

BOOK REVIEWS

Atkinson, James, *The Great Light: Luther and the Reformation*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1968. 287 pp. \$ 5.00.

This book is Volume IV in "The Advance of Christianity through the Centuries" series edited by F. F. Bruce. The title may give the impression that the book deals almost exclusively with Luther. Rather, it treats the Protestant Reformation quite broadly. Nevertheless, there is a particular emphasis on Luther which possibly justifies the title. The book is divided into four parts, Part I entitled "Luther and the German Reformation" covering nearly half of the main text (pp. 11-125). The other parts of the volume are as follows: "Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation" (pp. 129-155), "Calvin and the Establishment of Protestantism" (pp. 159-190), and "The Reformation in Britain" (pp. 193-261).

Luther probably deserves the emphasis he receives, inasmuch as he may be considered the great pioneer in the Protestant Reformation. Main attention is given to his thought and to a summary of some of his writings. On the other hand, biographical material is often quite sketchy. While many valuable insights are provided regarding Luther's thought and theological development, the exceptionally negative approach to the church of Luther's time must be questioned. Was there no background within Roman Catholicism itself toward reformation prior to Luther's arrival on the scene? What is to be said regarding the activities of humanists, mystics, the *Devotio Moderna*, the Conciliar Movement, and like groups?

Though the brevity of the treatment of Zwingli can be understood, the fact that more space is not devoted to Calvin is rather puzzling. That a considerable portion of the book is devoted to the British Reformation is natural inasmuch as this publication is part of a series originating in Great Britain and would therefore tend to emphasize developments there. One cannot but wonder, however, at a chapter title such as this (Chapter 14): "Scotland: Saviour of the Reformation." Does not such a title (and indeed the intent of the chapter itself) perhaps overplay the role of Scotland in the British Reformation?

A notable lack in this book is a discussion of those groups that are often called the "Sects." The present reviewer feels that the Anabaptists and even the various Puritan groups in England have hardly been given adequate treatment.

In closing, it must be said that although *Luther and the Reformation* shows somewhat of an imbalance in the treatment of its coverage, the insights which it furnishes in various areas are well worth the

attention of any reader. The style is lucid and the book makes enjoyable reading for the layman as well as the scholar.

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KENNETH A. STRAND

Betz, Otto, *What Do We Know About Jesus?* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968. 126 pp. \$ 1.65.

This book was originally published in German in 1965 when Betz was at Chicago Theological Seminary. He has recently returned to teach at Tübingen. Betz has contributed much in Qumran studies and his major contribution in this book is based on the background provided by the Qumran texts to the understanding of Jesus' messianic claim.

Books about Jesus are written today more or less from two points of view: from the basic acceptance of Bultmann's skepticism concerning what can be known about Jesus (including the new questers), and from a generally optimistic viewpoint which, while quite remote in spirit and method from the old liberalism, finds much more historical material in the Gospels than do Bultmann and his followers. The latter generally base their conclusions on Jewish backgrounds such as rabbinic sources and the Qumran scrolls. Betz falls in this latter camp.

In fact, in his opening chapter Betz takes to task Bultmann and even the new questers (rightly I believe) for neglecting the study of archaeological data including the Dead Sea Scrolls for the understanding of Jesus, and also for their preoccupation with form criticism. On the latter point, Betz attacks the criterion of dissimilarity as being too rigidly applied, since he finds it quite natural that similarity of ideas should be shared both by the church and Jesus and by the Jews and Jesus. And yet this criterion is useful to demonstrate the absolute authenticity of Jesus' teachings, *e.g.*, he finds that because the concept "of the rule of God" is rare in the OT and apocalyptic writings, totally absent in the Qumran Scrolls, and seldom used by Paul and the rabbis, "for these reasons alone there can be no doubt that the concept is an intrinsic part of Jesus' message" (p. 34).

Betz deals with "the bedrock of fact" in the activity of Jesus. He finds as primary background for the understanding of Jesus John the Baptist and the Qumran sect with their common eschatological expectation. The authentic activity of Jesus is set off against this common eschatological hope. The criterion of dissimilarity is invoked throughout. The miracles of Jesus are authentic and "can be deduced even from the Jewish polemic which called him a sorcerer" (p. 58). The criterion of similarity also seems to be invoked, though not explicitly. However, it is surprising that so little is written to establish the authenticity of the miracles of Jesus when Betz's objective is to do just this thing.

Against Bultmann who sees the miracles of Jesus along Hellenistic