

# Reviews

**MATTHEW: STRUCTURE, CHRISTOLOGY, KINGDOM**, by Jack Dean Kingsbury. *SPCK*, London, and *Fortress*, Philadelphia. 1976. 178 pp. £6.50 (\$10.95).

Recent studies of the gospel of Matthew (to which this book is an important addition) have mostly approached it along one of two divergent possible routes. It is seen on the one hand to be the work of a writer with full mastery of his material the best organized and most structured of all the gospels (though the clue to that structure has so far eluded scholars and still, in my judgement, eludes the author of this book; but to justify that opinion is beyond the scope of a review, though I hope to return to it in another place); a systematic theological writer too, consistent in his use of terms, so that it is possible by comparing passage with passage to interpret Matthew by Matthew, as R.H. Lightfoot taught some of us to interpret John by John. But at the same time the evangelist can be seen to be a practitioner of Jewish midrashic exegesis, a characteristically inclusive discipline which made it its business, among other things, to reconcile the apparently inconsistent and to make connections where none are visible to the naked eye. If justice is to be done to this side of the evangelist's mind, there are extremes of consistency to which he must not be pressed, especially as regards choosing between alternatives; his is the way of both/and rather than of either/or.

Kingsbury is an accomplished exponent of the first of these approaches. Where he scores over most of his rivals is in his readiness to let Matthew be an author, capable of writing material as well as of reproducing it, without assuming (where the evidence does not positively demand it) a host of predecessors whispering in his ear. (His views on source-criticism are in fact the conventional ones, but they are not

allowed to dominate the argument). He reaches by this method some good conclusions about the Christology of the gospel, which he holds is most fully conveyed by the term 'Son of God', and some very interesting ones about its use of the term 'Son of man' (a 'public' title with a hidden meaning to be revealed at the *parousia*), which may well be found to have implications beyond this gospel. But at the same time I found in his approach to this gospel a little too much of the either/or tendency mentioned above. Thus he expects his readers to decide between Christology as the evangelist's dominant interest (need they be polarized in this way?) or between Moses and Jacob in the typology of c.2 (why not both?). The Son of Man must be expelled from the final commission of 28:18-20 (in the teeth of a virtual quotation of Daniel 7:14) in order to make way for the Son of God (for which title the command to baptize in the name of the Trinity—even if genuine, a question that Kingsbury does not discuss here—offers much slenderer evidence); is there any good reason why the presence of either should exclude the other? And the fact that in this gospel 'prophet' is a popular verdict on the actions of Jesus need not exclude it from a part in the evangelist's own interpretation of him—as indeed a good deal in cc. 21-23 clearly suggests.

This unnecessary insistence on alternatives has been partly forced on the author by the questions previous scholars have raised and the terms in which they have tried to answer them. Had he been able to free himself from it he would have written a less one-sided, and so a still better book.

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