

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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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

lines, Betz would explain them out of the OT. Jesus is seen as the new Moses or David. Thus the stilling of the storm and the drowning of the herd of swine is analogous to the dividing of the Red Sea and the drowning of the Egyptians. The same OT events are the background for the walking on the water and the sinking of Peter. The feeding of the multitude finds its counterpart in the feeding of Israel with manna. These are signs, not of physical deliverance, but of spiritual deliverance. They mark the end of the devil's rule.

Betz is not satisfied with merely showing the general historical reliability of the facts of Jesus' life; he attacks the very citadel of historical criticism, *i.e.*, the denial of messianic consciousness in Jesus. To the question, why was Jesus crucified? Betz answers, because he claimed to be the Messiah. All other reasons are inadequate to account for his death by crucifixion at the hands of the Romans. He rejects the explanation that the church historicized its confession which only developed after the resurrection. Betz's attempt to show the existence of Jesus' messianic consciousness is the most original part of his work and also the most controversial. He leads up to his explanation by referring to Schweitzer's questions concerning the progression of events at the night trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin: "How did the High Priest know that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah? Why was the attempt first made to bring up a saying about the temple which could be interpreted as blasphemy in order to condemn him on this ground?" To these questions Betz adds, "Why was Jesus' messianic claim accounted blasphemous?" (p. 88)

The answers to all these questions Betz finds through the study of a fragmentary Qumran text in which the prophecy of Nathan (2 Sam 7) is applied to the Messiah. The saying about the temple was first used against him because 2 Sam 7 is used messianically in the Qumran fragment, and since in Nathan's prophecy the Son of David is to build a temple, such a claim would be equivalent to claiming Messiahship. Therefore, the high priest's query was a logical deduction out of the previous charge. If he would build a temple, he must claim to be the Son of the Blessed, and as such involves God's honor. But "a powerless person who maintains that he is the Messiah blasphemes Almighty God, and in the eyes of the Jews blasphemy is the worst of all crimes" (p. 89). Jesus answers the question affirmatively and thus blasphemes according to the high priest, but points toward his future sitting on the right hand of God. Thus all the questions raised above are answered and the logical progression of events becomes clear. For Betz the passage in Mk 14: 53-62, with the help of the Qumran fragment, is thus sufficient to show that Jesus knew himself to be the Messiah (p. 92).

Nathan's prophecy also serves to explain how readily the disciples could understand him as the Messiah at his resurrection. The resurrection merges into two conceptions, the restoration to life and the exaltation to his enthronement. Like David, Jesus was anointed sometime before he was enthroned. Thus, Easter has a continuity with the

earthly life of Jesus. His exaltation is the expected result of his anointing.

There are several questions raised by Betz's discussion. He seems at times to grasp at straws. His explanation that the drowning of the swine is analogous to the drowning of the Egyptians seems far-fetched. His legitimate desire to find Jesus' miracles reflecting those of Moses has gone too far. Peter's sinking as reflecting that of Nahson, the son of Aminadab, seems equally far-fetched. To conclude that Paul understood the Son of man in Daniel 7 as the community on the basis of I Cor 6: 2 is to take too many things for granted.

Betz interprets the temple which Jesus builds as the eschatological community. He bases it mainly on Mk 14: 58 (given wrongly as 14: 53 on p. 91), which is slim evidence for this interpretation, since it is not an interpretation of Jesus or the community, but a charge made by his enemies and it itself does not say (even if we accept it as an authentic statement of Jesus) what is the thing that is made without hands. The interpretation in John 2: 21 referring to his body seems more appropriate in all the passages where reference is made to the statement. It is, therefore, tenuous at best to connect it with Mt 16: 18.

And finally, to come to Betz's major point, to use the Qumran fragment on 2 Sam 7 as the explanation for Mk 14: 53-62 is to read into the passage, and especially into the high priest's procedures and questions, an eschatological understanding of 2 Sam 7 which the disciples themselves did not yet have and which would have been difficult for the high priest to have. It is questionable whether Betz's solution, via the Qumran fragment, can be accepted without further substantiation.

Betz's method is to find the key to the explanation of Jesus' acts in the OT with the help of the Qumran material, which gives us an indication of how messianic movements understood and interpreted the OT. Betz rejects the Hellenistic "divine man" as a model for the miracle-working Jesus. He also rejects Hellenistic derivation and origin for Christological titles such as Saviour and Lord. Perhaps Betz is basically correct, but one wonders if the Gospels do not reflect what does in fact happen in real life when cultures meet and mix and the meanings of words and ideas blend and become fused. Thus while Bultmann may have overestimated Hellenistic influence, Betz may very well have underestimated it. Nevertheless, his thesis that more consideration needs to be given to the milieu of Jesus, especially the Qumran Scrolls, is basically sound, and by this means he has not only given us new insights, but has helped us to see the plausibility of accepting more historical matter in the life of Jesus than the method of the Bultmannians allows.