

JESUS AND THE POLITICS OF HIS DAY. Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule (Eds.), *Cambridge University Press, 1984. Pages xii + 511 £37.50.*

A book of over 500 hundred pages, containing twenty-six learned and closely reasoned contributions by sixteen distinguished scholars, cannot be adequately reviewed even in the generous allowance of space permitted here. The reviewer cannot hope to do more than record a general impression, summarize, and draw attention to a few points of special interest.

It is safe to say that this is a book which no one will read without learning things that are new to him, in the history of the interpretation of the New Testament, in the Jewish background of the story of Jesus, and in the legal and juridical administration of the Roman provinces. It is full of information on a wide variety of topics; probably not many will read it, as the reviewer has done, from cover to cover, but will pick out those fields in which they seek an expert opinion. The first element in a general impression is thus admiration for a fine work of scholarship, one of the weightiest (in its field) produced in recent years in this country. The second element is the regretful sense that it is a little out of date. This is recognised by the editors in their Foreword. The book was compiled as both a contribution and a response to attempts "to interpret the life of Jesus of Nazareth in terms of the Jewish nationalistic movements of his day". It aims at a "sober investigation of the evidence relating to Jesus's attitude to authority, both Jewish and Roman". There have, however, been "unfortunate delays". Some of the essays "were completed about a decade ago". The book would have been a more timely contribution to debate if it had been published ten years ago. It is difficult to pin such things down precisely but it could be reasonably maintained that since 1967 (I choose the date of the late S.G.F. Brandon's *Jesus and the Zealots*) the theme of the book has lost some of its urgency. This does not mean that the book has no value. It is, as I have said, of great value, for though it contains, here and there, a certain amount of polemic it contains far more of solid, objective, and profoundly learned statement and analysis of facts that must always be of interest as long as men are concerned to understand the life, work, and significance of Jesus of Nazareth. Who was it who kept the editors waiting? They do not say, and I do not know; but the delay was unfortunate, and one must hope that the reasons for it were good ones.

J.P.M. Sweet's introductory chapter (The Zealots and Jesus) shows that Brandon's book, especially as its theme of Jesus the Revolutionary was taken up in revolutionary movements in various parts of the world, was the immediate starting point of the editors and contributors, but this is followed by the first of seven contributions by E. Bammel, who traces the history of "the revolution theory from Reimarus to Brandon". This is a fascinating essay, full of information not only about familiar figures, such as Reimarus, Eisler, Klausner, Winter, Brandon, but also about many who (at least to me) were by no means so familiar. There is less that is unfamiliar in F. F. Bruce's discussion of the date and character of Mark: the date is probably 64–5, and Mark wishes his readers to see that "the crucified Jesus is king—king in his crucifixion—and the way of the cross is the way of the kingdom" (p. 88). From the particular we move back to the general as C.F.D. Moule offers "some observations on *Tendenzkritik*"—fair observations, though I am disposed to think his last sentence unfair to F.C. Baur (p. 100). G.M. Styler's discussion of "*Argumentum e silentio*" contains a neat and on the whole convincing refutation of some of Brandon's arguments. Bammel returns with "The Poor and the Zealots". These are not identical, and Jesus is nearer to the former than the latter. H. Merkel deals with the "opposition between Jesus and Judaism" and concludes that Jesus was not a Zealot. B. Reicke turns to the post-resurrection period. "A certain zeal for the law was developed by Jewish Christians during the years 54 to 61" (p. 151), but only in this limited period. The late G.W.H. Lampe contributes essays on "A.D. 70 in Christian Reflection" and "The Trial of Jesus in the *Acta Pilati*": excellent, and not irrelevant to the main topic. Two

essays follow which show that the theme is older than Brandon, and even than Reimarus. W. Horbury deals with "Christ as brigand in ancient anti-Christian polemic" and Bammel with a version of the Josippon.

At this point the book moves on to a discussion of gospel sayings and incidents which are evidently relevant to its theme: Bammel on the feeding of the multitude; Bruce on "Render to Caesar"; Horbury on the Temple tax; M. Black on "Not peace but a sword" (the "holy war" is against the cosmic powers of evil); W. Grundmann on the decision to put Jesus to death (John 11. 47–57); D.R. Catchpole on the "triumphal" entry; Lampe on the Two Swords; Bammel on the *titulus*; K. Schubert on the Markan report of Jesus's examination before the Sanhedrin; G. Schneider on the political charge against Jesus (Luke 23.2); and Bammel on the trial before Pilate. Interspersed are a note by H. St. J. Hart on the coin of "Render to Caesar", and a discussion of Romans 13 by Bammel. Finally the late J.A.T. Robinson writes under the heading of "His Witness is true", arguing that John gives a true interpretation, and an essentially true account, of the trial of Jesus.

It will appear from this summary that the backbone of the book is by Bammel, whose contributions are considerable in extent and of the highest quality. There is however no weak link. I have never seen the logic of the *argumentum e silentio* analysed as clearly as it is by Styler, and Lampe's patristic essays are a worthy memorial. The two by Horbury are of great interest; so are those by Grundmann and Schneider. But I have enjoyed and profited from every piece in the book, though it is anything but easy reading. A reviewer, however will count himself lucky, notwithstanding the hard work involved in his task, to get a copy of this book for nothing. Not everyone will be able to afford it, but those who cannot should make sure that it is acquired by their libraries.

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ZOHAR: BOOK OF ENLIGHTENMENT (Classics of Western Spirituality), translated and introduced by Daniel Chanan Matt. SPCK. 1983. pp. xvi + 320. £11.50.

The Zohar, a large collection in Aramaic of short exegetical statements and homilies on the Old Testament, is perhaps the most important work of the canon of Jewish mystical literature, the Kabbalah. It is ascribed to Simeon bar Yohai, a Palestinian Rabbi of the second century A.D., but critical scholarship has established beyond reasonable doubt that it was written by the Spanish Kabbalist Moses ben Shem Tov de Leon in about 1280. It has been massively influential among Jews, especially (but by no means exclusively) in Hassidic circles. Christians influenced by it as early as the fifteenth century include the Florentine prodigy Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94), the German humanist Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522) and Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo (1465–1532).

The name "Zohar" bears connotations of clarity and light—it means "brightness", "splendour" or "enlightenment". It is far from being clear and lucid, however. Its symbolism is extremely intricate, its style is elliptic, it is riddled with Aramaic neologisms and is often ungrammatical. There is an English translation of the entire text (Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, London, 1931–34, five volumes), but this is without significant annotation and makes very difficult reading. Gershom Scholem, whose name, more than that of any other modern scholar, is associated with the scientific study of Kabbalistic literature, edited a small selection from the Zohar (Scholem, *Zohar—The Book of Splendour*, New York, 1963). While judicious selection makes Scholem's book more easily comprehensible than Sperling and Simon's translation, it too is without notes, and it therefore fails to unravel the Zohar's symbolism. The excellent two-volume extensively annotated selection by Tishby and Lachover is in Hebrew (*Mishnat Ha-Zohar*, Jerusalem 1961, 1971), and awaits a translator. Tishby and