

REDISCOVERING THE TEACHING OF THE EVANGELISTS, by Joachim Rhode. *SCM*, London, 1968. 278 pp. 50s.

The title of this book refers to the development in New Testament studies in Germany since the war. The long reign of *Formgeschichte* seemed to enter a new phase when a number of scholars, still using Form Critical methods and expressions, concentrated their attention on the evangelist as a creative redactor rather than on the pericopes created by the pre-gospel community. In 1954 Willi Marxsen gave this trend a definite title, *Redaktionsgeschichte*. Not all scholars approve of this name, nor do they accept Marxsen's definition of the trend in all its details. But the term has been conveniently applied in recent years to all the scholars working in one way or another on the evangelist as redactor. The object of study now is of the teaching of the evangelists, in other words how they interpreted the gospel material in the final redaction as known to us.

Rhode originally offered the substance of this book in a much larger thesis at Berlin in 1962. He has now brought his material up to date and made a select bibliography. The whole is well translated into English, with English editions quoted of the principal works referred to. The book embraces an enormous study, for Rhode is a voracious reader not only of all the published books touching Redaction Criticism but of unpublished theses at several German universities. It is natural that the range is confined to German scholars. Rhode reports them all generously and his own comments are carefully distinguished. This vast material is arranged in accordance with the aims and interests of the redaction critics themselves. For they are concerned with the individual evangelist and have on the whole each selected one evangelist in particular. So that Rhode's book is divided into three main sections, headed Matthew, Mark and Luke.

In the first section on Matthew (pp. 47-112) we become acquainted with the method of redaction criticism. Somewhat surprisingly, for all its jargon, it is the traditional method of comparing one evangelist with another on the

classical basis of the 'two source theory'. Matthew is closely compared with Mark and the differences are read off as indications of the special mind of the evangelist. A consistent and general pattern of interpretation is then discovered from a large number of these cases. Something of this sort had already been done by Bornkamm usually classed as a Form Critic. His pupils Gerhard Barth and H. J. Held have developed his work in the recognizable pattern of Redaction Criticism. Special mention in this field should be made of Wolfgang Trilling's contribution in *Das wahre Israel* (pp. 74 ff.) which gives a very interesting account of Matthew as an interpreter of Mark with a special eye to the growing Church in its role as mission to the world.

In Mark (pp. 113-152) the shortest section, almost the whole is concerned with Willi Marxsen's books and articles, which have made Redaction Criticism, at any rate the name, so famous. Marxsen believes that study should not only be of the redactional mind of the evangelist but of the particular situation in time and place—the notorious *Sitz im Leben*. He argues (p. 118) that 'the gospel of Mark came into being at the beginning of the Jewish War in the year 66, when the original community fled from Jerusalem to Pella'. This is derived from Eusebius ultimately, but Marxsen uses internal evidence to support it. For he notices the evangelist's emphasis on Galilee, and ingeniously points out that Pella though east of the Jordan was politically part of Galilee. This reveals the extent and perhaps the weakness of Redaction Criticism carried to its logical conclusion. Some other commentators classed by Rhode as Redaction Critics in the broad sense, like Strecker, object that Marxsen's *Sitz im Leben* is not fairly deduced from the evidence, and that the gospel of Mark need not have any particular situation of time and place as the cause of its being.

The longest section on Luke (pp. 153-239) is the most informative. Books by Conzelmann

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and Flender are fairly well known in England now, but Rhode gives a detailed account of ten other scholars with important and widely different views of the evangelist. There is more scope here as *Acts* is also taken into account, and the relation of the author to St Paul much discussed. The great difficulty here is that there is no agreement about the sources of *Acts*, and therefore no agreement about the extent of Luke's interpretation. The material may all be traditional (Dibelius), Luke probably made up the speeches himself (Haenchen) or even the contexts into which they fit as well (Wilckens). Any assessment of Luke's redactional mind in these circumstances is open to wide divergence.

It will be clear that a reader of this book will gain a vivid and detailed view of the present state of New Testament studies in Germany. There are scholars there who are not Redaction Critics, but the new wave is in fashion and affects almost all. One cannot deny that it shows a welcome advance on *Formgeschichte* in certain respects. For Redaction Criticism is dealing with the gospels as we have them, and the mind of an evangelist whose hand is everywhere apparent, instead of with an amorphous community and elements of the gospel as they may have existed before the evangelist grasped them. Although this takes us one further remove from the actual time of Jesus, the historical scepticism woven into *Formgeschichte* is here conspicuously absent. In Conzelmann's view it is not for a Redaction Critic to make categorical statements about the original events and words. And this reserve seems to be widely shared. However certain criticisms readily arise. In the first place the whole question of *Sitz im Leben* should be separated out. Anyone who writes anything is doubtless affected by what is going on around him and the kind of people who are going to read what he writes. But only certain kinds of literary production have an historical time and place as the dominant cause of their existence. It seems unlikely that the gospels were of this kind partly because a cause of this sort has never been noticed for nineteen hundred years, and because the most part of Matthew and Luke are in the sources; anyone burning to write for a particular time and place does not embroil himself in a hack work.

For the rest there are obvious limitations to Redaction Criticism. Many readers of Rhode's accounts will feel that the analysis of any one evangelist is so pernickety and subtle and shot through with the thesis mania of a theological professor, that the poor gospel writer becomes

an extension of the modern mind, obsessed with our infatuations—'salvation history'—and all the rest of it. Literary explanations are minimized in any observation of differences between one evangelist and another. Every detail is pounced on as pregnant with theological significance. And the critic has a kind of snobbery that assumes that the evangelist must have a unified system of thought and clear logical pattern in regard to all his problems. One feels that a little more commonsense and common experience would have suggested

that writers in the first century, or indeed any century, do not work on the rigid mental lines of their commentators. More account could be made of the very obvious fact that at least two of the evangelists are repeating what had been said before. The sources are used to prove the differences between the evangelists, but they also prove their similarity. Some explanation of this patent fact is called for. Perhaps some scholars fail by their very intensity and closeness to the objects of their study to see wood instead of trees.

ALFRED BAKER, O.S.B.

BORDERLANDS OF THEOLOGY AND OTHER ESSAYS, by D. M. MacKinnon. *Lutterworth Press*, 1968. 35s.

This book is divided into three parts, consisting of papers on theology and philosophy of religion, on ethics, politics and philosophy of history, and on metaphysics and epistemology. One is immediately astonished by the author's erudition and range; but even more impressive is the constantly questioning temper of his mind, and his steadfast refusal of easy solutions, whether 'conservative' or 'radical', to philosophical and theological problems. To be a pupil of Professor MacKinnon's is to be deprived of the insidious luxury of belonging to a school.

The section on theology is dominated by the insistence that Christian belief commits one to assent to propositions about matters of fact; that it cannot be reduced to a mere outlook on life, whether couched in idealist or existentialist terms, without becoming false to itself. This is why, as the author says in the essay on Christology, the decline of the idealist tradition in philosophy, though superficially it made the intellectual climate so much more inimical to Christian belief, was in many ways more healthy for it. It became much clearer that Christian faith entailed belief that something was actually the case about the world. When Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, he was stating something that he believed to be the case independently of his statement of it; he was not *making* Jesus the Messiah in the act of hailing him as such. Whatever be the defects of logical positivism, Professor MacKinnon is surely right that its concern with verification, with validation of theory by facts which happen to be the case but might not have been the case, is something which is neglected by theologians

to their peril. Sure enough, belief in the Resurrection has implications for Christian life here and now, but its meaning is not exhausted in these implications, since it essentially involves a historical claim; and if this claim is false, Christians will have believed in vain.

To judge by the writings of many modern moral philosophers, you can engage either in moral philosophy, or in inquiry into real moral problems, but never in any circumstances into both at once. Professor MacKinnon's writings are unusual for the manner in which they marshal technical ethical arguments for the confrontation of serious moral issues. There is a devastating treatment here of the palliatives with which Christians are inclined to quieten their consciences, and are abetted in doing so by the moral theologians, on the issues of politics and war. The advocacy of Collingwood, perhaps the most under-rated of first-rank twentieth-century philosophers, will perhaps persuade more people to read his work.

The last section is closely concerned, in its discussion of Professor Wisdom and the work of Strawson on Kant, with the limits of intelligible discourse, and the bearing of these on the work of the theologian. There are some tantalising hints, here and in the rest of the book, on the relation of metaphysics to poetry and other literature, which I hope Professor MacKinnon will expand on some later occasion.

It is impossible to summarize adequately a book which is so wide-ranging and sceptical (in the deepest sense). It may perhaps convey to those not fortunate enough to have been his pupils Professor MacKinnon's qualities as a teacher.

HUGO MEYNELL

THE PRIVILEGE OF MAN, by Kenneth Cragg. *Athlone Press*, 1968. 208 + xii pp. 42s. net.

Hitherto Mr Kenneth Cragg has mainly concerned himself with Muslim-Christian dialogue; and he has done much to make Islam more

comprehensible to Christians. But in every book he has written his meaning has been obfuscated by what seems to be the very