

Works" (pp. 152-163). Fortress Press is to be commended for making available to an English-reading audience this short, but penetrating, work by a well-known Reformation specialist.

(Note: For some brief earlier references in *AUSS* to the German edition, see the special Luther issue of *AUSS*—vol. 22, no. 1, Spring 1984—, pp. 140, 141. These references were made in conjunction with discussion of the topic, "Luther and the Jews.")

Andrews University

KENNETH A. STRAND

Pals, Daniel L. *The Victorian "Lives" of Jesus*. Trinity University Monograph Series in Religion, vol. 7. San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 1982. 223 pp. \$20.00.

Critical investigation of the life of Jesus and the systematic treatment of the gospels as historical documents amounted to perhaps the greatest and certainly the most controversial achievement in NT scholarship of the nineteenth century. This new style of reading the basic Christian texts quickly began to affect the religious conceptions of believers; and by chronicling a phenomenon of the Victorian religious publishing industry, Pals has developed a method of studying its progress in British public opinion. Gospel criticism became "a sort of vogue" during the 1860s and beyond, and what had been academic issues in Germany already for half a century became in Britain the subject of wide public concern in sermons and periodicals, and in the high-minded Sunday afternoon reading of thousands of respectable mid-Victorian households. A succession of best-selling attempts at a satisfactory narrative version of the life and times of Jesus maintained the focus of debate on the gospel sources and upon the historical figure of Jesus at a time when basic changes in the relationship between reader and Scripture had to be accommodated in the minds of educated Christians.

By a wide definition, thousands of publications of all sorts might be counted as Victorian "Lives" of Jesus, and Pals deals directly with scores of them. Most were imitations of a few influential works, and need to be considered only in general. By scanning the leading journals of this period for notices and reviews, Pals has selected the more interesting and important examples, in quantity sufficient to establish the limits of the genre. He offers in this monograph, which has been adapted from his 1975 University of Chicago doctoral dissertation, a survey and digest of extensive reading in shelves of mainly forgotten piety and argument, encountered frequently at Victorian rhetorical lengths that are now quite out of fashion.

As well as accounting briefly for the unique features and circumstances of his examples, Pals identifies key points of contention, such as the utilization of the Fourth Gospel or the attitude adopted toward miracles, and indicates the position of each work in such regards. At several points he outlines and revises a formula for popular success in the genre, reviewing conditions in the publishing industry and in the reading habits which favored these works. Of the literary texture of the "Lives," only scattered comments and brief quotations are provided, and Pals is not always at his best in addressing the subtleties of tone and style involved (as, for instance, when he distorts the light irony of Albert Schweitzer's chapter on Renan, bringing it into line with his own unduly shrill condemnation of the French writer). He has also decided to pass by the opportunity of following the less-disciplined artistic and literary ramifications of the issues (as, e.g., the "Pre-Raphaelite" painters responded to them in their religious illustrations, or as Robert Browning discussed them poetically).

The Victorian "Lives" arose from a concern which seems to have been relatively new in the nineteenth century—the attempt to separate out a chronological account of the public life of Jesus from the gospel context of spiritual interpretation laid over it a generation later to meet the needs of the early church. Victorian interest was stimulated especially in response to two well-known Continental works, David Strauss's *Leben Jesu* (1835-36) and the more popular *Vie de Jesus* (1863) of Ernest Renan. The radical advance in the application of historical and structural criticism which these writers proposed is made clear from the survey of earlier traditions with which Pals begins his study. German scholarship, represented by Strauss, had rendered obsolete the old form of the "gospel harmony," which dated back past Augustine to the early fathers and which was too often arbitrary and unworkable through pedantic literalism. It also isolated from practical consideration the medieval tradition of devotional hagiography in works such as the pseudo-Bonaventurian *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, with their fanciful backgrounds and apocryphal details. Building instead on the rationalist traditions of English Deism and the German Enlightenment (which had been largely ignored by ecclesiastical establishments), the general study of the gospels as records of ancient documents, rather than as sanctified Scriptures, began in English with the first grudging discussions of the *Leben Jesu* in the 1840s.

Strauss's massive and complicated work was hardly suited to the non-specialist reader, and only in part took the form of a biographical narrative. Although it was translated in 1846 (anonymously, by the novelist George Eliot), the effect of the *Leben Jesu* in Britain was mainly negative and indirect; its tenets received their widest circulation when quoted for refutation by orthodox writers, who would often have been happier to suppress

their pernicious influence. Strauss's basic critical strategy of reading the gospel stories as "myths" (i.e., "religious literature in which historical events are . . . created or enlarged to fit . . . ideal conceptions") was profoundly shocking, but the work could usually be ignored by the British press, or simply dismissed as "foreign." Strauss came to be seen as a mere bugbear, "the symbolic infidel of the 1840s," but Pals probably underestimates Strauss's readership in Britain, especially among free-thinking Christians.

In Strauss's wake, British writers began to pay lip-service to new critical techniques which their reverence still kept them from applying with any rigor. It took another foreign work, of wider appeal and easier scholarship, to directly inspire spokesmen for the British religious mainstream to enter the fray with their own full-blown "Lives." This was Renan's *Vie de Jesus*, intended for French Catholics. It was translated into English within months of its original edition and began very quickly to be much read and discussed in Britain.

Renan's achievement was one of vivid historical romance, rather than of original scholarship, and it is relevant to consider that the same century which developed these "Lives" of Jesus had also invented the historical novel. With his charming rational sentimentality and highly successful narrative structure, Renan was ideally suited to popularize the controversy while stimulating discussion with his unacceptably skeptical proposals. Having visited Palestine, he was able to incorporate travelogue material into his narrative, and this use of the Holy Land as a "fifth gospel" became one of the determining influences on the Victorian "Lives." But the combination of incontrovertible appeal with "unequivocal anti-Christian skepticism" made the *Vie de Jesus* a threatening book, greeted variously by British reviewers with outrage, sarcasm, and earnest refutation. The only solution was to reform Renan's techniques for more orthodox employment by British authors, and the genre which Pals identifies emerged in this process.

F. W. Farrar's *Life of Christ*, the most successful of these Victorian works, did not appear for another decade, but earlier examples quickly began to establish the pattern. The anonymous English best-seller *Ecce Homo* (1865) was the next great focus of discussion after Renan; its strategy was to acknowledge at the outset an acceptable perspective with regard to the miracles and the divinity of Jesus, but then to de-emphasize supernatural elements in favor of a human, sublimely inspirational teacher. Reaction to *Ecce Homo* dominated British journalism throughout 1866, and the example was set for widely successful publication of such works in large inexpensive editions. Many Victorian writers saw as their primary task the reassurance of believers, and although there was a vital minority strain of "rationalist" reading of the four gospels, the products of this

strain could not be widely distributed and were seldom noticed with any seriousness by the public press. They borrowed from the Continental "Lives" and contained more controversy than scholarship, but were nevertheless ahead of their time (as Pals indicates) in raising questions which conventional scholars managed to avoid until the close of the century. When Farrar's *Life of Christ* appeared in 1874 as Britain's definitive answer to Strauss and Renan, it appealed by maintaining a moderate orthodoxy in a florid romantic style, generally trusting in the interpretations of Paul and in the implications of the church creeds, rather than offering radical reassessments of the historical problems.

Farrar's book continued to sell throughout the final quarter of the century and was widely imitated. Great advances were not made in the popular tradition during these years, and the more important British works, such as Alfred Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1883), concentrated on the minutiae of Jewish lore and culture contemporary with Jesus, constructing an elaborate and useful background for what in general remained a naively uncritical representation of the familiar three-year ministry. With the response having been made to the challenge of Strauss and Renan, there seemed to be no need to keep up with continuing theoretical experiments of German scholarship (as, for example, the idea of Mark's priority). There was also little debate between the orthodox and the rationalist writers in Britain, each group tending to present again and again its established characterization of Jesus, without advance.

By the end of the century, gradual acceptance of gospel criticism had been established in the British churches (as it had not in America), so long as it stopped short of any direct challenge to Christian supernaturalism and to the fundamental historical reliability of all four gospels. Some respected scholars went much further than this, and it began to be widely maintained that even if passages as central to Christian worship as the infancy narratives were indefensible as history, and even if many of the miracles were exaggerated reports or literary inventions in imitation of OT incidents, the basic truths of Christian teaching and revelation remained available for belief, independent of the uncertain determinations of historical scholarship. Ironically, this was not far from what Strauss had originally intended in treating the gospel incidents as myths.

Pals terminates his survey at approximately 1910, by which time the Victorian narrative popularizations of gospel criticism had declined from their influential position. Increasing concentration on the process of constructing what Norman Perrin has termed a "faith image" of the Savior, and assertions of theology's independence from strict principles of historical inquiry, seem to have undermined the religious value of these "Lives" quite rapidly after the turn of the century. Widespread Victorian debate

over the "higher criticism" of the gospels had been contained within acceptable limits, and was perceived as a healthy exercise for the religious mind. In contrast, the fundamental structural criticism of OT texts, especially following Julius Wellhausen's work on the Pentateuch, entailed giving up too much too soon, and was shut out from comparable public interest. When an increasingly skeptical generation of NT scholars began denying the possibility of reconstructing any historically tenable biography out of the Gospel sources, the whole problem of integrating new textual studies into popular religious conceptions faded from public interest.

In Albert Schweitzer's classic 1906 study of gospel scholarship in Germany in the nineteenth century (where the backwater of the British "Lives" requires little attention), the manifold historical problems come to seem almost irrelevant to modern religious ideas. History by itself can provide only the barest sketch of a Jesus who "will be to our time a stranger and an enigma." Leading British scholars, characterized by Pals as more "gentlemanly" in their greater concern with the popular implications of their work, found it difficult to go so far, and the interest in their writings which Pals generates seems to rest finally in their contribution to Victorian sociology and popular culture, rather than to theoretical progress.

The Victorians and their conception of Jesus are inseparable, and we know them both better as the result of this work by Pals.

Santa Cruz, California 95060

JOHN L. BRUNIE

Westermann, Claus. *Genesis 1-11*. Translated by J. J. Scullion. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984. xii + 636 pp. \$29.95.

This publication is a commentary which rivals in volume and scope some of the more massive tomes on biblical subjects produced in the nineteenth century. Its 600 pages cover only the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

Although Westermann is well known as a prolific contributor to OT studies, his commentary on Genesis surely ranks as his *magnum opus*. This is the first volume to be translated into English from his three volumes on Genesis originally published in German in the *Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament* series from 1974 to 1982. The other two volumes cover Gen 12-36 and 37-50, respectively.

A rather standard literary critical approach to the biblical text has been adopted here by Westermann, but the details of his presuppositions are found in a rather curious location. The history of the development of the literary criticism of Genesis (and of the rest of the Pentateuch) and the presently modified treatment of this type of criticism are described only at