

planation (which appeals to the intentions of a person). These are quite different, and, since there can be a scientific explanation for the existence and order of the universe (a point on which I agree with Swinburne, who makes it very well), there must be a personal explanation if there is to be an explanation at all. But is that really so? Cannot the existence and order of the universe be brought about by what main-stream Christian orthodoxy calls 'God'? Cannot it be brought about by the Creator *ex nihilo* whose 'thoughts are not your thoughts' and whose 'ways are higher than your ways'? And if the existence of an orderly universe requires explanation in terms of a person's intention, why is there not a person whose intentions result in the fact that there is a person whose intentions result in the existence of an ordered universe? Swinburne might say that his non-embodied person is ultimate, and that, while one can ask why there are persons acting intentionally within the ordered universe (which is surely what one must be asking in asking for an explanation of the existence of an ordered universe), there is no need to ask why it is that this particular person exists. But on the supposition that he is really a person whose existence seems probable in the light of what we know about persons in the universe, that seems false. If the universe contains persons, if the universe must be brought about by P, and if P is really a person, then why cannot P also be said to be brought about by a person? It seems to me that Swinburne can only successfully reply by playing down (and playing down with a vengeance) the similarity

between P and the persons who operate within the universe and who are normally referred to by those offering what Swinburne calls personal explanation. But he is not prepared to do this, which means, I think, that his argument for an extramundane person is unconvincing, as, in the end, is that of Cleanthes.

There are various aspects of Swinburne's book of which I have said nothing. This is not to say that I am happy with them, but they demand a discussion more detailed than is possible here. One final point ought, however, to be briefly mentioned. This is that Chapter 13 ('The Argument from Religious Experience') is indiscriminating to the point of naivety. The chapter has some very sensible things to say about the reasonableness of believing on the basis of experience, but it pays no adequate attention to texts either Christian or non-Christian, and nothing much is said about the relationship between experience and interpretation. Instead we are treated to an assessment of assertions like 'I talked to God last night', 'I saw Poseidon standing by the window' (p 254), 'it seemed to Joseph that an angel was talking to him' (p 251) and 'it seems to the subject, perhaps very strongly, that he is aware of God or of a timeless reality or some such thing' (p 251). Swinburne is disposed to be sympathetic to such assertions. I should say he needs to think more about them, to study in detail the people (if any) who make them, and to think about a lot else besides.

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**RIGHTEOUSNESS IN MATTHEW AND HIS WORLD OF THOUGHT** by Benno Przybylski. *SNTS monograph 41. C.U.P. 1980. pp xiii + 184. £9.50.*

Benno Przybylski developed this study when he was a research student of E. P. Sanders. The main thesis is that those scholars who have imposed a Pauline understanding of righteousness as God's gift on the Matthean use of the term, especially Fiedler, have seriously distorted Matthew's meaning, and this is convincingly argued, although Fiedler's thesis had already been

demolished by A. Sand in *Das Gesetz und die Propheten* 1974. It is a pity that the polemical form has narrowed the perspective of Przybylski's study. Instead of asking 'What does righteousness mean?' he narrows the question to 'Does righteousness refer to God's gift to man or to God's demand upon man?' He answers that it means God's demand, but when the reader asks

what is involved in this demand, he is left without a definite answer.

The discussion of the method and purpose of the study in the introduction raises expectations. The Matthean concept is to be distinguished from the Pauline and from undifferentiated Old Testament usage. There had been a development in Jewish terminology between the Old Testament and the first century of the Common Era and this would be demonstrated with reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Tannaitic literature. This Jewish literature represents the intellectual milieu in which the Matthean concept of righteousness becomes intelligible. The study is to avoid the trap of imposing concepts from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Tannaim upon Matthew: the discussion of the meaning and function of the term is to be made on the basis of the Gospel itself. The results of the study will tilt the balance in favour of seeing Matthew as a Jewish Christian rather than a Gentile Christian.

These expectations are disappointed. The reader expects to find a detailed study of Matthean usage, drawing particular attention to any factors which demand an explanation in terms of discovering an appropriate background. But first the reader is presented with a detailed discussion of the material from Qumran, and the Tannaim. The Matthean material is left until last so that it can be treated in the light of conclusions reached in the earlier chapters. Matthew's meaning is distorted.

Had Przybyski started with Matthew and then asked the question about background, an obvious answer would have presented itself: Matthew's usage conforms to that of the Septuagint. Przybyski admits as much at the beginning of his chapter on Matthew (p 77). What Przybyski provides in his study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Tannaim is not background to Matthew, but background to the Septuagint. It is therefore misleading to conclude that Matthew must have been a Jewish Christian, influenced by Jewish developments. Rather Matthew was a Christian who accepted the Septuagint as scripture.

I accused Przybyski of distorting Mat-

thew. He interprets the important instance of *dikaïosunē* in Matt. 5:20 in the light of the antitheses in 5:21-48; and he understands the antitheses as an attempt to put a fence around the Torah. For example, a fence is put around the prohibition of murder (5:21-26): since anger leads to murder, anger is prohibited and there is no risk of murder. In general terms, this applies to each of the antitheses. Przybyski characterised Matthean teaching as 'an extremely meticulous observance of the law' (p 83). What he fails to discuss is the fact that there are many ways of putting a fence around the Torah. One way is to define exactly what is involved in the command: what behaviour constitutes murder, what constitutes adultery, grounds for divorce, swearing, etc. This is what the rabbis tried to do, and this is what I should describe as an 'extremely meticulous' interpretation. It is what Matthew derides in 5:33 f. Matthew interprets the commands according to two principles: firstly, he moves from action to intention (5: 22 and 28); and secondly he interprets in a spirit of reconciliation and generosity (5:23 ff., 32, 39 ff, 44 ff), drawing particular attention to the relationship which he believes exists between God's generosity and man's (5:45 and 48). I have no objection to describing this as putting a fence around the Torah, but it should not be characterised as 'extremely meticulous observance'.

Przybyski includes a discussion about the use of the terms *eleemosune* and *eleos* in Matthew because the Septuagint sometimes rendered *tsedaqah* by these Greek words. Matthew uses *eleemosune* in 6:2, 3, and 5 to mean almsgiving and uses *eleos* in 23:23 and as part of the quotation from Hosea 6:6 in 9:13 and 12:7. The verb *eleew* is used of God's saving activity in Jesus (9: 27, 15:22, 17:15, 20:30 f). In line with the clear distinction which Przybyski wants to make between righteousness as God's demand and salvation as God's gift, he distinguishes between the use of the noun in relation to men and the use of the verb in relation to God. But Matthew, on the contrary, stresses the connexion between the two: because God is merciful, man should be merciful. This is the teaching of the parable in 18:23-35 and of the Lord's

Prayer in 6:12 and 14-15, although forgiveness is the term used rather than mercy. A clear instance where the term mercy is used is the beatitude: 'Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy' 5:7, a passage not mentioned by Przbylski in this section, because the form *hoi eleēmones* is slightly different and because the passive form of the verb makes it unnecessary to mention God. This is a passage which Przbylski should not have overlooked.

Przbylski's discussion of *dikaïos* is forced. He states that Matthew uses *dikaïos* for 'those who in the past were properly religious', citing 13:17, 23:29 and 35, and for certain contemporaries who were 'properly religious' in the sense that they kept the law, but were not properly religious from a Christian point of view, citing 1:19, 5:45, 9:13, 10:41, 23:28 and 27:19 refers to Jesus as *dikaïos* and Przbylski seeks to explain this away by noting that this is a designation given to Jesus by a pagan and has no other significance. In fact, it plays a significant part in Matthew's presentation of the Passion because it helps to explicate the theme of Jesus' innocence. The story presents Jesus as unjustly condemned, and the material found only in Matthew, especially Judas' confession of Jesus' innocence (Matt. 27:3-10. *dikaion* is used in some manuscripts) and the statement of Pilate's wife (27:19) draw attention to this. The other instances of *dikaïos* refer to those who are found to be righteous at the final judgment: 13:43 and 49; 25:37 and 46. Przbylski concludes that the term *dikaïos* is not used to refer to those who are properly religious in the sense that they follow the teaching of Jesus. On the contrary, the righteous are those who keep the law. The instances in chapter 25 are labelled 'Jewish'. This is unconvincing. 27:19, 13:43 and 49, 25:37 and 46 show that Matthew believed the followers of Jesus were called to be righteous and salvation would depend on them being so.

Drawing his study together, Przbylski concludes that although Matthew emphasises the importance of proper conduct, the bearing of fruit, and sees this as the criterion of the final judgment, he does not call this proper conduct *dikaïosunē*. Because the term is not used in 28:16-20 and 12:46-50, it is deemed unimportant. What Matthew does emphasise, says Przbylski, is the need to do the will of God: 12:50, 26:42, 6:10, 7:21, 18:14. The essence of discipleship is expressed as 'doing the will of God'. Przbylski insists that *dikaïosunē* is used only when outsiders are addressed: it characterises Jewish observance not Christian. The instances in the sermon on the mount are understood solely as polemic against scribes and pharisees. Again this is unconvincing. 5:20 and 6:1 call the disciple to righteousness, and 6:33 refers to this righteousness that the disciple must seek as God's righteousness. Similarly, in the saying about John the Baptist in 21:32, the 'way of righteousness' is parallel to the will of the Father in the parable which introduces the saying in 21:28-31 (as Przbylski admits when discussing this passage). The distinction which Przbylski tries to make distorts Matthew's meaning. For Matthew, the demand for righteousness is part of the demand to do the will of God.

Przbylski has failed to do justice to the meaning and significance of righteousness in the First Gospel. Drawing on terminology from the Septuagint, Matthew uses *dikaïosunē* or *dikaïos* to describe the conduct of good men in the past, and to describe the conduct expected of disciples, but this righteousness is understood, in the light of God's forgiveness and salvation, to involve generosity and mercy. The association of the terms *dikaïosunē*, *dikaïos*, *eleēmosunē* and *eleos* in the Septuagint made these terms appropriate to express Matthew's message.

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