Der johanneische Kreis: Sein Platz im Spätjudentum, in der Jüngerschaft Jesu und im Urchristentum: Zum Ursprung des Johannesevangeliums. By Oscar Cullmann. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1975, xii + 111 pp., DM 14,80 paper.

Those of us who have read with interest the articles by which Cullmann has, over the years, contributed to discussion on the fourth gospel have sometimes wondered how he put it all together. Here is the answer.

Cullmann rejects complicated redactional histories like that of R. E. Brown and identifiable sources like those traced out by Bultmann, Fortna and Becker. He thinks that John was written by a strong leader, unknown to us by name but certainly not one of the twelve. Probably this took place prior to A.D. 70, but his work was edited by a disciple or group of disciples and published toward the end of the century.

The "*Heimat*" of the author was Palestine/Syria, but Cullmann is not certain the gospel was written there. Taking a cue from F.-M. Braun, he suggests that the writer may have traveled a good deal. But the original "Johannine circle," from which the writer sprang, was in contact with heretical Judaism and was part of the "hellenist" group that evangelized Samaria and from which Stephen emerged. The author's intention in writing is given in general terms in John 20:31; more specifically, he wanted to show believers that in each event in the life of the incarnate Jesus, Christ was simultaneously at work in the life of the contemporary Church. Thus what Luke took two books to present the author of the fourth gospel succeeded in doing in one.

This little book is unusually rich in seminal thoughts, but its smallness is also its chief weakness. In detail after detail, Cullmann proceeds by way of mere assertion or by argumentation so brief as to be unconvincing to all but his disciples. In some cases he takes note of published criticism of his positions, but instead of answering the criticism he simply thinks his own stance more probable. For instance, it is well known that Cullmann sees the Samaritan mission of Acts 8 in John 4:34-38, but his position has been cogently criticized by J. A. T. Robinson (*Twelve New Testament Studies* [1962], pp. 61 ff.), who argues for a reference to John the Baptist and his colleagues. Cullmann simply goes his own way. Again, he repeatedly sees reference to a "*Gottesdienst*" in the fourth gospel, and no doubt he is relying heavily on his own earlier work at this point. But he has taken no notice of criticism, such as the two articles by J. Dunn (*ZNW* 61 [1970] 247-252; *NTS* 17 [1970-1971] 328-338). He argues that the last clause of John 20:31 shows that the fourth gospel is directed to believers, but that is disputed, especially when the verse is contrasted with 1 John 5:13. Although Cullmann argues that the evangelist is trying to portray simultaneously both the incarnate Jesus and the exalted Christ of the Church, he handles questions of historicity too loosely to be convincing to the present reviewer.

This book is not designed to give an exhaustive bibliography, and it is often churlish for a reviewer to criticize another man for what he left out. But I am surprised by the number of quite significant omissions. To cite but one example of many: In discussing the relationship between the fourth gospel and *Odes Sol.*, Cullmann (p. 38) overlooks the article by J. H. Charlesworth and R. A. Culpepper on this subject (*CBQ* 35 [1973] 298-322).

Although the book is unconvincing, at least to this reviewer, in many of its constituent parts, its thrust is not implausible (save that I still hold to apostolic authorship). But its chief worth remains in its synthesis of Cullmann's thought.

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