

on the traditional well of Jacob and the tomb of Joseph at Shechem; and the third is on some Moslem shrines in the Shechem area.

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Johnsson, William G. *Religion in Overalls*. Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1977. 122 pp. Paperback, \$7.95.

Religion in Overalls is essentially a topical study of the Gospel of Matthew, primarily intended for the minister and thinking layman, in which the author tries to bridge the gulf between ivory tower and pew. Specifically, some of the results of NT scholarship from the last two decades are given a form and application to interest the nonspecialist wishing to gain a better grasp of the first gospel and its message. Matthew is chosen because of the author's conviction that this gospel has a message of "unusual significance" for the church today. While a special debt is owed and acknowledged to the redactional studies of Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, there is ample original material to interest those already familiar with these other studies.

Assuming the reader's limited knowledge of some of the conclusions most scholars take for granted, the author uses his first chapter to explain such matters as the synoptic problem, the priority of Mark, the nature of inspiration, canon, and the rudiments of redaction criticism, among other matters. Considering the material covered and the limited space available, the author "covers the waterfront" fairly well and says what needs to be said, although it is unlikely that the specialist will be very satisfied.

Perhaps the most important element in this early material is the author's appeal to listen to Matthew's unique message. Matthew is described as an author with something to say rather than as a mere chronicler. He portrays a Jesus distinct from the One found in Mark, Luke, or John, who speaks to the specific situation that Matthew knows. The recognition that each gospel writer is a creative author in his own right is said to be "one of the great insights to emerge in recent Biblical studies" (p. 23).

Having laid the necessary groundwork, the author proceeds to discuss a variety of topics in the next six chapters, including "Jesus: Royal Lawgiver"; "Discipleship: In the Footsteps of Jesus"; "Conduct: Better Righteousness"; "The Church: In the Storm-tossed Sea"; "The Kingdom: Already But Not Yet!"; and "The Cross: His and Mine."

Under each heading, Matthew's treatment of the tradition is analyzed to see how he has selected and modified material to convey the message that he wishes from the life of Jesus to meet the needs of the people to whom he is writing. It is observed, e.g., that while Mark and Luke record the story of the stilling of the storm in a simple and direct way so that the accent falls on the miraculous aspect, Matthew intends much more. Here the message is set in the context of discipleship, and it has a special meaning for the early believers beyond that of a mere nature miracle. "It is a picture of early Christianity. It elaborates what it means to follow Jesus. There is the little church, fearfully buffeted by the upheavals of the Roman world, apparently about to be swallowed up by the hostile society. . . . But [Jesus] . . . is near to speak the delivering word" (p. 77). Each study concludes with a brief homily in which the lesson drawn is applied to the present, as is seen in such subheadings as "Matthew's Jesus and Our Day," "The Disciple Today," and "Matthew's Concept of Righteousness Today," among others.

A concluding chapter surveys Matthew in retrospect and notes certain patterns which give insight to the situation he is facing and the intent of his message. It is

noted, e.g., that whereas the other gospels place considerable emphasis on the Spirit and his work, Matthew says little. In fact, he is said to be "strangely alone" and "clearly the odd man out" (p. 114). It is not that Matthew ignores exorcisms, miracles, and wonders so much as that he subordinates these through an emphasis on the significance of Christ's words. Matthew's gospel is seen to be "pre-eminently the gospel of Jesus' words" (p. 119). This gospel insists upon a practical type of Christianity, a Christianity that is lived out in the "hurly-burly of life" (p. 119).

While Johnsson has provided an interesting, helpful, and nicely written work, perhaps the most commendable aspect of his endeavor is the concern to make the gains of contemporary scholarship more broadly available. It is hoped not only that there will be further contributions from his pen, but also that his example will encourage others to make a similar effort.

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Kee, Howard C. *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977. xiii + 225 pp. \$13.95.

This book represents Kee's major contribution to NT studies to date. It has been written in order to engage his colleagues in the use of a new method for biblical research, called the "social-cultural-historical" method (p. ix). Basically it consists of reinforcing the literary criticism of the past with the insights provided by sociology of knowledge. In the fullest sense the method is "holistic" rather than atomistic.

The atomistic approach was tied to the well-established practice of writing commentaries on the biblical text. By their very nature, commentaries were bound to become a disjointed series of observations on words and phrases. With the rise of historicism and linguistic science in the nineteenth century, the comments became more and more pedantic displays of grasp on trivia. The development of form criticism as a method for Gospel research did nothing to change the atomistic approach. But redaction criticism allowed the gospels for the first time to speak as literary units with a voice of their own. It would seem that the days of commentaries on the Synoptic Gospels are numbered. On Matthew and Luke none of any significance has been written for a long time. On Mark, Vincent Taylor's (1959) set the high-water mark of the form-critical approach.

Kee's book is one in the new format of "Studies in the Gospel of. . ." The intent of the book is clearly to do what the commentaries were supposed to do: to interpret the text either theologically or historically. Kee opts for the historical, since that is to be done first in order later to "distinguish those implications which are typical and proper components of the meaning from those which are not" (p. 177). Here he is following E. D. Hirsch's advice.

The results of Kee's historical work are arrived at by means of painstaking work, solidly substantiated and clearly set forth. According to him, Mark was produced by an apocalyptic community in the years prior to the fall of Jerusalem. This community was located in southern Syria, from where it sent forth itinerant charismatics to the villages of the surrounding countryside in order to heal the sick and preach the vindication of Jesus as triumphant Son of Man in the immediate future. The Gospel was originally written in Greek within a community that fed itself spiritually from the LXX. The main purpose in writing was to set forth clearly how Jesus' life and death took place according to God's plan as foretold in Scripture, and to urge people to join the community of those who are waiting for the vindication of God's plan in the parousia.