

ity, or humanized religion, and taught that man was perfectible, but childhood perfect'. I don't see why Dr Walder calls this 'a cynical tribute' especially when he admits that the problem Dickens fails to solve is, in the words of Graham Greene, that 'Goodness has only once found a perfect incarnation in a human body and never will again, but evil can always find a home there. Human nature is not black and white but black and grey'.

Greene's remark exemplified the need

to distinguish between the religious imagination of a Dostoevsky and religious 'illustration' – but Dickens claims no more than that. Even so, Joe Gargery, in *Great Expectations*, is as a portrait of 'a gentle Christian man' more convincing because more highly developed than Mr Pickwick.

Dr Walder has produced a useful work of reference, especially for the teacher. It is thoroughly prepared and has an excellent bibliography.

JOHN COULSON

THE CHARISMATIC LEADER AND HIS FOLLOWERS by Martin Hengel, trans. by James Greig, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1981, pp xiv + 111 £7.95

This short book is a translation of a volume published in Germany in 1968. It is also one of the first volumes to appear in a new series of 'Studies of the New Testament and Its World', edited by John Riches. It augurs well for the series as a whole.

The book is an investigation of Jesus' call of men to discipleship, based on a detailed examination of one pericope (Matt. 8:21 = Luke 9:59f). The saying of Jesus which this passage contains 'runs counter to law, piety and custom' (p 14), and demonstrates the unconditional character of following Jesus. His unique authority, seen in his call to men to follow him, is inextricably linked with the urgency of his proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Although Jesus was a teacher he was not a rabbi, and the manner of his teaching was different from that of the rabbis. It is hardly surprising if there is no parallel to his call of men to follow him in the rabbinic traditions, since the relationship between Jesus and his disciples is quite different from that between rabbis and their pupils. His disciples were not called to imitate his everyday behaviour, not to memorize his teaching, but to share his concern for the dawning Kingdom of God. Jesus himself, instead of conversing with scholars, taught the crowds in the open air. Nevertheless, his call to discipleship was made to select individuals, not to the crowds (as with messianic leaders such as Judas the Galilean or Theudas); although

the offer of the Kingdom was open to all, Jesus did not call everyone to follow him. He is therefore to be distinguished from the apocalyptic enthusiasts, as well as from the rabbis. Only later were 'following after' Jesus and faith identified, so that accepting the message of Jesus became equated with deciding for Jesus himself.

The teaching of Jesus was characterized by authority, and was a call to decision. As such it differed from that of both the rabbis and the teachers of wisdom of an earlier period. Professor Hengel stresses this authority, and quotes several times the well-known words of E Fuchs, who described Jesus as one 'who dares to act in God's stead'. Jesus called his disciples to share his mission and authority, in offering salvation and in proclaiming judgment. So we find that the call of Jesus to men to follow him is linked with the theme of mission (as in Mark 1:17 and 3:13f). Unlike the disciples of rabbis, who are entrusted with carrying on a tradition, these men are called to prepare the nation for the coming Kingdom of God.

The importance of this study, in Professor Hengel's own view, is that it is concerned with questions about Jesus himself, and not with questions about the evangelists or the early Christian communities. In a vigorous protest against those who brush aside questions about 'the historical Jesus', he maintains that 'the central feature of Synoptic research must continue to be the attempt to get back to Jesus himself' (p

84). Since Jesus' call to follow him cannot be derived from Judaism, nor ascribed to the Church (since the verb 'to follow' is appropriate only in speaking of an earthly figure), it has a good claim to authenticity. The unique summons is characteristic of the 'authority' which many scholars regard as the authentic stamp of the Jesus of history. So we may confidently trace this radical summons back to Jesus himself, and not treat it as part of the theologizing of the later Church.

Professor Hengel's study is a healthy reminder that the attractions of redaction criticism – which is far more widely used now than when he wrote the original German version – must not entice scholars to abandon asking questions about Jesus alto-

gether, and cause them to lapse into 'general commonplaces about the historical Jesus' (p 86). If he is right in his analysis, then his investigation leaves us with more questions than it solves (though this is no criticism), since we are left asking about Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God, and the urgency of its proclamation which led him to summon men to discipleship. And we are left pondering the steps which led men and women to transfer the call from Jesus as the proclaimer of the Kingdom to Jesus as one who was followed for his own sake, so that 'following Jesus' became identified with faith in him, and the small band of disciples came to be seen as types of all who responded to the Gospel.

MORNA D HOOKER

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS THE JEW by Geza Vermes. (Riddell Memorial Lectures, 48). University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1981. pp 64. £2.00

In *Jesus the Jew* Dr Vermes attempted to show that scepticism about the quest of the historical Jesus is unnecessary for anyone who succeeds in placing him firmly in his Palestinian background. In these lectures he sets out to do the same for Jesus' teaching. Jesus belonged to the familiar class of figure, the charismatic prophet; but an examination of his teaching discloses his 'incomparable superiority'.

The distinctive quality of the teaching of Jesus, Dr Vermes argues, arises directly out of the closeness of his own relationship to God. He was the supreme example of the *reshuvah* (repentance) for which the Baptist had called, he had put his own life unreservedly at the disposal of the divine sovereignty and expected others to do the same, he therefore enjoyed a peculiarly intimate relationship with God as son to Father; and the heart of his ethical teaching was the *imitatio Dei*. Dr Vermes dismisses with some asperity the long debate between 'consistent' and 'realised' eschatology. 'This situating of Jesus' Kingdom of God in a context of time has been the subject of much learned, and to my mind futile, controversy. (p 23). God's sovereignty is realised on earth in the surrender of the self to his will. In Jesus'

passionate devotion to that will he became the agent for God's own care and love towards the needs of his creatures.

The evidence of the gospels is handled with sensitivity and affection, and is illuminated by many parallels from Jewish writings. Dr Vermes leads us along a road full of interest to the conclusion 'that the world may not have heard the last of the holy Galilean'. But his own conviction is that 'the simple Jewish person of the Gospels' will not again come into his own until he has been disencumbered of all the adventitious trappings of the Church's Christ. Like many another scholar in the past he lays the 'long exile' of the Jewish Jesus firmly at the door of the villain Paul, and he spares a sympathetic nod to those Judaeo-Christians who withdrew so quickly from the main body of the Church in which they saw 'a fatal misrepresentation of Jesus, a betrayal of his ideals, and their replacement by alien concepts and aspirations' (p 9).

The wise Christian reader will not be repelled by the negative side of this argument, but will welcome the chance to look at Jesus afresh through admiring eyes. But there are other and more important grounds on which the lectures may be criticized. Dr Vermes claims to be writing as a his-