

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

which might enable the reader to gain a better understanding of the literary form of these documents. Instead the author concludes that 1 John is a literary-theological unity (unit?), addressed to a specific situation.

The second chapter, devoted to a discussion of the theology of the Epistles, is the most important. Here Lieu attempts to come to grips with key concepts of Johannine theology such as ecclesiology and Christology. True to her methodology she looks for a number of clues in the epistles—titles, names, and issues—for the purpose of reconstructing both the historical setting and the theology of the epistle. The scarcity of data makes the task of putting the jigsaw puzzle together rather difficult. In keeping with her overall thesis, she minimizes the eyewitness account of 1 John 1:1-4. Following R. E. Brown's model, Lieu argues that the author's real *Sitz im Leben* is to be found in the context of a later community of people still in line with the first witnesses. However, this reconstruction is somewhat contrived and fails to be convincing. In the course of her reconstruction the author does not take some textual details of 1 John 4:2 and 5:6 seriously, concluding that they were intended to declare that Jesus, as the one sent by God, is the source of forgiveness. Evidently she minimizes the Christ event in favor of a later Johannine community.

In chap. 3 the author discusses the relationship between the Epistles of John, the Fourth Gospel, and the Apocalypse, concluding that there is no literary dependency between the Gospel and 1 John. Nevertheless, she observes, all of these writings show a family likeness, which indicates their linkage to a common tradition.

She concludes her study by showing that the Johannine Epistles have a contemporary significance which has to be true to the original meaning.

In spite of its usefulness, the book has some problems. Its presentation lacks clarity, such as one finds in Bultmann's work. There is no summary or conclusion. Finally, more careful proofreading of the text could have eliminated a number of typographical errors.

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HERBERT KIESLER

Messer, Donald E. *A Conspiracy of Goodness: Contemporary Images of Christian Mission*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992. 176 pp. Paper, \$14.95.

Donald Messer is a man with a large vision of a large God who oversees a large mission in an increasingly smaller world. His is not an ecclesio-centric book. Messer does not write about a God who is confined within the four walls of a church, relating to Christian people. Thus, this is a book that will stretch many minds.

*Conspiracy* is related to a number of other books published lately, *Resident Aliens* (Willimon and Hauerwas), *Transforming Mission* (Bosch), *The*