

his nature" for "the Word was God" (Jn 1:1); "one gift of grace after another" for "grace for grace" (Jn 1:16); "who is divine, who is closest to the Father" for "God which is in the bosom of the Father" (Jn 1:18); "Mother, why are you interfering with me?" for "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (Jn 2:4); "his people" for "saints" (Rom 1:7, which, by the way, has been placed after v. 1); "God's glorious intention for them" for "the glory of God" (Rom 3:23); "spirits of the sky nor spirits of the abyss" for "nor height nor depth" (Rom 8:39); "irreligious people" for "sinners" (Mt 9:10-11).

Some interesting translations are: "You are Peter" (meaning Rock) in Mt 16:18; "virgin companion" in 1 Cor 7:36; joining the last part of v. 3 with v. 4 in Jn 1 as in NEB; making a disjunction between Christ and God in Rom 9:5, again following NEB.

This translation with its glossary and translational notes will be a real boon to those translators for whom it is intended, yet one could have hoped that it had more faithfully followed the UBS text.

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Yoder, John H. *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972. 260 pp. Paperback, \$3.45.

The title of this book is misleading. Yoder's concern, in fact, is the relevance of a NT ethic of voluntary subordination for modern social ethics. Only by verbal legerdemain can one get this from the title.

Yoder has set himself an ambitious task. Utilizing the entire NT, he endeavors to establish the point that the NT sets forth a social ethic of voluntary submission. Further, he seeks to bridge the gap between the first century and ours, the second plank in his thesis being that this NT ethic merits consideration by ethicists in our time. And all this is attempted within the span of 250 pages!

Though Yoder claims to be aware of the hazards involved in his bold undertaking, it is not so clear that he has avoided them. We shall confine our remarks to a critique from the viewpoint of NT scholarship; it is likely that many more questions would be raised by students of social ethics.

It is regarding *method* that the most serious doubts are to be expressed. Yoder specifically disclaims any innovative NT interpretations. He sees his work as the gathering together of results from NT scholarship. But his approach leaves this reviewer distinctly uneasy on at least two counts: (1) He is not sufficiently aware of the difficulties involved in recovering the actual social ethic of Jesus. His case leans heavily on Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God and the announcement of the Jubilee in the sermon at Nazareth (Lk 4). Yoder looks to Luke's account as his principal source; Matthew hardly gets a mention. His treatment justifies only a more modest claim such as "the social ethic of Luke." To emphasize continually—as he does—the social ethic of *Jesus* is a position that few NT critics will espouse. (2) His attempt to bring together the various strands of the NT into an overall synthesis is even more unsatisfactory. For instance, after considering the social ethics of "Jesus and Paul," he states: "There would be the thought of the author of Matthew or of the writer to the Hebrews; there would be the mind of Peter, of John,

of Jude, or of the seer of the Apocalypse. There is reason to trust that the reading there would confirm the orientation already sketched" (p. 233). But would it? This writer's study in Hebrews by no means supports Yoder's thesis. The ethic there is rather that of the *pilgrim*. Again, in the final paragraph of the book (p. 250), Yoder affirms that "we are left with no choice" but to hold that the General Epistles reflect the social ethic he has already found in the Gospels and Paul. But he has not even considered these epistles in his work!

These observations show that the treatment of the NT material is spotty and selective. Yoder gives the impression of a man who, having found a thesis, raids the text for examples of it.

If Yoder's work is at many points frustrating to the NT scholar, one must state that his basic thesis is exciting. For long it has been held that no significant social ethic is to be found in NT thought, hanging as it does beneath the expectation of the imminent Eschaton. Yoder, then, is taking on a fairly settled view—and he gives it a series of jolts. There is a great deal which is not only provocative but extremely suggestive here.

As a finished product, *The Politics of Jesus* is quite unsatisfactory. But as a sketch, as a stone cast into the waters of NT research, it may prove to be very significant. Obviously, there is a need for a comprehensive work on the social ethics of the NT (Why hold that only *one* view is to be found?). The announcement of the Jubilee, for instance, needs to be established or rejected. Such a base alone will fill in the gaps left by Yoder's approach. If the appearance of *The Politics of Jesus* sparks such a debate, it will have served a valuable purpose.

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