

BOOK REVIEWS

Brown, Raymond E., Donfried, Karl P., Fitzmyer, Joseph A., and Reumann, John, eds. *Mary in the New Testament. A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press; and New York: Paulist Press, 1978. xii + 323 pp. Paperback, \$3.95.

In 1973 a team of NT scholars, at the request of the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, published a consensus statement called *Peter in the New Testament*. A model of contemporary historical-critical interpretation of the Bible, the book served as a kind of object lesson in methods shared across denominational lines.

Virtually the same group has tackled an even more sensitive issue, "a very divisive topic in Christianity, namely the role of Mary in Christian thought." In *Mary in the New Testament*, four Catholics, four Lutherans, two Episcopalians, and two theologians of the Reformed tradition present what they term "the NT data about Mary." They have isolated 37 NT texts and put them along with 21 NT apocryphal passages and a quick survey of second-century texts, carefully describing the import of each of them. The authors of the first draft of each chapter and the discussion leaders are identified, but the responsibility is assumed by the whole group.

Brown and his colleagues present the role of Mary in the NT and early Christian thought in a way marked by careful scholarship, lucid argument, intelligible writing — and surprising agreement. Pauline passages such as Phil 2:6-11, Rom 1:3-4, Gal 1:19, 4:4, and 4:28-29 are dutifully reviewed, but the team found little of direct Marian import. A majority of the task force did not believe either that Rev 12 originally referred to Mary, but agreed that, once incorporated in the NT canon, this material may have picked up a secondary Marian symbolism.

Not surprisingly, the most significant yields are found in the gospel narratives of Matthew, Luke, and John, though one's attention is soon called to the variety of concurrent Marian traditions in the early Christian community. The members of the task force see Mark as actually giving a "negative portrait" of Mary (especially Mark 3:20-35), though this view is regarded as more than offset by the later evangelists Matthew and Luke with their infancy narratives. They concur that Mark does not allude to the virginal conception, and remain undecided about the question of the perpetual virginity of Mary. In any case, the biblical authors are described as having no concern themselves with the latter issue.

Although the NT picture of Mary is considered to be far from unified, the members of the task force conclude that there is a generally highly positive picture of Mary as spokeswoman for the poor, as the obedient handmaiden of the Lord, and as a member of Jesus' eschatological family. Advocates of the historical-critical method will find few surprises. As the authors note: ". . . the task we set for ourselves was to see whether, as a group of scholars from different church backgrounds, we could agree upon a presentation of the NT data about Mary" (p. 294). To a remarkable extent they have been able to do so. For other readers, less convinced of the reliability of the modern exegetical methodology, the achievement of the authors' stated goal may have a more troubling effect. Roman Catholics, in particular, might find the final tabulation of results rather meager in view of the traditional role of Mary in Roman Catholic theology and piety. The issue is ecumenically important, for Catholics regard Mary's life-long virginity as a teaching of the church, not on conclusive biblical grounds, but as a belief that gradually took form in the early centuries.

The fact that this book raises more questions than it attempts to answer is

probably good evidence that the real issue lies elsewhere. The real ecumenical question regarding Mary will not be worked out on the level of exegesis, but rather on the level of theology and church praxis. What, for instance, does such a doctrine as the perpetual virginity of Mary mean for the ongoing life of the church? Is it a necessary part of Christian faith? What is the ultimate basis of its claim to authority? Is it reformable? What is the purpose of and legitimacy of the evolution of the church's reflection on Mary and her place in liturgy and piety?

For Roman Catholics and Protestants to agree on what is said about Mary in the NT may be the easiest step of all. The next step — namely, to decide what the churches are ready to say about Mary, and on what basis — will be more crucial for all who are concerned. The dozen scholars who contributed to *Mary in the New Testament* have probably made such a start possible.

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Cassidy, Richard J. *Jesus, Politics, and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978. ix + 228 pp. \$15.95/7.95.

Since the 1960s there has been a growing interest in Jesus' political and social stance as portrayed in the Gospels. Cassidy attempts an evaluation of this stance in the Gospel of Luke.

The passages in Luke that contribute to an understanding of the social and political teachings of Jesus are approached by way of redaction criticism. At times this means examining a minor social or political statement within a passage to the neglect of the major theme that initially led Luke to record the passage. In a note at the end of the book the author recognizes that minor themes may be presented within passages that contain unrelated major themes, and an examination of these minor themes must not result in a contradiction of their contexts. However, if the reader did not bother to turn to the "notes" to each chapter, he would miss this important methodological point, as well as other helpful statements on methodology. This inconvenience, of course, is a weakness in the format of the book and not in the work of the author.

Chap. 1 is an elementary "introduction" to the Gospel of Luke. The problems of date, authorship, and Luke's skills as a theologian and historian are dealt with. Redaction criticism is briefly explained and identified as the method used in this study. Chaps. 2 through 6 deal with the social and political stance of Jesus. These chapters are followed by four appendices. The first three give a brief history of Palestine under the Romans and the Herods, the country's social and economic situation during the first century A.D., and a short survey of five socio-religious groups, i.e. the Pharisees, Zealots, Essenes, chief priests, and general populace. As with the first chapter, the first three appendices are elementary and make a contribution only to a reader who is unacquainted with these subjects.

Therefore, only chaps. 2 through 6 (pp. 20-86) and appendix 4 (pp. 128-130) contain a treatment of Jesus' social and political stance. Appendix 4 is a brief refutation of Hans Conzelmann's evaluation of Luke's gospel as a "political apologetic." This appendix is simply a collection of the arguments and conclusions worked out in the body of the book that are important to the author's refutation.

Cassidy defines social stance as "the response that Jesus made, through his teachings and conduct, to the question of how persons and groups ought to live together" (p. 20). Beginning with the reading from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth, Cassidy shows that the Lucan Jesus is concerned with "the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed." Luke's version of the "Sermon on the