happened, and used a primitive Essene “Gospel of Jesus,” getting their chronology wrong by about a century.

Church leaders and theologians know all this, but have engaged in an enormous and deliberate deception, including suppressing some of the key Scrolls, to keep it from the laity. When the truth finally emerges, we will see a leaner, fitter version of Christianity, consisting of “the belief that there must be a loving creator behind this quite amazing universe,” that “there is a God and Jesus was very much part of his plan,” and that life is all predetermined anyway. The churches will abandon their unnecessary dogmas, unite around the simple teaching of Jesus (“love thy neighbour”), and so expand the influence of Christianity. This is the thesis of the present book.

There is a little learning here, mostly culled (with frequent acknowledgments) from Dupont-Sommer. There is a certain amount of ingenuity: the “Malchus” who loses one ear in John 18:10 was in fact a garbled reference to Hyrcanus II, who lost two, and who had an assistant called Malichus; 2 Cor. 4:7 is evidence that the Christians buried their writings in earthenware jars. There is also a large amount of ignorance. We are told that, if Jesus had lived when the gospels say he did, “we would expect to find manuscripts dating back to the 1st century AD.” “The books of Psalms and Isaiah were, for the most part, written by the Essenes.” And so on. And so on.

Most readers of this journal will recognize that this book belongs in a genre which was almost obsolete when it was published. Now that the Scrolls are more or less in the public domain, conspiracy theories may perhaps start to die down. Sober scholarly assessments will, one hopes, drive out bad currency with good. At the same time, the elements of family likeness between Qumran and early Christianity (which provides the thin ledge along which this book seeks to crawl to its imaginary goal) must not be forgotten. At a time when several scholars are painting early Christianity as unlike Judaism as possible, we must strive for a more mature history of Christian origins. This book does not contribute to such a project, but may be a reminder that there is still work here to be done.

Lichfield Cathedral

N.T. WRIGHT


Having supervised its restoration in 1965, Herbert Donner has acquired an unrivalled first-hand knowledge of the Madaba mosaic map. He still plans, it seems, to give the scholarly world the full benefit of this knowledge in the
form of a detailed commentary which sets the map in the context of the
topography of Palestine and Lower Egypt in the Byzantine period—a sequel
to the *Tafelband* which he and Cüppers published in 1977 (see p. 5). Meanwhile he has written this handy guide which is aimed primarily at
serving the needs of visitors to the site and which concentrates, therefore, on
explaining what is visible to the eye. Donner divides the mosaic into sec-
tions and analyses the toponyms and physical features of each section with
particular reference to their identification and sources. The discussion is
keyed into a large and handsome reproduction of the mosaic, in colour and
in black and white, based on the 1906 lithographs by Palmer and Guthe,
though these are not, as Donner notes, totally accurate.

Donner rightly stresses that the mosaic is more than mere decoration. He
estimates, presumably on the basis of the restoration work, that it would
have taken a master craftsman and two assistants 186 days, working a ten-
hour day, to lay the estimated 1,116,000 tesserae that made up the original
93 sq metre mosaic. This implies a very considerable expenditure of wealth,
which throws light incidentally on the economy of Madaba in the late 6th
century. The map displays considerable learning and also shows what books
were available in Madaba at the same period. It is a real map, cartographi-
cally correct to a high degree and more reliable than all its successors down
to the 19th century (see pp. 18 and 31).

But, as he rightly argues, the map was not produced for disinterested
"scientific" reasons: it is a theological construct—a cartographic account of
sacred history. It is, of course, a Christian representation of sacred geogra-
phy. It might be compared and contrasted with the 7th century inscrip-
tion defining the borders of Eretz Israel from the Tel Rehov synagogue near
Bethshean. Though this is simply a list of border-points it creates a mental
map which is just as ideological as the Madaba map. For the Tel Rehov
inscription Eretz Israel is the land of halakhah: its purpose is to define the
territory within which the commandments pertaining to the Land operate. For
the Madaba map Palestine is the land of salvation-history. Donner perhaps
overemphasizes the newness of the Madaba map's theological perspective
(see p. 30). It is wrong to differentiate too sharply between mental and
drawn maps. Theological geography, and ideological ways of structuring an
*imago mundi*, are well attested in Judaism from at least the Second Temple
period (note, e.g., the "maps" in 1 Enoch, Jubilees and the Genesis Apocry-
phon). There is much work still to be done on the Madaba map from the
standpoint of cognitive geography.

Donner observes, in the most original part of his study, that the overall
theological schema seems to fail in the little discussed part of the map
covering lower Egypt. Important events of the *Heilsgeschichte*—Joseph in Egypt,
the Exodus, the Flight into Egypt—are surprisingly absent from the repre-