

summary of the sources and the various critical approaches to them, there is a survey of Christian beginnings from John the Baptist to the founding of the primitive church, and then an account of the life and ministry of Paul. After that the material is organized geographically: there are sections on Palestine and Syria, on Egypt, on Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. In the section on Asia Minor, Greece and Rome there are three subsections, dealing respectively with 'the renewal of apocalypticism' (2 Thessalonians, Jude, Revelation and the *Shepherd* of Hermas), 'the transformation of Pauline theology into ecclesiastical doctrine' (Colossians, Ephesians, Hebrews, *Barnabas*, Ignatius, *1 Clement*, 1 and 2 Peter, the Pastorals, Polycarp), and 'Christianity in its encounter with the social word' (Luke-Acts along with the *Acts of Paul*, *Acts of Peter*, Marcion, the apologists, the martyrologies). The classifying of Luke-Acts along with the *Acts of Paul* and *Acts of Peter* in this last subsection is not fortuitous; despite some historically valuable material contained in the Lukan Acts, it 'belongs in the immediate neighborhood of the apocryphal acts' (p. 52).

As for the first volume, it would be difficult to think of a more comprehensive introduction to the background and setting of Christian beginnings.

Both volumes are illustrated, and select bibliographies are appended to each division.

Professor Koester is a pupil of Rudolf Bultmann, to whose memory the work is dedicated: perhaps the highest commendation that could be given to the work is to say, and that truly, that it is not unworthy of the great scholar whom it seeks to honour.

F.F. Bruce, The Crossways, 2 Temple Road, Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 9BA

Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, London: SCM Press, 1983. Pp. vi + 169. £5.95.

This British edition of a work published by John Knox Press, Atlanta, Georgia, in 1981, is an addition to the mounting number of sociological studies of the New Testament. The author, who is Professor of Biblical Studies in Creighton University writes for the beginner in NT study who needs to understand the texts in terms of the cultural contexts to which they originally belonged. Models from cultural anthropology, he believes (and rightly so), add a dimension to those provided by the literary-critical, historical and theological approaches.

Five areas are explored and related to the biblical material: honour and shame (the pivotal values of the Mediterranean world in the first century), human personality (the individual and the group), the perception of limited

good, kinship and marriage, clean and unclean (the rules of purity). In each area a hypothesis is stated and then tested by the NT evidence.

The main question-mark that I am inclined to set against much of the discussion relates to the difference between village life in Galilee (reflected especially in Jesus' parables) and life in the cities of the Aegean world. Do the same models apply to both these environments? Perhaps they do, but it would be desirable to show more clearly that they do. In particular, there is quite a wealth of epigraphic evidence bearing on life in the cities to which the principal NT letters were sent: if statements about values and presuppositions shared by the inhabitants of those cities were explicitly supported by such evidence, the arguments would be strengthened.

Reading the NT, it is said, is like eavesdropping on a group of foreigners: so it is, but it is even more like eavesdropping on two or three different groups of foreigners, who were foreigners one to another as much as to us. The basic human environment of the first-century Mediterranean world, we are told, 'was composed predominantly of agricultural and/or fishing villages socially tied to preindustrial cities' (p. 71). Even so, the values of life were differently perceived by the residents of the agricultural and/or fishing villages and those who had several generations of urban life behind them. Much of the humour of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, for example, depends on the discordant outlooks of the charcoal-burners from Acharnae who found temporary refuge within the walls of Athens and the urbanized Athenians.

When Professor Malina contrasts the 'perception of limited good' of those preindustrial cities with the present-day belief that 'all goods are limitless', one wonders how widespread this latter belief is. Certainly industrial society as we know it has opportunities of increasing the supply of goods that were unknown in preindustrial cities, but the western world today is becoming uncomfortably aware that vital resources are limited if not shrinking. It may be asked if this growing awareness in our postindustrial culture helps us to sympathize more with the preindustrial city-dwellers: probably only a minority then as now gave serious thought to the matter.

In a limited-good perspective 'what needs explanation to prevent community recrimination and reprisal is success found at the boundaries of one's closed system and the system adjacent to it' (p. 86). But the woman who found her lost coin and the shepherd who found his lost sheep did not volunteer 'public explanation to prevent suspicion of theft'; their joy simply overflowed so that their neighbours had to share it. The man who found hidden treasure in a field was probably more circumspect in letting others know of his fortune.

Luke's designation of Nazareth, Bethlehem and other small towns as 'cities' does not mean in itself that he 'did not know Palestine very well' (p. 91); Josephus, who knew it as well as an intelligent native could, uses the same nomenclature when he speaks of the 'thickly distributed cities' (*polesis puknai*) of Galilee (*Bf* 3.43).

But these criticisms on points of detail do not detract from the overall interest and helpfulness of a study remote from the traditional subject-matter of the theological curriculum. The author's aim is to help towards a better understanding of the NT, and in this he succeeds. A special word of appreciation should be said regarding his account of the transformation of inherited concepts of purity and impurity in the life and thought of the primitive church.

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Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung* (WUNT, II/7), Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1981. Pp. 614. Paper, DM 69.00.

Dr Riesner here presents a thesis of monumental proportions in which he investigates the origins of the Jesus-tradition in the synoptic Gospels. Over against the hypothesis of some form-critics that the tradition largely arose in the early church and had minimal links with the historical Jesus H. Riesenfeld and B. Gerhardsson attempted to show that the rabbinic literature testified to the careful handing down of oral tradition and that the early church likewise carefully preserved and committed to memory the tradition of what Jesus said and did. This thesis was criticized by various scholars on the grounds that the rabbinic evidence was too late to shed light on the nature of the Jewish handling of tradition before AD 70 and that in any case Jesus was not to be thought of as a rabbinic teacher teaching his disciples to remember his words by heart. Riesner embarks upon a thorough re-examination of the question, and his thesis has various significant aspects.

First, he has an extraordinary acquaintance with the modern literature—both English and German—on the subject, and he is able to show that the kind of things said by the Scandinavian scholars had already been anticipated by many earlier scholars who stressed the role of Jesus as a teacher and of his disciples as learners. The author rightly criticizes some of the form-critics for ignoring whatever evidence stood against their thesis, just as it can be urged that some of the proponents of the two-source solution of the synoptic problem also ignored scholarly objections to their solution.

Second, Riesner's principal contribution to the debate is to place the teaching of Jesus in the context of Jewish elementary education; he shows that the kind of oral teaching characteristic of the rabbis with its stress on learning material by heart was a central part of the widespread education of Jewish boys in Palestine. The argument from analogy is thus placed on a broader and firmer foundation.

Third, Riesner embarks on a thorough examination of the gospel material in order to see whether the analogy holds good. In this way he goes

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