 Tim. 3:5) and characteristically includes teaching (3:2; *cf.* Tit. 1:9)? There is also the question of his use of the Genesis stories: is he using the OT in a purely illustrative way (some have compared his allegorical argument in Gal. 4:24-31) or is he deriving principles from the creation accounts?

There are other NT passages that could be mentioned, for example 1 Peter 3:1-7, with its emphasis on wifely submission as a means of commending the gospel and with its complementary call to husbands to treat their wives with respect as the 'weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life'. But we cannot in this editorial go further in exploring particular passages.

Broader questions

As well as the particular passages, there are broader questions of biblical interpretation involved in the man/woman issue. Is there, for example, any significance in the OT restriction of the priesthood to men or in the selection by Jesus of twelve male apostles — the latter despite Jesus' strikingly liberal attitude towards women? It is possible in both cases to explain the policy concerned as a necessary accommodation to the cultural context of the time rather than as expression of abiding principle, though not everyone would accept such an explanation.

Theologically more fundamental is the question of God's own revelation of himself as Father and Son. Those in the Catholic tradition of Christendom argue that the priest celebrating the eucharist is representing Christ and that he must therefore be male. Evangelicals who reject the idea of a specifically ministerial and eucharistic priesthood (as opposed to the priesthood of all believers) are unlikely to be impressed by this argument: for them the celebrant at the eucharist does not so much portray Christ in his or her person as point away from him or herself to Christ. However, the question still remains as to whether there is not some significance in God's revelation of himself in primarily male categories. It would be wrong to suggest that God is revealed in exclusively male categories; there are biblical passages where God's actions or attitudes are described in distinctively female categories, notably in terms of motherhood (*e.g.* Is. 42:14; 66:13). We may justifiably conclude that maleness and femaleness reflect facets of the divine nature. But it still remains the case both that God revealed himself in the man Christ Jesus, born of course of a human mother, and that the idea of the Fatherhood of God was central to Jesus' teaching. The question is what significance should be attached to these facts: was this a case of divine accommodation to the cultural context? If so, can we in a different cultural context substitute mother-language for father-language without loss, as some suggest? Or does God's revelation of himself as Father and Christ's incarnation as a man fit in with Paul's teaching about headship and submission (human fatherhood being a reflection of divine fatherhood)? If maleness and leadership/authority are somehow associated in biblical thought and

divine design, then there is an appropriateness about God's revelation of himself as Father and Son.

Application to today

The hermeneutical task does not end with the elucidation of the original meaning of the biblical passages, though, as we have seen, that is often very difficult in itself. Once the meaning of the original author is established (if it is established!), there is still the task of applying that meaning to today's situation. Western society in particular is very different from biblical society, and not least so far as women are concerned. Smaller families, mechanical household aids, and longer life expectancy mean that women are less dominated by the demands of the home and motherhood than was formerly the case; developments in education and patterns of employment mean that women are able to participate more widely in the life of society than they once were. Society's expectations have also changed very considerably, so that it is now acceptable for women to do things that were previously unacceptable. Given this new context, how is the biblical teaching to be applied? Are women to be told that marriage and childbearing are their ministries whether they like it or not? There is certainly reason to think that the Bible values motherhood extremely highly in a way that is at variance with much modern feminist teaching, and Paul's advice to young widows in 1 Timothy 5:14 is of interest. However, he is there talking to those who have once been married, and his advice to the unmarried in 1 Corinthians 7 about the opportunities afforded by celibacy suggest that marriage and children are not everyone's calling.

So far as applying the biblical teaching in the church is concerned, that is also not straightforward. Our structures of ministry are often quite different from those which seem to have obtained in Paul's churches: instead of a group of elders/bishops in each local church, often we have one 'minister' in the local church and sometimes a hierarchy of bishops with oversight over a diocese or geographical area. Many of us consider that our modern patterns need reform in various ways (notably the pattern of one-man clerical ministry); but such reform is unlikely to be quick in coming. And the question in the meantime is how to apply the biblical teaching to our situation as it is. The difficulty of doing this is evident from the divergent opinions even among those who consider that the Bible does exclude women from certain leadership roles in the church: some deny women almost any role in the public ministry of the church; others argue that women may minister in speaking and teaching under the authority of a ruling male 'elder' — she may perhaps be one of a team of elders, but not the presiding elder; some draw the line at celebrating the eucharist, whether because of a Catholic view of representative priesthood or because they see the role of the celebrant as analogous to that of the father at the head of his table; others with an episcopal system of church government believe that a woman may be in charge of a local church, but that the bishop, who has oversight over her, must be male.

Those who believe that there are no theological barriers to female ministry naturally have fewer problems of application; but even they have to face questions about the appropriate timing for change. In particular, is it appropriate to press ahead with dismantling all the traditional restrictions on

women's ministry if this will cause division and stumbling in the church? Paul considered it a matter of principle that we should consider the weaker brother, restricting our freedom and rights if necessary. He valued unity in the church much more highly than do many Protestants. If Paul's own teaching about women being submissive was a proper and justifiable accommodation to his context, may it still be right in our context? Against this it may be argued that the restriction of women in the church is in itself causing offence, so that we have to choose between one offence and another; and also that 'the weaker brother' argument must be used with care, since it can be used to oppose almost any change and so to stifle growth in the life and ministry of the church.

Some concluding observations

It is not the purpose of this editorial to come up with definitive answers to the questions discussed, nor would the author be competent or sufficiently well read to do so. Its purpose has been more to describe some of the issues involved and to give readers a rough and ready map of the complex terrain. But, although no neat solutions can be offered, some concluding remarks may be in order. *First*, when faced with very complicated issues we may sometimes be tempted to despair of finding any solutions to our questions and so to acquiesce even in hurtful divisions. We must resist this temptation, sincerely seeking God's truth and his will, in the confidence that he wants the church to be united and that he has given the Holy Spirit to guide us. But it is worth emphasizing again that, if we are to make progress with a controversial and emotive subject like this, we must approach it with a humble desire to listen to Scripture, however uncomfortable that may be to us, with a serious commitment to listen in love to others from whom we differ, and with a willingness to change and grow in our understanding and outlook.

Second, it is important to realize that, although there are many difficult and controversial questions, there are also some things that are clear and that need emphasizing: these include the equality of men and women as created by God and as redeemed in Christ, the importance of men and women in Christian ministry, and the need for mutual respect and love in society, church and family. It is important to give substance and not just lip-service to these things, and it is right for men in particular to recognize with shame that they have often failed badly and exploited what Peter calls the 'weaker sex'.

Third, it is a fact of life, created by God, that men and women are different. This point should not be exaggerated — men and women have an enormous number of things in common as equal members of the human race; but in certain important respects they are different and they are unable to fulfil the role of the opposite sex. This is obvious on the biological level: men cannot fulfil that most important (and costly) role of bearing and suckling children; it is also widely agreed, by non-Christians as well as Christians, to be true on a psychological level, even though there is a lot of controversy about which male and female characteristics are innate and which reflect the conditioning of society. Christians see the God-given differences between men and women as part of God's very good creation, as something to be respected and rejoiced in (though not to be exploited or misused, as has so

often been the case). There are two opposite dangers to be avoided so far as male/female differences are concerned: the one danger is to exaggerate the differences and to exploit them, as men have often done when treating women as playthings for their pleasure or as bearers of their children rather than as equal partners. The opposite danger is to minimize the differences and to see them as an encumbrance to be concealed (*e.g.* in unisex styles of dress, *etc.*) or ignored; it is particularly serious how motherhood, a wonderful and high calling in the Christian view (as well as a painful and demanding one), has become undervalued in many circles (though that tendency probably has as much to do with a loss in Western society of a strong concept of the family as with a particular view of the relationships of the sexes: personal and sexual fulfilment are seen as the all-important aims of marriage, with parenthood and the creating of a new family being optional extras). Christians can and should agree in the recognition of sexual differences as part of the glory of God's creation. Where Christians may — and do — disagree is over what implications, if any, these differences have for the ordering of family and church life.

Our *fourth* point is another on which people of differing theological perceptions should be able to agree, namely that the church ought to take practical and effective steps to recognize and honour women's ministry in the church. Not that the church should accede to a desire by women or men for status in God's church: our Christian calling, which we so often forget, is to take the lowest place of service, not to seek for power or authority over others. It is a fact of church history that women have often been outstanding in this respect: they have served at great cost in missionary and other situations with little recognition in the church. But, although humility and self-effacement are Christian virtues to be sought and striven for, it is emphatically not a Christian virtue to dishonour others and to fail to recognize their gifts and ministries.

It is a fact that women's ministries have very often not been honoured as they should have been, and this has caused real pain. Part of the problem has been the church's failure to live out the NT teaching about the church as a body and in particular the clericalization of the church's ministry: all lay ministry has tended to be seen as second class (whether male or female), and ordination has come to have a misplaced mystique about it. As a church we need to take seriously the fact that the ministry of the mother who brings up a family in the fear of the Lord is quite as vital and first class a ministry as that of the minister who baptizes, marries, buries and preaches. (The Roman Catholic reverence for Mary, though questionable in various ways, has good aspects, not least in giving recognition to motherhood.) We need also to support mothers practically, since bringing up children is a much less glamorous ministry than many others, makes enormous demands, often involves loneliness, and does not always bring quick rewards in terms of personal fulfilment and enjoyment.

The affirmation of the significance of motherhood must not, on the other hand, be allowed to lead to the undervaluing of other ministries for women, whether married or single, or to the effective denial of the varied gifts that God has given to women. Such denial is wrong in principle and hurtful in practice, both to the women affected (especially single and

childless women) but also to the life of the whole church, which is thereby impoverished. The church must give proper recognition and support to all women's ministry, including 'professional' ministries. There may be questions about whether male and female ministries should be identical; there should be no problem in principle about the ordination of women to ministry, and no question about equality of men and women in the faith and service of Christ.

Finally, a comment about so-called sexist language. Although opinions may differ on the question of women in ministry, the biblical language about God as Father and Son should surely be regarded as sacrosanct. However we understand the divine revelation, we dare not substitute our images of God for the divinely revealed images: the danger of idolatry is too great, and it is human arrogance to suppose that we can better the divine revelation. Using inclusive language in worship is a different thing altogether: whether we like it or not, one of the effects of the feminist movement has been to make the generic use of the English word 'man' problematic in many contexts. We may regret that we can no longer speak of 'loving our fellow-men' without some people feeling that this is to leave out our 'fellow-women'; but it is a fact that language changes, and it is hardly a disaster if modern English is coming more into line with other languages (including Hebrew and Greek) in using different words for 'man =

human being' and 'man = a male'. Certainly it should be a small thing for Christians to seek to avoid causing hurt and offence in their choice of words.

The question of man and woman in the church is often divisive, and sometimes painfully so. All of us, both men and women, do well to take to heart Paul's exhortation in Colossians 3:12: 'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.' Or, as he puts it more briefly in Ephesians 5:21: 'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ'.

¹ Books published since the 1970s include the following: Stephen Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Servant, 1980); James Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (IVP, 1981); Mary Evans, *Woman in the Bible* (Paternoster, 1983); Myrtle Langley, *Equal Woman* (Marshalls, 1983); ed. Shirley Lees, *The Role of Women* (IVP, 1984) (a collection of articles from different points of view); Elaine Storkey, *What's Right with Feminism?* (SPCK, 1985); Anne Atkins, *Split Image* (Hodder, 1987); Mary Hayter, *The New Eve in Christ* (SPCK, 1987); ed. D. A. Carson, *The Church and the Bible and the World* (Paternoster, 1987) (note the article by Ronald Y. K. Fung on 'Ministry in the New Testament').

Jesus and the poor: two texts and a tentative conclusion

Hans Kvalbein

The author, who is an international editor of Themelios, is Professor of New Testament at the Free Faculty of Oslo in Norway. The article is (substantially) the text of a lecture given by Dr Kvalbein in Taiwan during the summer of 1986.

The question of Jesus and the poor had no prominent place in NT research up to the early 1970s. The existentialist trend set by Bultmann and his school did not give priority to the social background of the NT and the socio-ethical dimension of its message. This was changed with the new awareness of the world situation in the seventies. The wave of Neo-Marxism and the widening gulf between poor and rich countries changed the theological agenda. Liberation theology challenged both the ecumenical and the evangelical movements. In recent years many biblical studies have been devoted to the question of the social setting and the ethical implications of the NT, and many authors have published studies relating to the question of Jesus and the poor.¹

In this paper I don't want to describe or comment on this discussion. I'll rather go directly to two of the most important and most discussed texts in the gospels on this topic: the beatitudes of the poor, Matthew 5:3; Luke 6:20, and the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31. And from my interpretation of these texts I want to suggest some biblical guidelines for the question of evangelism and social responsibility.²

We start with a survey of the use of the word 'poor' in the gospels. We find this word in two different contexts: it is used (1) about those who receive alms, and (2) about those who receive the gospel or the kingdom of God.

(1) The 'poor' as potential receivers of alms

The rich man asking Jesus how to inherit eternal life was told to sell all he had and give it to the poor (Mk. 10:21 and parallels). The poor are not emphasized here. They are simply the receivers of gifts from the rich man. The dominant question is not the situation of the poor, but the rich man's salvation. He was called to follow Jesus, but he went away because he was very rich.

The tax collector Zacchaeus, however, responded positively to Jesus' call (Lk. 19:8). He wanted to sell and give away half of his wealth to the poor. Here again the rich man is the main person. The poor are the receivers of his gifts.

In the story about the anointing of Jesus (Mk. 14:3-9 and parallels), we hear that the disciples protested. The precious ointment could have been sold and given to the poor. But Jesus defended the woman's action. You have the poor always with you. You can always help them.

In the story of the widow's mite (Mk. 12:41-44 and parallel), we hear that she gave to the temple, to God, all she had. The point of this story is that she gave more than the rich

who gave from their surplus. She was poor and needed support from others, but she proved her love for God with a whole heart.

The story about the rich man and Lazarus tells about a beggar lying at the rich man's door (Lk. 16:19-31). In all these texts the 'poor' are the beggars, dependent on other people's mercy and help to survive. Their need is social and material.

(2) The 'poor' as the receivers of the gospel and the kingdom of God

The Baptist once asked Jesus if he was the one to come or if he should wait for another (Mt. 11:1-6 and parallel). Jesus answered by listing the miracles he did: 'The blind receive sight, the lame walk . . . and the good news is preached to the poor.' The last expression is a quotation from Isaiah 61:1f. This text is also the preaching text of Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth according to Luke 4:18, and it is the basic text of the beatitudes of the poor in Matthew 5:3 and Luke 6:20. Isaiah 61:1-2 seems to be a sort of programmatic text for the ministry of Jesus. It is the background to all of these texts speaking about the 'poor' as the receivers of the gospel or the kingdom. These texts are not many, but they all have an emphasized position in presentations of the basic message of Jesus.

In the parable of the great banquet (Lk. 14:15-24) the two different uses of the word 'poor' are combined. The new guests to be invited, after the first had refused to come, are the 'poor and maimed and blind and lame' (v. 21; cf. v. 13). In the story these are literally the beggars of the town. But the topic of the parable is how to receive the kingdom. From this interpretation these 'poor' seem to be a metaphor for those 'tax collectors and sinners' who received the message of Jesus, not a literal description of the receivers of the kingdom.

How can we understand the relationship between these two ways of using the word 'poor'? Is the kingdom and the gospel exclusively for beggars, the receivers of alms spoken of in the first use of the word? Is Jesus' message of the kingdom a special comfort for the poor and oppressed or even part of a class struggle between the poor and their suppressors? We see that the social and ethical question of Jesus and the poor implies a semantic question about the meaning and reference of the word 'poor', especially when the word is used to designate the receivers of the kingdom. Let us first look at this question in the light of the beatitudes. Then we can discuss the position of the poor in a text about a 'potential receiver of alms', the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

I. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' — 'Blessed are you poor'

If you look at the form and context of the two versions of this beatitude, you'll find a striking similarity and some important differences.

Matthew has the expression 'poor in spirit' followed by a beatitude on 'those who mourn'. His addition to the blessing on 'those who hunger', i.e. 'and thirst for righteousness', makes it evident that he is not speaking about people who are materially poor. They are not hungering for bread or rice, but for righteousness. The context and the form of the beatitudes in *Matthew* 5:3 makes it clear that the word 'poor' is used in a metaphorical or transferred sense.

The text of *Luke* is different. The blessing of the 'poor' is here immediately followed by a blessing on 'those who hunger now'. Hunger is a typical suffering of the materially poor. *Luke* speaks about the needs of our body, and he contrasts the poverty of this present time with the glory and abundance of the world to come. And the poor are contrasted in the following woes with the rich and well-to-do in this world. They shall suffer in the coming age. For this and other reasons some scholars speak about *Luke* as the 'social gospel'. He brings the good news to the hungering and oppressed masses of the world.³

But be cautious! *Luke* is different from *Matthew* in another way also. The beatitudes of *Luke* are not in the third person, but in the second person plural. His beatitudes are directed to 'you poor', to a specific group Jesus has in front of him. The context leaves no doubt as to whom Jesus is speaking: 'Looking at his disciples, he said . . .' (v. 20). The message of Jesus according to *Luke* is not that everybody who is poor is blessed, but that the disciples, in spite of their bad condition now, are blessed because they are the receivers of the kingdom of God.

In fact neither the text of *Luke* nor the text of *Matthew* pronounces a general blessing on all the poor and oppressed in the world. But many NT scholars say that these two texts must have some common origin. And they try to reconstruct this text by eliminating all specific features in *Matthew* and *Luke* and retaining what they have in common. By this method the 'original form' of the three common beatitudes may be the following text:

Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are those who hunger, for they shall be satisfied.⁴

This reconstruction of the supposed original text may, in contrast to the text of *Luke* and *Matthew*, be understood as a broad social message of comfort to all suffering and destitute people. Jesus proclaimed that God is king, and as king he'll care for the poor and oppressed. In this way the message of the reconstructed text is interpreted as different from the message of our gospel texts.

But according to this view, this original message of Jesus has been changed by the gospel writers. *Matthew* has changed this message into a moral catechism or a catalogue of virtues. To be 'poor' is a negative description of man, but to be 'poor in spirit' is positive. *Luke* has in a different way changed the beatitudes into a message of comfort for a church in distress. This reconstruction is to be found in many scholarly books. The most elaborate argument for this reconstruction and interpretation is given by the eminent Belgian scholar Jaques Dupont in his three-volume work, *Les Béatitudes*.

I don't want now to discuss this reconstruction of the text. I want to prove that even if we presume it as a probable reconstruction of the common tradition behind the beatitudes, we

don't need to accept this interpretation of it. In fact it is not very probable that Jesus declared all poor people happy and promised to them the kingdom of God. In this context the word 'poor' does not refer to social position or material needs. I'll argue for this in four points.

1. The meaning of the word 'poor'

The most important word for 'poor' in the OT, the Hebrew *ani*, has a broader meaning than the modern European words for 'poor' (poor, pauvre, arm, fagg, etc.). We could translate it 'miserable, unhappy', like the English expression 'poor me', which can be used both by rich and poor. The Hebrew word is used in many different contexts and with different meanings.

In the laws of the OT we find rules to protect the poor from the oppression of the rich and powerful. The law, the wisdom writings and the prophets again and again encourage the Israelites to take care of the poor and protect them against exploitation. In these contexts the words evidently refer to the material poverty of those in a weak social position.

But in other contexts we see that the word has another meaning. In many psalms of lamentation we find the expression 'Hear me God, because I'm poor and needy [*ani weebjon*]'. But the psalms where this expression is used never describe a material or economic need. The typical need in these psalms is (a) social: they are persecuted by enemies who are never described as rich, but as wicked and powerful. Or their need is (b) medical: they suffer from illness, or (c) religious: they are guilty before God because they have sinned. The word can also be used in another religious meaning: to be 'humble'. In *Zechariah* 9:9 we find a description of the Messiah, the king, coming to Jerusalem. He is *zaddiq* and *ani*, 'righteous' and 'poor', not in a material or social sense, but 'humble'. Similarly the word *ani* is used to describe Israel in *Psalms* 18:27 and 2 *Samuel* 22:28.

On the basis of these texts, A. Rahlfs a century ago maintained that the *Psalms* had their origin in groups of poor Jews in post-exilic times. These 'pious poor' regarded their poverty as a part of their piety. They made a virtue out of their need and despised the rich and wealthy.⁵ The idea of the 'anawim-piety' was taken up by NT scholars and used to explain the background of Jesus and the first Christians. They suggested that the beatitudes of *Matthew* and *Luke* refer to such groups: *Matthew* to their piety and ideal of humility, *Luke* to their social position.⁶

But in fact there are no references to such groups in the historical sources! OT scholarship has refuted Rahlfs' view of the *Psalms* and their background. The thesis of 'the pious poor' has no tenable basis⁷ (though it is still alive among NT scholars). It gives a sociological solution to a semantic problem. The use of the word *ani* with a religious meaning cannot prove the existence of a special piety of the poor or a poverty of the pious. The *Psalms* is the official prayer book of the Israelites and not an apocryphal work for separate conventicles. When the Israelite in his prayers describes himself as 'poor and needy' he does not describe his economic position, but his helplessness and need before God. This language is found also in later Jewish texts like *Ecclesiasticus*, the *Psalms* of Solomon, and the Hymn Scroll from Qumran.

From the OT background we see that the word 'poor' does not always have a material or social sense. We must consider the possibility that Jesus used the word according to this liturgical language of prayer.

2. The narrow context of the beatitude of the 'poor'

The 'poor' are here put together with those who mourn and those who hunger. To the first word we must say that sorrow is not sociologically limited. You find sorrow and mourning people both among rich and poor. The word 'hunger' however describes a typical need of the materially poor. But this word can in the OT also be used metaphorically, e.g. about those who hunger for the Word of God (Am. 8:11). The narrow context gives no clear answer to the question of the meaning of the word 'poor' in the beatitudes.

3. The biblical reference to Isaiah 61:1-2

Isaiah 61:1-2 is a promise to the 'poor', the 'brokenhearted', the 'captives', the 'prisoners'; it is a word of comfort to 'all who mourn' and 'those who grieve in Zion'. Two expressions in the beatitudes are taken from this text: the 'poor' and 'those who mourn'. When we look at the content and the wider context of Isaiah 61 it is evident that the promise refers to Israel as a whole. It does not refer to a limited group of economically poor within the people, nor does it refer to all the poor and destitute in the world. These expressions describe the humiliation and the poor conditions in the Babylonian exile for the people of Israel and cannot be taken literally. At least they are understood as metaphorical descriptions of Israel in later Jewish use of Isaiah 61:1-2 (see *11QMelch*, *Targum*, *Mechilta*). This corresponds to the ministry of Jesus. He never literally liberated prisoners or captives from jail. The OT text behind the beatitudes and the use of this text in Judaism points clearly in the direction of a metaphorical use of the word 'poor' in the first beatitude.

The decisive question we have to discuss to find the meaning of the first beatitude is this: what does Jesus in other texts say about the hearers of the gospel and those who receive the kingdom of God? We have to look at the beatitude in the broader context of Jesus' message about the kingdom.

4. Jesus' message about admission to the kingdom of God

I summarize my argument in four points:

4.1 The children: 'The kingdom of God belongs to such' (Mk. 10:14ff.)

This sentence is in the Greek NT the one which is most similar to the second part of the blessing of the poor: 'for the kingdom of God is theirs'. It is impossible to take this sentence as a literal promise of the kingdom to all children. What then could be the age limit? The word is both literally a warning not to exclude children from the fellowship of Jesus, and a parabolic word about admission to the kingdom for all men.

The Greek word meaning 'such' (*toiouton*) contains an element of comparison. We should be like the children in some way. Some interpreters try to find virtues in children that we should live up to. A popular idea is that children are innocent, but this idea is not rooted in the Bible, but in the Greek connection of sexuality (puberty) with sin. In the biblical view children are sinners too, like grown-ups.

Another interpretation is that children are so trusting. They believe everything you say to them. Many think that this text encourages the grown-up to have faith like a child. I don't think that is a biblical interpretation either. The NT has many exhortations to Christians to grow in their faith, to be mature Christians, to test everything critically.

I think all interpretations that try to find positive values in children fail to capture the meaning of this text. Children receive the kingdom not because of their virtues, but simply because they are small and helpless. And God gives his gift of salvation, without asking for qualifications, to all who receive Jesus. This will be confirmed when we look at what other words say about the recipients of the kingdom.

4.2 'Not the wise and prudent, but the simple' (Mt. 11:25 and parallel)

This word doesn't talk directly about the kingdom, but its topic is closely related. The question is: who have received the revelation from God? The answer is given in the form of an antithesis: 'not the wise and prudent, but the simple'. The opposite of wise and prudent is in fact 'silly' or 'unwise'. Jesus here excludes those who are normally highly esteemed and respected by everybody. The revelation from God and the kingdom of God is not dependent on intelligence.

In this verse there is a polemical note against the scribes and the Pharisees. They believed in their knowledge and in their ability to keep the law. Therefore they did not need Jesus and rejected him. The gospel, the revelation from God, is also for helpless and stupid people. The Greek word for 'simple', *neptos*, and its Hebrew equivalent *peti*, has a meaning close to the word 'child' (see Gal. 4:1-3). The word does not here designate a virtue. Those who receive the kingdom are described *negatively*, in opposition to the positive description of the outsiders. This will be confirmed when we look at the most striking and paradoxical expressions about the recipients of salvation:

4.3 'Not the righteous, but sinners' (Mk. 2:17 and parallels)

'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.' This word is of course neither an idealization of sinners nor of the sick. Jesus wants sinners to be forgiven and the sick to be healed. The kingdom is given to them not because of, but in spite of, their situation. It is given through Jesus and by the grace of God alone. This helps us to understand the other words about those who receive. They don't describe virtues, but the basic position of men before God, in need of his wisdom and his healing and his grace.

Jesus as the friend of 'tax collectors and sinners' is a basic part of the picture of Jesus in the gospels, testified both through his words and his actions. At this point he was remarkably different from his contemporaries. He dared to cross borders within Jewish society in a new and radical way. And these borders were not set by economic or material standards. The tax collectors were not poor in our sense of the word. But they are not excluded from his 'good news to the poor'. They shall be among the first to enter the kingdom of God (Mt. 21:28-32).

This may also be the key to another important group of sayings about admission to the kingdom, which is expressed above all in many of Jesus' parables:

4.4 'Not the first invited, but the outsiders' (Lk. 14:15-24; cf. Mk. 12:1-12 and parallels; Mt. 8:11 and parallel)

In the parable about the great banquet (Lk. 14:15-24) the first invited did not want to come. Other activities seemed more important to them. But the host invited new guests: the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. These beggars in the streets and marketplaces had never been to a banquet like this before. But now they were included. And there was still room for new guests from outside the town!

This is a parable of the kingdom. In the life of Jesus these beggars correspond to the 'tax collectors and sinners'. They received the invitation to the kingdom, but the 'righteous' leaders of the people rejected it. The new groups from outside the town may correspond to the Gentiles. The parable warns the Jews not to reject Jesus' invitation to the kingdom. And it shows the possibility of a new people for the kingdom, where outsiders are included. Jesus crosses social boundaries. Your position as righteous or sinner, healthy or sick, rich or poor, or even as Jew or Gentile, is irrelevant. When you meet the invitation to the kingdom only one question counts: your relationship to Jesus. That is what Jesus said already in his answer to John the Baptist: 'Blessed is he who takes no offence at me' (Mt. 11:6f.). The blessing of the 'poor' should be read and understood in this broader context.

Conclusion

We have now argued in four steps about the possible meaning of the beatitude of the 'poor'. We may summarize the results first negatively, and then positively.

The meaning of the word 'poor' is here not the economically poor, destitute or needy. Tax collectors are also included. The meaning is not 'humble' as a positive religious and ethical virtue. The word must here be interpreted as a negative description of those who receive salvation. In the broader context of Jesus' ministry it is used in a parallel way to the description of those people as 'like children', 'simple', 'sinners', 'ill'. This is also confirmed by the nearer context speaking about the recipients as 'those who mourn' and 'those who hunger'. These are all negative expressions. The meaning of the word 'poor' must therefore be found in what it has in common with these parallel expressions.

'Poor' here means 'helpless', dependent on others, unable to pay back. The recipients are in this world indeed described as beggars. But the word does not refer to their economic or social status. The tax collectors, the fishermen and the farmers in the fellowship around Jesus were certainly no beggars and could hardly be called 'poor' in a material or social sense of the word. They were able to sustain themselves by their own work. But they were beggars before God. They were dependent on his grace as it was proclaimed and demonstrated in the preaching and person of Jesus. The word is used in a transferred sense and describes the fundamental position of man before God.

One of Martin Luther's last words was this: 'We are beggars, that is true.' As far as I know, Luther had never been a beggar in the literal sense of the word. But he had learnt both from Scripture and life that we are dependent on God, we are beggars before him. The gospel is the message that God gives his gift, his kingdom, to beggars, into empty hands. We have nothing with which to pay him back.

The *reference* of the beatitudes is therefore *not* to a socially limited group of poor and destitute, neither in Israel nor in the world. I think we can interpret the reference of the beatitudes in three different directions, perhaps corresponding to a historical development within the ministry of Jesus and the history of the early church.

First they refer to Israel as a whole corresponding to the promise of salvation in Isaiah 61. Jesus brings the message of God's fulfilment of his promises to his chosen people. Jesus *is* the fulfilment of the promises. But we know that most of the people did not receive his message. And therefore he says: 'Blessed are those who take no offence at me.' In this way he creates a new Israel of those who receive him and his message.

There is, secondly, the direct, literal reference of the beatitudes as we find them in Matthew and Luke. They refer to the disciples as the remnant of Israel. But this message is not only for the disciples in the past: there is, thirdly, also a good message for the nations, for the church of both Jews and Gentiles. This is the reason that it is written down in the gospels. These gospels are written for the universal church, for all who receive the kingdom of God.

We started by presenting a theory of an 'original text' as a possible source for the two versions of the beatitudes in Matthew and Luke. We conclude that it is not possible to use this text as argument for the view that Jesus' 'original' message was different from the message of our gospel texts. There is no contradiction, but a clear continuity between them. Matthew and Luke have two different applications of the same gospel from the same Lord and Saviour.

In my opinion *Matthew* (or the tradition before him), with his explaining additions, is closest to the original meaning of the first three beatitudes. He makes it clear that Jesus speaks of the 'poor' and 'those who hunger' in a transferred sense. His first three beatitudes describe the basis for discipleship: the gift of the kingdom given into empty hands. And he adds other beatitudes to show the character of these disciples as children of God (vv. 6-10) and their position in this world (vv. 11f.). The beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12 are a basic text for the doctrine of the church.

Luke gives another version of the beatitudes where they are related to the position of the disciples in the world. In spite of their material poverty, their hunger, the persecutions they meet, they should know they are not forgotten by God. They are better off than the rich and well-to-do, because they live under the promise of the kingdom. The beatitudes and woes in Luke are a new and different application of the beatitudes: a word of comfort directed to the disciples and a warning against the attitude of the rich. The Lukan text is closely related to James 2:5-7, which may be an early application of the tradition behind Luke 6:20-26. I don't find it impossible to think that Jesus himself gave the beatitudes a new form like the one we find in Luke. But I find it probable that this form is a *new* application of a text already taught and memorized in Jesus' instruction of his disciples. (Luke's use of the second person only in the second sentence in each beatitude is difficult to explain unless against the background of a fixed tradition in the third person.)

For an evangelical, biblical theology, the question of the origin and the development of the biblical traditions, is not

crucial unless it is used to undermine the authority of the real text of the Bible or the concept of a basic doctrinal unity of Scripture. A hypothetical reconstruction of a possible 'original' text may be useful as far as it may help us understand the given text. But it can never replace the biblical text as the only source of faith and conduct.

II. The rich man and the poor Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31

This text talks very seriously about the two possibilities for eternity. The rich man was lost and came to hell; the poor man Lazarus reached his life's destination and came to the bosom of Abraham. There are two possibilities, and after death there is no possibility of change.

But why did the rich man come to hell, and why did the poor Lazarus come to Abraham? This is a text where interpretations go in different directions. A popular interpretation in modern theology is that this text expresses the hope of the poor. It presents us with the reversal of fortunes in the coming age. The poor, who have suffered much in this life, will be comforted then, but the rich, who have lived in luxury and affluence, are lost and shall suffer. The main point in the story is seen in verse 24, and this verse is interpreted as giving a sort of balance: suffering in this world will give comfort in the world to come, and the well-to-do in this world will suffer. But verses 27-31 are seen as a secondary addition. These verses talk about conversion as the way to eternal life, and this does not fit into this theory of the reversal of fortunes as the main point of the story. This is an interpretation you'll find in many studies of this story.⁹

Against this interpretation I want to present another understanding of the text. This story does not teach how the poor are saved. It concentrates on the question of why the rich man is lost. It is a warning to the rich and not a promise to the poor. It corresponds to Luke's woes against the rich, but is no explanation of the beatitudes of the poor (Lk. 6:20-26).

I'll argue for this second interpretation, making five points.

1. The structure of the story

When we read a long text in the Bible it may be important to see how it is structured in different sections. This story has two main parts: the narrative and the dialogue. The narrative part tells first about the life on earth of the two persons, then very briefly about their fate after death. So far it's true that there is a reversal of the fortunes of the two. We see that the poor Lazarus has his place at the gate of the house of the rich man, who is described as very rich indeed. He had to pass this beggar many times every day as he went in and out of his house. It should have been a privilege to lie at the gate of such a rich man. But the relationship between these two persons is in this part described with ice-cold silence. The whole situation of Lazarus is a cry for help. But nothing happens.

When their fates after death are changed, then the rich man is in pain and needs help from Lazarus. And the first part of the dialogue is the request from the rich man. He knows how to treat poor people: 'Send him over here to give me some water!' But now the situation is changed. The open gate is replaced by a deep gulf between them. Communication and help is impossible. It is too late. And now we find a sympathetic feature in the picture of the rich man. He begins to think about his brothers and wants to warn them. But also

his prayer for his brothers is refused. They have the Law and the Prophets, they should hear and obey them. It would not help them even if Lazarus were raised from the dead and could warn them.

We can summarize the structure of the story like this:

1. *Narrative part*, verses 19-23:
 - (a) Their life on earth, verses 19-21 (the open gate)
 - (b) Their fate after death, verses 22-23 (the deep gulf, v. 26).
2. *Dialogue*, verses 24-31:
 - (a) The request of the rich man for relief is refused, verses 24-26
 - (b) The prayer of the rich man for his brothers is refused, verses 27-31.

From the structure of the story we see that only the rich man takes part in the dialogue. He is the main person. The last appeal of the story is directed to the five still-living brothers of the rich man, those who live like him. The story is a warning to the rich man and his brothers.

Lazarus is only a figure of contrast. He illustrates the unfulfilled possibility on earth: the rich man did not help him but left him to the dogs, the unclean animals. And he illustrates the lost possibility after death. He did reach the destination for the people of Abraham, the destination which the rich man lost. The salvation of the poor is not discussed at all. I think it is simply presupposed that he is a son of Abraham living under the promises to Abraham. This is perhaps indicated by his Jewish name, Lazarus, which is the Greek form of Elazar or Eliezer, 'God helps'.

This interpretation will be supported by our next step:

2. The context of the story

In Luke 16:14 we see to whom this story is told. It is told to the Pharisees, 'who loved money'. This is the only place in the NT where the Pharisees are accused of greed. It corresponds to the fact that 'love for money' is an important concern in the previous verses. In verse 13 Jesus warns his hearers against Mammon and invites them to choose between God and Mammon. We don't know any other Jewish sources where money is pictured as an idol in this way. Verse 9 concludes the previous story about the unjust steward. But it can also be seen as an introduction to the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The verse gives an exhortation to use worldly wealth to gain friends so that they can welcome their helpers into the eternal dwellings. The rich man is an illustration of what happens if you don't do this. He had a chance to gain a friend by helping the poor Lazarus. If he had done so, he might have been received into the eternal dwellings. But he didn't help, and he was excluded. The context speaks very much about wealth and the right use of wealth and confirms that this is a main concern in the story.

The context also speaks about another topic. Verses 16-18 speak about the Law. The Law retains its validity as long as heaven and earth exist. This corresponds to the last part of the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man and his brothers should have listened to and obeyed 'Moses and the Prophets'.

You may object to this argument by saying that this context has been created by Luke or his sources. We have no guarantee that this was the original context of the story in the ministry of Jesus. We have to interpret the story by itself and

from a general picture of Jesus' message, not from the context given us by the final redaction of the gospel. I would answer to this objection that even if the context may be secondary, it is in no way accidental. It is the oldest evidence we have for the understanding of the story in the early church. And in this case the context only confirms what we have already found by a structural analysis of the story itself.

Let us now have a broader look at what Jesus says about these two topics: (1) wealth and the wealthy and (2) the Law.

3. *Jesus' teaching on possessions and the rich*

We find quite a number of texts in the gospels where Jesus gives warnings against the power of money and wealth. These are not popular preaching texts today. Perhaps they tend to be suppressed in our rich churches in the rich part of the world. I can only briefly list the main points of some main texts.

(1) The rich man (Mk. 10:17-31 and parallels). The story of the rich man who came to Jesus to ask for the way to eternal life has a very unhappy end. The man went away sad because he did not want to sell all and follow Jesus. His great wealth was a hindrance to discipleship. Jesus' comment on this event is simple: 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' It is quite interesting to read in commentaries how interpreters try to make the needle's eye wide or the camel small in order to make this possible. But in fact Jesus speaks about the smallest opening and the biggest animal because this *is* impossible. At least, for men it's impossible; nothing is impossible for God.

(2) In another text (Mt. 6:24) Jesus speaks about the choice between Mammon and God. It sounds similar to the robber coming to his victim saying, 'Your money or your life.' It is impossible to have both. You have to choose. But Jesus doesn't say this with a gun in his hand. He says it with the love and the respect for the other man that gives him the freedom to make the wrong choice and go away.

Both these stories tell us that money and wealth are idols competing with God. Perhaps Mammon is much more dangerous than the Baals or the Buddhas or other idols that are worshipped right up to our present day.

(3) The story of the rich farmer, Luke 12:16-21, shows us how a man gains and accumulates wealth all his life. But suddenly his life is taken from him. Who then shall have all he has gathered? This is the fate of a man who has become economically rich 'but is not rich towards God'.

(4) In Luke 6:20-26 the beatitudes on the poor disciples are followed by the woes on the rich. Again the two possibilities are contrasted: blessing or curse. It is dangerous to be rich!

(5) But Luke also has a story about the positive possibility for a rich man. The story about the wealthy chief tax collector Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-10) shows how a rich man can be liberated from Mammon. When he receives Jesus and his salvation his attitude is completely changed. He gives half of his possessions to the poor, and wants to give fourfold back to those he may have cheated. His relationship to his money and to his fellow men becomes quite different.

These examples may demonstrate how important are the warnings to the rich against dangers from wealth in the message of Jesus. It's dangerous to be rich. We should interpret the story of the rich man and Lazarus in line with these words. But we should be careful to note that the

warnings against wealth do not necessarily imply an idealization of poverty. Poverty is in the Bible always seen as a need to be relieved and an evil to be fought against. It's the result of injustice or lack of care from fellow men, and is no desirable condition for human life.

4. *Jesus' teaching on 'the Law and the Prophets'*

This is a big and difficult question. For our purpose it's enough to state in what respect the Law has retained its value after the coming of Jesus. The answer to this is given when Jesus summarizes the Law and the Prophets in the double commandment of love (Mt. 22:34-40/Lk. 10:25-37). The whole NT unequivocally shows that this was the main impression of the teaching of Jesus on the Law. And in Luke 10:25-37 Jesus gives a story illustrating one practical implication of the love for one's neighbour. Before we give a comparison between the story of the good Samaritan and the story of the rich man and Lazarus, we should try briefly to relate the warnings against riches to the double commandment of love.

In fact these warnings can be seen as an application of this summary of the Law. Love of money is dangerous first of all because it *hinders* the love of God. This is the main message of the texts we have mentioned in section 3.2-4 above: Matthew 6:24; Luke 12:16-21; 6:23-26.

But, secondly, love of money is also dangerous because it hinders love for your neighbour. It makes it more important for you to gather wealth in order to secure yourself than to share with those who are in need. This is the main message of the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus was the rich man's neighbour, but the rich man overlooked him and did not care for him. He loved himself and his money instead of God and his neighbour.

And thirdly we may add that love for money is dangerous because it hinders discipleship. To follow Jesus is to leave everything behind and to give him and the ministry for him the first and absolute priority. This is what we learn from texts like Mark 10:17-31 and parallels and Luke 6:23-26; 14:25-33.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is first and foremost an illustration of the second part of the double commandment of love. The rich man and his brothers are warned to listen to 'Moses and the Prophets' while there is still time for it. The Law speaks clearly about our duty to love God and our fellow men. In this story the kingdom of God is not the main topic of Jesus' message. The judgment of the rich man and the appeal to conversion are derived from their failing to hear the Law, not from their failing to hear and receive the message of the kingdom.

5. *A structural comparison of the story of the rich man and Lazarus and the story of the good Samaritan*

Finally, we want to illuminate our interpretation by a comparison of our text with the main illustration of the commandment of love in the gospels: the parable of the good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37. We look at the roles of the different actors in the stories in order to see similarities and differences.

Both stories have a person in need who is a *potential object of love*. In Luke 10 it is the man who was robbed and lay helpless at the road, in Luke 16 it is the poor Lazarus at the

gate of the rich man. Their situation is a cry for help; they need care and love from their fellow men.

Both stories also have *negative examples*. From these persons you should learn: don't be like them. The priest and the Levite saw the helpless man, but did not stop to help him. In the same way the rich man did not care for the poor Lazarus.

Now we come to the difference in the structure of the two stories. Only the story of the good Samaritan has a *positive example*. It is the good Samaritan. The message of the story is: Be like him! Do care for your suffering neighbour! He is the illustration of what love means. It's action! It would be very wrong to regard poor Lazarus as a positive example in Luke 16. The hearers of the story should not identify with him. In the same way it would be wrong to make the man among robbers the positive example in the story of the good Samaritan. In these stories we are not encouraged to be robbed by robbers or to be beggars dependent on mercy from our fellow men. But we are encouraged to care for fellow men who come into such situations, and we are warned not to overlook them because God doesn't overlook them. He cares for them and has given us a duty to help them in his Law.

Lazarus is no ideal for imitation. Poverty is never idealized. Jesus doesn't preach ascetism. The NT allows us to use and enjoy the world God has created. But it should be used according to the Law of God: don't love the world, but love God with your whole heart — and your neighbour as yourself!

Summary of Luke 16:19-31

We now can summarize the message of the story of the rich man and Lazarus in two sentences, a negative and a positive.

1. *A life of affluence and luxury closes your ears to the Word of God and your eyes to the need of your neighbour.* Wealth is dangerous for your spiritual life, for your relationship to God, and for your relationship to your fellow man.

2. *Hear the Word of God and let it lead you to your neighbour in distress — while there is still time for it.* The gate is open now. You can help your suffering neighbour now and care for him. Your action now has consequences for eternity.

III. Some tentative concluding theses

We started with a simple question of Jesus and the poor. We saw that this question cannot simply be discussed as a question of *social ethics*. The texts also raise the *semantic* question of the meaning of the word 'poor'. This semantic question is urgent in those texts that talk about 'the poor' as those who hear the gospel and receive the kingdom. To speak biblically and clearly about 'Jesus and the poor', it is imperative to recognize the two basic meanings of the word poor: in its literal meaning it refers to *beggars*, to the material need of people not able to sustain themselves; in its transferred meaning it refers to the fundamental position of man before God, as helpless, as a sinner, regardless of material resources or social position.

On this basis I first want to offer three theses on the biblical teaching on poverty.

1. Poverty in the material and social sense of the word is *neither a hindrance nor a condition for salvation*. The Bible

contains no promise that all poor and suffering people will be saved at last. Poverty is a distress to be helped, a human need that should not be made innocent by a false comfort or the promise of 'a pie in the sky'. Poverty is never idealized. It challenges us to relieve it and work for justice. Therefore the church cannot remain passive or neutral when fellow men suffer from poverty.

2. *Salvation is given to those who are poor in themselves.* Notice now that the word 'poor' is used in a transferred sense. The kingdom of God can only be received by empty hands. Jesus warns against (a) worldly self-sufficiency: you trust yourself and your own resources and don't need God. Example: the rich farmer; (b) religious self-sufficiency: you trust your religious attitude and moral life and don't need Jesus. Example: the unbelieving Pharisees.

3. *The people of God are sent to the poor, to suffering and oppressed fellow men.* The empty hands receiving salvation are not made lame! They are strengthened and filled to serve the neighbour, to meet his need for bread, health, social security, justice (1 Jn. 3:16-18).

But our neighbour also has another need. Regardless of social position he has a need for the gospel: to hear the saving Word of God. The good news for 'the poor' is for all mankind! With this gospel we are sent to everybody. It is a human right to hear the gospel!

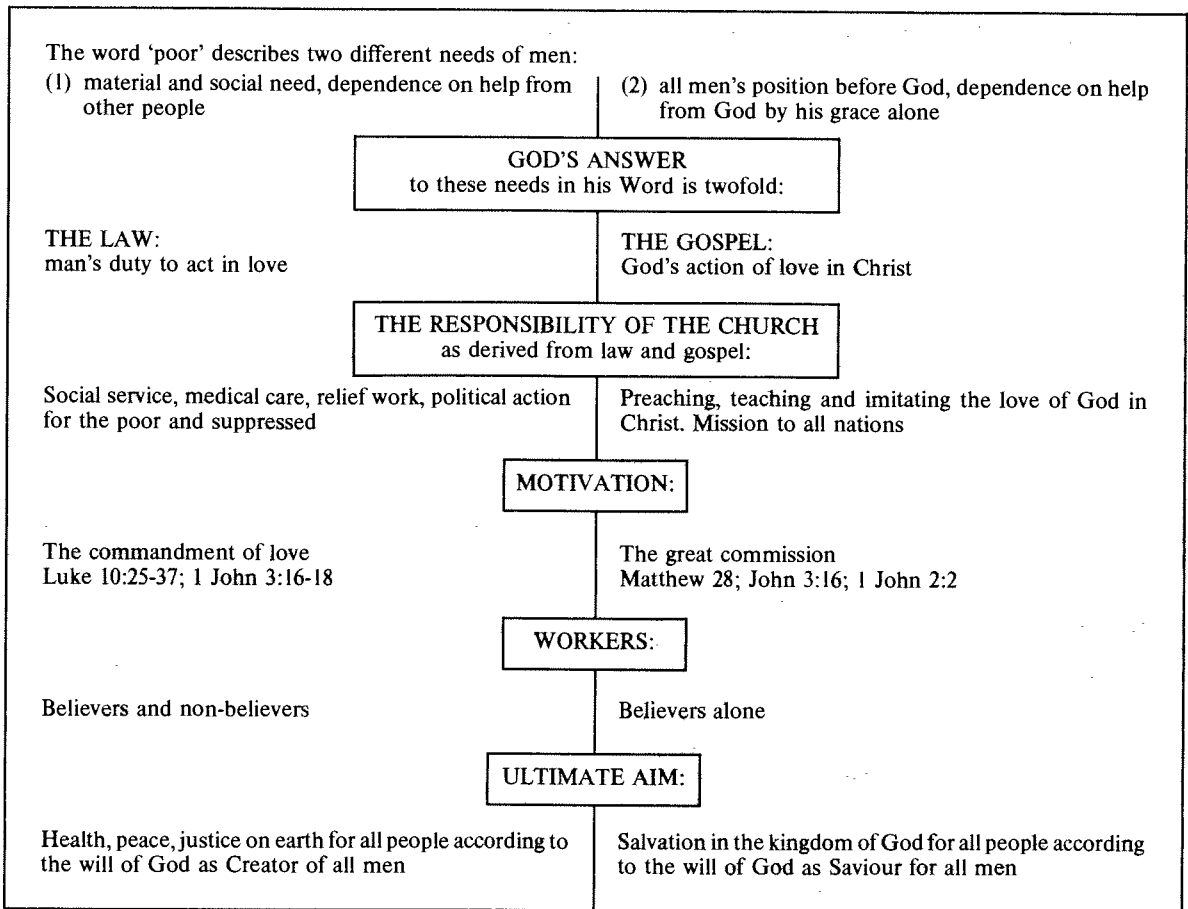
The word 'poor' describes two different needs of man. In its material and social sense it describes people dependent on others for bodily survival. In its transferred sense it describes everyone's position before God: helpless, dependent on his grace. These two meanings correspond to the two different contexts of the word in the gospels. When it is used in the material sense of the potential recipients of alms, we regularly find also an implicit or explicit challenge for action from their fellow men: care for them, help them. When used in a transferred sense the context refers to Isaiah 61:1f. and the promise of *God's* action of salvation for his people.

In this way the two different meanings and uses of the word seem to correspond to the classical evangelical distinction between law and gospel. The Law is what God demands from men, summarized in the commandment of love; the gospel is the good news of God's fulfilled action of salvation, the message that he loves us. Preaching the gospel is not to tell men what to do, but to tell what God has done for us. But the preaching of the gospel should never be separated from the proclamation and the application of the Law.

The words on Jesus and the poor in the gospels can be related to the distinction between law and gospel in the way described on the next page.

The danger for evangelical Christians has been to stress the gospel in a way that has made them deaf to the demands from the Law. It challenges us to share our wealth with those in need, to care for all who suffer injustice of any kind, to support and cooperate with those who want to build a better world for human beings. The materially poor need bread, not only bread from heaven.

The danger in modern liberation theology is to confuse law and gospel by saying that we can bring salvation and build God's kingdom by our social work or political action. That's not biblical. The Bible teaches us that salvation in the full



theological sense is given by God alone. The kingdom does not come through our poverty programmes or political reforms. The kingdom can only be offered as a free gift through the gospel. And it is open for all men, regardless of social status, sex, race or nation. All men are beggars before God. And as 'poor' in this sense all men also need the 'bread from heaven'.

¹ L. Schottroff/L. Stegemann, *Jesus von Nazareth – Hoffnung der Armen* (Stuttgart, 1978); D. L. Mealand, *Poverty and expectation in the Gospels* (London, 1980); W. E. Pilgrim, *Good News to the poor. Wealth and poverty in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis, 1981); D. P. Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Linz, 1982); F. W. Horn, *Glaube und Handeln in der Theologie des Lukas* (Göttingen, 1983). An impression of the discussion in the ecumenical movement can be found in: J. de Santa Ana, *Good News to the Poor. The Challenge of the Poor in the History of the Church* (WCC, Geneva, 1977); *Your Kingdom come. Mission Perspectives* (Report on the World conference on

Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne, 1980/Geneva, 1980). From the evangelical movement: R. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger. A biblical Study* (Downer's Grove, Illinois, 1977).

² A broader discussion on these texts and the other gospel texts on Jesus and the poor is given in my doctoral dissertation: H. Kvalbein, *Jesus og de fattige* (Oslo, 1981).

³ J. Ernst, 'Das Evangelium nach Lukas – kein soziales Evangelium', in *Theologie und Glaube* 67 (1977), pp. 415-421.

⁴ This reconstruction has been made by J. Dupont, *Les Béatitudes, Vol I: Le problème littéraire* (EB, Paris, 1969). The interpretation of this reconstructed text is given in *Vol II: La bonne nouvelle* (EB, Paris, 1969), and the interpretation of the texts of Matthew and Luke in *Vol III: Les évangélistes* (EB, Paris, 1973).

⁵ A. Rahlfs, *Ani und anaw in den Psalmen* (Göttingen, 1892).

⁶ E.g. J. Schniewind in his commentary to Mt. 5:3 in *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (NTD, Göttingen, 1936).

⁷ H. Birkeland, *Ani und anaw in den Psalmen* (Oslo, 1933); H.-J. Kraus, *Die Psalmen I-II* (BKAT 15, Neukirchen, 1978).

⁸ The reference to Israel is well argued and applied in the work of Seccombe (see above, n. 1).

⁹ E.g. Schottroff/Stegemann, Mealand and Horn (see above, n.1).

Work, faith and freedom

John W Gladwin

The author is Secretary of the Church of England's Board for Social Responsibility, and is also Associate Editor of Themelios in Social Ethics.

Hardly a week seems to pass without a new book or article appearing from Christians about the subject of work in an age of unemployment. It was Hitler's concentration camps which displayed slogans proclaiming the virtues of work as the way to freedom. Christians believe that faith in Christ opens the door to liberty: so why all this concern about work and employment? Is not work a curse and a means of oppression? Should we not rejoice that the old traditional exploitative labour is collapsing — is this not a day of opportunity if we care to grasp it?

There are many pitfalls in this subject and Christians need to tread with caution. I can remember twenty years ago being told that working people looked forward to the day when some of the unpleasant, back-breaking, dirty tasks would be lifted from the lives of labouring people. Miners did not want their children condemned to dig coal under the ground. Now in an age of the fear and reality of unemployment every job is protected. Better to dig coal from under the ground than to have no job at all. It would appear that we have regressed.

There has been a massive shake-out and shift in the whole experience of work and employment throughout the world over the past fifteen years. These changes have their roots deep in history. The British experience of this goes back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The changes of more recent times, however, are very real for those directly affected by them. Manufacturing industry has been shaken in two ways. There has been a collapse of some manufacturing industries and there has been a technological revolution. Both have hit traditional patterns of employment. Millions of jobs which once were filled by the semi-skilled have gone. For regions heavily dependent on such industrial work the results have been dramatic. In Britain the West Midlands is probably the most striking region in this respect. From being the engine-room of Britain's engineering and industrial life, it has become one of the worst regions for unemployment and industrial collapse. Patterns which have become established in the developed world will lead to pressure on the developing world to tread the same path.

At one and the same time other forms of work and employment have been developing. The post-1945 period has seen a significant development in the employment of women. Efforts have been made, not always with great success, to protect women from exploitative practices based on the assumption that employment is essentially a male prerogative. Nevertheless, women expect to be able to find work and develop vocations.

As manufacturing industries have declined, other forms of employment have grown. Service industry work has been on

the increase. Some of this is part-time and short-lived. More flexibility, insecurity and mobility have been introduced into patterns of employment.

Patterns of work and employment are among the basic factors which create community. The collapse of inherited patterns can have devastating effects on communities (witness the effect on people when traditional rural communities are suddenly invaded by industrial society). Other things get tested out in the ensuing uncertainty and instability. Marriages become vulnerable, home life is under threat, people suffer stress and lose a sense of identity. The established patterns on which many depend for the shape to their living are thrown into a measure of confusion. The changes may be necessary, even unavoidable; they are not, however, without cost. The costs are frequently borne by those sections of society least well equipped to pay them.

What are we Christians to say to all this? Frankly, it has to be said (and witness the vast pile of literature on the subject)¹ that we struggle to find a clear word from God. Confusion has hit us as well. The church has not been exempt from the fallout from this period of change. Is there anything in our struggle with these matters to help others who struggle with them?

We should remind ourselves of some basic Christian values:

1. Work and Christian liberty (see especially Rom. 4)

One of the crucial truths of the gospel is that it is God who justifies us in Christ. It is God's work rather than ours which establishes the foundations and the environment of human freedom. Yet so often in human experience we are lured into believing that it is our work which is critical. We have to justify ourselves by our work. We even describe people according to their work. 'What do you do?' is a first question in many a new conversation. Such is, of course, terribly debilitating for all who are not in some form of paid or professional employment. It has been a particular put-down to the unemployed and to women: 'Oh, I'm just a housewife.' Once we accept the temptation to see things in terms of our work we lock ourselves into a form of oppression in the world of work. We have to justify ourselves and achieve what is required of us by others. Work, however, is not the way to freedom. Liberation is a gift of God to the world in Jesus Christ discovered in the moment of faith. Our work must therefore be seen in the light of freedom, not as a means to it (Gal. 3:1-5). Yet Christians and the churches can be the worst offenders at colluding with this oppressive doctrine that we are justified by our work.

2. Work and vocation

If work is to be seen in the context of Christian liberty we can begin to appreciate the original positive understanding of it

given in creation. Work need not be oppressive. Indeed, since the world is God's creation and the object of God's continued love and care, work has to be seen as a gift of God and a possible opportunity for vocation (Gn. 2:4-15). God calls us to action. The garden needs tilling, the city needs building, the wealth of creation needs husbanding to assist in proclaiming the worth of the God who calls us to freedom. For those therefore who see the liberty God gives in Jesus Christ, it is a shame and disgrace to find that some are not able to share in proclaiming God's worth through their activities. The deliberate prevention of people from discovering vocation and offering their worship to God through such calling is an affront to Jesus Christ. That sort of unemployment which shuts people out of society is a disaster in the light of the message of freedom offered in Jesus Christ.

3. Labour and toil (Gn. 3:16-24)

So too is the sort of work which destroys people in the process. Work which undermines people's humanity, exploits their gifts, and destroys their lives and their communities is offensive in the face of what we see in Jesus Christ. Work which proclaims God's liberty must affirm human dignity, nurture rather than destroy human creativity, enhance rather than inhibit society and community. The Bible demonstrates that in a fallen world which does not know the redemptive love of God work can collapse into toil. That which could proclaim the liberty God offers becomes a means of oppression and injustice.

4. Idleness and the soul (Pr. 24:27-34; 26:14-16)

Worship is always a balance between activity and reflection. It has moments of joyful movement and moments of quiet and peace. The actual worship offered to God by the church is a sign and symbol of the way all life is called to be in the light of Jesus Christ. God calls us to proclaim the liberty he offers in the glory of activity and the wonder of rest. Work and rest together make life into worship of God. This dialectic of experience is the way to the enrichment of the freedom we experience in Jesus Christ. The life of the soul is furthered when the pattern of social life reflects the inner mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is therefore tragic when this creative balance of work and rest topples over into the disastrous duet of toil and idleness. Human life, instead of being enhanced

and moved forward on its journey of work and rest, is torn apart and led into despair by the deathly choice between toil and idleness. If the choice is between breaking one's back in exploitative labour or living outside society in the idleness of enforced unemployment, then how are we able to demonstrate the meaning of God's offer of liberty? It is small wonder the church struggles with environments which are predominantly about toil and labour or about idleness and unemployment. If it is true to Jesus Christ it is bound to be seen as carrying a message which threatens the whole basis of the corrupted social order which has created this toil and unemployment. If it colludes with it it becomes part of the grey and uninviting scenery of a world gone badly wrong.

What next?

It is clear for any who believe in God's reign in our history that we cannot go backwards. We cannot return to the past. There is no going back to the old patterns of employment and, indeed, there are many who would not wish to return that way. The more mobile, less certain and more open pattern of working life is upon us. The challenge concerns whether we see such change as an opportunity to enhance the life chances of the members of our society or as the gateway to a new oppression. If work in its new form becomes an end, a means of justification, it will tear us apart as certainly in the future as it has done in the past. If it is put into the proportion implied in the Christian experience of God's gift to us in the work of Jesus Christ, it might yet be able to open the way to new creativities and to the chance for it, at least in a measure, becoming a means of worship and service. Government, employers, financial institutions, Trades Unions and all corporate institutions concerned with the future of work and employment need to collaborate with this purpose in mind. Our futures may depend on it.

¹ Recent literature on the subject includes: Roger Clarke, *Work in Crisis* (St Andrews, 1982); David Bleakley, *Work – the Shadow and the Substance* (SCM, 1983); David Bleakley, *In Place of Work . . . The Sufficient Society* (SCM, 1981); Howard Davis and David Gosling, *Making Unemployment Work* (WCC, 1985); P. Elsam and D. Porter, *4,000,000 Reasons to Care* (Marc, 1986); John Brockett, *No Free Lunches* (Churchman Publishing, 1986); P. Mayhew, *Unemployment under the Judgement of God* (Churchman Publishing, 1985); *Coal, Church, Community* (Easington District Council, 1986); Ann Warren, *Living with Unemployment* (Hodder, 1986).

Three commentaries on Matthew: a review

Gerhard Maier

The author, who is an international editor of Themelios, is Director of the Albrecht-Bengel-Haus in Tübingen, and is himself author of a two-volume commentary on Matthew. He here reviews the commentaries of U. Luz, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, Teilband 1 (EKK, Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1985), of D. A. Carson in the Expositor's Bible Commentary vol. 8, ed. F. E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), and of R. T. France, The Gospel according to Matthew (Tyndale Commentary, Leicester: IVP/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

Matthew exegesis is on the move again! 1981 saw the appearance of another major commentary in English by F. W. Beare (after a long interval);¹ even before that a two-volume popular-level commentary on Matthew was published in the German *Bibelkommentar* series.² But then in 1984 and 1985 three remarkable commentaries were published, by D. A. Carson, R. T. France and U. Luz on Matthew 1 - 7. So 1984/5 was a great year for Matthew. Incidentally, Theodor Zahn's commentary on Matthew was also re-edited and published in 1984.³

1. Luz

It will be helpful to look at Ulrich Luz first. In the series of EKK commentaries (*Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*) he published in 1985 the first volume of *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, which expounds Matthew chapters 1-7. He needed 420 pages for this first volume. If he proceeds at the same rate through the gospel, by the end he will have produced five volumes with a total of 2,100 pages (whereas the Nestlé-Aland text requires 87 pages for Matthew, 17 of them for chapters 1-7). It will be interesting to see whether and how Luz sticks with the present structure in the coming volumes. On the back cover we read: 'This commentary is the first major academic commentary on Matthew's gospel for twenty years.' If at all, this can only be the case on the Continent (note Beare 1981, Carson 1984!).

The introduction is about 70 pages long, the exposition of the Sermon on the Mount 240 pages. This shows the main emphasis very clearly. Of particular importance for the user is the section in which the author explains the intention behind his commentary (pp. 78-82). The distinctive characteristic of his commentary for him is his attempt to make fruitful use of the history of interpretation and of the study of the historical influence of the gospel (its *Wirkungsgeschichte*). Through this he hopes to achieve two things: first to show 'what we have become through the texts' (p. 79); we will thus learn to understand more of ourselves as we are now. And second to offer helpful correctives, showing us 'what we could be through the texts' (p. 80). The author says explicitly that he wants to help 'overcome a deficiency in historical-critical exegesis' (p. 82). The text should be brought out of the distant past back into the present. Luz is aware — and it is good that he mentions it — that 'doing this introduces an element of personal engagement and an element of subjective limitation' into his work (p. 82). One can detect this, for example, in his view of the peace issue. On the other hand, Luz feels thoroughly committed to historical-critical exegesis. Neither 'a backing out of history' nor 'a fundamentalist elimination of history' is a viable option for him (p. 79). Luz therefore takes a moderate critical position, as is characteristic of many contributors to the EKK.

Concerning the dating of Matthew, Luz says: 'The writing of Mark's gospel and the destruction of Jerusalem constitute the *terminus post quem* (22:7)' (p. 75). He takes it completely for granted that 22:7 is a *vaticinium ex eventu* (a prophecy after the event), and he finally concludes that Matthew can be dated 'not long after the year 80' (p. 76).

On the authorship of the gospel, Luz honestly admits that a lot of arguments speak for the apostle Matthew. Nevertheless he remains convinced that the author is anonymous (pp. 76f.). He is a Jewish Christian, coming from a Jewish-Christian community (p. 62). 'It is sure that . . . his mother-tongue is Greek' (p. 63). It is 'sure' that the gospel was composed in a 'larger Syrian city where Greek was the *lingua franca*' (p. 75). But a knowledge of Aramaic cannot be excluded (p. 63). The author of the gospel looks back on the final break with the synagogue (p. 70). He does not presume to reach non-Christian Jewish readers (p. 71).

His sources are Mark and Q: 'Matthew's gospel was composed by working the Q-tradition into the threads of Mark's gospel' (p. 65). This combining of traditions was a theological, and not just a literary, exercise: the author is the

theological heir of Mark and Q: 'Matthew is the student, or, better, the heir of his theological fathers Mark and Q' (p. 57). Even if this point of view may be distinctive of Luz, it is clear from his other conclusions on introductory questions that he stands in the mainstream of historical-critical exegesis, being in that respect 'conservative'.

So far as the exposition itself is concerned, we can only give a small sample here. It is remarkable that in the 'Prologue', which Luz defines as from 1:1 to 4:22, he recognizes only 'a loose association with the Old Testament' (p. 88 on Mt. 1:1). The genealogy of Jesus is 'fictitious' (p. 91). 'It is hopeless to try and prove the historicity' of Jesus' virgin birth (p. 102). Luz assumes that the story of the virgin birth was 'part of an attempt by Jewish-Christian communities to testify to their faith in Jesus as the one installed as Son by God through his Spirit (Rom. 1:4), in a way analogous to other ancient narratives involving a childhood story' (p. 102). It is also hopeless to try and prove historically Matthew 2:1-12 (p. 115) and 2:13-23 (p. 128), possibly with the exception of the visit to Egypt.

The commentary becomes explosively controversial when Matthew is seen as the starting-point for an anti-Jewish *Wirkungsgeschichte*, i.e. as giving rise to anti-Semitism, such as 'has become fatal' (p. 141). Matthew lends support to anti-Semitism by the way he underlines the exclusiveness of the Christian claim to the OT, thus taking the OT away from Judaism (p. 141). In the same way Luz notes on Matthew 4:14-16 that this citation is an 'expression of the basic polemical claim that . . . the evangelist makes for the Bible of Israel' (p. 171). So is Matthew anti-Semitic, a Jewish Christian against Judaism?

The commentary becomes explosive again when Luz claims that the Sermon on the Mount is not just 'disciple-ethics': he asserts, 'The Sermon on the Mount lays claim on the whole world' (p. 190). In that statement he turns against the Lutheran two-kingdom tradition. Luz sees himself in the same line as some minority groups who take the Sermon on the Mount as practicable and who, in Luz's eyes, come closer to the gospel of Matthew than, for instance, Luther (pp. 191f.). This idea comes into sharp focus towards the end of the first volume. On pp. 416ff. Luz offers thoughts about the practical implementation of the Sermon on the Mount for today. His thoughts lead in two main directions: (a) 'Matthew, as exponent of a minority community', can help the church today in the necessary task of coming to terms with being a minority church, now that the era of the nation church has come to an end (p. 417); and (b) The peace movement poses a serious question about the 'form of the church' (p. 418). The Sermon on the Mount helps us 'to show our obedience to the will of the Father in all secular fields', and that also includes politics, especially a responsible and rational 'politics of peace' (p. 420), involving Christians and non-Christians.

It would be good to mention many other points, but lack of space does not permit it. The style of the commentary becomes quite chatty at times. But this is alongside impressive scholarship which, for example in the bibliography, almost reaches encyclopedic dimensions. Once finished, Luz's work must stand a good chance of becoming the top historical-critical commentary in the German-speaking world for some time.

2. Carson

We will compare Luz's commentary first with that of Don A. Carson, which was published in 1984 together with Walter W. Wessel's commentary on Mark and Walter L. Liefeld's commentary on Luke as volume 8 of the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. It is a commentary on the whole of Matthew's gospel, running to almost 600 pages. Apart from F. W. Beare's, this is to my knowledge the most detailed of all English commentaries on Matthew in the last few decades (with the exception of Gundry's work).

In many ways Carson's work is at the opposite pole to Luz's. This applies, first, to its hermeneutical position. The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* is an international and interdenominational series. Its contributors are, according to the back cover, 'the best in evangelical scholarship committed to the divine inspiration, complete trustworthiness, and full authority of the Bible'. In terms of scholarship Carson is comparable to Luz. Both obviously draw their information primarily from the literature of their own theological background. So we have here two top-class exegetical works from differing perspectives, which is what makes a comparison of the two particularly exciting and instructive. How does an evangelical exposition of Matthew on the same academic level differ from a middle-of-the-road, critical exposition?

Carson devotes about 60 pages (10% of his commentary) to introduction. After a short overview of historical research he emphasizes that the evangelist did intend to convey historical information as well as theology (p. 10). An interest in faith and historical authenticity do not exclude each other. As Carson writes, 'the burden of proof rests with the skeptic' (p. 11). This valuation of historicity is one of the major differences from Luz.

Concerning the synoptic problem: 'This commentary adopts a cautious stance' (p. 16). He agrees that Mark is older than Matthew and that Matthew worked with Mark's information. It would be a mistake, however, to tie oneself slavishly to the two-source hypothesis, although it is still the best theory in the field. Above all one may not draw any conclusions from this hypothesis for questions of historicity and the age of the tradition (p. 16). Carson wants to approach his commentary in such a way that his conclusions would not be affected substantially by the downfall of the two-source hypothesis: 'The aim throughout has been to let Matthew speak as a theologian and historian independent of Mark, even if Mark has been one of his most important sources' (p. 17). Compared with Luz, this approach allows Carson a greater freedom *vis-à-vis* the two-source hypothesis; as the hypothesis is one that is increasingly being called into question these days, Carson seems that much more 'modern' than Luz in this respect (*cf.* pp. 14ff.).

Carson adopts a similarly cautious point of view on the authorship of the gospel. However, he tends to believe that the apostle Matthew is the author and that this is the most likely theory. The following sentences are quite typical: 'Though Matthew's authorship remains the most defensible position, very little in this commentary depends on it. Where it may have a bearing on the discussion, a cautionary notice is inserted' (p. 19).

Carson also considers the date of the gospel very carefully. As Jesus was quite able to prophesy the destruction of

Jerusalem, AD 70 need not be the *terminus a quo* (p. 20). The circumstances in which Matthew's gospel is set permit a dating between AD 40 and AD 100. Also, Matthew's gospel is not anti-Jewish to the extent that we can presume the final break between synagogue and church. Although no fixed date can be given, 'perhaps the sixties are the most likely decade for its composition' (p. 21). So Carson dates Matthew approximately twenty years earlier than Luz. The place of composition was probably somewhere in Syria.

A considerable part of the introduction is devoted to discussion of the gospel's distinctive themes. Luz's commentary does not have much comparable discussion. Carson discusses Christology, prophecy and fulfilment, law, church, eschatology, the Jewish leaders, mission, miracles, and the understanding and faith of the disciples (pp. 26ff.). It is striking that Carson gives much less importance to anti-Jewish polemic in Matthew than does Luz (see pp. 32ff.).

Let us turn to some examples of exegesis which enable us to compare Carson and Luz. Over against Luz, Carson believes in the virgin birth as an historical fact: 'There is a good case for treating chapters 1-2 as both history and theology' (p. 73). The visit of the magi is also historical: 'Matthew records history so as to bring out its theological significance and its relation to Scripture' (p. 83). Similarly on Matthew 2:13ff.: 'there is nothing historically improbable about this account' (p. 90). Although Carson is willing to treat any objection to historicity seriously, we can note a fundamental difference from Luz in this respect. Carson's interest in history is far greater than that of his historical-critical counterpart.

The classification of the Sermon on the Mount leads us to another difference. In Luz's volume it is qualitatively and quantitatively an unparalleled high point. This is evident from the way he divides the prologue (1:1-4:22) and the words of Jesus (4:23-11:30), with the latter consisting in this first volume of nothing but 'A. The Sermon on the Mount'. Carson, however, groups 3:1-7:29 together under the heading 'The gospel of the kingdom', seeing it as one of seven main sections in Matthew's gospel. And this (second) main section chapter is again divided into two main sections: 'A. Narrative' (3:1-4:25) and 'B. First discourse: The Sermon on the Mount' (5:1-7:29). In this way the Sermon on the Mount is seen more strongly than in Luz as part of the general development of the story.

And the differences continue. Carson places importance on the authenticity of the words of Jesus in Matthew 5-7, and that includes 5:17-20 (pp. 123ff., 141), whereas Luz believes that Matthew 5:17-20 is without doubt the work of Matthew himself (Luz, pp. 228ff.). Even the context of Matthew 5-7 is seen by Carson to be authentic and historical: 'The authenticity of that context must be assumed' (p. 125). Carson discusses different ways of interpreting the Sermon on the Mount: the Lutheran, the classical liberal, that which takes its starting-point from a Matthew community, the Baptist ('Anabaptist-Mennonite'), the existentialist, the 'Interim Ethic' approach, that starting from a radicalizing of the OT, and the classic-dispensational approach (pp. 126ff.). Luz sees himself as closest to the 'minority community of Matthew' or the Anabaptist interpretation. Carson refuses both those interpretations. The first is 'reductionist' in his eyes, because

the gospel is more than a community catechism, and we have to interpret it in terms of salvation history (pp. 126ff.). The second leads to pacifism and retreat from the world and does not fit in with the Scriptures as a whole (p. 127). The other possibilities mentioned above do not satisfy him either. So Carson decides in favour of an interpretation in terms of salvation history, with the kingdom of God as the starting-point (pp. 127ff.). This means for him that the Sermon on the Mount has to be seen Christologically, pointing to Jesus as the fulfiller of law and prophecy (pp. 128, 143f.). This interpretation allows for the unity of Old and New Testaments, of Matthew and Paul, of Palestinian Jewish Christians and of Pauline Gentile Christians (p. 144). The NT and the two Testaments together can be interpreted as a unity if we follow Carson.

After the Sermon on the Mount the comparison between Carson and Luz has to come to an end. Carson follows his path consistently in the following chapters, *i.e.* he interprets them in the light of salvation history and Christology, and combines this with his interest in historicity.

Let us start by examining the outline. 'The kingdom' is also part of the heading of the third and fourth main sections and of the second half of the fifth main section. It is a theme followed through to Matthew 28:16-20, 'The Risen Messiah and His Disciples'. Let us have a look at the conclusion of the commentary. Carson talks about 'historical reminiscence' used by Matthew in 28:16-17 (p. 594). Carson's interpretation of Matthew 28:18-20 seeks to show continuity between the authority of the Risen One and the earthly Jesus in his ministry (p. 594). Disagreeing with Hill, Carson asserts the authenticity of the Great Commission to make disciples in all the world (pp. 596f.). In the same way he defends the authenticity of the reference to the Trinity in Matthew 28:19, which he, with D. Wenham, traces back to Jesus (p. 598). On the last page Carson writes: 'The revelation of Jesus as Messiah at this late stage in salvation history brings the fulfilment of everything to which the OT Scriptures pointed and constitutes their valid continuity; but this means that the focus is necessarily on Jesus' (p. 599). This masterly commentary is notable for its discussion of historical issues, of salvation history and of Christology.

3. France

Finally, let us have a look at the commentary of Richard T. France, who teaches at London Bible College. It is in the series of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries and was published in 1985. France has only 410 pages for his commentary on the whole gospel. This does not allow him to go into highly detailed academic discussion. Furthermore, we have to remember that the purpose of the whole Tyndale series of commentaries is to bring out the contemporary relevance of the biblical text for a general readership (see the preface by Leon Morris). So the academic discussion of the text is of secondary importance, and France's commentary has to be viewed on a different level from the works of Luz and Carson. Comparison of the three is only possible to a limited extent.

The relatively large introduction to France's commentary, extending as it does to over 50 pages, shows, however, that he, like the others, has done his work thoroughly. He stresses the close connection of Matthew with the OT (p. 16). It is a

Jewish Christian gospel (p. 17) and at the same time universal (pp. 18ff.). Despite its 'ecclesiastical' features it should not be too narrowly viewed as a church catechism or the like (pp. 20ff.). France, like Carson, speaks out against the opinion, represented most recently and notably by Gundry, that Matthew is a midrash (pp. 22ff.). Instead, he defends the historical authenticity of the gospel (p. 26).

The place of composition could either be Palestine or Syria (pp. 27f.). Like Carson, France prefers 'a date in the sixties' for the final 'publication' of Matthew (p. 30), but he remains as cautious as Carson in his arguments about this. From the point of view of someone on the Continent two things stand out: the cautious evangelical argumentation, and the tendency to date Matthew relatively early. The apostle Matthew is possibly the author, though here too we cannot be completely certain: 'we simply do not know the extent of the role of the apostle Matthew in the composition of the First Gospel, but the tradition of the early church encourages us to believe that it was a major one' (p. 34).

The synoptic problem is also treated with great caution by France (pp. 34ff.). He refers to 'areas of growing uncertainty' (p. 35) with regard to the classical two-source hypothesis and notes the questions both about the priority of Mark and about the direct literary dependence of Matthew. Nevertheless, like Carson, he works from the assumption of Markan priority, taking Mark and Q to be Matthew's sources (p. 38).

A long section deals with the central theological themes of Matthew's gospel (pp. 38-56). Like Carson, France deals with themes such as promise and fulfilment, Christology, law, community, and then turns to the structure of the gospel. As we have already referred to parallels with Carson several times, it ought to be stressed that France did not know Carson's commentary when he was writing his (see p. 14).

It is characteristic of France that he structures his commentary on geographical lines. Following the first major section, 'Birth and Preparation of Jesus' (1:1-4:16), there follow two major sections on the 'Ministry in Galilee', 'public' (4:17-16:20) and 'private' (16:21-18:35), then the 'Ministry in Judaea' (19:1-25:46), and finally 'Death and Resurrection' (26:1-28:20).

In his exposition France emphasizes firmly the historical credibility of the fiercely debated chapters 1 and 2. We are dealing here with 'facts': 'It would be a strange apologetic, which invented "facts" in order to defend them' (p. 71). Concerning the Sermon on the Mount, the discussion of the different possible interpretations is much shorter than that in Carson or Luz. It is 'throughout the teaching of Jesus, but much of the structure derives from Matthew' (p. 106). France points out that we are dealing with teaching for the disciples and not for all: 'indeed much of it would make no sense as a universal code' (p. 106). Of the three commentators, France stands closest to the two-kingdom theory of the Lutheran-Reformation tradition. His Christological interpretation allies him with Carson. The Sermon on the Mount compels us first to think about who is speaking here, *i.e.* about the identity of the preacher of the Sermon (p. 107). He differs from Luz in his view that man cannot fulfil the Sermon (pp. 106f.). Evangelical exposition is — at least in this area — closer to the 'majority Reformation' point of view than the critical view. Matthew 5-7 and 8-9 highlight 'the unparalleled authority of Jesus the Messiah' (p. 151).

France is also convinced of the historicity of the miracles. One reflection of this conviction is his ability to accommodate the fiercely debated 'Messianic Secret' in his historical understanding of Jesus' way; he does not have to reinterpret it as an artificial construction of the later community.

The reader will be very grateful for the careful and down-to-earth approach France takes on many questions that cause problems in the Christian community. He says, for instance, that Matthew 10:23 and 16:28 refer to Jesus' taking of heavenly authority, not to his parousia (pp. 184f., 261). Partly due to the shortness of the commentary, there are of course many points where the keen reader would have liked a more detailed exposition (e.g. on 1:17 or 23:39).

Towards the end of the commentary France's convictions about historical authenticity are evident again. It is indeed Jesus who speaks to the disciples after his resurrection, and gives them the Great Commission referring to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (pp. 413f.). Neither Carson nor France reflects on the significance of the order 'baptizing' and 'teaching' in 28:19. The commentary ends

pointing to the glory of Jesus Christ: 'That the risen Lord can now make such a promise (sc. in 28:20) as God made to his people in the past brings the Gospel's portrait of Jesus... to a stupendous climax' (p. 416).

Although he writes independently of Carson and at a different level, France agrees with Carson in emphasizing the same three important things: salvation history, historicity, and Christology. In the reviewer's opinion this is no accident, but may be seen as a typical characteristic of current evangelical exegesis, at least in NT studies. Despite its brevity, France has provided the reader with an excellent commentary.

¹ Cf. my review in *Bib* 64 (1983), pp. 434-437.

² G. Maier, *Matthaus-Evangelium*, 2 vols (Neuhausen-Stuttgart, 1979/80).

³ In R. Brockhaus (Theologische Verlagsgemeinschaft).

We are grateful for the help of Marie-Louise Read in the translating of this article.

There is a further review of France's commentary in the book review section (below).

Book reviews

H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 16) (Waco: Word, 1985), lii + 417 pp., £17.95.

The fact that this commentary more than adequately fulfils the purpose of the series, namely, to give a scholarly theological understanding of Scripture, should not deter anyone interested in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Whilst it is not a superficial introduction to the study of these books, it is written clearly and concisely, bringing into clearer light the nature of the material contained in them.

The normal pattern of the series is followed, with a full Introduction and a main commentary divided into Bibliography, Translation, Notes on the Hebrew text, an introduction to the Form, Structure and Setting of each major division of the text, together with a detailed Commentary and Explanation of each section.

The Introduction sets the direction for the commentary which views 'Ezra and Nehemiah as two parts of a single work' which 'is to be regarded as complete as it stands' and not the conclusion to the books of Chronicles, as is frequently supposed. The sources used were the Ezra Memoir and the Nehemiah Memoir, together with independent records and lists which have been supplemented by the final compiler.

Dr Williamson seeks to explain the text in its present form, but at the same time points out that it has been composed with a theological message. He states: 'We must start by noting that although the books have an initial appearance of straightforward historical narrative, they do not regard chronology in the same way we do.' This means, for example, that although Ezra is considered to precede Nehemiah, their work is not considered to be contemporary with each other.

The first major redaction, about 400 BC, mainly consisted of the integration of the Nehemiah Memoir with the Ezra Memoir, which were both written close to the events they describe. Nehemiah 13, frequently regarded as a later addition to the books, is considered to be part of the Nehemiah Memoir. This was written over a period of 15 years in two stages: the initial wall-building, and later insertions which concluded with the so-called 'remember' formula (Neh. 5:19; 13:14: etc.). The Ezra Memoir, in which Dr Williamson concludes

that Neh. 8 originally stood between Ezra 7 - 8 and 9 - 10, was originally written by Ezra, and the events it records covered a period of just one year.

It is also found that Ezra 1 - 6, describing the return from exile and rebuilding of the temple, are based for the most part on historical sources which were finally compiled, with editorial reworking, only at the time of the second redaction of the books, about 300 BC.

Some sections of the books, however, are defined as 'typological accounts' rather than as historical records. Thus Ezra 3 is found to be 'extremely stylized, for at almost every turn parallels are drawn, either by phraseology or by content, with the account of the building of the first temple under Solomon'. At most places, however, the integrity of the material is upheld, even if it has been reworked and relocated by the compiler, as in the case of Neh. 9.

One of the most helpful parts of the commentary is the extensive Bibliography, not only of works on Ezra-Nehemiah in general, but of each sub-section being interpreted. This provides the most useful starting-point available for any further study of these books, or for the time of the restoration in general.

The Translation is well supported by Notes on the Hebrew text containing significant alternative readings and frequently supplying new insights into the meanings of difficult words and phrases. For example, the difficulties of the questions raised by Nehemiah's opponents in Neh. 4:1-5 (English text) are helpfully discussed in some detail. On the other hand, it is surprising, for a generally conservative commentary, that 'Nehemiah the governor' is removed from the text at Neh. 8:9 on linguistic, theological and literary grounds.

Detailed discussion of the Hebrew text, however, does not mean that the commentary will confuse those without a knowledge of Hebrew, for translation of Hebrew script is always provided and the arguments are easy to follow.

The Form/Structure/Setting section of each passage surveys and appraises current interpretations, and frequently offers new ones. After describing various attempts to define the nature of the prayer in Neh. 9, Dr Williamson concludes that the author has woven several elements together and 'that to press Neh. 9 into the mould of a single *Gattung* would be to miss much of its forcefulness'. This introductory section is followed by a detailed Comment on almost every verse of the text.

The Explanation clearly expresses the theological meaning of each section and brings the immediate situation into the light of Scripture as a whole, showing its relevance for our own time. However, some difficulties, like the issue of the divorces in Ezra 9 - 10, are resolved more on a pragmatic basis ('the lesser of two evils') than a theological

one, but NT teaching and ethical deliberation is given for modern interpretation.

Over-all, Dr Williamson conveys his own interpretation skillfully through his wide knowledge, sound scholarship and spiritual insight. These, together with the exegetical approach he uses, makes the commentary essential for any serious student of Ezra-Nehemiah.

Philip King, Spurgeon's College.

Richard J. Coggins and S. Paul Re'em, Israel among the nations: A Commentary on the Books of Nahum, Obadiah, and Esther (International Theological Commentary; Edinburgh: Handsel/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), x + 140 pp., £4.95.

To produce a commentary on an OT book from a Christian perspective is one of the most difficult exercises in contemporary theological writing. The editors of the International Theological Commentary, therefore, are to be applauded for their declared aim, 'first, to develop the theological significance of the OT and, second, to emphasize the relevance of each book for the life of the Church'. Though Nahum, Obadiah and Esther may not seem the most attractive books of the OT through which to make such an attempt, yet each book in its own way raises an issue with which so many struggle today, namely, how should the people of God live when subject to the domination of an unfriendly political power?

These two commentators have approached their task in two very different ways. Coggins, who teaches at King's College, London, has written on Nahum and Obadiah in the traditional mould. In many ways it is a most useful commentary, whose major strength is a careful and judicious verse-by-verse exegesis. There is a special concern for translation of difficult words and emendation of the text is generally unwelcome. One is also encouraged that Nahum and Obadiah are placed in the mainstream of Israel's prophetic and cultic life rather than being treated as examples of false prophets, as is sometimes alleged.

On the other hand, Coggins is more persuaded of the literary rather than historical merits of both prophets, and those who look for precise historical and geographical data will be disappointed. The theological contribution is also less satisfying than one might have been led to expect by the editors. Though the reader is grateful for the emphasis on the prophetic theological tradition, a consistent Christian approach must surely give more attention to the theological dimensions of the whole of Scripture. Further, while the author is well aware that some issues of the 7th and 6th centuries BC are still alive today, the theological reflection provided here does not give the reader any real guide to interpretation. For example, while one accepts that the prophetic message of judgment supports neither an all-inclusive religious tolerance nor a rigid condemnation of all non-Christian religions, one looks for some clearer principles by which we may receive the prophets' words as Christians now. This is not the first commentary to discover that the whole question of biblical relevance is far more demanding than appears at first sight.

The contribution on Esther is more superficial and limited in scope. The Introduction particularly is confusing on various historical and literary issues, and reads more like a hastily assembled collection of short notes. The commentary itself is unremarkable, apart from its sympathy for the LXX, not only in its more overtly religious interpretation of the Hebrew text but in accepting the minority view that the Persian king was Artaxerxes I rather than Xerxes. The author, who is a Hebrew Christian, also often seems to show greater interest in Jewish matters than in 'the life of the Church'.

There is a curious imbalance in this volume. Four chapters of Nahum and Obadiah receive 102 pages, but 38 pages cover all ten chapters of Esther. Yet this is a fair indication that the book's chief value lies in Coggins' exegetical foundation, which will be useful to anyone who has an interest in Nahum or Obadiah. On Esther, however, the recent commentaries of Baldwin and Clines, not mentioned in this work, would seem to provide more reliable assistance.

Martin J. Selman, Spurgeon's College, London.

T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 239 pp., £14.95.

It is a pleasure to welcome a book which fills a glaring gap. The lack, prior to this work by the doyen of British Calvin scholars, of a study of such an extensive corpus (running to 25 volumes in a newly-projected English translation) of so distinguished a commentator as John Calvin is a truly remarkable fact. The book is good news for Calvin studies also for a second reason, in that, 'like an ice-breaker opening up a way for the scientific party', as the author puts it, it exposes so much terrain awaiting further exploration. There is scope for many a Ph.D. in this vast territory.

Readers familiar with Dr Parker's earlier work on *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* will be well advised to read carefully his explanation, in the Introduction, of the differences between the two books. They are considerable. Dr Parker's concern here is largely expository, with four chapters dealing respectively with the relation between the two Testaments, and history, law and prophecy in Calvin's commentaries. The first chapter alone deals with more technical matters, presenting a very useful account of Calvin's three forms of OT exposition — sermons, lectures and commentaries. Only in this chapter does the writer make any references to secondary literature. He breaks new ground in discussing the lectures — their hearers, the timetable of their delivery, the time they took to deliver, the relationship between their oral and written (printed) form, and between Calvin's only three commentaries proper (on Psalms, his harmony of Exodus-Deuteronomy, and Joshua) and his commoner lectures. All students of Calvin will learn a good deal from this chapter.

The remaining four chapters, which deal only with the lectures and commentaries (the two being normally, if loosely, grouped together as 'the commentaries'), tackle more familiar subject-matter, but do so with a detailed knowledge of Calvin's works that few can match. The non-technical character of the bulk of the book will increase its value to non-specialist readers, not least the expositors and preachers of today. They will find, for example, much stimulus in Calvin's remarkable arrangement of the Mosaic law in his harmony — which is in fact much more than a harmony.

Scholarly opinion may beg to differ on a few aspects of Dr Parker's interpretation of Calvin. (The reviewer may be allowed to refer to his own discussions of the Mosaic harmony commentary in *Scott. Journ. of Theol.* 36 (1983), pp. 463-485, and *Calv. Theol. Journ.* 21 (1986), pp. 33-50.) But one can say with much greater confidence that many a young theological student could do far worse than buy this book and follow the example of Karl Barth, who once averred, in a letter quoted by Parker, 'I could gladly and profitably set myself down and spend all the rest of my life just with Calvin.'

D. F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh.

R. T. France, Matthew (Tyndale NT Commentaries) (Leicester/Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity/Eerdmans, 1985), 416 pp., £4.25.

This excellent new commentary, replacing the 1961 commentary of R. V. G. Tasker, admirably accomplishes the aim of the new series as articulated by the general editor, Leon Morris, and is a model of what a concise exegetical commentary should be.

In a fine section devoted to introductory matters, about 50 pages compared to the mere 15 in Tasker's volume, France discusses not only the origin of the gospel but also its theological distinctives. All of this is done in awareness of, and in conversation with, the latest and best Matthean scholarship. Indeed, despite its non-technological nature and the limitations of space, which allow only occasional reference to the scholarly debate concerning Matthew, the entire commentary is clearly based on scholarship of a high calibre.

As to authorship, France cautiously argues that the apostle Matthew probably had a major role in the origin of the gospel. He

leans, rather tentatively, towards dating the gospel in the sixties and sees it as addressed to a community of mainly Jewish believers. Tasker by comparison associated the apostle with an Aramaic substratum and dated the Greek gospel later than AD 70, regarding 22:7 as a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. France favours the priority of Mark and the two-source hypothesis, though with due sensitivity to the questions recently raised against these views. Even apart from the issue of priority, however, he rightly stresses the importance of synoptic comparisons in discerning Matthew's distinctive emphases.

The commentary proper proceeds verse by verse over against the section by section treatment of Tasker with occasional 'additional notes'. France moves through the material confidently and with an exceptional clarity. His exegesis is supported by careful argument so that one always knows why he opts for a particular interpretation. Particularly impressive is his sensitivity to matters such as structure, immediate context, and (as one would expect from his previous work) the evangelist's use of the OT. His conclusions always seem sane and balanced. Also interesting to note is his appeal to humour in the exegesis of a passage (e.g. 15:26f.; 17:27; 19:10; 23:24) and the fact that despite the relative limitations of space he manages to include appropriate application at many points. France does particularly well with the notorious challenges that face every Matthew commentator, such as the Sermon on the Mount (and especially 5:17-21), the parables of Jesus, Peter's confession, and the Olivet Discourse.

The present commentary may here and there be a little more conservative than Tasker's. This can be seen in France's unflinching acceptance of the supernatural aspects of the birth narrative. Thus where Tasker can describe the angelic revelations and the moving star as ways of speaking about divine guidance, France refers to a spiritual being and a miraculous occurrence. France also seems more concerned with harmonizing discrepancies between different accounts than does Tasker. For the most part, France is content to assume rather than to argue the historical veracity of Matthew's narrative. On the other hand, one could hardly say that France's commentary is uncritical or obscurantist. Thus concerning the difficult passage in 27:52f. he concludes that what a camera would have recorded is 'a matter of faith, not of objective demonstration'. He accepts the visionary character of the temptations of Jesus. His work indeed is characterized throughout not by credulity, but by a consistent and appropriate respect for the text.

France properly takes into account the creativity of the evangelist at many points. He acknowledges editorial freedom in arranging the materials, including the grouping of items according to subject (and not chronology), the formation of the major teaching discourses, and even, perhaps, in the doubling of those healed (see on 8:28). Although he is thus open to the evangelist's redaction of his sources, this comes into play surprisingly seldom in the commentary. The result is that at important points the theological significance of Matthew's alteration of Mark's wording is unduly minimized (e.g. Mt. 9:17/Mk. 2:22; Mt. 15:1-20/Mk. 7:1-23). Furthermore, the insistence on the importance of the immediate context to the exegesis of any passage, something otherwise very productive in this commentary, can make for some forced exegesis when the evangelist has juxtaposed material that may originally have been independent. Thus, may it not be better to ignore the immediately preceding material when exegeting such passages as 22:11-14 and 24:29-31?

Two further weaknesses of the commentary may be mentioned. First, France's portrayal of Judaism and especially Pharisaism is generally too negative. It is not that he is unaware of the important recent scholarship that portrays first-century Judaism much more sympathetically than does the NT. For example, commenting on 5:20 he states that the Pharisees' scrupulous concern to obey the smallest commandment is not to be faulted; in his treatment of chapter 23 he suggests there were some good Pharisees and that many were unconscious of their moral failure, and he rightly cautions against an anti-Semitic interpretation of 27:25. But much more could and should be done by a modern commentator to compensate for the excessively negative view of Judaism in the gospel. Often France's remarks concerning Judaism and the Pharisees reflect what must be described as the all-too-common stereotype of a legalistic religion dominated by the quest for a righteousness based on works. Unfortunately no allowance is made for the reasonable supposition that the hostility between the synagogue and the church has resulted

in a considerable heightening of the anti-Judaism of the gospels.

Secondly, although France regularly depends upon historical information for his exegesis, the commentary is written largely with insufficient attention to the life setting of the original readers. The *Sitz im Leben* of the community to which the gospel was first written remains, of course, necessarily hypothetical, since it can only be reconstructed from the data contained in the gospel itself. But despite the danger of the circularity involved, attention to the readers' own situation can often illuminate the text in a most helpful way.

These weaknesses take away little, however, from the overall excellence of this commentary. I suspect that every evangelical reader will wish, as I do, that the commentary were three or four times its present length so that France would have had more scope to deal with the richness and complexity of this gospel. It is not that the commentary as it is is inadequate, but rather simply that once one has tasted the good things in it, one wants more. But in its class and with its prescribed purpose this commentary has no peer.

Donald A. Hagner, Fuller Theological Seminary.

D. P. Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Linz, Austria: 1982), 298 pp., no price stated.

It has become commonplace either to assert that Luke has a bias towards the poor (if not an ideal of poverty and an ethic of renunciation) or to spiritualize his handling of the theme to the point that he has nothing of practical significance to say on the question of wealth at all. Seccombe's book, a revision of his Cambridge PhD thesis (and written at Tyndale House), argues both such positions to be misunderstandings of the evangelist's intention.

Against the first position Seccombe offers essentially two arguments. Firstly, the chief passages on which such an idea is based are (a) Lk. 4:16ff., with its commission to preach good news to the poor (cf. 7:22); (b) the beatitudes in Luke which speak of the blessing of the poor, the hungry, and those who weep with corresponding woes on the rich, the full, and the merry (6:20-26); and (c) the Magnificat, with its celebration of the humble lifted up and the hungry filled, while erstwhile rulers are torn from their thrones, and the rich sent empty away (1:51-54). But these passages, Seccombe argues, are not about the 'poor' in general and in socio-economic terms; they are about *Israel*. The poor in the Psalms call out to God in their need, for he pledges himself to hear the needy. But already within the psalmic tradition some not-so-poor (in literal and economic terms) begin to present themselves to God as 'the poor', using this as a metaphor to designate *their situation of need* even when the latter is a matter of ill-health (Ps. 88:16) or of persecution (Pss. 22:24; 35:10; 69:29,33; etc.; indeed, so 'David' prays in the latter two). So, too, in the Psalms 'the poor' becomes a designation for Israel, oppressed by the nations and crying out to God in her need as she had done in Egypt (cf. Ps. 9). It is this tradition of metaphorical use for the nation in need of salvation from oppressive enemies that is taken up in Isaiah (esp. in Is. 61:1f.) and given a cosmic dualistic spiritual interpretation in Judaism (esp. in 11Q^{Me}) and by Jesus (Lk. 4:16f.; 7:22; etc.). In these places 'the poor' carries no real socio-economic sense; they are first and foremost Israel, seen as the oppressed of Satan (cf. 13:16; Acts 10:38). The Lucan beatitudes and the Magnificat derive from the same tradition of interpretation; the poor, the hungry and those who weep are Israel in need of salvation. The rich, the haughty and the rulers who are to be plucked from their thrones are the oppressive demonic powers and their agents. Where 'the poor' in the Lucan tradition denotes the *literal* poor, they do not include Jesus and his disciples. The poor are those who need charity; Jesus and his circle come from the more comfortably-off sector — they give *alms* rather than receive them.

Seccombe's second major argument against the view that Luke champions poverty is that the passages normally taken to evince a renunciation ethic (Lk. 14:25-35 and 18:18-30) in fact do no such thing. The first of them, contextually, is neither about renunciation of possessions as such, nor about *normal* discipleship at all. It depicts Jesus' hyperbolic challenge to any triumphalist understanding of his ministry; Jesus bids 'disciples' abandon all calls of family, and any care for their own safety, and rather take up the cross-beam, and join

him in his execution march to Jerusalem. In this context 'everything he has' (14:33) is much more than the disciple's bank balance; in the extreme situation discipleship is revealed to be potentially limitless. Luke's point for his readers has nothing to do with an ideal of voluntary poverty; nor is it that discipleship will normally take such an extreme form, but that at any time it *might*.

The pericope of the rich ruler (18:18-30) is atypical in its demand too. That it has nothing to do with an idealization of poverty is clear from vv. 29-30, where a disciple who has left anything for the sake of the gospel is assured he will receive many times as much *in this age* as well as eternal life, and from the Zacchaeus story (19:8, where Zacchaeus gives half, not all of what he owns, for the poor). The ruler who has kept the commandments since his youth is invited to receive its reward, and to enter life in the circle of Jesus' followers. That he should return home and sell what he has appears as a subordinate direction; atypical in that Jesus more usually requires a man *not* to return home, but to follow immediately (*cf.* 9:59-62). The response, however, shows the demand was justified; and Luke wishes his reader to learn from the story that he should not be held back in responding to the challenge of the gospel by misgivings related to money and social position. The rich ruler's dilemma reveals how hard it is for one with privilege and power in this world to count these things as nothing for the sake of enjoying true 'life'.

But Secombe also avoids the trap of concluding that Luke has specialized the question of riches and poverty to the point where they have become mere cyphers for different types of existential relation to the gospel (a danger not successfully circumvented by, *e.g.*, L. T. Johnson). In chapter 4 he gives a good exegesis of Luke's warnings concerning greed (see especially his treatment of the parable of the rich fool (12:16-21)); and he nicely saves Lk. 12:22-34 from the banality of teaching that worry is psychologically damaging. The whole assures the Christian facing possible deprivation due to persecution that he should persist in discipleship, for the harassed 'little flock' are at the centre of God's concern, and *the Father* will provide. Indeed, the disciple need not save for the rainy day, but may without worry give generously, for as he does so he will surely receive God's blessing even *now* (purse and treasure 'in heaven' mean 'with God', so available now, not merely future eschatological joys). The parable of the unjust steward (16:1-9) and connected teachings emphasize that the follower of Jesus is not to shun the 'mammon of this age' (which is how Secombe interprets 'mammon of unrighteousness'), but to use it generously in such a way as displays God's love to the needy. The parable of pounds (19:11-27) makes a similar but more general point — the need to strive to maximize the benefit of anything God gives; while the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus declares that failure to use one's resources to help those in need is an outrage against the Law and the Prophets which are fulfilled in the gospel. Jesus' ethic in Luke is thus portrayed as an ethic of anticipatory realization of the kingdom, based in Is. 58:6f.; the disciple is called to use his resources now to mirror what God will do at the end: to feed the hungry, *etc.*

A further chapter on Acts briefly examines the way Luke's handling of the theme of poverty and riches parallels Greek ideas of how true friendship is expressed in 'fellowship' of goods and life without legalistic communal possession. There are valuable insights here too, but the discussion is much briefer and the strength of the book lies in the chapters on the gospel.

Secombe has given us a thoroughly researched yet readable book, with originality, a commendable lack of strained exegesis, and a message of some importance for the church in an affluent society. What he says needs also to be heeded by those in less affluent settings who too uncritically read Luke through the spectacles of current liberation theologies. This work shows they need to aim for a much more exegetically nuanced statement. A good book, well worth the price (I say in faith); especially if you can get a rich man to buy it for you!

Max Turner, King's College, Aberdeen.

Hans F. Bayer, *Jesus' Predictions of Vindication and Resurrection* (WUNT II, 20, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986), 289 pp.

Did the historical Jesus actually believe and teach that he would be

crucified, resurrected and exalted to his Father's right hand? In an academic environment which barely admits of the possibility that Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah — a concept vague enough not to require any supernatural interpretation of his nature or prophetic explanation of his knowledge — the biblical critic who would answer this question affirmatively must provide a persuasive case indeed. To this ambitious task Hans F. Bayer, currently a lecturer in the *Freie Theologische Akademie* in Giessen, West Germany, dedicates himself in this revision of his 1984 Aberdeen thesis under Professors R. S. Barbour and I. H. Marshall. The results appear in the form of yet another landmark volume in the prestigious WUNT series edited by Tübingen Professors M. Hengel and O. Hofius, a series which is distinguishing itself as perhaps the most prominent German outlet for dissertations and theses of relatively conservative and even evangelical bent.

The book falls into three parts of unequal length. More than half of the work considers implicit predictions of Jesus' vindication. These include Jesus' promise not to eat of the fruit of the vine anew until he should eat it in God's kingdom (Mk. 14:25 pars.), his references to the cup he must drink (Mk. 10:38 par.; 14:36 pars.), the baptism with which he must be baptised (Mk. 10:38 par.; Lk. 12:50) and the hour which was to come upon him (Mk. 14:41 par.; Lk. 22:53), his citation of the cornerstone passage (Ps. 118:22) at the end of the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mk. 12:10 pars.), and his enigmatic pronouncement concerning the sign of Jonah (Mt. 12:38-40 pars.). A much shorter section then considers the explicit resurrection predictions. These include the three relatively detailed statements in Mt. 8:31 pars.; 9:31 pars.; and 10:33-34 pars., as well as the briefer references in Mt. 9:9 and 14:27-28. The third concluding part very briefly examines the correlation, background and thematic integration of these various sayings into the wider message of Jesus.

The studies of individual passages in each case subdivide in two: a detailed discussion of their provenance and a briefer survey of their meaning. Bayer analyzes the linguistic pedigree of each text in meticulous detail, invariably arguing for a Palestinian Jewish-Christian, pre-Markan origin of the triple tradition material and for a similar pre-Matthaean and/or pre-Lukan source influencing the more significant variations in those two gospels. This kind of labour seldom leads to exciting reading, irrespective of author, but in today's academic climate it is absolutely essential. Bayer recognizes that such pre-synoptic provenances do not automatically lead to a *Sitz im Leben Jesu*, but he shows that in each case the arguments against attributing an important core of each saying to Jesus fail to convince.

If the substance of each of these predictions is authentic, then Bayer concludes that Jesus did anticipate his own 'somatic resurrection to immortality'. He also realized that he must first undergo death accompanied by divine abandonment and judgment. Subsequently God would vindicate him; both rejection and exaltation were equally ordained by divine necessity. The diversity of first-century Jewish views concerning resurrection and the *post mortem* destiny of God's people ensured that none of Jesus' predictions was explicit enough for all in his audiences to know exactly what was going to happen. Hence the distinction between implicit and explicit references is somewhat anachronistic, and none of the predictions contains enough detail to pass successfully for *vaticinia ex eventu*.

Helpful subpoints, many from the frequent excursions, also abound. The metaphor of the cup points only to the fact and not to the mode of judgment. But comparison with the metaphor of baptism suggests that the latter focuses more on outward persecution and the former (the cup) more on inward abandonment by God. The cornerstone passage serves to identify the evil tenants as the rulers of Jerusalem rather than functioning as an appended proof-text for the resurrection. Jonah most likely reported his adventure with the big fish to the Ninevites; this and not the preaching of repentance constituted his 'sign'. Mention of 'three days' before the resurrection may simply reflect a standard idiom for a short period of time. The intricacy of the debate on the background and meaning of the 'Son of man' phrase renders its presence useless as a criterion for determining the authenticity of a passage, although probably a combination of Bultmann and Lindars is needed — both apocalyptic and generic elements seem present and authentic.

The over-all structure of Bayer's discussion is crystal clear and the cumulative force of his arguments compelling. Along the way, a few of the links in his chain seem weaker than others, especially when he

is arguing for Matthaean and Lukan distinctives as pre-synoptic, but this is probably inevitable in the fairly subjective discipline of dictional analysis. The style is at times a bit stodgy, and grammatical infelicities and redundancies occasionally betray the fact that the author's native tongue is German and not English. These very minor complaints are more than adequately compensated for by Bayer's copious coverage of all the significant German works in consistently ample footnotes, a task which most of us in English-speaking academia wish we could accomplish as effortlessly.

As I worked through Bayer's study, two scholars of diametrically opposite perspectives kept coming to mind. Both currently hail from Oxford. The one is James Barr, who has criticized evangelicals for what he calls 'maximal conservatism'. This is the approach which seeks to buttress evangelical views by quoting the most conservative non-evangelicals who support them wherever possible, while rejecting those scholars' views where they dissent from evangelicalism, even if those views are logically entailed by the arguments employed earlier. The other scholar is Roger Beckwith, who has repeatedly lamented evangelical appropriation of critical methodology at the expense of a full-orbed defence of the authenticity of all of Jesus' sayings (cf. e.g. his recent lopsided review of Colin Kruse's *New Testament Models for Ministry* in this journal). I suspect that both Barr and Beckwith would view Bayer as a classic example of what they find wrong with evangelicalism.

I see things quite differently. Granted there are several occasions when Bayer seems not to argue for the positions he defends but merely cites a German authority who happens to agree with him, and granted there are even more occasions when he might have stated the significance of his conclusions for Christology and for Jesus' self-understanding in less muted terms, nevertheless the vast majority of his study presents an exemplary paradigm for what evangelicals writing NT theses must do today if they wish to defend the authenticity of a disputed portion of the sayings of Jesus. Only this type of painstaking sifting of the evidence for and against each small portion of the text can do full justice to the complexities of the debates, and it is my judgment that Bayer has proved more than equal to the task for the corpus of material he has chosen.

Craig L. Blomberg, Denver Seminary, Colorado, USA.

John A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*, ed. J. F. Coakley (London: SCM, 1985), 443 pp., £19.50.

My personal indebtedness to John Robinson is great. When I was a student at Cambridge I heard him lecture on the Fourth Gospel; and my own interest in John was largely kindled as a result of his teaching, just as it has been subsequently fostered by his personal influence and encouragement. So I awaited the promised appearance of his last book with understandably great eagerness; and reading it, as with writing this review, has been in every sense an act of *pietas*.

In *The Priority of John* Dr Robinson gathers up the fruits of his lifelong Johannine research. At the time of his death, in 1983, he had completed the text of the book on which his 1984 Bampton Lectures were to be based, intending to return to the final stages of the volume after the Lectures. But, as is well known, Professor C. F. D. Moule eventually prepared and delivered the Bampton, while John Robinson's pupil Dr J. F. Coakley, who teaches at the University of Lancaster, prepared the manuscript of the book for publication.

And what a fascinating and readable study it is! Written with as much pace and freshness as an unforgettable detective story, John Robinson brings to his account the acuteness and cogency of Hercule Poirot himself. As it happens, we know in advance the outcome of the mystery which is being investigated; but nonetheless the writer acts as an expert sleuth, pointing out clues, sifting the evidence, and enabling us time and time again to see, through his magnifying glass, data the importance of which we might otherwise have missed.

Robinson wears his considerable scholarship and erudition lightly, and never allows his knowledge of all the familiar, and many of the less well-known, sources to obscure the main lines of his argument. (Robinson alludes, for example, to H. W. Watkins and G. Edmundson, two of his predecessors in the Bampton lectureship,

whose work is immediately relevant to the study of John's gospel. I must confess that I had heard of neither of them!) Inevitably, some of the material in this book is familiar to us from other sources to which John Robinson has contributed. So also is his basic thesis. Nevertheless, the fact that the Robinsonian stance is known to us already in no way detracts from the value of the volume, which presents the case for Johannine priority, and its implications, at greater depth and with greater detail than has been possible before.

But it is crucial that the nature of the case itself should be properly understood. Despite the title of this book, and the totally misleading claim on its dust-cover, Robinson is *not* arguing that 'the Gospel of John was the first Gospel to be written'. He is examining instead the possibility that John's underlying *tradition* is primitive; that the fourth evangelist drew on sources which are independent of the synoptic witnesses, and therefore deserve to be considered as valuable historically as the equally independent traditions Mark, Q, M and L. In Robinson's own words, his aim is not to prove that his is the only tenable position, but the more modest intention of trying out an hypothesis, exploring 'what happens if one reverses the prevailing presumption that John is not a primary source' (p. 9). Not all will agree with this supposition, or the results which it yields for this author, especially in relation to the final dating of the Letters and Gospel of John, which are placed in that order by Robinson, and given a pre-AD 70 date. But the possibility that John's tradition is historically respectable as well as theologically interpreted (a theory which has altered the face of Johannine studies radically) has gained considerable ground in the last quarter-century, and is one to which many scholars would give support today. Robinson lends weight to his view by means of the more debatable claim that John the apostle was himself the (only) author of the Fourth Gospel. But, either way, it is this presumption which is being tested in this book: that John 'got it right' — historically and theologically' (p. xiii).

In many ways the most important section of this book is the first chapter, where Robinson deals with this matter of 'presumption': reversing normal critical orthodoxy (which operated until the middle of this century, at least), and presuming the priority rather than the posteriority of John. If we do not postulate, Robinson argues, that John has to be slotted into the synoptic picture of Jesus, we can reasonably ask what may be learned from making the opposite presumption. And the results are intriguing. The links in time, place and person (the person being John the apostle, the beloved disciple) are 'sufficiently plausible at least to make it worthwhile to follow up and test out the presumption that the Fourth Gospel could take us as far back to source as any other' (p. 122). So far as the chronology of the gospels is concerned, the Markan timetable of the ministry of Jesus can be fitted into John, but, because the Markan chronology is too fragmentary, not the reverse; and this suggests that, where there are incompatibilities, the Johannine evidence is to be preferred. At many points in the recitation of the story of Jesus (beginning, middle and end) the presumption of John's priority throws light on the historicity of the narrative, and makes sense of it. John's account of the teaching of Jesus is not artificial and contrived, but integrated with the narrative itself, and much nearer in character to the synoptic witness than is often supposed; both traditions may therefore reflect the original teaching of Jesus. The Johannine portrait of Jesus himself, as 'fully a man of our history and uniquely his Father's son' (p. 397), is likely to be correct, and, once again, not so far removed from the presentation of the person of Christ in the other three gospels.

Re-examining familiar material from his own, unusual, perspective, John Robinson thus constantly produces fresh insights and unexpected discoveries. Nevertheless, whatever view is taken of his controlling argument, some of the detailed conclusions which arise from it may be disputed. I question, for example, whether the ministry of Jesus was really so short (Robinson suggests that the synoptic and Johannine pictures both presuppose a *two-year* pattern), and whether the events of holy week were quite so concentrated (less than a week). I also wonder if John's Christology is as 'low' as Robinson seems to imply. Moreover, even if we opt for the historical reliability of John's basic tradition, as I would, some may argue that the theological accuracy of John's interpretation of that tradition cannot be so easily established. And the trouble with all presumptions is that, depending on the set chosen, they *can* work in opposite directions. Nevertheless Robinson's investigations are significant and appealing; and in future they must be taken as a

standard reference for all studies of John.

Robinson's account of Johannine priority is weighty and lengthy. But he puts himself into all that he writes; and, even if the long footnotes with their ample quotations might have been somewhat pruned, they contain endlessly perceptive and often amusing comments and criticisms. The volume as a whole is beautifully and accurately produced, and Chip Coakley's editorship is expert. On the front of the dust-cover is a picture of the beloved disciple. It is a detail from the Giotto crucifix in the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, Florence. John Robinson had this picture on the desk while he was finishing his final book: one John reflectively gazing at another. No doubt in heaven the two Johns are even closer together, and further light is dawning upon them.

Stephen S. Smalley, Coventry Cathedral.

Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John* (Word Bible Commentary Vol. 51) (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984), xxxiv + 386 pp.

Judith Lieu, *The Second and Third Epistles of John: History and Background* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), x + 264 pp., £12.95.

The publication of R. E. Brown's *Anchor Bible* commentary on 1–3 John – all 840 pages of it – might be thought to put an end to all further scholarly commenting on the epistles for some time to come. Students, however, will welcome this new contribution by a conservative scholar, partly because it says everything essential in (exactly) half the length of Brown and partly because of its excellent and reliable scholarship. Dr Smalley argues that the letters are to be seen as reflecting the development of (a) a strongly Jewish group which questioned the full divinity of Jesus, and (b) a Hellenistic group which questioned his full humanity. The letters are written to deal with these tendencies in the 'Johannine community' and to reassert the true Christian teaching enshrined in the gospel. The format of the Word commentaries provides for: 1. full sectional bibliographies, which display the author's familiarity with Johannine scholarship; 2. a fresh translation; 3. textual notes, which are helpful in showing why certain readings are preferred to others; 4. a discussion of 'Form/Structure/Setting' which places the section in its context and summarizes the flow of thought; 5. 'Comment', which gives a detailed discussion of the Greek text; and 6. 'Explanation', which draws the exegesis together in a brief summary. Dr Smalley's treatment is lucid, thorough and judicious, and tackles the exegetical problems in an exemplary fashion, setting out the various options fairly and presenting reasoned solutions. The one weakness of the volume, which it shares with others in the series, is that, although the 'Explanation' is apparently meant to indicate the passage's 'relevance to the ongoing biblical revelation', scarcely anything is done to indicate what the message of the passage is as part of Scripture which has something to say to the contemporary reader. To be sure, the exegesis will help the reader to understand the original meaning of the text and will provide him with an excellent basis for moving on to contemporary application, but he will have to take that further step for himself. It is a pity that an evangelical series of commentaries has not grasped the opportunity to discuss the problems of exposition more fully. With this one reservation this volume can be most highly commended as now being the standard work for students on the Greek text of the letters.

Dr Lieu's book has developed out of her Birmingham doctoral dissertation and is probably the only thesis of note that has ever appeared devoted primarily to the problems of 2 and 3 John. It is a work for the Johannine specialist rather than the general reader. There are five sections. First, there is a thorough study of the canonization of these two brief letters which confirms that the three Johannine epistles had independent histories as regards their translation and canonization. Second, it is argued that while 3 John is a genuine letter, 2 John has a more artificial, self-conscious character. Third, there is a detailed exegesis of the two letters, which shows that 2 John is more than 'a pale version' of 1 John, although it is based upon it and is even described as 'parasitical' upon it. 2 John is seen as

being written for the Johannine communities as a whole rather than to a specific situation in one church. 3 John is held to be from a different author. Fourth, Dr Lieu discusses the ecclesiastical situation with its problems of authority in the church. She finds a tension between the original witness tradition and the living experience of the community. There is a firm rejection of non-Johannine forms of Christianity. The quarrel with Diotrephes in 3 John may be what led to the erection of rigid barriers against non-Johannine Christians in 2 John. Finally, the implications for the understanding of the Johannine tradition are examined. There is a lack of openness to the continuing witness of the Spirit in 1 John as contrasted with the Gospel, a negative attitude to the world (no mention of mission!), and a sense that the world lies beyond redemption; this is related to a theology which tends to centre on the community rather than on Jesus. There are fundamental differences of thought between the Gospel and the Epistles. Simplistic solutions to the problem of the relation of the Epistles to the Gospel are ruled out.

All this is presented in a somewhat allusive and almost hesitant tone by Dr Lieu, which makes it difficult to state her thesis with precision; clearer signposts and summaries of her main points would have been helpful. As it is, the thesis is difficult to grapple with. It contains a wealth of useful observations and insights that must be taken into account in assessing the situation behind the Johannine letters. But it tends to push impressions and possibilities too far, and finds sharper differences between the Johannine documents than seems probable to me. It is interesting that Dr Smalley, who is familiar with her work, and indeed commends it, is firmly of the opinion that both the Johannine Gospel and the Epistles are 'mainstream' and not sectarian in their Christianity and finds a close unity between them, although he leaves the question of common authorship rather open.

I. Howard Marshall, University of Aberdeen.

A. E. Harvey (ed.), *Alternative Approaches to New Testament Study* (London: SPCK, 1985), 144 pp., £4.95.

The book consists of seven unintegrated essays. M. Goulder, 'A House Built on Sand', offers a pugnacious rejection of critical orthodoxy on the question of gospel origins. He makes merry of the arguments for Q in particular, and more generally of the methods by which scholars seek to identify which words of a passage come from a source, and which from the evangelist. For example, he only has to show that many so-called Mattheanisms are actually also there in Q – albeit less frequently (but then Q is a shorter *corpus* than Mt.) – in order to throw doubt both on the word-count method of redaction/source analysis so often practised, and even on the existence of Q itself. (This is further thrown in question by the demonstration that many of the traits of the third gospel normally regarded as evidence that Luke has preserved a more authentic version of a Q saying than Matthew's parallel can better be interpreted as Lucanisms!)

While some of his points are well made, others are less convincing. For example the agreement between (e.g.) Mt. 26:67f. and Lk. 22:63f. against Mk. 14:65 is said to falsify the Q hypothesis (because here one cannot invoke Q, which *ex hypothesi* had no passion narrative; one must assume Luke used Matthew, in which case *that* explanation satisfies all other agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark and makes Q redundant). If we are tempted to answer (quite reasonably) that Luke may have shared other traditions with Matthew than merely Q, Goulder objects (a) that we are making our original thesis unfalsifiable, and so meaningless, and (b) we are multiplying unnecessary hypotheses. The 'easiest' explanation is that the Q and M material in Matthew is the evangelist's own creation, and that Luke freely rewrote Matthew and Mark, in turn creating virtually all the so-called L material (including e.g. parables of the Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son, etc.). The trouble is that many of us traditionalists (and that includes other writers in the volume) need to be shown that Goulder's simpler hypothesis (we agree it is simpler *numerically*, in that it posits fewer sources and traditions; but that is probably irrelevant) is also the more historically believable: and we still find it

wildly improbable that Luke knew and used Matthew. The old wine of the traditional answer to the synoptic problem may need maturing yet; but it still tastes better than the new.

John Drury, 'Mark 1:1-15: An Interpretation', attempts to give a structuralist analysis of the passage to elucidate the early church concerns which provide the dynamic and the shape of this section. Unfortunately the essay does not provide a clear elucidation of structuralist *method* of analysis, and so the exegetical results are not firmly based in it. Nor does Drury seem to have achieved thereby insights into the passage which he could not better have deduced by tradition and redaction criticism: indeed in contrast to them his structuralist analysis appears impressionistic and undisciplined. The method may have been creative in offering suggestive possibilities, but these needed to be pinned down properly through textlinguistics (in the literary dimension) and tradition and redaction criticism (in the historical).

John Riches and Alan Millar, 'Conceptual Change in the Synoptic Tradition', begin with a commonplace of linguistic philosophy (even more so of Semantics and Pragmatics), namely that determination of the sense of an expression in a discourse involves identifying a whole collection of related theological presuppositions and entailments which are themselves historically and sociologically conditioned. Using the example of 'the kingdom of God', the authors show that one cannot understand what Jesus means by this expression on purely linguistic grounds, or merely on the basis of formal analogies with statements about the kingdom in other literature (Weiss and Chilton), but must also take into account what Jesus considered his proclamation to *entail* for ethics, in relation to purity laws, etc. What Jesus meant by 'the kingdom of God' can only be known when its entailments are known. More semantic precision may be required, but this is a good essay in the use and abuse of parallels, and should be recommended reading for students.

J. D. Derrett offers an original essay on 'Taking up the Cross and Turning the Cheek' which is refreshing, if hardly methodologically rigorous, but this reader is not quite sure in what sense it commends itself as a strictly *alternative* approach to the NT.

If much modern NT scholarship offers theological abstractions barely grounded in the social realities of the NT world, others have rightly rebelled, and amongst their number must be included not only Riches (above) but also A. E. Harvey and F. G. Downing. Harvey's essay, 'Forty Strokes Save One: Social Aspects of Judaizing and Apostasy', examines the social and legal pressures that would come upon a Jew who converted to Christianity. He might not find it easy (or even desirable) to extricate himself from Judaism. But *if* he tried he would probably have to move district (or even country if he were Palestinian) to do so: it was not simply a matter of declaring himself an apostate! Judaism, for its part, would probably tolerate a wide range of opinions but *might* construe Christianity as blasphemous, and would certainly have taken very seriously the breach with purity laws required for Jewish Christians to have full fellowship with Gentile Christians. For that the heavy flogging Paul received five times (2 Cor. 11:24) might well be expected, and accepting the punishment would be the only way of staying within Judaism, e.g. to evangelize. From this (not entirely original) stance Harvey looks at the Antioch incident, Galatians, Hebrews, Matthew, and the Pauline mission, and attempts to elucidate the socio-historical situation of each. The right questions are asked, even if the evidence afforded us is thin, and capable of several interpretations.

F. G. Downing, 'Ears to Hear', focuses our attention on the fact that in antiquity authors produced their discourses in active discussion with their intended audiences (or samples thereof) who thereby had a direct influence on the shaping of the discourse. Downing also argues that, for example, Josephus' speeches in part deliberately echo the sort of theological, moral and political interests in Dionysius of Halicarnassus because he knows that his audience has read and enjoyed Dionysius (and others like him). Luke shows something of the same proclivities, claims Downing (see *NTS* 27 and 28). This approach — which asks serious questions about how Luke's or Mark's selection of material is affected by audience expectations and preferences, and how the writer reacts with them — is entirely to be commended, even if we have to recognize the provisional nature of many of Downing's own conclusions.

Finally, Leslie Houlden, 'Trying to be a New Testament Theologian', grapples agonizingly with the question of how so

diverse a bundle of documents as the NT, so individualistic in theology, so contextually contingent, and so culturally removed from our situation, can be the basis of a theology for today. He is not willing, with Nineham, to saw off the academic branch he is sitting on and make study of the NT a merely antiquarian pursuit. He does see the NT as having an authority for theology that, say, Calvin's *Institutes* cannot have; but precisely what the cash value of the affirmation is remains unclear. Is it enough to say (however well) that certain key features, like the conviction of Christ as living, the awareness of 'salvation' and the sense of a new, expectant community of God's people, are the legacy of the NT to the theologian today who must simply make them the hub of his theological wheel and recognize that otherwise NT scholarship canonizes diversity and autonomy? And what does all this mean in practice? We are not told. Evangelical students will perhaps be inclined to a more positive evaluation of the underlying unity of the NT, and of its potential coherence for our world, and so find the whole problem less painful; but they will benefit from a sympathetic reading of the essay, and an attempt to elucidate their answer to the problems Houlden poses.

In the final analysis the title and preface promise more than the book fulfils. While not ungrateful for some of the contributions, the reader comes away disappointed. No new ground has really been broken; little use has been made of disciplines that offer genuine alternative approaches to NT questions.

Max Turner, King's College, Aberdeen.

Oliver O'Donovan, **Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics** (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 284 pp., £14.95.

The importance of this book lies in the corrective it provides to two equally erroneous Christian approaches to ethics. There have always been those whose interpretation of the gospel as an essentially 'spiritual' phenomenon has obliged them to neglect ethical considerations in favour of personal piety and doctrinal orthodoxy. Others, disappointed by this apparent failure to address the world's problems, have taken the opposite course and have propounded a 'social gospel' as the essence of Christianity at the expense of traditional beliefs concerning the person and work of Christ.

It is in direct opposition to both these tendencies that Professor O'Donovan proceeds with his contention that 'Christian ethics must arise from the Gospel of Jesus Christ' (p. 11). Both moralism and antinomianism rest upon a false dualism more proper to the Gnostic systems than to a Christianity which takes seriously the redeeming act of God in his Son Jesus Christ. Once the nature of this act as a recreation and vindication of the natural order in the resurrection of Christ is perceived, these sub-Christian alternatives must be left behind in the realization that 'certain ethical and moral judgments belong to the gospel itself' (p. 12). Evangelical ethics is thus not to be considered as a subject in its own right, but is properly an aspect of soteriology concerned with the new life in Christ.

Professor O'Donovan speaks of three 'moments' in the salvation of man: the past moment, in which God acted decisively once-for-all, renewing his creation in Christ; the present moment, in which the Holy Spirit enables us to participate in this new creation; and the future moment, in which lies the final consummation of the divine salvific purpose. In accordance with this model, Part One of O'Donovan's book deals with the objectivity of the moral order which God has established in creation and vindicated in redemption. An evangelical ethics cannot condone the objectifying approaches to moral order represented by voluntarism and rationalism. If Christian morality consists properly of man's appropriate response to the divine ordering of creation, then that ordering must be real, and not simply a measure of man's ability to *impose* order upon what he experiences. Alongside this affirmation, however, O'Donovan calls us to 'reckon also upon the opacity and obscurity of that order to the human mind which has rejected the knowledge of its Creator' (p. 19). There can be no 'natural law' in the noetic sense. Christian ethics must feel the force of the cross before it can proclaim the resurrection. It is only in Christ that we *truly* know the moral order of creation as it stands

before us in judgment as well as grace (here, as elsewhere, we see that the influence of Barth is not limited to the placing of discursive material in small print). The responsibility which this knowledge in Christ imposes upon the church is that of being a prophetic voice in the world, avoiding the erroneous alternatives of moral totalitarianism on the one hand and 'ecclesiastical house rules' on the other.

Part Two, entitled 'The Subjective Reality', approaches the question of moral order from the perspective of man's participation in the new humanity in Christ. Thus whilst O'Donovan is eager to point us first and foremost to the objective reality of redemption, he is in no way guilty of 'objectivism'. The restoration which God has set forth in his Son does not proceed independently of us, but for our sakes. God is not content to leave us in our sin, but gives us to participate in the renewed order. Our moral agency as Christians is thus enabled by the Spirit of Christ who makes the 'objective' subjective in our lives. He it is who evokes our free response as moral agents to the authority of the New Creation. Thus true human freedom is not overwhelmed or contradicted by the presence of grace, but is upheld and affirmed. This is contrary to the popular presentation of human fulfilment as consisting in increased autonomy and self-sufficiency.

We might expect Part Three to deal with the third 'moment' of redemption, as indeed it does in the final chapter presenting the eschaton as the *telos* of the moral life; but this section as a whole attempts to deal with the *form* of the moral life which has been revealed to us as love. This is considered first from the perspective of the variety of situations to which the moral agent might find him or herself having to respond. O'Donovan reminds us again that we are living in a universe rather than a multiverse, and thus even the most novel occurrence is encompassed within the interpretative matrix of the divine ordering.

After a consideration of the moral subject in terms of the relation of character to actions, there follows a Christological reworking of the twofold command of Jesus to love God and our neighbour. This must direct us to Christ, our love for whom fulfils both aspects of the command. The point is a powerful one, and might perhaps have been developed more fully along the lines that our relationship to God is not primarily an immediate *vertical* relation but a *horizontal* relation through the mediating humanity of Christ, a fact which condemns further any 'spiritualizing' of the Christian life. The book continues, however, by raising the question 'who is my neighbour?' in terms of the Christian perception of human personhood. Who is a person? O'Donovan answers this question with the challenging statement that 'the church anticipates restored humanity, and all humanity lies implicitly within the church' (p. 242). Thus there can be no theological justification for the dehumanizing of any group or individual; all are comprehended in our love for Christ the Head.

It is impossible to do justice in so little space to the breadth of scope of this book, incorporating as it does penetrating discussions on issues of philosophy, hermeneutics, ecclesiology, and many other topics in addition to those discussed above. That this is achieved without the cost of superficiality is a fact which ought to command the respect of ethicists and theologians alike.

Trevor Hart, Aberdeen.

J. I. Packer and others, **Here We Stand: Justification by Faith Today** (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), 189 pp., £5.95 pb.

The renewed scholarly interest in justification, encouraged no doubt by ARCIC, is cause for thanksgiving, although it scarcely seems a topic of conversation at pew level. These essays may help to stimulate that interest. They are written by the Oak Hill faculty, past and present, to celebrate the college's Golden Jubilee.

Each of the eight essays has its place, ranging from Butterworth's 'Justification in the Old Testament' to Wheaton on 'The Justified Minister at Work' and 'Liturgy for the Justified'. Bray's essay on 'Justification and the Eastern Orthodox Churches' is fascinating, and perhaps the only short essay available introducing an often ignored subject. Carey brings us up to date on 'Justification and Roman Catholicism' with an introductory essay which complements his earlier one, 'Justification by Faith in the Roman Catholic Church', in

The Great Acquittal (1980). The present essay includes a discussion of McGrath's evaluation of Küng, and concludes, 'we need not share McGrath's pessimism', arguing that Küng pinpointed definite areas of agreement between some Protestant and some Roman Catholic theologians.

However, for this reviewer three essays were notable: Packer's 'Justification in Protestant Theology' gives in 18 pages a remarkably lucid and comprehensive summary, pinpointing with unflinching accuracy the ways the doctrine has been distorted. Atkinson's 'Justification by Faith: A Truth for our Times' gets up a splendid head of steam. Written by a preaching scholar (by no means the same as a scholarly preacher), it speeds across the page with all Luther's own fervour and sometimes his language as well. The implications of the doctrine are excellently drawn out. If you have listened to a bad Sunday's preaching (or maybe done the bad preaching yourself), read this and you will be revived.

Most outstanding is Stephen Motyer's 'Righteousness by Faith in the New Testament'. It is worth buying the book for this stimulating essay alone. Beginning with 'Righteousness in Matthew' before moving to Pauline material, he argues, 'there is no doctrine of justification in the New Testament: rather, there is a doctrine of righteousness'. His sections on the Law, the death of Christ, union with Christ, and the meaning of faith really form an exposition of Gal. 2:17-21. The thinking is fresh and the writing is crisp. An odd statement on p. 35, 'that there were and are missionary situations in which justification would be an inappropriate theme to present as the heart of the gospel', should not prejudice the reader against the essay as a whole.

Altogether, a useful collection.

Tony Baker, Christ Church, Beckenham.

Bernard Palmer (ed.), **Medicine and the Bible** (Exeter: Paternoster Press for Christian Medical Fellowship, 1986), 272 pp., £7.95.

Rex Gardner, **Healing Miracles: a doctor investigates** (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), x + 214 pp., £4.95.

Medicine and the Bible is the third in a trilogy published by the Christian Medical Fellowship; the other two are *Decision Making in Medicine* (1979) and *The Influence of Christians in Medicine* (1984). It arises from concern 'to establish the essential relationship between the Bible and Medicine', and it is intended to be 'an up-to-date survey of some of the most important issues facing the medical profession today as seen in the light of the teaching of the Bible (pp. 9-10).

Chapters 1-4 concentrate on biblical material. Chapters 1-2 are entitled 'Medicine in the OT/NT World', though the second in particular might more accurately be headed 'Biblical references to medical matters considered in the light of the contemporary background'. Much of the contents can be found in Bible dictionaries, but there is some new and updated material, and it is conveniently compiled. Chapter 3 is a discussion of the Levitical Code, and concludes that its primary purpose was to help in the separation of a holy nation, and that it also had incidental value in the development of hygiene. Chapter 4 discusses the identity of the disease(s) represented in most English Bible translations by 'leprosy', and concludes that 'both (Hebrew) *šārāat* and (Greek) *lepra* present such a wide range of meaning that they are virtually untranslatable' (p. 124); the chapter is a useful case study in biblical semantics.

Chapters 5-9 deal with a selection of current medical topics — the value of human life, homosexuality, demon possession, healing, and conscience. Their writers aim to show 'the relevance of biblical principles to modern medical practice', and they will be criticized mainly by those who believe that 'the Bible is not relevant to our contemporary social situation' (p. 151). Chapter 7, on demon possession, although restricting itself to a 'medical perspective in a western culture', seems to me to fail to come to grips with its subject, as it does not clearly answer the questions 'May people be possessed

by demonic forces today?', 'If so, what might the presenting symptoms be, and how should such people be treated?', and 'Are there spiritual states in which there is a (lesser) degree of demonic invasion – and if so, what should be done about them?'. John Richards' standard work *But Deliver us from Evil* (1974) is not even mentioned in the notes to this chapter. Chapter 8, on healing, maintains a balance between extreme 'dispensationalist' and 'triumphalist' viewpoints, and reaches a position similar to that of Rex Gardner's book reviewed below.

In the preface the editor says that *Medicine and the Bible* will appeal to Bible teachers, members of the caring professions, and all who see in the Bible a precept for living. Although its contents are valuable and its contributors eminent, I am left wondering (i) whether the book has been aimed at too wide a readership, and (ii) whether it has demonstrated that there is an 'essential relationship between the Bible and Medicine'. Theological students will, I believe, find it useful for reference in libraries.

Healing Miracles: a doctor investigates is a more exciting and challenging book. It addresses itself 'to the practical and clamant problems not only of the Christian who is ill, but of the doctor or the Christian counsellor', and is written for people 'who need to know with some urgency where they and their patients stand as regards miraculous healing'. (By 'miraculous healing', the author means 'the healing of organic disease by means, or at a speed, inexplicable medically and preceded by prayer in the name of Jesus Christ', p. 1).

The book is a discussion of healing, prayer, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, in the NT, in church history, and at the present day. It is illustrated by 24 medical case records, and by references to the Bible, to biographical materials from many periods of church history, to missionary narratives and to contemporary experience.

Some Christians believe that gifts of 'miraculous healings' – and perhaps other charismata such as the gift of 'tongues' – were marks of the apostolic age only, and then ceased; anything like them today they regard as counterfeit. Gardner considers this view in Chapters 4 and 7, and I believe he conclusively disproves it.

Rather more Christians today seem to me to have an illogical attitude to 'miraculous healing' – they are impossible to please! If prayed – for healing is sudden, they say it is 'over-dramatic'; if it is slow, it is 'natural remission'. If some particularly hard evidence is brought, they merely ask for more – and they have their stock of stories about people who were not healed. Gardner clearly shows that this evasion is not good enough. By presenting a wide range of samples of the sorts of things that actually happen, and by considering their medical, theological and pastoral implications, he makes his case in a very open, irenic and practically helpful way. He concludes that 'there remain some cures for which medicine has no explanation', and 'that in these cases the constant association of prayer to God cannot be discounted' (p. 205).

Gardner's most challenging conclusion is that although today 'only a small percentage of those for whom physical healing is sought from God to obtain it . . . in absolute terms the number appears to be fairly rapidly increasing as more churches become open to this work of God; and percentage-wise more are being healed as the Holy Spirit is being permitted to develop ministries within local fellowships'. In other words, we are challenged to be open to God's leading to personal activity in this area. The fact remains that in most theological teaching institutions little theoretical or practical instruction is given on these matters, and in some it is actively discouraged. If theology is the study of God and of his acts, every student of theology should read this book. Academically, it provides a valuable antidote to contemporary dismissal of 'interventionism' (e.g. J. Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, rev. ed., pp. 247 ff.); pastorally, it is practically very helpful on the actual dilemmas of Christian healing ministry today.

Roger Cowley, Oak Hill College, London.

Kenneth Cragg, *The Christ and the Faiths: theology in cross-reference* (London: SPCK, 1986), 360 pp., £13.50.

It is clear that the relationship of Christ and Christianity to other

faiths is a key contemporary debate for theology as well as for missiology. We therefore welcome this further contribution from the erudite pen of Kenneth Cragg, coming as he does with a profound understanding particularly of Islam and the Jewish world. Although he has clearly done his homework on Hinduism and Buddhism, the reader will detect slightly less empathy in those contexts, especially with Buddhism in its Theravada form. He does, however, see Mahayana Buddhism as an alleviation of the almost vacuous irrelevance and emptiness of Theravada belief in anatta, anicca and dukkha as the bases of philosophy and life.

Dr Cragg is not directly addressing the burning theological issues of revelation and salvation outside the Judaeo-Christian history, but his book is rather attempting to see vital points of inter-relationship and possible areas for significant debate between Christianity and Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Nevertheless, this book constantly raises questions on those issues of salvation and revelation *extra ecclesiam*, although Dr Cragg does not give neat or simplistic answers. Actually it is not only his theological stand which is not always completely clear, but also his literary style which is brilliant but far from lucid.

Dr Cragg is concerned that we often function within a closed circle whereby our faiths can only be understood from within. He aims to pinpoint areas where possibilities of cross-reference exist – and succeeds with stimulating freshness.

With regard to Islam, his three chapters relate to the topics of Creation and Theodicy, Revelation, Zeal for God and God's zeal towards us. As in his previous writings he again highlights the power-consciousness of Islam in contrast to the cross-centred faith of the gospel. He also shows the implied emphasis on created man's dignity and freedom to respond to or reject the sovereign demands of Allah. Allahu Akbar always claims man's acceptance and submission; these can never be assumed. Revelation likewise must include man's participation and therefore there can be no static Way. This particularly relates to Islamic and Christian ideas on prophethood. Is the prophet merely a passive channel of God's word? Or does the prophet not only participate in the conveying of the message, but actually incarnate in his life the reality of the word? Naturally this must lead on to the person of Jesus Christ as prophet and Word incarnate. Cragg suggests that perhaps a true Muslim concept of prophethood is not in fact as far removed from the Christian understanding of the person of Jesus Christ as it may at first seem.

When it comes to interaction with Jews, Cragg poses some key questions. What sort of Messiah is expected? So who is the Messiah? Is he somehow similar to Shabbetai Zvi? Can Jesus really be the Messiah when the world remains in its unredeemed nature? And inevitably Cragg brings the holocaust to the fore, as must be done whenever Christians debate with Jews. It was good to see that he evidently feels with us Jews the horrific significance of the holocaust. But strangely, Cragg does not mention any possible relationship between Jewish messianic expectations and the Christian hope of the second coming of Jesus. And he falls into the usual Gentile Christian error of omitting all mention of Jewish Christians today. It is strange how Gentile Christians always seem to assume that Jews today cannot be Christians. Even in ecumenical dialogue between Jews and Christians, Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah are hardly ever invited to participate. It is high time that the church took notice of the growing number of Jewish believers in their midst.

While Cragg's discussion of Hinduism was interesting in its emphasis on a plurality of christologies and on going beyond both history and also biblical norms in order to attain what is spiritually relevant, there were also some significant gaps in his discussion. I would have liked him to define more fully what 'oneness with ultimate Being' may actually mean both in Hinduism and in Christianity. This lack is underlined by his restricting his Indian theological debate to such theologians as Sundar Singh, Chenchiah and Chakkarai, while failing even to mention the great Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya – but the former are more related to the bhakti school of Hinduism and therefore to the plurality question, whereas Upadhyaya is more advaitin.

In the Buddhism section Dr Cragg fastens onto the question of the self which L. DeSilva, Choan Seng Song and others have made the key area of contextualized debate and theology. What is the self which anatta denies? How does the self relate to selfishness? Can godly and loving desire be unselfish? How then can a Buddhist anatta

doctrine have any bearing on the Christian desire for the good of society and neighbour? What salvation can there be if there is no self?

Cragg ends with a fascinating final chapter on some verses in 1 Timothy and the deep need for honesty in particular matters. He has a controversial but stimulating discussion on the Canon and whether Asian antecedents may enter into it. Can a Jewish and Mediterranean source-book suffice for a world theology and liturgy?

This is not an easy book. It assumes some background knowledge and its style demands concentration. It may not give the answers some of us would like, but it will stretch us and stimulate us with perceptive questions.

Martin Goldsmith, All Nations Christian College, Ware.

Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 2nd edn. (rev. and enlarged) (New York: Orbis Books/Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1985/London: Collins, 1986), 358 pp., £7.95.

I am very grateful for this revised, enlarged edition of Bishop Cragg's book first published in 1956. He concludes both editions with words which will speak to every generation: 'We who, in our generation, listen to the call of the minaret may hear it most compellingly from the muezzin over Gethsemane. There we shall best understand wherewith we must answer – and how, and why' (p. 326). It is not surprising, therefore, that Cragg, after describing Islam at the beginning of its new century (1979) in change and continuity and having presented a sympathetic and thought-provoking account of Muslim beliefs and practices, discusses that how and why. He notes that 'renewed and effective politicization of Islam is the most important single fact of the new century' (p. 8). However, he does not ignore the folk Islam of the ordinary, often illiterate, people with their prayerful visits to the tombs of saints. He describes as a double insurance the blessing of the holy man corroborating the skills of the technician (pp. 23 and 23).

In Part II of his book Cragg asks what the minaret says to the Muslim. He maintains that both Muslims and Christians believe in one supreme, sovereign Creator-God but describe him differently (p. 30). 'Revelation is conceived of, not as a communication of the divine Being, but only of the divine will. It is a revelation, that is, of law, not of personality' (p. 41). The Qur'an gives men enough knowledge to relate to God as servants but not as sons. Historically, Islam begins with the Hijrah in AD 622 when Muhammad and his followers emigrated from Mecca to Medina. At that point Muhammad decided that prophethood must be successful. 'The Muhammadan decision here is formative of all else in Islam. It was a decision for community, for resistance, for external victory, for pacification and rule. The decision for the Cross – no less conscious, no less formative, no less inclusive – was the contrary decision' (p. 85). In chapters 4 and 5 Cragg discusses Prayer and Religious Life in Islam and the Islamic Order for Human Society.

Part III discusses what the minaret says to the Christian. It is firstly a call to understanding. The writer describes the place of the Qur'an in Islam – its chanting, its calligraphy, its centrality. In the call to participation (ch. 8) Cragg notes that many of the old forms of Christian action have been taken over by the Muslim state or rejected. His remarks on 'tentmaking' are pertinent: 'It is important that there be no subterfuge in Christian relationship. The 'tents', whatever skills they entail, must be real' (p. 202). He observes that much has changed in the last 30 years with regard to the possibilities for participation. In some parts, especially in Africa, the doors are wide open for doctors and teachers prepared for long-term commitment, but where this is not so, intelligent and sensitive Christian ministry is needed through presence and identification (p. 217).

Writing on the call to retrieval, Cragg pithily sums up the situation. 'The Muslim sees Islam as correcting Christian "distortion" of Jesus and of God. Christians see Islam as disqualifying the heart of their understanding of both' (p. 219). He says: 'Let it be clear that the retrieval is not territorial. Christianity is not a territorial expression. The retrieval is spiritual. It aims not to have the map more Christian but Christ more widely known' (p. 230). About the Qur'anic picture of Jesus, Cragg notes that the vetoes are worse than the silences (p. 234).

Chapter 10 deals with the call to interpretation especially of the Bible, the Person of Jesus, the Cross, the Christian doctrine of God and the Church and a Christian Society. Cragg calls for new understanding: 'As for the sacraments themselves, how little they have been interpreted to Muslims! Islam, in its own way, is sacramental. Washing before prayer, posture in prayer, the qiblah toward Mecca, pilgrimage, and Ramadan – all these and much more are examples of material expression and spiritual meaning' (p. 299).

The last chapter deals with the call to hope and faith. Cragg's final message is much needed today when the church sometimes falters in its mission to Islam or turns elsewhere where there are more responsive groups of people: 'It should be plain to all in either faith-community that Christian mission is not a calculus of success, but an obligation in love. Statistics do not make it, nor can they unmake it' (p. 305). Cragg does not see baptism as 'extractionism' – extracting someone from their culture and community. He states: 'Baptism, bringing persons within the Church, means their incorporation by faith into the supranational fellowship of Christ. It does not, properly understood, deculturalize new believers; it enchurches them. . . . New Christians become responsible to Christ for their old setting and to their old setting in the new truth' (p. 306). Later he comments: 'The problem is not whether baptism should be withheld, but whether it should be encouraged or invariably sought on our part' (p. 317). 'Let it be clear that no sincere seeker will be hidden and unknown' (p. 318). Cragg has often been quoted on the subject of religious freedom: 'The Muslim concept of toleration has been, from the beginning, that of freedom to remain what you were born or freedom to become a Muslim. It has never yet meant freedom of movement of conscience, or freedom to become. . . .' (p. 306). 'It is assumed that Islam is a faith that no Muslim would ever conceivably wish to question. Consequently the option to do so is neither valid nor feasible. . . . that which one is not free to leave becomes a prison, if one wishes to do so' (p. 307). He also points out that full freedom would involve alternative procedures in matters of personal status laws which otherwise can have a stranglehold on their members (p. 310). Another incisive comment is found on p. 321 to the effect that Christianity in the eastern mind is primarily represented by the ancient churches and so a sympathetic knowledge of them is indispensable to the western Christian.

Cragg is not easy reading but his works are infinitely worthwhile. One needs to read slowly, reflectively, realizing that here is a writer who has immersed himself in his subject and who towards the end of life has preserved and deepened that compassion which first bade him make known to Muslims the Christ in whom God reconciled the world unto himself. Cragg is philosopher, theologian and evangelist and his book will never really be out of date.

Vivienne Stacey, I.F.E.S.

Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* (London: SPCK, 1986), 156 pp., £3.95.

It is heartwarming and deeply encouraging to find that after a lifetime of Christian work as missionary in India, as missiologist in Birmingham, and now as a pastor in Birmingham, Lesslie Newbigin is still thinking fresh thoughts, breaking new ground, making us reexamine our ideas.

I approached the book incautiously. It appeared unpretentious: a slight-looking paperback. In fact I have found it the most profound and possibly even the most important book to come from Lesslie's never-idle pen. As the sub-title indicates, he is dealing with the relationship between the gospel and western culture.

We have for many years now recognized the problem posed for the gospel by its cultural bias, and so have attempted to contextualize it for its African or Asian setting. But we must now wrestle with the problem of unwrapping our own good news from its western cultural setting. Somehow we must give time to identifying the presuppositions – scientific, economic, political – which inform our society and which find too ready acceptance within our churches, and so distort and even silence the gospel.

Just as the good news has challenged other cultures, so now it must be allowed to challenge ours. Our theory of knowledge, which assumes that a so-called scientific explanation, a mechanistic cause-and-effect explanation with no recourse to the concept of *purpose*, is sufficient explanation, must be tested. Our political systems which determine what can be done by society to remedy its own ills, must be tested. Are there no genuinely Christian alternatives to the familiar secular panaceas?

Having just come from a day conference of professional theologians, I have found myself responding with unusual warmth to Newbigin's appeal for a declericalized theology. One is impressed by the versatility, the *brilliance*, as it would probably be called, of the clerics, and at the same time bored and depressed by the sheer irrelevance to ordinary mortals of what they are doing. This call for the declericalization of theology comes as the third of seven priorities for the confrontation between the church and western culture. The remaining six shall remain anonymous, but they are as relevant and as controversial as number three.

This is not at all an easy book. It is an important book. It is certain to challenge and reward the careful reader. And finally it must be said that it is very much to be hoped that Bishop Newbigin will be willing to be persuaded to exempt himself from his own process of declericalizing theology: the loss of writing such as this would impoverish us all.

Peter Cotterell, London Bible College.

Carsten P. Thiede, *Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 272 pp., £7.95.

The historical Peter has fared badly in scholarship. The references to him in the NT hardly amount to a connected narrative of even a part of his career, and the two epistles that are attributed to him are declared inauthentic by a growing number of critical scholars. Dr Thiede's exhaustive bibliography lists less than half a dozen books on Peter's career in English; to these can be added a short study by J. Lowe (1956) and the recently published articles on Peter and the Petrine Epistles by R. P. Martin and J. R. Michaels in the revised *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. III. Hitherto the only full-length treatment of Peter in scholarly detail has been O. Cullmann, *Peter, Disciple, Apostle, Martyr*. This new book, therefore, which offers a thorough study of the career of Peter, based on a first-hand acquaintance with the scholarly literature, is much to be welcomed.

What we are offered here is a careful reconstruction of all that can be known about Peter from the NT; the author goes step by step through each incident in which he is involved. He compares the gospel accounts with one another and harmonizes the information which they offer to give a more complete picture. Interesting light is shed at various points. But it is in the discussion of Peter as church leader that Dr Thiede offers a new light on the apostle. He claims that it would be Peter from whom Paul got his knowledge of Jesus in Gal. 1:18f. (cf. Acts 9:27). After the Cornelius episode (dated before AD 41) Peter was a supporter of mission to the Gentiles. When he escaped from prison in Jerusalem (AD 42) he went to Rome, the 'other place' of Acts 12:17, identified via Ezek. 12:3,13 as 'Babylon' (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13). He possibly visited Antioch and Corinth en route. Thus he was the founding apostle of the Roman church (cf. Rom. 15:20!). Here he was with Mark (AD 42-6), and here Mark wrote his Gospel, whose existence before AD 50 is guaranteed if we can accept the identification of the Qumran papyrus fragment 7Q5 as part of Mk. (see the author's essay in German in *Biblica* 65, 1984, pp. 538-559 [with the correction in 66, 1985, p. 261], and his book on *Die älteste Evangelien-Handschrift*, Wuppertal, 1986). This ties in with the patristic belief that 'after the *exodos* (sc. "departure" of Peter from Rome) Mark wrote what he remembered. At this point Peter may have baptized Priscilla and Aquila. Then he returned via Antioch to Jerusalem, being joined en route by Mark (Acts 13:13), and took part in the 'council meeting' about the requirements to be placed on Gentile converts (Acts 15, understood as the same meeting as that described in Gal. 2:1-10). Since his work in Jerusalem was finished,

he departed and returned to Antioch, where he yielded to persuasion by the 'men from James' about not eating with Gentiles and fell out with Paul. He may have gone to Corinth, but in any case he reached Rome after AD 57 (the date of Romans). During this period he wrote his two letters, *i.e.* before the persecution of AD 64. 1 Peter was written up by Silvanus in good Greek, and some allusions to Nero's crimes may be detected in 1 Pet. 4:15. 2 Peter is also regarded as genuine (c. AD 59-60), with stronger traces of Peter's own hand but written up by a scribe trained in the 'Asian' style detected by some critics. It served as the source for some of Jude's ideas. Peter perished in Nero's pogrom probably in AD 67, and the authentic site of his burial is the tomb known to Gaius in the second century and rediscovered by modern archaeologists on the Vatican hill.

Anybody who thought that conservative scholars could not produce new ideas or new arguments in favour of traditional positions will have to think again after reading this book. Certainly there are several places where the author needs to examine the cases for opposing viewpoints and demolish them rather than simply assert in effect that the onus of proof is on those who question the historical statements in a document. I have quite a number of points where I want to place question marks. Is Dr Thiede prepared to accept the authenticity of late traditions too easily? Does he take over J. A. T. Robinson's redating of the NT documents before AD 70 too readily? Is his thesis dependent on the assumption that three of the gospels rest on direct eye-witness testimony, and how far has he considered the case for a different view of their origins? Did not Irenaeus place the composition of Mk. after the *exodos* of Peter and Paul from Rome? Is it credible that 'rough notes' of Peter's speeches were made from memory shortly afterwards? How far is the identification of the incidents in Acts 15 and Gal. 2:1-10 essential for his reconstruction? Is it so certain that Jude is dependent on 2 Peter and not vice versa? And why should a letter by Jude push a letter by Peter into the background?

On the other hand, it can be argued that Dr Thiede is right to attempt 'psychologizing' explanations of some of the phenomena in the NT and to resist those who arbitrarily reject them out of hand. He is right to call those who make easy assumptions about inauthenticity and unhistoricity to provide arguments for their positions. If he is correct about the date of Mk., a lot of current reconstructions of the history behind the NT are going to be undermined. It is imperative, therefore, that his carefully argued case for the identification of 7Q5 be swiftly available in English and be subject to expert assessment by palaeographers who have no particular axe to grind.

I. Howard Marshall, University of Aberdeen.

Robert Grant, *Gods and the One God, Christian Theology in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: SPCK, 1986), 211 pp., £6.95.

Professor Grant's latest book is one of the first in a promising new SPCK series which is designed to make the fruits of current theological research more readily accessible to the student and interested layman. The author is a well-known authority on the early church period, with a reputation for clear and attractive writing which is fully maintained in the present volume.

The book is divided into three parts, of which the first deals with the relationship between the early Christians, and especially the apostle Paul, and the pagan gods. The second part goes on to describe the nature of popular paganism, whilst the third concerns itself with basic doctrines and the origins of Christian theology.

In the first two sections, the main point of interest for most people will be the detailed discussion of paganism, which includes many facts and anecdotes to illustrate what popular, pre-Christian religion was like. Here Professor Grant takes what amounts to a sociological approach to religion, in so far as this can be done for the ancient world, and the result is quite fascinating. Many students who perhaps have only a vague knowledge of Graeco-Roman paganism will benefit enormously from these chapters, which are easy to read and consult, thanks to a liberal use of sub-headings!

The third part, which concerns itself with the philosophical challenge to Christianity and the church's response to it, is less satisfactory than the first two. The anecdotal approach does not suit the subject matter in the same way, and the author does not have the space to develop his theme adequately. The result is that the beginner is likely to get confused among the names and theories which are put forward here in rapid succession. Particularly unsatisfactory is the impression, given towards the end, that Christian theology represented a compromise takeover of the pagan philosophical inheritance.

That the early Christians were influenced by the latter is hardly to be doubted, but Professor Grant's analysis borders on syncretism and must, I think, be balanced by an awareness that Christians rejected the philosophers – and were in turn rejected by them! The hostility of the ancient world to the new faith is consistently played down, with the result that the final picture is distorted. On the other hand, Grant rejects the extreme liberalism of Harnack and Bauer, preferring to see the growth of Christian theology more in terms of a continuous, logical development than in terms of increasing corruption of the gospel.

The list of books for further reading, at the end, gives the impression that the first two parts have been more carefully thought out and researched than the third part, which may help to explain why it is unsatisfactory. Grant's reliance on and general recommendation of J. N. D. Kelly's classic studies must be followed by the student who reads this book, if an adequate picture of this particular theme is to be had.

Gerald Bray, Oak Hill College, London.

Donald A. Hagner, **The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academic Books, Zondervan Publishing House), 341 pp., \$9.95.

In his analysis and critique of modern Jewish research on Jesus, Hagner adds to the Judeao-Christian debate. Instead of following current trends and concentrating on issues common to both faiths, he takes an uncompromising evangelical stand and brings into question the very value of the Jewish approach which seeks to show Jesus and his teaching as entirely Jewish.

In Chapters 1-2 Hagner reviews the history of Jewish literature and attitude to Jesus. Two conclusions arise from this. First, the willingness of Judaism to reclaim Jesus reflects an improvement in Jewish-Christian relations. Secondly, the readiness to reclaim Jesus has not brought any fundamental change in accepting the teachings of the gospel.

In Chapters 3-6 Hagner analyses Jewish attitudes to various aspects of the teachings of Jesus, his ministry and his person. These include the 'law', and Jesus' claim of authority over it, particularly as the Jews are first and foremost the people of the law; 'the kingdom of God', its nearness and the eschatological perspective at the heart of Jesus' message, with its ethical teaching, of which various aspects are dealt with, particularly his teaching on love and its implications; Jesus' religious teaching, which includes an examination of grace and works, repentance, atonement, prayer, God as father and the place of Jesus. In these chapters Hagner outlines the views of major Jewish scholars, the way they try to reclaim Jesus and his teaching for Rabbinic Judaism, and particularly the way in which the problem topics are dealt with. Their general attitude may be summed up by saying that all that is good in the gospels is not new and can be found in Rabbinic Judaism, and what is new in Jesus' ministry is either argued away as theological insertion by the early church or conceded as a mistaken view developed by Jesus.

Hagner then deals with the person of Jesus, assessing the categories into which Jewish scholarship attempts to place him (*i.e.* Pharisee, prophet, *etc.*). He then looks at the Christian titles of Jesus and Jewish reaction to them, showing that even if they could accept Jesus as Messiah, the Jewish understanding of this term would differ from the Christian understanding.

In the concluding chapter Hagner assesses the contribution the Jewish reclamation of Jesus has made in making Christians more

aware of the Jewish context of the gospel, but concludes that this reclamation is at an impasse because of the lack of desire to face the central message of the gospels, thereby concentrating merely on peripheral issues.

In three excursions Hagner deals with Pharisaism and the question of originality in the teaching and ministry of Jesus.

The subjects dealt with in the book are highly controversial and sensitive, but although Hagner's stand and approach are challenging, he writes in a positive and constructive way.

Finally, Hagner shows how the emancipation opened the way for liberal Jewish scholars to try and reclaim Jesus. The return of the Jews to Israel will, and is beginning to, bring the nation of Israel to reclaim Jesus not into Rabbinic Judaism but as Saviour.

John Woodhead, Jerusalem.

Geoffrey W. Bromiley (ed. and trans.), **A Karl Barth Reader** (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), ix + 117 pp., £4.95.

'Sometimes, on a hundredth birthday, we may be rediscovered and people may look at us and read something about us, but a fortnight later they will no longer speak about people who are long since gone' (extract from a sermon by Barth with reference to the centenary of Nietzsche's birth, quoted on p. 1).

This little book was prepared in celebration of the Barth centennial and, in the process of arranging selections of his writing under eight thematic headings (usually in chronological order), makes accessible various writings not previously available in English. The well-chosen extracts reveal again the humour, concern and humility that are typical of the man and (as always) little is lost in Geoffrey Bromiley's lucid translation. Typical is the following extract from a sermon preached at Basle prison in 1962 on the text 'My grace is sufficient for thee':

'Some of you may have heard that in the last forty years I have written many books, some large. I will freely and frankly and gladly admit that these six words say much more and much better things than all the heaps of paper with which I have surrounded myself. They are enough – which cannot be said even remotely of my books. What may be good in my books can be at most that from afar they point to what these six words say' (quoted on pp. 3f.).

However, it is unlikely that the book will fulfil Bromiley's expectation of providing some form of brief and accessible introduction to Barth's thought for those with 'neither the time nor perhaps the desire to plunge into his bulky output for themselves' (p. vii). Indeed the extracts appear to have been chosen with the aim of demonstrating the breadth of Barth's thought and interests rather than the central concerns of Christology and election which dominate the *Church Dogmatics* and from which all else derives. Probably the passage which gives the clearest indication of the mainspring of Barth's theological thought is an article entitled 'The Great Yes', prepared in 1959 for a Berne weekly (pp. 107ff.).

As a 'reader' and a celebration of the Barth centennial this booklet will be a source of considerable delight to those already familiar with Barth's thought. Nonetheless, while I for one am grateful for this little book, and for the précis and review of the *Dogmatics* previously provided by Bromiley, the need remains outstanding for a work that can truly 'introduce' the theology of Karl Barth to the non-specialist reader.

John E. Colwell, London.

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE THIS VALUABLE SERIES

“ This collection shows conservative evangelical scholarship at its most professional
First-rate conservative scholarship . . . Throughout the approach is a positive one
A series that is proving itself to be indispensable to evangelical students of the gospels
One must unreservedly praise this enterprise
Editors of the series are David Wenham, Dick France and Craig Blomberg.

– *Heythrop Journal*
– *Churchman*
– *Themelios*
– *Expository Times* ”



GOSPEL PERSPECTIVES

With the completion of the Gospel Perspectives series, JSOT Press is able to offer you a special discount on the whole set of six volumes:

▶ 35% off the retail price ◀

	Retail Price	
1 Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels I	£7.50	\$14.75
2 Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels II	£8.95	\$14.75
3 Studies in Midrash and Historiography	£8.95	\$14.75
4 The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse	pa £8.95	\$13.50
	cl £16.00	\$24.50
5 The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels	pa £8.95	\$13.50
	cl £16.00	\$24.50
6 The Miracles of Jesus	pa £8.95	\$13.50
	cl £16.50	\$24.50

No question in biblical studies is more important than the question of the historical reliability of the gospels. The Gospel Perspectives series is a significant attempt by an international team of scholars working under the auspices of Tyndale House in Cambridge, England, to throw light on the question and to help liberate gospel scholarship from needless scepticism.

Available from JSOT Press, The University, Sheffield S10 2TN, England and Eisenbrauns, POB 275, Winona Lake, IN 46590, USA

TSF BOOKLETS

The Theological Students Fellowship (TSF) publishes a series
of booklets

Among the most recent are

‘New Testament Commentary Survey – Revised’

by D A Carson (95p)

and **‘Jürgen Moltmann**

– a Critical Introduction’

by Stephen N Williams (85p)

To order these, or to get a free Catalogue and Order Form,
write to the

**UCCF Bookstall Service, Norton Street
Nottingham NG7 3HR. Telephone 0602 781054**

BOOK REVIEWS

- H. G. M. Williamson **Ezra, Nehemiah** (Philip King)
- Richard J. Coggins and S. Paul Re'em **Israel among the nations: A Commentary on the Books of Nahum, Obadiah, and Esther** (Martin J. Selman)
- T. H. L. Parker **Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries** (D. F. Wright)
- R. T. France **Matthew** (Donald A. Hagner)
- D. P. Seccombe **Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts** (Max Turner)
- Hans F. Bayer **Jesus' Predictions of Vindication and Resurrection** (Craig L. Blomberg)
- John A. T. Robinson **The Priority of John** (Stephen S. Smalley)
- Stephen S. Smalley **1, 2, 3 John** (I. Howard Marshall)
- Judith Lieu **The Second and Third Epistles of John: History and Background** (I. Howard Marshall)
- A. E. Harvey (ed.) **Alternative Approaches to New Testament Study** (Max Turner)
- Oliver O'Donovan **Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics** (Trevor Hart)
- J. I. Packer and others **Here We Stand: Justification by Faith Today** (Tony Baker)
- Bernard Palmer (ed.) **Medicine and the Bible** (Roger Cowley)
- Rex Gardner **Healing Miracles: a doctor investigates** (Roger Cowley)
- Kenneth Cragg **The Christ and the Faiths: theology in cross-reference** (Martin Goldsmith)
- Kenneth Cragg **The Call of the Minaret** (Vivienne Stacey)
- Lesslie Newbigin **Foolishness to the Greeks** (Peter Cotterell)
- Carston P. Thiede **Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome** (I. Howard Marshall)
- Robert Grant **Gods and the One God. Christian Theology in the Graeco-Roman World** (Gerald Bray)
- Donald A. Hagner **The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus** (John Woodhead)
- Geoffrey W. Bromiley (ed. and trans.) **A Karl Barth Reader** (John E. Colwell)



IFG

*ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ
προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.*