

JESUS AND THE ZEALOTS, by S. G. F. Brandon. *M.U.P.*, 1967, 55s.

This work is a sequel to *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (1951; second ed. 1957), in which Professor Brandon studies the effect of the Jewish War against Rome (66–70 A.D.) on the beginnings of Christianity. Now comes the much more delicate question of Jesus's own attitude to Israel's cause against Rome. It is delicate because the author knows that the very asking of the question will cause offence to people whose beliefs he respects.

The investigation is thoroughly scholarly; this must be stressed, even if we disagree with some suppositions and more conclusions. Its starting point is in the credal clause 'suffered under Pontius Pilate'. This might be thought to involve a minimum of political implications. But Professor Brandon is not content to leave it at that: instead he writes, 'the most certain thing known about Jesus of Nazareth is that he was crucified by the Romans as a rebel against their government in Judea' (p. 1). This is in line with the book's sub-title, 'The Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity'. Thus a reader can know from the outset that the author has taken up a position – and not one ordinarily taught in Christianity. Yet it needs to be investigated by a thinking Christian.

For the purposes of this thesis St Mark's Gospel is pivotal since the author of Mark (followed in this by the other Gospels) 'presents Jesus as the incarnate Son of God who was done to death by the *odium theologicum* of the Jewish leaders, backed by the Jerusalem mob . . . pursuing his mission curiously insulated from current political events . . . Jesus ends his career, surprisingly, by being executed for sedition on the order of Pontius Pilate' (p. 323). In other words the presentation of the facts by St Mark is said to be an early distortion; but it was so vividly presented, so essentially congenial to the Christian outlook after 70 A.D. and 'became established tradition' (p. 323). Over against this established tradition Professor Brandon suggests that the early followers of Christ were very close to the Zealots, and one indeed was a Zealot. These Zealots were prominent in resisting Roman authority and taxation and were in the forefront of the Jewish War and again at Masada in 73 A.D. Furthermore it is argued that the Christian Church in Jerusalem disappeared in 70 A.D.; and the flight to Pella is considered legendary. This was a key fact (p. 15) since the authority of the Jerusalem Church was paramount in the Epistles and Acts. More surprising is to read that members

of the Jerusalem Church would have chosen to make common cause with their countrymen against the heathen might of Rome (p. 15). This supposition, unlike the flight to Pella, is supported by no text at all.

The problem hinges upon 'the possibility that Jesus might have had political views'. The possibility is exceedingly slender; we have no textual evidence for it, and instead a good deal which shows that the Saviour preached a kingdom 'not of this world' – even if the Romans feared that it might well be of this world. But what the Romans mistakenly half-expected in a Palestine seething with discontent is not necessarily going to explain what our Lord did and taught. Professor Brandon recognises that St John presents 'Jesus as insulated from the political unrest which was so profoundly agitating contemporary Jewish society' (p. 17). More recent scholarship is willing to recognise that some very early traditions are embedded in St John; so, on this score alone, the picture of a pacific Christ, uninvolved in the affairs of this world, may well be authentic and very early. The problem at heart is that of the person and teaching of Christ, as gathered from Epistles and Gospels, and more particularly from the traditions behind these; and also of Christ continued in the Church down to to-day. Thus Vatican II has declared 'That mission proper to his own Church and which Christ entrusted to her, is not of a political order, nor economic, nor social. The end which He determined for it is of a religious order . . . the power which the Church can infuse in the society of men of to-day, consists of faith and love made effective in life: not in some external domination exercised by merely human means' (*The Church in the World*, §42).

Passing now to particular points, let us note (p. 340): 'for some unexplained reason . . . Jesus and a number of his disciples passed out in the dark through the gates into the country beyond'. Lk. 22 : 39 and Jo. 18 : 1–2 give very good reasons. Incidentally, Gethsemane would hardly be referred to as 'country beyond' by anyone living in Jerusalem then or now. Then (p. 65) the childhood of Christ is filled with matter redolent of apocryphal gospels. It is suggested that he 'listened enthralled to tales of Zealot exploits against the hated Romans'. Yet when the Child Jesus went to Jerusalem, he certainly took the calm of Nazareth with him. All we know is that he spoke of his Father's affairs. The rest is Gospel silence, and

more impressive. Again, much of the thesis is built on Jesus' choice of a Zealot for an Apostle (cf. e.g., pp. 10, 16, 42-43, 243-245, etc.). Why not simply think that Simon *had been* a Zealot, as Matthew had been a tax-collector? Then, great play is made (p. 202) of Matt. 10 : 34, 'not peace but the sword'. But is 'sword' taken actively or passively? For the evil that we do is very different to the evil that we suffer. And for the 'sword' of Lk. 22 : 38, we need only cite Professor Caird 'an example of Jesus fondness for violent metaphor, but the disciples take it literally, as pedants have continued to do ever since' (St Luke, Pelican Ed., p. 241). Heavy weather is made of Iscariot (p. 204 n.), which can be explained as 'man of Qeryoth' cf. Jos. 15 : 25.

A total of such particular points would in the end serve to demolish the thesis of the book. So too no doubt would a more profound investigation of the traditions behind the gospels, and

in particular an examination of the traditions in I. Corinthians and Romans (both earlier than St Mark): St Paul after all had to say with anguish in his heart that his own people had 'crucified the Lord of glory' (I Cor. 2 : 8; Romans 9-11). It is also important to remember that the death of our Lord was the term of a long conflict; opposition and enmity were mounting up during all his ministry. We cannot take the crucifixion in isolation.

Such are some of the thoughts that come to us as we read this thought-provoking book. For the rest, it is well produced, with excellent plates of Roman and Jewish coins, of the site at Masada, of the inscription of Pontius Pilate found at Caesarea in 1961, as well as the well-known carvings on the arch of Titus. With the indices and bibliographies, we have an altogether handsome volume in the best traditions of the Manchester University Press.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

THE THEOLOGICAL TENDENCY OF CODEX BEZAE CANTABRIGIENSIS IN ACTS, by Eldon Jay Epp. (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 3.) *Cambridge University Press*, 1966. 45s. (\$8.50).

Codex Bezae, which now lies in the Cambridge University Library, used to be in the monastery of St Irenaeus at Lyons. Guillaume du Prat, Bishop of Clermont in Auvergne, borrowed it to take with him to use as evidence for unusual Greek readings at the Council of Trent. Théodore de Bèze, Calvin's successor in Geneva, acquired the Codex which now bears his name after it had been found in the monastery at Lyons during the civil commotions in 1562, the year Lyons was sacked by Huguenot troops. In 1581 Bèze presented the manuscript to the University of Cambridge. It is perhaps appropriate that a Presbyterian reviewer should be allowed to report in a Roman Catholic journal on the latest attempt to explain the Codex which, wherever it lies, belongs to all.

Codex Bezae was written in both Greek and Latin, on facing pages, as early as the fifth century A.D. The text of those parts of the Gospels and Acts that it contains is usually longer than the text of the Codex Vaticanus (in the Vatican Library, eventually published because of the persistence of a German Lutheran). Codex Bezae is the best witness to the 'Western' text and Codex Vaticanus is the best witness to the 'Egyptian' or 'Alexandrian' text, and the intriguing problem is, which text is more faithful to the original text of the New Testament? Naturally each is likely at

times to provide readings which are superior to those of the other, because no text is ever copied completely accurately, but the disparity in length between these two suggests that there may have been deliberate editing involved; perhaps Codex Vaticanus represents a pruning, and perhaps Bezae represents a paraphrasing expansion.

Textual critics like J. H. Ropes and M.-J. Lagrange, O.P. agree in thinking that Codex Vaticanus represents a better text than Codex Bezae; they think that the 'Western' text is longer because an editor tried to explain seeming difficulties, or to heighten the vividness of the narrative, or to smooth out rough or puzzling expressions. They agree that sometimes the 'Western' text is more anti-Jewish and more universalistic than the 'Alexandrian' text, but Lagrange detects more of a consistent theological bias than does Ropes.

Professor Epp claims to find a far more pervasive theological tendency in the readings peculiar to Codex Bezae than any of his predecessors. He says that Codex Bezae betrays a theological tendency in the same way as a theological tendency can be found in the writings of Luke or Paul; the bias is towards 'a decidedly heightened anti-Judaic attitude and sentiment', according to which the Jewish leaders are more blamed for Jesus's death, Judaism is seen as less important in the early