

Mitton, C. Leslie. *Jesus: The Fact Behind the Faith*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974. 152 pp. Paperback, \$2.95.

While the trend toward a general skepticism concerning what can be known about the historical Jesus has turned somewhat, the impression still remains that very little can be known about Jesus. The Gospels, it is maintained, reflect the Church's faith in Christ as Lord and thus the historical Jesus is beyond recovery. Mitton attempts to show that this assessment grossly exaggerates the situation. While not denying later elements of faith within the Gospels, he is confident that these do not distort the picture of the historical Jesus recoverable in the Synoptic Gospels.

He states that his book is not intended to contribute anything to the scholarly discussion of this question but is written for ministers and teachers who have become disturbed by this skeptical mood. While it is true that the author presents nothing new in a specific sense, nevertheless his bringing together in such a lucid and cogent way evidence that scholars (including himself) have furnished is a worthwhile contribution.

Mitton is conservative but critical. He does not accept John as a reliable historical source nor the M material in Matthew, and he recognizes that some alteration of Mark's material is made by Matthew and Luke, and that there are other inauthentic items. He also places a number of items in the possible but uncertain area. But by and large he feels that on the basis of sound historical criteria the Synoptic Gospels reliably present to us the historical Jesus in three areas. They provide a valid portrait of the character and person of Jesus himself, a credible sequence of the outstanding events of Jesus' life, and a considerable amount of reliable teaching material. His criteria for distinguishing the historical from nonhistorical are (1) multiple attestation, i.e., material found in Mark, Q, and L; (2) agreement of John with Mark, Q, and L; (3) "stumbling-block characteristics of Jesus," i.e., material offensive to Jews of his time and to followers of Jesus at a later time; (4) test of dissimilarity.

Mitton's arguments are persuasive and need to be seriously evaluated, although those inclined to skepticism will find basic points of disagreement and the fundamentalists will feel that he gives up too much.

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Morris, Colin. *The Hammer of the Lord*. Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1973. 160 pp. Paperback, \$4.75.

Colin Morris, now general secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society of England, takes up his pen this time more constructively to deal with the theme of hope following two "demolition books," *Include Me Out* and *Unyoung, Uncolored, Unpoor*, written while a missionary in Zambia as a fiery passionate spokesman for the people of the Third World. His objective is "to point to sources of Christian hope without pandering to that slick optimism which the hardheaded realist rightly sweeps aside with contempt" (p. 9).

But what are the sources of hope that Morris points to? First of all is the fact that the universe stands behind us when we do good in spite of the