

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

apparent triumph of evil, that God promises us an open future, that God has inexhaustible initiatives by which he brings pressure upon the world, that the church with all its weaknesses is still the custodian of hope, that the individual is important because he can change things, that men are becoming more responsible for one another, that God can penetrate into the present by miraculous action.

Morris views secular optimism as a serious obstacle to the possibility of hope. As a stubborn realist he realizes that there are some insoluble problems but the Christian nevertheless must practice the ethics of hope, do to others as Christ has done for him.

Morris believes in the future but refuses to isolate it from the past and the present. He insists on keeping all three in one focus and shuns mellon-tolatry. His emphasis, however, is to awaken hope in the present in what he calls the "eternity between Crucifixion and Resurrection" (p. 159). Some readers may feel that Morris has not been positive enough. His signs of hope may seem vague and indefinite. Thus this is not an inspirational book in the usual sense of the word since he consciously seeks to set aside easy optimism for a hardheaded realism which still maintains hope in an apparently hopeless time. The reader knows there is no easy way out, that faith will be tried to the uttermost, and that love must respond to a hostile environment. As he says, "To live through the death of faith is a terrifying, numbing thing" (p. 158).

In this somewhat loosely written work, we still feel the power of Morris' pen when he grasps one's attention by his skillful collocation of words and phrases. In spite of this ability the book suffers from a lack of tight organization. At times it rambles and wanders off its subject. There is no clear logical arrangement of topics.

Still many will be glad to have Morris strike a positive note and be constructive after his two previous books.

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Mueller, Walter. *Grammatical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972. 86 pp. Paperback, \$2.45.

This work is intended as a supplement to a standard grammar and for students who already have basic knowledge of Greek grammar or who are in the process of acquiring it. It is a convenient and concise summation and is put together so that the student will be able to see the relationships among different declensions and conjugations as well as the identifying marks of each form. This will help to make the learning of Greek a bit easier than the rote memorization of every form as an isolated item.

This work could be very helpful as a quick review for students about to enter Intermediate Greek, as well as for those who may need to review after having completed Greek several years ago.

The work is organized very well and the explanations are simple and clear. However, the reviewer has found that students encounter as much problem with the translation of these forms as with the forms themselves. It would have been equally helpful if such assistance had been given.