

of 1914 a monarchist with nationalist attitudes, and at the level of theory he remained critical of democracy. Unlike the majority of Protestants, however, he ended the war prepared to accept the Weimar Republic (it is a weakness of Professor Drescher's book (that he throws little light on the rapid change in Troeltsch's outlook towards the end of the conflict). He became involved in the moderate, middle-class German Democratic Party, among whose founders (in November, 1918) was his friend, Max Weber. The party, which aimed to strengthen the political centre against both the radical Left and the extremists of the Right, won 65 seats in the Prussian State Assembly in 1919, and Troeltsch served as under-secretary of state to a Social Democrat Minister of Culture from then until 1921. He looked after church affairs, anxious to break with the Lutheran and Prussian tendency to use religion in order to foster a hierarchical social order and nationalistic politics, but he was not dogmatically committed to separation between the Churches and the State. Rather, he clung to the nineteenth-century ideal of a school in which religion should penetrate everything that was done. At the same time, however, he thought that the Churches should provide their own dogmatic instruction: in the state schools religious education should essentially be historical and phenomenological. In these last few years he was deeply alarmed by what he called 'neo-Romanticism' in both religion, culture and politics, a retreat to irrationalism which he found in Friedrich Gogarten, Stephan George, Ostwald Spengler and Graf Keyserling, for example.

Troeltsch was pre-eminently an intellectual, a historian who knew that claims to special divine revelation, and therefore to special religious authority, had lost their cogency. At the same time, as a consequence of defeat in the first World War, Germany's social structures had been radically weakened; there was no longer any common order which could of itself limit the attractiveness of a mixture of militarist, racialist and anti-semitic ideas which had shown new life all over Europe since the 1890s. Even before his death, Troeltsch could see how difficult it would be to find a German solution, and Europe failed to provide one. Had he lived, one hopes that like that unswerving sculptress, Käthe Kollwitz, already a left-wing pacifist in the first World War, he would have stayed in Germany and protested to the end.

JOHN KENT

MATTHEW by Margaret Davies. *JSOT Sheffield Academic Press*, 1993. Pp. 224. Hardback. £30.00/\$50.00.

This commentary breaks new ground in its systematic application to the gospel text of the approach known as reader-response criticism, exploring what the text would have conveyed to its original readers and

what it can be expected to convey to those of the present day. Its introduction is largely an account of the method, clear and jargon-free, from which this reviewer learned not a little; but it calls for a greater degree of sophistication in the reader than is required by the rest of the book. That may well be a tribute to the author's mastery of her method, but it does raise questions about her implied readership: does it extend to those who will be best advised to study the body of the commentary before they tackle the introduction? These apart, its most obvious appeal and usefulness will be, first, to the well-educated general reader, especially if versed in contemporary approaches to other kinds of literature, and, secondly, to professional non-academic expositors of the text, catechists, teachers, and especially preachers. These latter will be helped and stimulated by her readiness not simply to expound the text but to engage with it; she resists, on the whole successfully, the temptation to find in it the answers that her own personal standpoint (about which she is refreshingly explicit: she is a politically radical Anglican) might incline her to find, but this objectivity does not mean neutrality. She challenges the reader to consider what a consistent application of the evangelist's message might mean in a context and a time-scale that he could never have imagined.

These qualities, it has to be said, have been bought at a price as far as the academic student, and particularly the student beginner, is concerned (and I am not thinking primarily of the cash price of the book); there is no space alongside the primary objective of the book to provide much of the information that he will be looking for. He can only be referred to the two commentaries listed in the bibliography (both of them, fortunately, comprehensive and up-to-date). Synoptic parallels and discrepancies are noted *en passant* (in two cases incorrectly), but there is no indication that they might be significant for the history or the character of the Gospel. A number of the positions adopted by Davies are controversial, to say the least; seldom does she let the reader into this, let alone set out the arguments that have led her to them. Two in particular of these turn up so frequently that they call for further comment here. First, she states repeatedly that Matthew's community was basically Gentile and that its evangelist was unfamiliar with Hebrew. The grounds for this are apparently the wildly inaccurate charges that this gospel makes against the Pharisees, which E.P. Sanders thinks impossible for a community with any first hand knowledge of Judaism. But Jewish Christianity was not specifically Pharisaic, and need not have been all that familiar with Pharisaic attitudes, particularly as these developed in the years following A.D. 70. There are insufficient grounds here for rejecting the Jewish religious background for the evangelist and at least a part of his readership which his exegetical practice otherwise suggests.

Secondly, I find her account of Matthew's Christology too reductionist. This is not to attribute a negative theological bias to her; that a first century evangelist had not arrived at the settled Christology of Chalcedon (which she explicitly cites) is not in dispute. Nor should we fail to find in Matthew the thought that the Son of God was to be, as Paul called him, the 'firstborn among many brethren'. But to maintain, as she does, that for Matthew Jesus was only one among many such sons, and that his relation to them was only exemplary, does less than justice to the ways in which, for this gospel, Jesus is 'special': his conception 'from Holy Spirit', the promise that he will 'save his people from their sins', his acknowledgement by the divine voice at his baptism, the statement that he alone knows and can reveal what the Father is, his sonship as the content of Peter's confession, his investment with 'all authority in heaven and earth', and his post-resurrection presence with his disciples as 'God with us' — the OT background of this expression conveys much more than 'not against us', which is all she finds in it — all point to him as the means and the source of their sonship. I therefore regret that she has revived the rendering 'this was a son of God' at 27.54 (cf. 39). The Greek is most faithfully rendered here without either definite or indefinite article, and if Matthew had meant no more than 'one among many' he would expressed himself differently at 16.16 and 26.63.

There are other places where I am less than happy about her rendering of the Greek, but for a non-technical review this must suffice. Dr Davies' essential scholarship is not in doubt, and I look forward with interest to the wider reception of her book.

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A HISTORY OF THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE VOLUME II: FROM 1700 TO THE PRESENT DAY by David Norton. *Cambridge University Press*, 1991. Pp.xii + 493. £50.

Like the first volume, this one deals chiefly with the history of the Bible as literature in England. There is substantial discussion of the work of Herder, Schweitzer, Strauss and Auerbach, but on the whole a steady focus on the English-speaking world, its wider reaches mainly represented by the American scene. But that leaves plenty of matter and the book traces with notable success the fortunes of the King James Version of the Bible and the translations which have succeeded it since the eighteenth century; and the literary consciousness which both informed the criticism and was itself shaped by the English-language texts of Scripture. To the reader familiar with the patterns of preoccupation of fashionable philosophical and theological thought during this period this treatment presents a salutary corrective. We do