

BOOK REVIEWS

Bruce, F. F. *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974. 216 pp. Paperback, \$3.45.

The prolific NT scholar F. F. Bruce here presents an analysis and evaluation of materials dealing with Jesus and Christian origins outside the NT for thinking laymen. Besides dealing with references found in the early Roman writers, he discusses both the genuine statements and Christian glosses of Josephus, the Qumran documents, the Agrapha and Apocryphal Gospels, the Gospel of Thomas (at some length), Jesus in the Koran and in Islamic Tradition, and the evidence of archaeology.

Bruce deals with these wide-ranging materials in a very interesting manner, but apparently he himself has some doubt about the nature of the contents since in the last chapter he presents an apologia for it. The reason for this is that in fact some of these materials, such as statements of Tacitus, Suetonius, Josephus, the rabbis, and archaeological evidence, have been used to confirm if not to prove the historicity of Jesus, while on the other hand, the Apocryphal Gospels and the Koran have very little reliable historical matter. The Qumran documents do not refer directly to Jesus or to Christian origins. Bruce's defense is simply that "he is concerned to give an account of references to Jesus and Christian origins, factual or fictitious, outside the New Testament" (p. 203). If this is so, he has left out the greater part of the material in the apostolic and other church fathers. To justify the fictitious material, he adds that it testifies to the exceptional impact of the person of Christ. Somehow, it seems to the reviewer that there is lack of coherence in the material included in the volume and this is indicated by Bruce's uneasiness and also in the "Publisher's Note" (p. 7). Too much variegated material is thrown together. A more selective principle should have been used to bring about coherence and consistency.

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Conzelmann, Hans. *History of Primitive Christianity*. Translated by John E. Steely. Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1973. 190 pp. \$8.50.

The period from the resurrection of Jesus to A.D. 100 is the subject of this book written for non-specialists. The sources are quite limited, mainly Acts and Paul's letters. The clearest picture of this period understandably portrays the history that deals with Paul and his communities. Always, however, the author makes a critical evaluation of the sources, especially the book of Acts. Because of the limitation in sources, most chapters are necessarily short. Only three pages are devoted to "The Original Community from the Apostolic Council down to the Jewish War" and five pages to "Jewish Christianity after the Jewish War."