

Reviews

MIDRASH AND LECTIO IN MATTHEW, by M. D. Goulder. SPCK, London, 1974. 528 pp. £8.50.

This book, dedicated to the memory of Austin Farrer, is not only the tribute of a former pupil and continuing disciple, but an epigonous extension of his work; it starts from certain positions for which Farrer always stood, but which he lacked opportunity, and probably inclination, to justify in detail, and carries them further and in directions which, so far as we are aware, he had not foreseen. The writing has not a little of Farrer's style and wit, and the argument at least a little of his characteristic impatience; it is a relief, though, to find that the author no longer affects the mask of assumed simplicity with which Farrer concealed the width of his reading in other men's writings. Strangely, and perhaps significantly, it is in the places where Goulder is most directly dependent on Farrer that he carries least conviction: on the temptation, for instance (where Gerhardsson's treatment, which he seems not to know, would have served his purpose much better), or the composition of the Sermon on the Mount.

His main contentions are three: (i) There was no Q, no sayings-source behind the material common to Matthew and Luke; Luke took and adapted this from Matthew. Matthew's only documentary source is Mark. (ii) There was no unwritten sayings-tradition available to Matthew; there was little in any case, and what survives of it is confined to Mark. The sayings-material in Matthew has been created by the evangelist, some of it *ex nihilo*, that is, out of his own poetic imagination, and more from reflection on what he found in Mark or in the OT scriptures, together with some reminiscences of the Pauline letters. The first evangelist is thus both the Church's poet and its foremost practitioner of *midrash*, the traditional Jewish method of exegesis which set out to interpret scripture to its own time and often ended by rewriting it. (iii) The evangelist's object in composing his gospel was a liturgical one, to provide a continuous lectionary for use in the Christian synagogue service alongside the OT. A pre-

cedent for such a venture was already to hand in the work of the Chronicler; it is assumed that Matthew could have understood the character of this and made it the model for his own.

These three stages are like the storeys of a house; the lower can stand without the upper but the upper hardly, in this form, without the lower. But is the structure itself a house of bricks, or of cards?

(i) The reviewer himself belongs to the minority which does not have to be convinced of the impossibility of Q; but the proportion of passages in the so-called Q material for which 'derived by Luke from Matthew' seems the most natural solution went up from, say, two-thirds before reading Goulder to something nearer seven-eighths afterwards. However, the Q research industry has become so intensive in recent years that it is going to take a more systematic and documented refutation than this to dislodge its convinced supporters; whether Goulder's promised sequel on Luke will provide it remains to be seen.

(ii) That Matthew's literary methods are those of a practised exponent of *midrash* can be gathered from the character of his infancy narrative, to look no further; that he was a poet the Beatitudes (for example) bear witness. This reviewer needed no persuading that the midrashic method pervades the whole gospel: Goulder's chapters on Matthew's poetry and his imagery helped him to see the poetic hand of the evangelist in many places where he had previously missed it. But the elimination of *all* oral source-material is another matter. It is *a priori* unlikely that the tradition on such crucial matters as divorce, living by the gospel and the discipline applicable to obdurate sinners should have reached the Pauline churches and that which produced Mark, and yet vanished without trace from the tradition of the Palestinian and near-Palestinian communities of Matthew's day, leaving the evangelist to reconstruct it from these Gentile-Christian sources. The evidence of what

have been called 'broken patterns' in Matthew (notably in the anti-theses of the Sermon on the Mount) is harder to dispose of than Goulder's treatment allows, while the sayings in the gospel which express strict Jewish-Christian attitudes to, e.g., the observance of the Mosaic law or the evangelisation of the Gentiles can only be claimed as the evangelist's own, as the hypothesis demands, if he was himself that kind of unemancipated Jewish Christian. Goulder is not alone in maintaining this, though he takes an extreme position in arguing (in the teeth of the implications of Mt. 15¹⁻²⁰) that Matthew's church actually observed not only the written but the Pharisaic oral Torah; but the position is hard to reconcile either with other parts of the evidence or with other aspects of his own case. It is improbable, for instance, that a church that still formed part of a federal union of Jewish synagogues (a point itself contradicted by Matthew's repeated reference to 'their synagogues') would have read the letters of St Paul for instruction of life and manners. (His contention that 'Matthew, like the rabbis, assumes that the Temple will soon be rebuilt' (p. 397) is demonstrably false.) But the alternative is that Matthew included in his gospel sayings which did not fully represent his own point of view, and this implies access to a tradition of some sort, even if it was not very extensive. And if it was in Aramaic, a translator would necessarily have used his own characteristic vocabulary.

(iii) Whether Goulder's lectionary hypothesis for Matthew will fare any better at the hands of the experts on the first century synagogue than Carrington's for Mark or Guiding's for John

remains to be seen. On the scores of research and coherence I would say that it deserves to. But the suggestion which he has picked up from Carrington, that the headed divisions of the text in *Codex Alexandrinus* and other ancient manuscripts not only have a lectionary basis (which is fine) but go back to the evangelists (which is problematical), may turn out to be the Achilles heel in his whole reconstruction, since it would seem to commit him to a lectionary origin not just for Matthew but for the other synoptics too, which trebles the difficulty of establishing the thesis. He offers an outline scheme (half-yearly) for Mark; the case for Luke (and Acts?) must wait for his next instalment.

He has thrown in a number of other hostages to fortune: what can only be called a highly idiosyncratic account of the early history of the apostolic church; large claims for the genuineness and in particular for the early circulation of the entire Pauline corpus (the Pastoral epistles alone excepted); a readiness to accept as authentic the sayings attributed to Jesus in Mark which asserts oddly with the stringency of his evaluation of those in Matthew. None of these is fairly confronted with the views which currently hold the field, let alone shown to be superior. Moreover, the brilliance of his style is like a covering of snow spread evenly over the thin and the solid ice, and some readers may complain of being unfairly dazzled by it. I enjoyed the humour of the lecturer's asides which he has admitted to the published text, but I fear that their effect on the German academic mind may be to discourage it from taking his case with the seriousness which the essentials of it deserve.

H. BENEDICT GREEN CR

THE SECOND GIFT: A Study of Grace, by Edward Yarnold. *St Paul Publications*, Slough, 1974. 217 pp. £2.50.

Perhaps in no other field of Catholic theology has the categorising zeal of the theologians been more misleading for the ordinary faithful than in the matter of grace. It is still the common belief that God's grace is like some substantial medicine which comes in distinct varieties for different occasions: actual grace, habitual grace, sanctifying grace, extraordinary grace, etc., and that it is the object of the Christian life to get as much of them as possible. The worst of it is that, as a result of this preoccupation with a substantialised grace, atten-

tion is distracted from what really matters: God himself on the one hand and ourselves transformed by him on the other. If the Christian life is a matter of God's self-communication with us, making us able and willing to communicate ourselves to him in return, there cannot be some third thing permanently interposed between us.

Any study of grace which helps to re-establish its unity and which shows it to be God's own gift of himself to man, thus enabling man to give himself to others, should be welcomed without