

regard to sanctification and perfection, it certainly offers a model of sober and careful scholarship for all who would refute Knight's claims.

Of the two books, *Pharisee's Guide* is the more attractive. The print is larger, and of better quality, the cover is more pleasing, and the book in general is much more readable. One gets the impression in places that *My Gripe with God* is not as polished as its sequel, and that the issues had not matured as thoroughly in the author's mind before publication. By way of balance, however, I must point out that *Gripe* is the more consistently biblical in approach (which I, at least, prefer). In addition, books on the cross have to contend in the reader's mind with such gigantic achievements as John Stott's *The Cross of Christ* and Leon Morris' *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* and *The Atonement*, not to mention works like those of McGrath, Denney, Forsyth, and Murray which are repeatedly cited in Knight's own book. *The Pharisee's Guide*, on the other hand, has the field to itself and will become, I believe, the standard by which other Adventist books on the subject will be judged.

A small element of disquiet that I feel concerning these books must be mentioned. I am not certain that the Pharisees, the Adventist advocates of some form of "moral influence," or the so-called "Adventist right-wing" would always recognize their positions in the descriptions that Knight lays out. Knight has a tendency to caricature opposing positions, which strengthens and clarifies his own position but may not be entirely fair to the positions of those he critiques. As a result, although Knight strives for, and generally achieves, balance in his presentations of a given subject, his polemical style leaves the impression of overreaction.

In spite of minor flaws, however, both books are worth the time and effort it takes to read them, at least for Seventh-day Adventist readers. And I think that I am on safe ground when I assert that *The Pharisee's Guide* is probably the best book published by an Adventist press in years.

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JON PAULIEN

Kuyper, Abraham. *The Problem of Poverty*. Edited by James W. Skillen. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; and Washington, DC: The Center for Public Justice, 1991. 94 pp. Paperback, \$6.95.

On November 9, 1891, Abraham Kuyper, Protestant theologian and Dutch statesman, addressed the First Christian Social Congress held in the Netherlands. One hundred years later, James W. Skillen re-edited this keynote speech on the problem of poverty and Baker Book House published it.

The enduring value of Kuyper's speech lies, first of all, in the fact that present social conditions show no improvement since his time. The persistence of poverty, strikes, unemployment, welfare-dependent families,

famines, and homelessness all indicate either a status quo or even regression. The rich are fewer, and the poor are poorer.

More significantly, however, society is faced with an ideological vacuum. One hundred years ago the failure of nationalism, capitalism, and scientific revolution was acknowledged. The world groped for some new messiah who would save the masses. All eyes turned toward socialist ideologies which promised change for the poor and challenge for the rich. Some feared, while others hoped for a new revolution.

One hundred years later, with socialism in decline, Marxism in disgrace, and capitalism in bankruptcy, Skillen believes that Kuyper's insights must be heard again. Christianity, says Kuyper, holds in its womb a far greater potential for social renewal than we think, provided it acts upon its beliefs and launches into social action. It must overcome its traditional inertia and seize the opportunity. To let this chance go by would be both irreligious and irresponsible. Christians readily exert their control over nature through art and work, following the command to guard and till. Thus, a dull stone yields a diamond, and a wild stream irrigates the fields. The responsibility for human behavior requires the same commitment, argues Kuyper. No one can allow his or her inner drives to go unbridled, nor can a parent let children behave as they please. Human history is plagued with error, sin, selfishness, and crime. And just as it is legitimate to discipline and educate individuals, it is warranted to control and influence social and communal life.

Kuyper advocates learning from Jesus and his way of coping with the evils of his time. He also dismisses the idea of Jesus as a revolutionary, seeking to reform society through political means (37). On the contrary, Christ's ministry to social needs is perceived as threefold. (1) *Jesus preached* against error by presenting truth, and against sin by announcing and realizing his expiatory sacrifice. (2) *Jesus lived his convictions*; born in a stable, he had no address, associated himself with the poorest, as well as with the richest, and sent his disciples without a purse to serve those in need. He spent His time touching leprous flesh and healing the sick; yet, in his view, the poor were not to grumble in bitterness nor tremble in fear about food, drink or clothing, "for after all these things do the Gentiles seek" (Matt 6:25-33). (3) *Jesus organized his church* to continue his work of denouncing sin and announcing the good news of victory in and through Christ.

In contrast to Jesus, socialism operates on different presuppositions. These principles, the legacy of the French Revolution, represent a total restructuring of the frame of mind. Kuyper notes the following: (1) the replacement of God's authority by the individual free will; (2) the loss of eternal and transcendent dimensions of life; (3) the replacement of fallenness and the need for conversion by natural human pride; (4) the acceptance of egoism, competition, and a passionate struggle for possessions as a new *modus vivendi*, superseding Christian compassion; and (5) the replacement of human dignity proceeding from an organically

integrated society under God by self-seeking and self-serving individualism. Christianity must, therefore, respond to the failure of socialism by acknowledging the problem and marshaling the power of the gospel for the alleviation of poverty. Zealots and radicals must not be allowed to tear down all structures.

Kuyper suggests four points for Christian strategy: (1) oppose all forms of colonization whether military or economic; (2) work on the salvation and restoration of the family unit; (3) insist on dignity of work above the dignity of fame and riches; and (4) support any government which stands on the side of justice for all.

Abraham Kuyper's *The Problem of Poverty* is very helpful as a resource and guide for classroom discussion or for professionals involved in the social issues. Furthermore, Skillen's introduction sets the stage, and his notes provide insightful commentary to make this a useful work.

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MIROSLAV KIŠ

Lieu, Judith M. *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*. New Testament Theology. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991. xii + 130 pp. \$12.95.

With this book begins a new series on the theology of individual books of the NT. This is a welcome event as the discipline has, until now, been the domain of German biblical scholarship.

*The Theology of the Johannine Epistles* is a serious effort by a competent New Testament scholar to cast light on the historical situation and to discover the theology of these early Christian documents. Lieu's ultimate aim is to bring out their meaning and significance for the church today.

In her treatment of the Johannine theology, the author uses an inductive approach to these documents in an attempt to reconstruct both their historical setting and theological meaning from the texts themselves. Lieu's study is divided into four sections: (1) introduction; (2) the theology of the Johannine Epistles; (3) the epistles within the Johannine tradition; and (4) the significance of the Johannine Epistles in the church.

While the author discusses questions concerning the historical setting and background of the epistles and their relationship to the wider body of Johannine literature in the introduction, she fails to introduce the reader to the issue she intends to discuss in the book. In her treatment of the historical setting and background of the Epistles she could have tied in the discussion of the Johannine tradition instead of relegating it to the end of the book.

Lieu rightly maintains that one's understanding of Johannine thought presupposes a knowledge of both the literary style and structure. She dismisses the idea that 1 John is a homily, an abstract tract, or even a letter, at least in some respects. But she does not explore other possibilities